

THE LINE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE:  
LINE MANAGERS AS EFFECTIVE HR PARTNERS

Anna Bos-Nehles

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Prof. dr. P.J.J.M. van Loon (chairman/secretary)

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	University of Twente
Prof. dr. K. Sanders	University of Twente

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PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van  
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Line managers today have a critical role in Human Resource Management (HRM). The line management's position in HRM has become crucial as they are responsible for managing people at the operational level (Guest, 1987; Lowe, 1992; Marchington, 2001; Storey, 1992). In this role, they are inevitably responsible for the implementation of HR practices (Gratton & Truss, 2003; Storey, 1992). However, many researchers argue that line managers have been unsuccessful in their HR role (Hope Hailey, Farndale & Truss, 2005; Torrington & Hall, 1996) because they are influenced by a number of factors that lead them to perform HR practices ineffectively. This thesis aims at identifying those factors that constrain line managers in performing an effective HR role, investigating to what extent organisational contingencies influence these HR constraints in various organisations and determining which of these constraints actually affect their effectiveness when implementing HR practices. The journey towards understanding the line management role in HRM and the HR constraints that line managers' perceive as limiting their HR implementation effectiveness is first outlined.

## 1.2 Devolution

A crucial development in giving an important HRM role to line managers is *strategic HRM (SHRM)*. In order for an organisation to be strategic, the HR function should help in making the HRM strategy consistent with the strategic direction of the firm, and this is achieved by *integrating* HR strategy with business strategy (Boxall & Purcell, 2003). On this basis, *HR Integration* is defined as "the degree to which the HRM issues are considered as part of the formation of business strategies" (Brewster & Larsen, 1992, p. 411). According to Storey (1989), there should be a mutual relationship between business strategy and HRM. In building this close relationship, two developments have occurred. First, HR managers have become more proactive towards SHRM by supporting the strategic direction of HR in business or management meetings. Operational HR responsibilities thus became of lower importance to the HR department and were consequently *devolved* to line managers. The second development was the subsequent integration of line managers in the process of executing HR practices in order to build a closer link between strategy development and human resource development. In 1987, Guest (1987, p. 51) was already illustrating that "HRM is increasingly being integrated and shared with line managers".

The term 'devolvement' or *devolution* is defined as "the degree to which HR practice involves and gives responsibility to line managers rather than personnel specialists" (Brewster & Larsen, 1992, p. 412). Budhwar and Sparrow (1997, p. 477) present five justifications for

such devolution: (1) certain issues are too complex for top management to comprehend; (2) local managers are able to respond more quickly to local problems and conditions; (3) it leads to employees being motivated and effective control, as line managers are in constant contact with employees; (4) it helps to prepare future managers (by allowing middle managers to practice decision-making skills); and (5) it helps to reduce costs. Line management is thus understood to be the appropriate place in the organisation to locate HR responsibilities: because they can reduce employees' operating costs and because they can add value to other resources by motivating and committing the workforce. People management responsibilities have even been devolved to line managers on the argument that this would increase organisational effectiveness (Brewster & Larsen, 1992). Thus, line management has become engaged in HR responsibilities because the line was expected to handle such responsibility well, even better than HR managers, and because it would result in organisational and financial benefits for the organisation.

### **1.3 Line Management**

Most organisations differentiate between various levels of management (Sims, Veres III, Jackson & Facticeau, 2001). Top managers are responsible for establishing an organisation's overall objectives and developing policies to achieve those objectives. Middle managers are positioned below top managers and are responsible for supervising other managers. They are usually responsible for establishing and meeting goals in their particular department or unit. Often, these managers have job titles such as division manager, district manager or unit manager. First-line managers are the lowest level in the organisation's management team: they oversee and supervise the work of operating employees. Hales (2005, p. 473) defines a first-line manager as a manager "to whom non-managerial employees report". He addresses the increasing responsibility given to first-line managers as a change from being operational supervisors to becoming 'team-leaders/co-ordinators' or 'business unit managers'. Whereas supervisors had responsibility but no authority, first-line managers possess delegated authority to take decisions.

Line managers have an increasingly important role in the organisation, as they are expected to create a synergy between human, financial and physical resources by allocating time, money and energy to the development of their subordinates (Brewster & Larsen, 1992). The line management role has shifted from the operational supervision of a team towards team leadership and strategic business management. The character of the new role can be described as a "mini-manager model" (Storey, 1992, p. 219), because line managers are given

a wider set of responsibilities, more authority, higher pay and status plus better training, and, further, there is a more careful selection of persons to fill this role with enhanced competencies being required. They also become responsible for achieving the HRM goals of ensuring their subordinates show commitment, quality, flexibility and profitability (Lowe, 1992). According to Legge (1989, p. 27), HRM is “vested in line management as business managers responsible for co-ordinating and directing all resources in the business unit in pursuit of bottom line profits”.

According to Luthans, Hodgetts & Rosenkrantz (1988), managers are responsible for executing the following HRM activities: (1) motivating and reinforcing, (2) disciplining and punishing, (3) managing conflict, (4) staffing, and (5) training and developing. Many HR responsibilities are shared between HR managers and line managers: pay and benefits, recruitment and selection, training and development, industrial relations, health and safety, and workforce expansion and reduction (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Larsen & Brewster, 2003).

Line managers have not only gained increased status, authority and responsibility, they have also been burdened with many HR activities alongside their continuing operational activities. They now have the prime responsibility for the implementation of HR practices at the operational level (Child & Partridge, 1982; Gratton & Truss, 2003; Marchington, 2001). Thus, effective HR implementation and performance is dependent on line managers’ commitment towards and capability regarding their HR role (Guest, 1987; Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe, 2004; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Storey, 1992). However, although line management was identified as the perfect location to position HR responsibilities, because it would make HR more effective, many researchers believe that line managers have failed in their given HR role (Hope Hailey et al., 2005; McGovern, Gratton, Hope Hailey, Stiles & Truss, 1997). They are viewed as being reluctant to carry out HR practices effectively (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris, Doughty & Kirk, 2002; Lowe, 1992). The devolution literature argues that there must be certain constraints that result in line managers not being able to complete their devolved HR responsibilities and perform the required HR practices well (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; McConville & Holden, 1999; McGovern et al., 1997; Thornhill & Saunders, 1998; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). In the devolution literature, the following five constraints on effective HR implementation by line managers are regularly presented: (1) line managers do not have the *desire* to perform HR responsibilities (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Harris et al., 2002; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006); (2) they do not have sufficient *capacity* to spend time on both personnel and operational responsibilities (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; McGovern et al., 1997);

(3) they lack sufficient HR-related *competences* (Hall & Torrington, 1998; McGovern, 1999, Renwick, 2000); (4) they need but do not always receive *support* and advice from HR managers to perform their HR role effectively (Bond & Wise, 2003; Gennard & Kelly, 1997; McConville & Holden, 1999; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003); and (5) they require clear *policies & procedures* concerning their HR responsibilities and how to apply them (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Brewster & Larsen, 2000; McConville, 2006). These factors summarise the general findings as to why devolving HR practices to the line does not make HR more effective, and could even lead to ineffective implementation of HR practices on the work floor. Bond & Wise (2003) concur that the devolution literature tends to come back with the same five reasons why devolution ‘does not work’. Despite this apparent consensus, these constraints have never been investigated together, in one model, as the reasons for ineffective HR implementation by line managers. They have been identified by individual researchers in individual case studies, but never measured or tested for their combined effect on HR implementation effectiveness.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement and Research Questions**

The issue with the identified HR constraints line managers seem to face in implementing HR practices is that these five factors are *empirical outcomes* presented in various case studies. They are (1) collected from individual cases, (2) not theoretically grounded nor yet placed in any comprehensive model, and (3) never tested against any outcome variable. Another concern we have with the devolution literature is that much of the research on the HR constraints on line managers’ HR implementation collects data only from HR managers – the line managers themselves are ignored. Thus, HR managers are asked which constraints arise when line managers are given responsibility for implementing HR practices. We would argue that it is the line managers who should be asked what constraints *they* perceive as hindering them in HR implementation. Following this, the identified HR constraints should be placed in a single model to test which of the constraints are most important in limiting the effective implementation of HRM by line managers. Further, the organisational situation of the line managers should be taken into account as organisational characteristics may affect the management role and therefore also the constraints line managers perceive in their role. Therefore, the main research question for this thesis is formulated as:

*Which of the five factors identified in the literature as constraints on the effective HR implementation are salient to line managers’ HR implementation effectiveness?*

In order to answer this research question, a few other research questions first need to be answered in the four research papers:

1. To what extent do first-line managers perceive the five factors so far identified as hindering or fostering their HR implementation success?
2. What measures would be effective in researching the constraints line managers perceive in implementing HR practices?
3. How do organisational differences influence the HR constraints line managers perceive in implementing HR practices?

Once we have answered these questions we can move on to our fourth, general research question:

4. *Which of the five factors identified in the literature as constraints on effective HR implementation are salient to line managers' HR implementation effectiveness?*

We aim to use the Occam's razor argument. This rule, formulated by William of Occam (ca. 1290-1349), prescribes choosing the simplest (i.e. least complex) model that describes the data well (Myung & Pitt, 1997). With this, he was criticising scholastic philosophy, "whose theories grew ever more elaborate without any corresponding improvement in predictive power" (Domingos, 1999, p. 409). As such, here it reflects that our aim is no more than to investigate which HR constraints have the greatest predictive power for HR implementation effectiveness by line managers.

In order to answer the formulated research questions, the HR constraints on line managers in implementing HR practices effectively will be investigated through case study research, using quantitative and qualitative cross-sectional data collected within the Netherlands. It is reasonable to research this topic within the Dutch context as the Netherlands is among the leading European countries in terms of devolving HR responsibilities to line management (Andolšek & Štebe, 2005; Larsen & Brewster, 2003). Organisations for the case studies were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) most of the HR responsibilities had been devolved to the line, (2) the companies selected had different line management responsibilities and backgrounds, (3) the organisations came from various sectors, and (4) they organised the HR function differently.

A pilot case study was performed in four business units of Dutch organisations. It was decided to pilot-test the devolved situation and the HR constraints among first-line managers

because, as presented above, many scholars have described first-line management as the most critical group in effectively implementing HRM (Child & Partridge, 1982; Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe, 2004; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Storey, 1992). By interviewing a total of 31 first-line managers about what they perceive to be HR constraints for implementing HR practices, the HR constraints presented in the devolution literature could be confirmed.

Following this, *quantitative* results on HR constraints facing line managers on various levels of the line management hierarchy were collected by surveying 471 line managers in six other organisations to those involved in the pilot study. The measurement instrument was developed by the researcher and validated as a good instrument for investigating line managers' HR constraints when implementing HR practices. In four of these six organisations, additional *qualitative* data were collected by interviewing line managers and discussing the topic with a number of HR managers. Additional scales were developed to investigate the effectiveness of line managers in implementing HR and applied by asking their subordinates about how satisfied they were with the way their line managers applied various HR practices on the work floor. This survey was carried out in two of the six organisations.

## **1.5 Thesis Structure**

This thesis is a collection of four articles (Chapters 2 to 5). It is structured in the form of four research papers plus a discussion chapter in which the results presented in the research papers are reflected upon and discussed (Chapter 6).

Chapter 2 presents the pilot case study. By interviewing first-line managers, the researcher gains an understanding of their position in the organisation, their HR responsibilities, and the constraints they perceive as hindering or fostering them in implementing HR practices on the work floor. The interview protocol is based on HR constraints presented in the devolution literature (Appendix A and B). The goal of this chapter is to explore the first-line management function in organisations by investigating what the managers themselves perceive as hindering them in their HR role and to assess the effect of organisational differences on the HR role.

In Chapter 3, the aim is to develop suitable scales for measuring line managers' perceptions of HR constraints when implementing HR practices. Since there were no existing HR scales to measure the perception of line managers towards their HR role, scales from psychological and marketing research were adopted. These scales are then adapted to reflect the HR role of line managers in organisations. The research population here is all the line managers in the six organisations in order to cover differences in perception due to different

levels in the hierarchy. The new measurement instrument is thus validated with cross-sectional data from a total of 471 line managers.

The fourth chapter illustrates the effects of organisational differences on the perceptions of HR constraints by line managers. It is theoretically argued that organisations differ from each other in terms of which, and how many, HR tasks they devolve to line managers, which roles and responsibilities (for tasks and people) line managers are given, which managerial roles they play, and what level of education or line management background is required to carry out the line management HR role. The impact of organisational contingencies on this role, and the HR constraints perceived, is investigated in this chapter.

Finally, in Chapter 5, the general research question can be answered by measuring the effect of the five constraints on line managers' effectiveness in implementing HR practices. The aim is to determine how restricted line managers are in performing HR practices effectively, and whether the HR constraints that line managers perceive do actually affect their HR implementation effectiveness, as is claimed in the literature.

In the sixth chapter, the results of the four research articles are discussed and answers to the research questions formulated. The contributions and limitations of the research are addressed, and its practical and theoretical implications are discussed. Finally, suggestions for taking the research further are offered.

## 1.5 References

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## Chapter 2

# Implementing Human Resource Management Successfully: A First-Line Management Challenge

This chapter is based on: Nehles, A. C., van Riemsdijk, M. J., Kok, I., & Looise, J. C. (2006). Implementing human resource management successfully: the role of first-line managers. *Management Revue*, 17 (3), 256-273.

**Abstract**

In this paper we will address the success of Human Resource Management (HRM) implementation, concentrating not on the HR function but on first-line managers. First-line managers find implementing HR practices at the operational level difficult and show reluctance with their HR responsibilities. However, they have become increasingly responsible for the implementation of HRM and thus, their performance is critical for HRM effectiveness. Previous research pointed to five factors that could lead to HRM implementation difficulties. Four case studies in four different multinational business units are presented here to investigate the salience of these factors. Results show that first-line managers perceive four of the five factors hindering, but that the challenges faced vary per business unit.

## 2.1 Introduction

First-line managers (FLMs) have an unquestioned crucial role in implementing Human Resource Management (HRM), because they are responsible for executing HR practices on the operational work floor (Guest, 1987; Storey, 1992; Lowe, 1992; Brewster & Larsen, 1992; Legge, 1995; Gratton & Truss, 2003; Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe, 2004). In this paper, we investigate the application of the HR practices: performance appraisals, training and development, staffing and compensation.

According to Hales (2005, p. 473), the expression ‘first-line manager’ traditionally stands for “the position representing the first level of management to whom non-managerial employees report”. We include the performance of HR activities in our definition and define FLMs as the lowest line managers at the operational level, who manage a team of operational employees on a day-to-day basis and are responsible for performing HR activities.

Until now, researchers have primarily investigated the relationship between HR practices and HRM system (or organisational) effectiveness (Schuler & Jackson, 1984; Arthur, 1992; Pfeffer, 1995; Delery & Doty, 1996), whereas the implementation of HRM has attracted only limited attention. However, some constraints on effective HRM implementation were identified in the devolution literature (cf. Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Renwick, 2000). Devolving HR responsibilities to the operational line level implies a change in the roles taken on by the HR function (Storey, 1992; Ulrich, 1997; Caldwell, 2003). The interventionist HR roles of ‘change agents’ and ‘regulators’ are consequently reduced by emphasising on non-interventionist roles, such as ‘advisor’ and ‘service provider’ (Caldwell, 2003; Hope Hailey, Farndale & Truss, 2005). The interventionist HR roles are increasingly devolved to FLMs, who seem to be neither capable nor motivated to take on such roles (Hope Hailey, Gratton, McGovern, Stiles & Truss, 1997; Hall & Torrington (1998); Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Hope Hailey et al, 2005). Therefore, it seems that FLMs have failed to live up to their new roles.

In recent years, scholars have dedicated much attention and energy towards demonstrating a linkage between human resource management and firm performance. Effective HRM can help an organisation achieve a competitive advantage and so improve its performance (Lado & Wilson, 1994; Huselid, 1995; Pfeffer, 1995; Becker & Gerhart, 1996). The effectiveness of HRM depends on the quality of HR practices, as well as the success of HRM implementation (Huselid, Jackson & Schuler, 1997; Wright, McMahan, Snell & Gerhart, 2001; Kane, Crawford & Grant, 1999; Gratton & Truss, 2003; Bowen & Ostroff,

2004). However, even if HR practices were believed to be effective, the HRM system might still not be effective because FLMs do not know how to implement HR practices successfully on the work floor. Therefore, we need to study the challenges that FLMs face when implementing HRM processes, as these can influence the effectiveness of the whole HRM system.

## 2.2 Theory: Factors Hindering First-Line Managers in Executing HR Practices

FLMs are in a position in which they are responsible for operational output, as well as for the performance of their team. To draw the best performance, FLMs are supposed to perform HR activities by using HR practices. However, FLMs do not always see the need of using HR practices to achieve their business goals (McGovern, 1999; Harris et al, 2002). Many authors have stated that FLM's are, in fact, 'reluctant' to take on these HR responsibilities (Storey, 1992; Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). The literature suggests that FLMs may not be willing to perform HR activities, have no spare time to spend on their additional responsibilities, have insufficient competences to apply HR practices, are not well supported by HR managers or are not provided with clear policy and procedures for performing the additional HR tasks. These five factors are suggested to be the challenges FLMs experience when implementing HRM.

However, FLMs themselves have never been asked what they perceive as a hindrance to implementing HR successfully. Therefore, we want to investigate to what extent first-line managers themselves perceive the five factors that have been identified so far as hindering or fostering their HRM implementation success?

Therefore, our research model focuses on the relationship between the five factors that should hinder FLMs and HRM implementation success.

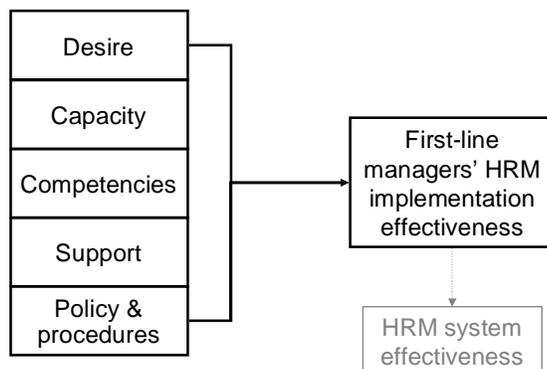


Figure 1: Research Model

So far, the results of numerous case studies showed the following possible explanations for FLMs' reluctance.

### ***2.2.1 Lack of Desire***

Willingness among FLMs is an essential precondition to successful HRM implementation. While some managers are enthusiastic about their HR responsibilities for the people they supervise, many are not. This low level of desire can result from a lack of either personal or institutionalised incentives. The fact that FLMs are not always sufficiently willing to take on HR responsibilities or that their motivation to do so is lacking highlights a lack of personal incentives for using HR practices (McGovern, 1999; Harris et al, 2002). Institutional incentives can persuade FLMs to give HR activities serious consideration (McGovern 1999; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003), e.g. by making HR responsibilities an integral part of FLMs' own performance appraisals, their job descriptions or business policy. In addition, FLMs often give HR tasks low priority when managerial short-termism dominates (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003).

### ***2.2.2 Lack of Capacity***

FLMs need time to implement HRM successfully. HR tasks are generally devolved to FLMs without reducing their other duties (Brewster & Larsen, 2000). This implies that FLMs might not be able to devote enough time to HRM, especially when short-term operational pressures dominate (Gratton, Hope-Hailey, Stiles & Truss, 1999; Renwick, 2000).

### ***2.2.3 Lack of Competences***

There is a need for HR-related competences for successful HRM implementation. FLMs lack specialist knowledge and skills (Lowe, 1992; Gennard & Kelly, 1997; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris et al., 2002), for example on legal requirements and agreed practices. Competences in performing HR activities can be developed through training. Some authors have shown the need for continual and systematic training in HR activities (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; McGovern, 1999; Renwick, 2000). However, there is evidence that few organisations provide such formal HR training (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Harris et al, 2002).

### ***2.2.4 Lack of Support***

There is a need for support from HR managers for successful HRM implementation. If HR specialists are unable or unwilling to provide clear and proactive support, FLMs will lack

sufficient HR skills (Gennard & Kelly, 1997; Renwick, 2000) and proper encouragement to manage the operational workforce effectively. Thus, FLMs need advice and coaching from personnel specialists on how to perform HR activities (Hope-Hailey et al, 1997; Hall & Torrington, 1998; McGovern, 1999; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). However, some HR managers are not able to provide FLMs with the support they need, or are reluctant to abandon their HR responsibilities and play a new organisational role in supporting FLMs (Gennard & Kelly, 1997; Hall & Torrington, 1998).

### ***2.2.5 Lack of Policy and Procedures***

There is a need for a clear overall HR policy and accompanying procedures to coordinate which practices FLMs should use and the way they should do so at the operational level (Gennard & Kelly, 1997). On the one hand, this is necessary to consult FLMs about the devolution of their responsibilities and prevent that they become unclear about their roles (Lowe, 1992; McGovern, 1999). On the other hand, it is necessary to remove individual judgment and potential bias in – and interpretation of - HR practices by defining the way in which HR activities are performed in practice. If FLMs do not know how to use HR practices, they ‘adjust and fine tune’ the practices according to their idiosyncratic understanding (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

These five factors highlight the possible causes of the difficulties FLMs experience when implementing HRM and could explain their ‘reluctance’. In order to research which of these five factors are salient we will begin by outlining our research design and methods. We will then present our findings, and discuss them. Finally, we will present our conclusions and emphasize those aspects of the case studies that are particularly relevant for future research.

## **2.3 Methods**

### ***2.3.1 Participants***

The research was carried out within four multinational business units (BUs). BU A, which is part of one of the world’s biggest electronics companies, has a product line that includes technologies in cardio/vascular X-ray, ultrasound, magnetic resonance, etc. The complex job tasks in the high-tech working environments require well-educated and trained employees. BU B, which is part of a large international company in the market of foods, home care, and personal care, is an operating BU responsible for the production and

marketing of ice cream and frozen products in the Netherlands. The routine production environment requires fewer complex job tasks and thus less well-educated employees than in BU A. BU C, a unit within a global group of energy and petrochemical companies, is responsible for refinery operations and the distribution of refinery products. Refinery operations require less well-educated employees than BU A, because the job tasks are not as complex as in BU A. However, responsibilities and especially the hazardous nature of the operation need better trained employees than those in BU B. Finally, BU D is a subsidiary of an international technology company. It develops and produces high-quality, lightweight components and systems for the aviation and aerospace industry. Here again we see a technologically advanced working environment, in which well-educated employees are needed to handle complex job tasks.

We selected a total of 30 FLMS with day-to-day supervisory responsibility for teams of about 5 to 15 operational employees and the relevant HR responsibilities in various operational departments of the different BUs. The number of FLMS selected per BU was evenly distributed, resulting in seven to eight FLMS per BU. In addition, we selected four HR staff members who work with operational line managers. For each of the four BUs, we selected one HR staff member. Information about the different units of analysis, as well as sample data, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Unit of Analysis and Sample Data

Variable	BU A	BU B	BU C	BU D
Location	Netherlands	Netherlands	Germany	Netherlands
Number of employees/site	2200	160	1500	825
Number of line managers	200	11	100	80
Sample	7	8	8	7
Average age (s.d.)*	42 (6.9)	40 (8.4)	44 (6.7)	48 (6.5)
Average span/control (s.d.)*	12 (6.0)	9 (5.2)	12 (3.2)	30 (41.1)**
Average years of experience (s.d.)*	7 (5.5)	9 (9.0)	11 (6.9)	15 (10.3)
Average education level	tertiary	sec./vocational	vocational	tertiary
Average education level team	tertiary	secondary	vocational	vocational

\* standard deviation \*\* 1 outlier: span of control of 120 employees - without outlier: 15 (11.1)

### 2.3.2 Procedures

During 2005, we undertook four case studies based on semi-structured interviews with thirty FLMS and four HR staff members (one per BU). On average, each interview lasted between 1 and 1,5 hours.

### 2.3.3 Measures

We aimed, first, to examine whether FLMs indeed experienced the previously identified factors as hindrances, second, to better define the problems these factors actually contain, and third, to explore what FLMs perceive as hindering in performing their HR responsibilities.

To control for the differences between the four BUs and for the personal differences of the interviewees, the variables age, span of control, years of experience as a line manager, education level of the FLM, and education level of the team were taken into consideration (compare Table 1). Hindrances experienced by FLMs are not significantly influenced by the control variables. The variable span of control has a high standard deviation in BU D and could thus be regarded as an outlier. We nevertheless included the results of this FLM as the characteristics with respect to age, years of experience, education level and education level of the team are in line with the average results in all BUs.

We explicitly adhere to the research stream on HRM effectiveness that uses the *perceptions* of the main party involved in the HRM implementation process (cf. Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Huselid et al, 1997; Wright et al, 2001; Kane et al, 1999). Using perceptions gives us the opportunity to investigate how FLMs consider their HR role, which challenges they go through when managing their team, and what experiences they have with executing HR practices. We therefore asked FLMs whether they perceive the factors *desire*, *capacity*, *competences*, *support* and *policy and procedures* as hindering in effectively applying HR practices. The data from the 30 interviews were analysed by dividing each factor into several operationalised sub-items (see Table 2).

Table 2: Operationalisation of Questionnaire

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Item measured</b>	<b>Sub-items</b>	<b>Operationalisation</b>
<b>Desire</b>	Personal unwillingness to perform HR activities	Personal incentives	Value added of HR role for reaching business goals Enjoyment in carrying out HR responsibilities
		Institutional incentives	Job description Performance appraisal Business policy
		Managerial short-termism	Priority for people or business issues
<b>Capacity</b>	Insufficient time for performing HR activities	Actual time spent	Average actual time spent on performing HR activities
		Necessary time spent	Average necessary time spent on performing HR activities
<b>Competences</b>	Insufficient HR knowledge/skills	Training courses	Value Sufficiency

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		attended Experience	Value Sufficiency
<b>Support</b>	Insufficient support from the HR department	Needed support Received support	Kind and amount of support needed Kind and amount of support received
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	Unclear policies and procedures	Role unclarity  Idiosyncratic understanding	Knowledge about HR responsibilities Concreteness of HR instruments Guidelines for HR activities Standardisation/formalisation of HR activity performance in different departments

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The answers given by the interviewees were transformed into results by counting the perceived hindrances per factor at the item level. To measure the *desire* factor, the FLMs' personal unwillingness to perform HR activities was measured with the *personal and institutional incentives* items, as well as *managerial short-termism*. For the *capacity* factor, we measured insufficient time for performing HR activities by comparing the *actual and necessary time spent* on performing these activities. Insufficient HR knowledge or skills was observed for measuring the *competences* factor. This item is based on the *training courses followed* and *experience* sub-items. The *support* factor was examined by measuring insufficient support from the HR department, taking the difference between *needed support* and *received support* into consideration. For the *policy and procedures* factor *role unclarity* and *idiosyncratic understanding* were used as sub-items to see if policies and procedures are perceived as unclear. In addition to inquiring about the five factors already identified in the research, we asked the respondents if they experienced any other hindering factors to explore the possibility that additional factors should be added. This proved not to be the case. In order to get an indication of the most salient factor for FLMs, we asked the respondents to identify the factor that they experienced as being most hindering and thus the factor that they would change if they could.

## 2.4 Results

### 2.4.1 FLMs' HR Responsibilities

Of the HR practices we investigated, line managers in the four BUs are responsible for applying appraisal and training and development activities. In BU B, a formal appraisal system had not yet been introduced, but FLMs will be responsible for assessing employees'

performance as soon as the system is in place. In the areas of staffing and compensation, the line manager shares his responsibility with the HR department. FLMs are responsible for daily staffing decisions, such as work distribution among employees, and administrative tasks, such as time registration and holiday planning. Recruiting and selecting new employees are tasks that are often handled by the HR department, although line managers are sometimes involved in selection decisions. Compensation decisions were only indirectly influenced by the FLM's appraisal assessment. The application of compensation activities, however, was performed exclusively by the HR department or by outsourced parts of the companies. The kind of people management responsibilities that are included in the HR role of FLMs depends on what the FLMs themselves perceived as necessary. This part of their role was less structured and formalised. However, FLMs perceived it as a very important part of their HR role, investing more time in these tasks than in the execution of centrally developed HR practices. Most FLMs invest a lot of their time in guiding, monitoring, coaching and motivating employees, sometimes in the context of regular, structured bilaterals and sometimes in less structured contexts, whenever they deemed it necessary.

**2.4.2 Challenges Identified**

We analysed the results quantitatively in order to be able to establish which factors are relevant in what way and under what conditions. When looking at an average of the five factors across the four case studies, no factor is perceived as hindering by more than 1/3 of all interviewees (compare Figure 2). In total, four of the five factors are identified as being obstacles for effective HRM implementation. The overall result illustrates that the *capacity*, *competences*, *support* and *policies and procedures* factors are considered to be hindering to nearly the same extent.

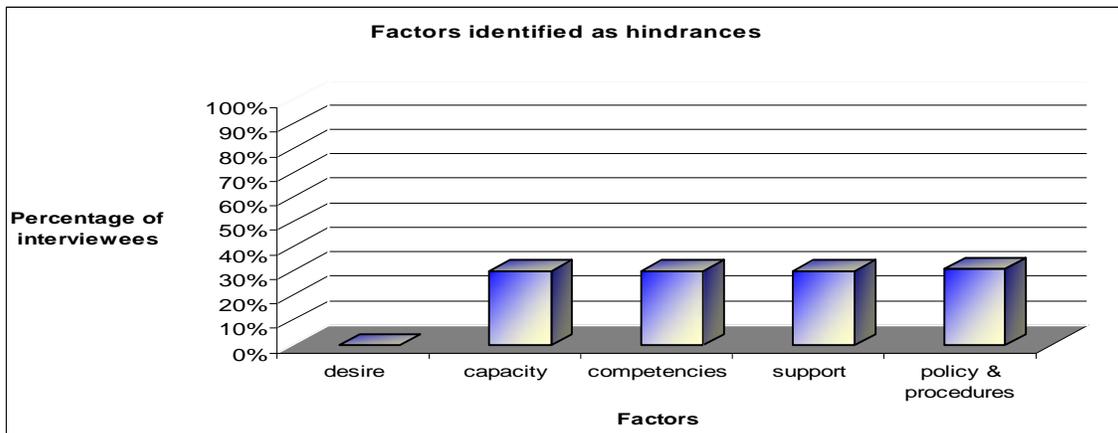


Figure 2: Factors Identified as Hindrances

Although 4 of the 5 factors identified by previous research are found to hinder line managers in our sample of the first hierarchical level, their relevance clearly differs per company studied. Some factors are very relevant in some BUs, whereas they appear less relevant in others (compare figure 3). Many differences are apparent regarding the *policy and procedures*, *competences* and *support* factors, whereas all FLMs interviewed experience nearly the same challenges with the *desire* and *capacity* factors. These differences will be further elaborated in the discussion.

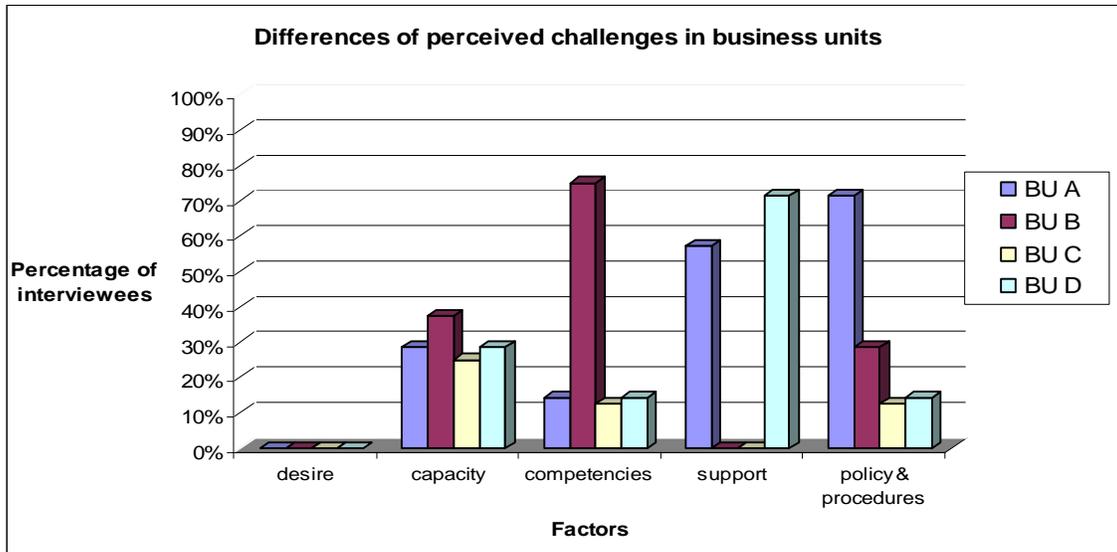


Figure 3: Differences of Perceived Challenges per BU

#### 2.4.2.1 Desire

Not one of the 30 FLMs we interviewed shows reluctance to perform HR activities. All FLMs perceive sufficient personal and institutional incentives to commit to their HR responsibilities and are willing to do so. All FLMs either see an added value in applying HR practices or like this aspect of their responsibilities. However, the reasons for FLMs' personal motivation are different. In general, HR practices are regarded as a valuable tool for helping individual employees grow, improve and develop, as well as for motivating and leading the team. Some respondents also state that HR practices are valuable tools to get “the right person with the right skills in the right place”, that they represent a structure or framework for fulfilling HR responsibilities and symbolise uniformity in the instruments within the company.

Regarding institutional incentives, we found that the general HR role of FLMs is included in most job descriptions, performance appraisals and business policies. All FLMs from BU C and more than half of those from BU D state that their HR role is written down in

the business policy, whereas the majority of FLMs from the other companies state they are not. Much higher is the percentage of FLMs that state their HR role and responsibilities are clearly communicated throughout the whole company.

When asking FLM's about what they would prioritise, it turned out that 83% rank business issues over HR issues because they perceive managerial short-termism. This means that when they need to decide what to do first, most aim at solving technical or business problems before solving people problems. However, for most FLMs, this does not mean that they do not perform HR activities at all but simply that the performance of HR activities will be postponed.

#### *2.4.2.2 Capacity*

Of the 28 FLMs who could indicate how much time they actually spend on HR issues, 14 respondents spend less than 10%, 10 spend between 10 and 20%, and 2 spend between 20 and 40%. However, 2 FLMs indicated that they spend much more time on HR activities, namely between 40 and 50%. When asked whether they perceive the time they spend on HR activities as sufficient to lead their team effectively, 9 of all 30 FLMs said they would prefer to spend more time on HR issues, whereas 17 perceived the time they spend as sufficient and 4 wanted to spend less time in order to concentrate more on business issues. Thus, in total, 9 (30%) of all FLMs interviewed perceive time problems in their HR role. They pointed out that operational pressures prevent them from performing all of the HR activities they are supposed to perform or from spending sufficient time on the individual HR activities. The *capacity* factor is perceived as hindering in all four BUs, but is regarded as challenging by most FLMs in BU C.

#### *2.4.2.3 Competences*

Results show that 9 (30%) of all FLMs interviewed experience a lack of competences to apply HR practices in an effective way. This factor is perceived as most disturbing in BU B. Here, 6 of the 8 FLMs consider their HR competences as insufficient to perform HR activities effectively, whereas only 1 of the FLMs in each of the other BUs experiences this obstacle.

Almost all interviewees indicate that both experience and training are necessary to develop the right competences. Of those FLMs that are hindered by a lack of competences, half point to limited experience as a cause and the other half to insufficient training courses. A lack of experience correlates with a limited number of years of experience in a supervisory job (2 years on average). Those FLMs that refer to a lack of training as a cause primarily

perceive themselves as lacking particular leadership skills, which they think they could develop by attending appropriate training courses. Gaining leadership skills is regarded as helpful for applying HR practices, especially in order to become more secure and make fewer mistakes in the HR role.

#### 2.4.2.4 Support

In total, 9 FLMs (30%) perceive this factor as hindering because they do not receive the support they need. The kind of support needed is, however, different in the different BUs. If a lack of support is perceived as hindering in one BU, this is always perceived by most of the FLMs interviewed in this BU. FLMs in BU C and D require support on *regulatory questions and organisational arrangements*, whereas FLMs in BU B require support on *competency-related matters*, including *advice on how to apply HR practices* and FLMs in BU A require support on *directions about how to apply HR practices*.

Although the kind of support demanded is different, only FLMs in BU A and D receive less support than they require and thus feel hindered by this factor. FLMs in BU A feel a lack of guidance and coaching on how to apply HR practices. In addition, they feel the need to implement HRM in a way that matches with the future plans of the company and guarantees uniformity within the firm. The HR department, however, seems not to be able to deliver this information. FLMs in BU D miss support in organisational arrangements and extra services, such as system registration and badges for new employees. They are hindered by the fact that the HR function does not perform the tasks they perceive it is supposed to perform or that it does so too late.

#### 2.4.2.5 Policy and Procedures

In total, 9 of the 29 FLMs (31%) (1 respondent felt he could not judge the policies and procedures) perceive the *policy and procedures* factor as hindering. All but 1 FLM, who experienced difficulties with this factor, indicated idiosyncratic understandings about how to apply HR practices, whereas 2 respondents indicated hindrances because of unclarity on which HR practices they are supposed to use. This factor is perceived as most challenging in BU A. Here, FLMs miss concrete policies and procedures on how to standardise and formalise the performance of HR activities within their teams.

The causes for the hindrances that are based on an idiosyncratic understanding are all more or less the same. People are bothered by the fact that the instruments they use are not concrete enough or that they are not provided with enough or sufficiently detailed guidelines

on how to execute HR practices on the work floor. If this information is lacking, FLMs feel obliged to interpret the practices according to their own understanding, although they fear that this might lead to inconsistencies across departments. They regard it as problematic when, for example, employees from different departments meet each other at the coffee machine and discover that they are not appraised in the same way their colleagues are appraised. Perceptions of role unclarity emerge because FLMs do not have a handbook on which HR responsibilities they are responsible for and which HR activities they are to perform.

## 2.5 Discussion

Regarding the *desire* factor, it is remarkable that most FLMs did not question the fact that they are the ones responsible for HR issues. Some FLMs even thought their HR role was written down in the business policy, although this was not in fact the case, and some wondered whether anyone else could theoretically be responsible for HR issues, as they themselves are the ones who work most closely with their team. This finding is in line with McGovern (1999), who stated that line and HR managers support the devolution of HR responsibilities to the line, as FLMs have the most knowledge about people.

FLMs are aware of their HR role in all four case companies, irrespective of institutional incentives with which they are provided. Institutional incentives might help to increase their personal incentives but are not necessarily needed to encourage their understanding of what they are supposed to do.

Generally, we were surprised about the results regarding managerial short-termism. Because of short-term pressure, we expected a clear priority for business issues instead of HR issues (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). However, 17% of all FLMs interviewed prioritise HR issues over business issues. In addition, a lot of them also stated that although they prioritise business issues when they need to choose, they would nevertheless always perform HR activities at a later point in time. In addition, they could also think of situations in which they would prioritise HR issues because people issues can affect business issues in the long run. Therefore, short-termism of business issues might result in postponing HR activities but not in cancelling them, as most FLMs perceive the performance of HR activities to be valuable for the business.

*Capacity* is perceived as a problem in all case companies to nearly the same extent. Thus, differences in the BUs cannot explain our findings for this factor. Instead, a lack of capacity seems to depend on the personality of FLMs or, alternatively, to be a general problem identified in all companies at the first-line management level. Some FLMs

compensate for the time problem by preparing for or even performing HR activities during weekends, evenings or breaks. This is another indicator for the fact that our respondents regard HR issues as important and are willing to perform them.

It was clear that those FLMs indicating a lack of training as the reason for a lack of *competences* are more insecure than the FLMs indicating a lack of experience. Inadequately trained people feel really bothered by this factor, whereas the ones who lack experience believe that they will certainly become more competent over time. FLMs who indicate a lack of competences even though they have a lot of experience in their job are only found in one company, i.e. BU B. These FLMs have a lower education level on average than the people that state they lack competences due to a lack of experience.

FLMs get *support* not only from HR managers but also from colleagues, their superior, the works council or even the medical service department. This is a new finding, not mentioned in previous research. Instead of asking HR professionals, FLMs often contact their superior or other FLMs first, and only contact the HR function when support from colleagues is not sufficient or the problem is too complex, making HR contact necessary.

Besides this, FLMs contact different parties for different concerns. They often talk to their colleagues or their superior about problems that their employees encounter or about how to handle certain day-to-day HR difficulties. The HR function is contacted for legal issues or information about specific regulations. It seems that FLMs with a secondary or vocational education, who work in operational areas where the task complexity is low, often ask their superior before contacting the HR function or even ask their superior, if necessary, to contact the HR function. In contrast, FLMs with a tertiary education, who work in operational areas where the task complexity is high, often contact the HR department directly without involving their superior.

A lack in *policies or procedures* will not necessarily lead to obstacles as perceived by FLMs, when they are balanced by support from the HR department. When FLMs know that HR managers will provide them with the answers they need, the success in the execution of HR practices should not be harmed. A number of FLMs admitted that they like the freedom they have in applying HR practices in accordance with their own interpretation and understanding. However, at the same time, a lot of them recognised that differences in application of HR practices might result in different outcomes, which might be negative for the company. Therefore, they asked for policy and procedures in order to standardise the execution of HR practices, thereby ensuring that HRM is implemented in a consistent way. Idiosyncratic understanding, as proposed by Bowen & Ostroff (2004), but also role unclarity

(compare results), as proposed by Lowe (1992), was thus found to be a challenge for the implementation of HRM.

The perception of this factor seems to be related to the BU environment and, even more so, the HR environment in which FLMs perform. Providing FLMs with clear and concrete policies and procedures is an HR decision at a centralised level, but can also be taken care of by local HR in the form of personal guidance.

Figure 3 shows the factors perceived as challenging differ by BU. Only the *capacity* factor is perceived as almost hindering uniformly in the four BUs. The fact that FLMs in different BUs perceive different obstacles in their daily HR work has various causes. What seems to explain the difference between some challenges experienced by FLMs in different BUs is the education level of FLMs and the complexity of tasks at the operational level. The high-tech work environment in BUs A and D, for instance, requires performing complex tasks by well-educated and well-trained staff. In BUs B and C, the task complexity and the educational level of the operational staff is lower because the routine production setting does not require sophisticated training. It is clear that the *support* factor is only experienced as challenging in those BUs that have high task complexity and a highly educated work force, whereas it is perceived as non-challenging in those BUs that have low task complexity and less educated staff. The factors that are perceived as most challenging in BU A, for example, are *policy & procedures* and *support*, whereas the *competences* factor is perceived as least challenging after the *desire* factor. However, in BU B the most worrying factor is *competences*, whereas the *support* factor is not perceived as a hindrance by any of the FLMs interviewed.

The support demanded from the HR function depends on the perceived relevance of support received from HR managers and the interest the HR staff show in operational problems. In the BUs with low task complexity and employee education level, support is given in a different way than in the BUs with high task complexity and employee educational level. FLMs in BU B, for instance, have frequent contact with the HR function and a close relationship between line management and the HR function was indeed apparent. HR managers from this department are valued for the interest they show in problems that occur at the operational level and for their frequent visits to the work floor. With this kind of behaviour of the HR function, it is unsurprising that FLMs do not perceive the *support* factors as challenging. In BU C, the HR function also offers personal support, but FLMs do not use this as frequently as in BU B. The HR function describes itself as quite service-oriented to

line managers, because the HR staff we interviewed said, “supporting line managers, this is what we are there for”. The fact that FLMs do not use this support can be either explained by the fact that line managers in Germany (BU C is located in Germany) need to follow a special line manager training to pass an exam (“Meisterprüfung”), and thus do not need as much support as line managers in the Netherlands who do not follow such training, or by the fact that FLMs in BU C have a close relationship with their superiors who they often ask for support first. In the BUs that can be described as having high task complexity and employee education levels, the service orientation of the HR functions is not as high as in BU B and C, and more educated FLMs seemed to demand more support from the HR functions than their less educated colleagues in the other BUs. In both BUs, FLMs complained about HR managers’ lack of interest in (HR) problems that occur on the work floor and their lack of time and motivation to support them in solving such problems.

However, the perception of some factors seems to be rather BU-related, and thus could not be explained by internal or external differences between the BUs. The *competences* factor, for example, is perceived as challenging by the majority of the interviewed FLMs in BU B, whereas the majority of FLMs in BU C, the BU with a similar job complexity and educational level, perceived it as non-hindering. FLMs in BU A and D, which are comparable regarding their task complexity and education level of staff, perceive the *policy and procedures* factor differently as well. In BU A, they perceive it as the most hindering factor, whereas in BU D they perceive it as one of the least restrictive ones. The training programs for FLMs and the policies and procedures that FLMs obtain in the different BUs are obviously different.

The competences of FLMs are audited differently in the different BUs. In all BUs except BU B, line managers are selected based on a specific test or exam. Then, those FLMs are trained on how to apply HR practices in specially designed training courses in BU C and D. FLMs need to register for all training courses (HR practices related or general coaching or leadership courses) themselves, but the HR function checks for their participation in those courses in BU A and D. BU D is currently developing a line management introduction training program, that contains all courses that line managers are expected to follow. However, in BU B there are no specific training courses for line managers and no specific training on how to apply HR practices. The HR function trains FLMs personally on an ad-hoc basis. The fact that BU B offers fewer specific training courses for line management, does not select line managers based on a clear procedure, and does not audit the training courses followed results in the fact that FLMs perceive their lack of competences as challenging the effective implementation of HRM.

Policies and procedures are handled differently in the four BUs. When we look at the guidelines that line managers are provided with, it is clear that the type of guidelines and the way in which they are communicated differs a lot. In BU A, the BU in which we noted the most *policy and procedure* challenges, information is given on the intranet and HR managers give personal guidelines to departmental managers. They are then supposed to communicate this further to their line managers. However, this does not seem to work well. In BU B, some general guidelines are given on the intranet, but HR managers also explain FLMs orally how to apply HR practices. In BU C, the intranet provides detailed guidelines and, additionally, HR managers hand out information and examples to help improving the application of HR practices. Besides, the used forms also contain some guidelines on how to complete them. In BU D, there are no written guidelines on how to apply HR practices but training courses cover these instructions. In addition, some general guidelines are given on the intranet. The fact that FLMs in BU A are most bothered by the *policy and procedures* factor, shows us that the guidelines given on the intranet are either not detailed enough or FLMs are not aware of their added value. Moreover, the personal guidelines that are given to departmental managers should either be better communicated to FLMs or given directly to them, as is done in BU B.

We found out that the majority of the hindrances that line managers perceived are comparable with what the literature suggested, but that the desire factor was not perceived as hindering, as suggested in the literature. For some factors, more insights than provided by the literature were gained during in the interviews. The perception of these factors as challenges differs for the BUs studied. For some factors, these differences can be explained by the complexity of tasks and educational level of staff in the different BUs, whereas for other factors the differences can be explained by BU-related HR processes such as the training, guidelines given and communicated, and the support provided for line managers.

## **2.6 Conclusion and Limitations**

The four case studies offered valuable insights in FLMs' difficulties in effectively implementing HRM and in the concrete factors that hinder them in performing their HR responsibilities. Many case studies have been carried out with the intention of identifying various factors that might hinder line managers in performing their HR role. We aim, not to identify more factors, but to understand which of these factors are salient for HRM system effectiveness. With the help of our four pilot cases, we built our theoretical framework and prepared our way for asking the right questions in a quantitative investigation. An operationalisation of the factors was possible after getting input from the line managers

themselves and was necessary for the construction of a questionnaire. A quantitative survey would be helpful in exploring what really hinders FLMs in effective HRM implementation and which factors are most salient in different circumstances.

Case study research and, in particular, the use of interviews based on perceptions, present some drawbacks. Asking FLMs about what they perceive as hindering in performing their HR job successfully and which problems they encounter when carrying out HR activities could result in biased answers, because FLMs might not want to admit their weaknesses in leading people. In particular, the response given when asking FLMs about their willingness to perform HR responsibilities and their own HR competences is difficult to judge as we asked them to assess themselves. All factors, except the factor *desire*, can be extrinsically attributed. The responses FLMs give when being asked about their personal incentives for performing their job successfully could also be influenced by social desirability. Asking FLMs about their own competences turned out to be complicated, as FLMs are modest about this. The first answer was either 'you can never have enough competences', 'I can always improve' or 'why don't you go and ask the people in my team about this issue?'. Even the experienced FLMs showed hesitancy in answering this question and showed uncertainty by noting that they can always learn more and improve skills. Using a scale to test the factors *desire* and *competences* seems to be a more appropriate way to measure both the FLMs' willingness to implement HRM and their ability to do so.

Although the qualitative nature of our research shows some limitations, it provided us with a valuable insight into what FLMs perceive when reflecting on their HR role. The results show that FLMs experience obstacles in executing HR practices on the operational work floor. As this could harm the effectiveness of the HRM system, these hindrances need serious attention.

It became clear that some differences between our results and the results from previous research exist and that some factors involve different issues than those previously assumed. In contrast to the case study results reported by McGovern (1999) and Harris et al (2002), we did not find evidence for the factor *desire*. FLMs in the four case companies we investigated are either motivated to perform their HR responsibilities or at least see an added value in applying HR practices in their teams. The factors *capacity*, *competences*, *support* and *policy and procedures* are experienced as challenging by nearly the same percentage of FLMs. However, the average numbers do not illustrate the strong differences between the results of the four case companies. We found that four of the five factors are indeed relevant in explaining HRM implementation success.

It seems to be essential to take company characteristics into account in order to understand the differences in the perceptions of FLMs in the different BUs. A classification of task complexities and FLMs' educational levels necessary to fulfil these tasks seems to be relevant for identifying which factors are salient under which contextual conditions. However, this only helps understanding the perceived differences of some factors. For other factors, it is necessary to look at BU-specific differences in the HRM systems, such as training and development, guidelines and support provided for line managers and the way these processes are communicated. Only then will we be able to determine which factors explain the reluctance of many FLMs to implement HRM in different environments.

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## Chapter 3

# HRM Implementation by Line Managers: Development and Validation of a Research Instrument

A version of this chapter is based on: Nehles, A. C., van Riemsdijk, M. J., & Looise, J. C. (2008). *Assessing the constraints of HR implementation: development and validation of a research instrument*. Paper presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Anaheim, California, USA, August 8-13, 2008.

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to develop an instrument for measuring the constraints perceived by line managers when implementing HR practices. Previous HR research identified challenges in giving HR responsibilities to line managers, but lacked scales to measure them. In response, we have developed such an instrument for what are seen as the five constraining concepts: desire, capacity, competencies, support, and policy & procedures. The constructs for these concepts have been developed on the basis of reliable and validated scales in non-HR literature, adjusted to the HR domain. A multidimensional approach has been chosen and, after collecting data from 471 line managers, the new instrument has been assessed by calculating the reliability and validity of the constructs and dimensions. The measures developed were found to be of good quality for investigating line managers' constraints in implementing HRM.

### 3.1 Introduction

In recent years, scholars have dedicated much attention and energy toward demonstrating a link between human resource management (HRM) and firm performance (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Huselid, 1995; Paauwe, 2009). In trying to establish a link, primarily the relationship between HR practices and HRM (or organisational) effectiveness has been researched (Delery & Doty, 1996; Pfeffer, 1995; Schuler & Jackson, 1987). It has been shown that effective HRM can help an organisation achieve a competitive advantage, and thereby improve its performance (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Lado & Wilson, 1994). The effectiveness of HRM depends on (1) the presence of HR practices and (2) the success of HR implementation (Gratton & Truss, 2003; Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997; Wright, McMahan, Snell, & Gerhart, 2001). While the effectiveness of HR practices has received much attention (Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995), the effectiveness of HR implementation has attracted less. Even if HR practices are properly designed, they need not be effective if line managers are unable to implement them effectively on the work floor. Developing first-class HR practices is only the first step in achieving effective HRM. The manner and context in which line managers apply these practices also play an important role (Wright & Nishii, 2006).

Many researchers today concur that line managers have failed to do justice to their HR role (Hope Hailey, Farndale, & Truss, 2005; Lowe, 1992; McGovern, Gratton, Hope Hailey, Stiles, & Truss, 1997) and state that they are in fact reluctant to accept their HR responsibilities. Francis and Keegan (2006) state that “it might be naïve to assume that line managers have the time, the training or the interest to give employee well-being the kind of priority it deserves” (p. 242). The literature on devolving HR responsibilities suggests that line managers may be unwilling to perform HR activities, have insufficient time to spend on personnel responsibilities, lack the competences to apply HR practices, are not well supported by HR managers, or are not provided with clear policy and procedures for performing the additional HR tasks. However, this research on the implementation of HRM lacks clear and stable measurement instruments. In this paper, we generate items for a multidimensional instrument to measure the HR implementation constraints of line managers. The theoretically grounded but empirically validated measurement instrument helps us in measuring the reluctance of line management to perform their allotted HR tasks.

The paper is structured as follows. Firstly, the measurement of HR implementation in literature so far will be reviewed. Secondly, we will identify theoretically grounded constructs for the implementation of HR practices by line management. Subsequently, we will show how

these constructs are defined, and how they are developed. Once the items are developed, we focus on their psychometric qualities. Finally, we discuss the new measurement instrument and offer suggestions for its application in future research.

### **3.2 Measuring HR Implementation**

Although many constraints on the effective implementation of HRM have been identified in the literature (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Lowe, 1992), the research emphasis to date has largely been on the consequences for the role and position of the HR department rather than those of line management. One can distinguish two different research streams. The first group of studies investigates the *effectiveness of HR* (Chang, 2005; Kane, Crawford, & Grant, 1999; Mitsuhashi, Park, Wright, & Chua, 2000; Wright, McMahan, Snell, & Gerhart, 2001). They ask various stakeholders of the HR department to evaluate the effectiveness of HR, taking into consideration the effectiveness of HR practices and the contribution made by HR professionals. Line managers are usually treated as stakeholders, and these studies show that line managers and HR managers have different perceptions of the effectiveness of HR. HR professionals are generally more positive about the effectiveness of HR roles, HR services and HR contributions than are line managers (Mitsuhashi et al., 2000; Wright et al., 2001). Also the HR roles are considered as differently important to HR professionals and line managers. Whereas HR professionals evaluate the employee champion role (development of employees) as most important for HRM effectiveness, line managers see the need for an effective administrative expert role (adequate personnel administration and information about personnel costs) before attaching value to other roles (Biemans, 1999; Buyens & de Vos, 2001). However, such studies ignore the fact that HRM effectiveness is not only influenced by the way HR professionals perform their work, but also by the way line managers implement HR practices on the work floor, and thus contribute to its effectiveness. Thus, when investigating the effectiveness of HR, these studies overlook the role of the line in implementing HRM.

The second group can be referred to as the *devolution stream* (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris, Doughty, & Kirk, 2002; McGovern, 1999; Renwick, 2000; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). This set of literature describes the constraints in devolving HR practices to the line, from HR, line, trade union and/or employee perspectives. Commonly, the following participants are included: (1) HR professionals (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Torrington & Hall, 1996), (2) HR professionals and line managers (at various

hierarchical levels) (Bond & Wise, 2003; Currie & Procter, 2001; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006; Poole & Jenkins, 1997; Renwick, 2000), or (3) HR professionals, line managers (at various levels), union representatives, and employees (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Harris et al., 2002; McGovern et al., 1997; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Few studies concentrate on line managers as implementers of HRM and the hindrances they experience with their new HR responsibilities (Harris, 2001; McConville, 2006; McConville & Holden, 1999; Renwick, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Both research streams do include line managers as research participants, but do not focus on their implementation of HR practices or the constraints they experience in executing HR practices on the work floor.

The devolution literature identifies a number of constraints in devolving HR responsibilities to the line such as: “the capability and willingness of line managers to devote time to deal with HR issues properly” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 223), the fact that short-term operational pressures tend to dominate (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; McGovern et al., 1997), line managers’ lack of specialist knowledge and skills (Harris et al., 2002; Lowe, 1992), their insufficient competence in HR skills (Harris et al., 2002; Renwick, 2000), and their limited knowledge of company policies and procedures (Bond & Wise, 2003). Most of this research is based on case studies and, as such, it uncovers ever more factors that potentially hinder line managers in implementing HR practices. However, since these are individual case studies, they do not combine the various factors identified into one coherent model that simultaneously tests the relevance of all factors. While this research generates useful insights into the constraints when devolving HR responsibilities to line managers, it lacks a theoretically grounded and empirically validated measurement instrument. To date, no constructs have been developed in the HR literature to measure line managers’ constraints in executing HR practices. Accordingly, our aim in this paper is to develop reliable scales that measure the constraints on effective HR implementation by line managers on the individual level.

To summarise, the case study nature of the existing devolution research coupled with the lack of HR constructs highlights the need for a validated measurement instrument. Our intention is to develop such an instrument that will empirically measure the constraints identified on effective HR implementation by line managers.

### **3.3 HR Implementation Constraints**

To date, the numerous case studies in the devolution literature have identified the following possible explanations for line managers’ reluctance to implement HR practices.

(1) Willingness among line managers is an essential precondition for successful HRM implementation. While some managers are enthusiastic about taking on HR responsibilities, HR professionals are usually more eager to devolve HR tasks to the line than line managers are to accept them. Often, a marked reluctance among line managers to take on new responsibilities is reported (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006). The HR literature shows that a low level of desire can result from a lack of motivation or willingness to spend time on HR tasks (Harris et al., 2002). Motivation can be created, either in the form of personal incentives (Harris et al., 2002; McGovern, 1999) or institutionalized incentives (McGovern, 1999; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). McGovern's research (1999) shows that the personal motivation of line managers is more important than institutional incentives in becoming involved in HR issues.

(2) Line managers have to find the time if they are to implement HRM successfully. HR tasks are generally devolved to them without any reduction in their other duties (Brewster & Larsen, 2000). Through restructuring, line managers often also gain a wider span of control, resulting in more staff reporting to them (McGovern et al., 1997). The implication is that line managers might become overloaded if they are given HR responsibilities alongside their responsibilities for operational performance (Hope-Hailey et al., 2005). A role overload might result in line managers not being able to devote sufficient time to their HR responsibilities (Harris et al., 2002), or giving them a low priority when there are short-term operational pressures (Gratton, Hope-Hailey, Stiles, & Truss, 1999; Renwick, 2000). We therefore can expect some line managers to face a role overload, resulting from excessive demands on their time and energy supply of both HR and operational performance.

(3) There is a need for HR-related competences for a successful HRM implementation. Line managers often lack specialist knowledge and skills, for example on legal requirements and agreed practices (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Lowe, 1992). If they perceive such a lack of competency in performing HR tasks, the implementation of such tasks might suffer either through insufficient knowledge and skills or through a lack of confidence in their own ability to perform as a leader. Competences in performing HR activities can be developed through training and experience. Some authors have shown a need for continual and systematic training in HR activities (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; McGovern, 1999; Renwick, 2000).

(4) Line managers usually feel a need for support from HR professionals. The literature shows that line managers need content-related advice and coaching from personnel specialists on how to perform HR activities (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Hope-Hailey et al., 1997). However, some HR professionals do not provide line managers with the services they need,

because they do not have time to help line managers, are not available when needed, are not able to provide reliable and accurate information, or are reluctant to abandon their HR responsibilities and adopt a consulting role in supporting line managers (Gennard & Kelly, 1997; Hall & Torrington, 1998).

(5) Line managers experience the need for a clear overall HR policy and accompanying procedures for on the one hand coordinating *which* HR responsibilities they have been given and the HR practices they are to use, and on the other hand advice on *how* they should use them effectively (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Gennard & Kelly, 1997; Hall & Torrington, 1998). If line managers are unsure about their responsibilities and HR duties, it becomes necessary for HR to consult line managers concerning their authority and responsibilities regarding HR tasks (Lowe, 1992; McGovern et al., 1997). In terms of the *how* question, HR professionals should remove individual judgment and potential bias in the use and interpretation of HR practices (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Harris et al., 2002) by clearly defining the way in which HR activities should be performed in practice. If line managers do not understand how to use HR practices on the work floor, they ‘adjust and fine tune’ them according to their own idiosyncratic understandings (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Some researchers have proposed tools to help line managers in executing HR practices, such as frameworks, handbooks, guidelines, and toolkits (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris et al., 2002; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003).

### **3.4 Operationalisation of Concepts**

The characterization of the constraints perceived by line managers in implementing HR practices, as described above, will be developed into empirical scales. We will achieve this by first operationalising line managers’ constraints as methodological concepts and constructs and, second, by identifying and defining unambiguous items for the concepts with which to develop a sound measurement instrument.

The *desire* of line managers to execute HR tasks on the work floor is conceptualized as their personal motivation plus any institutional incentives they receive to perform these tasks (McGovern et al., 1997). We operationalise this concept with the help of the self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (1985). It is assumed that line managers are personally motivated to perform HR tasks when (1) they regard these activities as inherently interesting or enjoyable (intrinsic motivation) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) or (2) when they perceive an added value in devoting time to HR tasks because this will benefit them or their employees in the future. When line managers perform their HR role because of institutional incentives,

they are institutionally or extrinsically motivated to perform HR activities. Such line managers engage with their HR role because it leads to a separable outcome or an instrumental value (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and because their “goals of action extend beyond those inherent in the activity itself” (Guay, Vallerand, & Blanchard, 2000, p. 177).

We use the Situational Motivation Scale (SIMS; Guay et al., 2000) to measure line managers’ personal motivation and institutional incentives because this scale measures both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The SIMS is a reduced version of the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand et al., 1989) which was created to assess students’ contextual motivation towards education activities on the basis of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to this theory, human behaviour is governed by three distinct types of motivation which can all be evaluated on a continuum from high to low levels of self-determination: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. Extrinsic motivation is subdivided into identified regulation and external regulation for more detail). In order to measure the second component of personal motivation, namely added value, items covering the perceived added value of performing HR practices were added to the instrument. These items were based on results from a pilot case study we executed that involved interviewing 30 first-line managers about their involvement in HR practices. The added value items were developed on the basis of the answers we received to the question “why do you perform HR activities?”.

In order to measure line managers’ role overload with both HR and business responsibilities, we used items on role overload taken from the housewife scale (Reilly, 1982) to measure the concept of *capacity*. When line managers perceive a role overload, they are probably unable to devote sufficient time to their HR responsibilities and thus face capacity problems. Reilly (1982) defines role overload as “a type of role conflict that results from excessive demands on the time and energy supply of an individual” (p. 407). In this scale, a housewife’s role overload is defined as a conflict that occurs because the sheer volume of demanded behaviour exceeds her available time and energy. We argue that line managers may face a similar kind of role overload conflict, albeit with different conflicting demands, i.e. operational performance versus HR tasks. We selected this scale because the definition of role overload is in line with our understanding of a line manager’s role overload and because it has been found to be extremely reliable (original Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.88).

We modified the wording of this scale to better reflect the time demands on line managers. The items were thus reformulated to assess the role overload of line managers in performing HR activities. For example, the original item “I just can’t find the energy in me to

do all the things expected of me.” was reformulated as “I just can’t find the energy in me to perform all the HR activities expected of me”. The original role overload scale included thirteen items, of which we used seven that seemed relevant to our context.

To test the perceived *competences* of line managers to perform their HR role effectively, we use the occupational self-efficacy scale of Schyns and van Collani (2002). The concept of self-efficacy was originally developed by Bandura in 1977, and has since been adapted by various authors to suit a range of domains. Bandura defined self-efficacy as “the conviction that one can successfully execute a given behaviour required to produce certain outcomes” (Bandura, 1977a, p.193). Schyns and van Collani (2002) developed the occupational self-efficacy scale in order to produce a more general scale related to self-efficacy in the occupational domain. We adopted this scale because we wanted to measure the occupational competencies of line managers to perform HR tasks in terms of their own perceptions of their competencies. The items were reformulated to address line managers performing an HR role and their self-efficacy in handling HR activities. As such, we changed the expression “in my job” to “in performing my HR role”. We also developed two additional items on the importance and sufficiency of training courses followed, and two items on the importance and sufficiency of line managers’ own experience in supervisory functions, since training and experience are expected to have an influence on competencies. We labelled this construct *training & experience*.

The concept of *support* should measure the perceived effectiveness of the support that line managers receive from HR professionals. As we showed earlier, line managers are frequently dissatisfied with the HR services that HR managers deliver: because the services do not come on time, HR managers are not available, they provide incorrect information, or they do not see themselves as responsible for advising line managers. The effectiveness of the support that line managers receive is operationalised as the quality of HR services. Service quality is commonly measured using the SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988). In this scale, service quality reflects the customer’s overall perception of the service provided, and “stems from a comparison of their expectations or desires from the service provider with their perceptions of the actual service performance” (Parasuraman et al., 1988, p.5). These authors identified five constructs for service quality: (1) tangibles, (2) reliability, (3) responsiveness, (4) empathy, and (5) assurance. We adopted four of these five constructs. We excluded *tangibles* since this is defined as “physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel” (Parasuraman et al., 1988, p.6) and is, in our opinion, not applicable to the services delivered by HR professionals, but rather to the

services provided for products. Further, we applied the SERVQUAL scale to services delivered to *internal* customers (line managers) rather than to *external* customers as in the original scale. Fortunately, these scales had already been reformulated for the services supplied by HR professionals and translated into Dutch by Biemans (1999). Thus, we were able to use these reformulated items since we were also investigating the services supplied by HR professionals rather than by service personnel.

For the concept of *policy & procedures*, we used a role conflict and role ambiguity scale plus a scale to measure the user friendliness of provided HR forms. In the previous section, we discussed how line managers were not always clear as to which HR responsibilities and authorities they had. The issue of responsibility and authority will be measured using the role ambiguity and role conflict scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). Role ambiguity is a concept that is dealt with in both classical organisation theory and role theory, and a person that feels role ambiguity is seen as not having a “specified set of tasks or position responsibilities, no specification of duties or formal definition of role requirements” (Rizzo et al., 1970, p. 151). Role conflict occurs when the ‘chain of command’ (hierarchical relationships, flow of authority) or the ‘unity of command’ (orders from one supervisor only; compatible orders and expectations) is not obvious (Rizzo et al., 1970). We chose these two scales because authors such as Lowe (1992) and McGovern (1999) suggest that line managers are not clear about their responsibilities and authority, and thus are unclear about their HR role. The items were reformulated for our study to address performing the HR role of line managers.

In addition to their unclear responsibilities, line managers are also uncertain about how to use HR practices effectively (Harris et al., 2002). If HR policies and procedures are not clear and detailed, line managers start interpreting HR practices according to their own understandings. Guidelines, frameworks, and examples can help minimize these uncertainties. We measured this phenomenon using the dimension *user friendliness of HR forms*. Based on our qualitative pilot study, we developed items to measure the usefulness and clarity of provided HR forms, instruments, and guidelines. Five items are used to measure how clear and understandable HR forms, instruments, and guidelines are, and whether they are sufficiently concrete to be used in practice.

### **3.5 Research Methodology**

Two types of validity are commonly distinguished: content and construct validities (Creswell, 2003). Content validity refers to the adequacy with which a measure reflects the

domain of interest, and assesses whether items measure the content they were intended to measure. Construct validity concerns the way a measure relates to other variables within a system of theoretical relationships (Babbie, 1990).

### ***3.5.1 Development of the Questionnaire***

In developing the measurement instrument, we tried to rely on existing scales from various research fields that had been found to be reliable. As we intended to use scales taken from other contexts involving other research topics, we needed to retest their reliability and validity in the new domain. Where we could not find an appropriate scale, we developed one ourselves by carefully following the scale development guidelines provided by Hinkin (1995) and Babbie (1990). The item and scale development process has three steps: (1) item generation, based on content validity; (2) scale development, showing the design of the developmental study, the construction of the scales, and the assessment of reliability (construct validity and internal consistency); and (3) scale evaluation, evaluating the scales based on psychometric quality (convergent and discriminant validity).

#### ***3.5.1.1 Item Generation***

When developing items, one tries to build content validity into the measure. In order to use items that should have a good content validity, we have, wherever possible, used scales that are regarded as reliable in the literature. These items have been carefully created and their reliability and validity has been tested in a specific research field.

We used the following pretested items (see Table 1): (1) the SIMS instrument developed by Guay et al. (2000) for the concept of *desire*; (2) role overload taken from the housewife scale developed by Reilly (1982) for the concept of *capacity*; (3) the occupational self-efficacy scale of Schyns and van Collani (2002) for the concept of *competencies*; (4) the SERVQUAL scale on service quality developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) for the *support* concept; and (5) the role conflict and role ambiguity scale developed by Rizzo et al. (1970) for the concept of *policy & procedures*. All these items were reformulated to fit the situation of line managers performing HR tasks.

We had to develop constructs for *value added*, *training & experience*, and *user friendliness of HR forms* ourselves. For this, we used the inductive approach in which items were derived from a pilot case study in which the five-factor structure derived from the literature was pretested with a sample of 30 first-line managers from four organisations. By classifying the answers, we built seven items for the *value added* construct, four for the

*training & experience* construct, and five items for the construct reflecting the user *friendliness of HR forms*. The total number of items used in the instrument is 75.

### 3.5.1.2 Scale Development

The objective of the scale development process is to create measures that demonstrate validity and reliability. According to Hinkin (1995), scale development consists of three stages: (1) design of the development study; (2) scale construction; and (3) reliability assessment. We followed these steps as outlined below.

(1) We included the 75 items in a survey with the items being presented in the order given above for the pretested items used and grouped by factor investigated. For each item, a five-point Likert scale was used to measure response, ranging from 1 (“disagree”) to 5 (“agree”). A breakdown of the items is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Operationalisation of the Research Variables

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Items</b>
<b>Desire</b>	Situational Motivation Scale (SIMS; Guay, Vallerand & Blanchard, 2000)	16
	§ Intrinsic motivation	4
	§ Identified regulation	4
	§ External regulation	4
	§ Amotivation (R)	4
	Value added of performing HR activities (developed on the basis of the pilot case study performed)	7
<b>Capacity</b>	Role overload (Reilly, 1982) (R)	7
<b>Competences</b>	Occupational self-efficacy (Schyns & van Collani, 2002)	6
	Training & experience	4
<b>Support</b>	Service aspects of the HR function (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Biemans, 1999)	18
	§ Reliability	5
	§ Responsiveness	4
	§ Assurance	4
	§ Empathy	5
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	Role conflict (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970) (R)	9
	Role ambiguity (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970) (R)	9
	User friendliness of HR forms (developed on the basis of the pilot case study performed)	5

Note: (R)= reverse coding

(2) In order to reveal the structure of the factor model, a confirmatory factor analysis was completed to test alternative hypotheses regarding the content domains of an instrument. In using confirmatory factor analysis, one imposes a measurement model on the data and evaluates how well this model highlights the theoretical relationships between the items

(Bryant, 2002). Using the data provided by 471 respondents, we thus examined how closely the data gathered from line managers' responses to the 75 items were consistent with the 5 concepts adopted and the 15 latent factor model of HR implementation by line management. Based on these findings, the model was refined to improve the fit between the model and the data in terms of internal consistency and discrimination between constructs.

(3) The assessment of reliability is considered part of the testing stage of a newly developed measure or instrument. The most commonly accepted measure is internal consistency reliability, assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The minimum suggested acceptable level for internal consistency is an Alpha of 0.70 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998; Nunnally, 1978). All but one of our scales exhibited good internal consistency based on this criterion.

### ***3.5.2 Sample and Procedure***

As the concepts that are assumed to constrain line managers are based on earlier case study results, we first carried out a pilot case study in order to explore constraints on line managers in performing HR practices. The individual concepts taken from the earlier case studies were included in a five-dimensional model and, thus, it was necessary to assess whether all five of these concepts were recognized by line managers. We used semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of how 30 first-line managers in four organisations in the Netherlands considered their HR responsibilities. The interview framework contained questions reflecting the five concepts, such as "why do you perform HR activities?", "what HR responsibilities do you have?", and "do you enjoy performing HR activities?". From this exercise, valuable insights into the position of line management within an organisation, their HR responsibilities, their opinion about HR instruments, guidelines and procedures, and the challenges they perceive in their HR role were gained. The interviews helped us to pose questions in the later survey that were relevant to line managers in various organisations.

The survey was conducted in six large organisations within the Netherlands. The questionnaire was slightly modified by the HR director of each organisation to better reflect the company language and situation. The time needed to complete the survey was approximately 20 minutes. We either sent the questionnaire by mail to the home addresses of the participants or distributed the questionnaire during an on-site training course for line managers. In all the organisations, our population consisted of all the line managers in all divisions. The total population was 930 line managers.

We used a four-phase administration process, as suggested by Salant and Dillman (1994). In the first phase, a short advance notice was sent by e-mail to the population. The second mailing was the actual survey, accompanied by a signed letter to the respondents. This mailing was sent one week after the advance notice. Phases 2 and 3 were supposed to be reminders sent to non-respondents. Instead, we sent a reminder e-mail to the whole population after one, two, and three weeks after the survey had been distributed, since we could not distinguish between respondents and non-respondents given the anonymous nature of our survey. Line managers were given three weeks to complete the survey. In total, we achieved a sample of 480 line managers in the six organisations, representing an overall response rate of 52 percent. After rejecting a few incomplete responses, we had a usable sample of 471 respondents. Table 2 gives more information about the survey responses.

Table 2: Survey Response Data

	<b>O1</b>	<b>O2</b>	<b>O3</b>	<b>O4</b>	<b>O5</b>	<b>O6</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Population</b>	105	149	161	60	213	242	930
<b>Sample</b>	66	108	55	46	108	88	471
<b>Response rate</b>	68%	73%	34%	82%	51%	36%	51%
<b>Average age</b>	42.98	46.76	46.17	41.95	51.58	46.79	45.58

### 3.6 Results

#### 3.6.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Prior to entering the items into a confirmatory factor analysis, we carried out an exploratory factor analysis in order to preselect those items that did not load sufficiently well into the five-factor model. The extraction method used in the exploratory factor analysis was a principal axis analysis with varimax rotation. Factors were retained if their eigenvalues were greater than one. We deleted items if they loaded equally heavily onto more than one factor (cross loadings above 0.40), or when their loadings were below 0.40. This exploratory factor analysis reduced the total number of items from 75 to 60.

The confirmatory factor analysis is used to hypothesize the precise structure of the factor model based on some underlying theory. We performed the confirmatory factor analysis for our proposed model using the same sample as in the exploratory factor analysis, using LISREL 8.3. We used the measurement model to specify how hypothetical constructs depend upon the observed variables. A factor analysis is often used in data reduction to identify a small number of factors that explain most of the variance observed in a much larger number of manifest variables (Hinkin, 1995).

In evaluating the models tested, we used RMSEA and Type-3 incremental fit indexes, such as the Bentler comparative fit index (CFI), as well as Type-3 absolute fit indexes, such as the goodness of fit index (GFI) and the adjusted goodness of fit test (AGFI), as these tests are less sensitive than many to sample size (Hu & Bentler, 1995). According to Cudeck and Browne (1993), RMSEA values below or equal to .08 indicate an acceptable fit. The modification indices can provide good indications of how to improve a model by removing those items that load highly onto non-hypothesized factors or refining items such that they load onto various factors. However, as one of our aims was to reduce the number of items in our instrument, we rejected items that loaded too heavily onto more than one construct.

### 3.6.2 Refinement of Factor Structures and Scales

With the *desire* concept, we deleted the *external regulation* construct because a four-factor model for *desire* had a much higher goodness of fit index, and because the initial value of Cronbach's Alpha was lower than 0.70. The model with the best goodness of fit for the *support* concept was a two-factor model, rather than the hypothesized four-factor model based on the four constructs of *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *assurance*, and *empathy* developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988). Factor 1 is labelled *HR support services* and contains three items from the original constructs of *reliability* and *responsiveness*. The second factor represents *HR support behaviour* and is measured by four items from the *responsiveness*, *assurance*, and *empathy* constructs. For all the other concepts, the theoretical factor structure produced good fit indices once certain items had been removed. The complete exploratory factor analysis of the dimensions can be seen in Tables 3 to 7. The final items and their coefficient indices are presented in Table 8.

Table 3: Factor Analysis for the Desire Dimension

<b>Factor analysis dimension desire</b>						
<b>(<math>\alpha=.78</math>)</b>						
Items	Factor					CFA
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Intrinsic motivation</b> (Cronbach's alpha)		(.84)				(.78)
Because I think that this activity is interesting	0.06	<b>0.55</b>	0.07	-0.01	0.23	
Because I think that this activity is pleasant	0.13	<b>0.76</b>	0.27	0.05	0.15	<b>x</b>
Because this activity is fun	0.22	<b>0.87</b>	0.15	0.02	0.02	
Because I feel good when doing this activity	0.24	<b>0.71</b>	0.11	0.03	0.21	
<b>Identified regulation</b> (Cronbach's						(.73) (.73)

alpha)					
Because I am doing it for my own good	0.08	0.13	-0.02	0.19	<b>0.53</b>
Because I think that this activity is good for me	0.12	0.37	0.05	0.05	<b>0.68</b>
Because I believe that this activity is important for me	0.23	0.32	0.05	0.04	<b>0.65</b>
<b>External regulation</b> (Cronbach's alpha)				(.68)	<b>x</b>
Because I am supposed to do it	-0.01	0.07	-0.01	<b>0.66</b>	0.01
Because it is something that I have to do	0.06	-0.08	-0.09	<b>0.74</b>	0.05
Because I feel that I have to do it	-0.02	0.01	-0.19	<b>0.55</b>	0.21
<b>Amotivation</b> (Cronbach's alpha)			(.80)		(.75)
There may be good reasons to do this activity. but personally I don't see any	0.27	0.06	<b>0.65</b>	-0.13	0.00 <b>x</b>
I do this activity but I am not sure if it is worth it	0.21	0.11	<b>0.64</b>	-0.05	0.06
I don't know; I don't see what this activity brings me	0.28	0.10	<b>0.68</b>	-0.06	0.01
I do this activity. but I am not sure it is a good thing to pursue it	0.18	0.10	<b>0.64</b>	-0.05	0.00
<b>Value added</b> (Cronbach's alpha)	(.93)				(.85)
Because it helps the people in my team to grow. improve and develop themselves	<b>0.67</b>	0.12	0.27	0.03	0.09
Because it helps me to supervise my team	<b>0.77</b>	0.13	0.36	0.00	0.13
Because it helps me to get the right people with the right skills in the right place	<b>0.79</b>	0.14	0.24	-0.01	0.09 <b>x</b>
Because it helps me to reach my production goals	<b>0.68</b>	0.14	0.16	-0.03	0.16
Because it creates a good work atmosphere	<b>0.76</b>	0.20	0.19	0.01	0.07 <b>x</b>
Because it helps me to treat employees in a fair and consistent way	<b>0.78</b>	0.11	0.15	0.01	0.07
Because it helps me to motivate people in my team	<b>0.84</b>	0.16	0.15	-0.02	0.05 <b>x</b>
Eigenvalues	7.28	2.84	2.17	1.44	1.13
Explained variance	31.66	44.01	53.45	59.70	64.61

Table 4: Factor Analysis for Capacity Dimension

<b>Factor analysis dimension capacity (<math>\alpha=.84</math>)</b>		
Items	Factor	CFA
<b>Role overload</b> (Cronbach's alpha)	(0.88)	(0.84)
I have to perform HR responsibilities which I don't really have the time	0.65	<b>x</b>

and energy for.		
I need more hours in the day to perform all the HR responsibilities which are expected of me.	0.80	<b>x</b>
I can't ever seem to get caught up with performing my HR responsibilities.	0.79	
Sometimes I feel as if there are not enough hours in the day.	0.62	
Many times I have to cancel my commitments to my HR responsibilities.	0.71	
I find myself having to prepare priority lists to get done all the HR responsibilities I have to do. Otherwise, I forget because I have so much to do.	0.69	
I feel I have to perform HR responsibilities hastily and maybe less carefully in order to get everything done.	0.76	
<i>Eigenvalue</i>	4.08	
<i>Explained variance</i>	58.35	

Table 5: Factor Analysis for Competencies Dimension

<b>Factor analysis dimension competencies (<math>\alpha=.</math>(.76)</b>			
Items	Factor		
	1	2	CFA
<b>Occupational self-efficacy</b> (Cronbach's alpha)	(.85)		(.81)
I can remain calm when facing difficulties in performing my HR responsibilities because I can rely on my abilities.*	<b>0.73</b>	0.09	
When I am confronted with a problem in performing my HR responsibilities. I can usually find several solutions.	<b>0.61</b>	0.03	
Whatever comes my way in performing my HR responsibilities. I can usually handle it.	<b>0.74</b>	0.09	
My past experiences in my job have prepared me well for performing my HR responsibilities.	<b>0.66</b>	0.19	
I meet the goals I set for myself in performing my HR responsibilities.	<b>0.61</b>	0.12	
I feel prepared for most of the demand in performing my HR responsibilities.	<b>0.78</b>	0.18	<b>x</b>
<b>Training</b> (Cronbach's alpha)		(.77)	(.77)
The courses I followed were relevant for performing my HR responsibilities.	0.05	<b>0.77</b>	
The course offerings were sufficient for performing my HR responsibilities.	0.20	<b>0.78</b>	
<i>Eigenvalue</i>	4.63	1.49	
<i>Explained variance</i>	46.31	61.22	

Table 6: Factor Analysis for Support Dimension

<b>Factor analysis dimension support (<math>\alpha</math> .87)</b>			
Items	Factor		
	1	2	CFA
<b>HR support services</b> (Cronbach's alpha)		(.85)	(.77)
When the HR department promises to do something in a certain time frame. then it does happen.	0.32	<b>0.80</b>	

The HR department delivers services at the time it promises to.	0.31	<b>0.84</b>	x
The HR department insists on administering data without mistakes.	0.38	<b>0.55</b>	
The employees working in the HR department inform me about the time specific services need to be ready.	0.30	<b>0.61</b>	
<b>HR support behaviour</b> (Cronbach's alpha)	(.89)		(.84)
The HR managers are always willing to help.	<b>0.68</b>	0.36	
The HR managers are never too busy to help me when I ask them to.	<b>0.44</b>	0.40	x
The HR managers are polite and interested in me.	<b>0.82</b>	0.26	x
The HR managers have the necessary knowledge to answer my questions.	<b>0.68</b>	0.33	
The HR department gives me individual attention.	<b>0.65</b>	0.35	
The employees working in the HR department give me individual attention.	<b>0.65</b>	0.31	x
The HR department tries to reach the best for me.	<b>0.68</b>	0.31	
<i>Eigenvalue</i>	10.26	1.19	
<i>Explained variance</i>	57.02	63.62	

Table 7: Factor Analysis for Policy &amp; Procedures Dimension

<b>Factor analysis dimension policy &amp; procedures (<math>\alpha=.81</math>)</b>				
Items	Factor			CFA
	1	2	3	
<b>Role conflict</b> (Cronbach's alpha)	(.86)			(.78)
I have to do things that should be done differently in performing my HR responsibilities.	<b>0.58</b>	0.08	0.13	x
I work under incompatible HR policies and HR guidelines.	<b>0.64</b>	0.11	0.20	
I receive an HR assignment without the manpower to complete it.	<b>0.61</b>	0.21	0.15	
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out my HR responsibilities.	<b>0.68</b>	0.13	0.12	
I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently in performing HR responsibilities.	<b>0.63</b>	-0.01	-0.02	
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people regarding my HR responsibilities.	<b>0.69</b>	0.14	0.02	x
I perform HR tasks that are accepted by one person but not by others.	<b>0.63</b>	0.14	0.03	
I receive an HR assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.	<b>0.61</b>	0.19	0.19	x
I work on unnecessary things in performing my HR responsibilities.	<b>0.56</b>	0.03	0.23	x
<b>Role ambiguity</b> (Cronbach's alpha)	(.84)			(.68)
I know how much authority I have.	0.11	<b>0.60</b>	0.05	x
I have concrete, planned goals for my HR responsibilities.	0.00	<b>0.59</b>	0.12	
I lack HR policies and guidelines to help me.	0.31	<b>0.44</b>	0.13	
I know what my HR responsibilities are.	0.12	<b>0.75</b>	0.18	x
I have to feel my way in performing my HR responsibilities.	0.06	<b>0.51</b>	0.06	
I know exactly what is expected of me in performing my HR responsibilities.	0.04	<b>0.80</b>	0.18	x

Explanation is clear of what has to be done in performing my HR responsibilities.	0.27	<b>0.72</b>	0.24
<b>User friendliness of HR forms</b> (Cronbach's alpha)			(.89) (.89)
19. The HR instruments I am provided with are clear and understandable.	0.20	0.15	<b>0.83</b>
20. The HR instruments I am provided with are concrete enough to use them.	0.17	0.20	<b>0.85</b>
21. I find HR instruments easy to use.	0.14	0.15	<b>0.78</b>
<i>Eigenvalue</i>	7.40	2.87	1.96
<i>Explained variance</i>	32.19	44.69	53.21

We were able to optimise our models and achieve high-quality goodness of fit indices (Table 9). However, the process of scale purification, on the basis of the confirmatory factor analysis, reduced the number of items from 60 to 44. Thus, we see that the tested and validated scales taken from non-HR literature did not directly provide good factor structures in the line management context. Completing a confirmatory factor analysis helped us in defining models that were relevant for the situation of line managers applying HR practices at the operational level.

Table 8: Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Factor Loadings per Item, Construct and Concept

	<b>Desire</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Compe- tences</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>
<b>Desire</b>					
Intrinsic motivation1	0.65				
Intrinsic motivation2	0.86				
Intrinsic motivation3	0.88				
Identified regulation1	0.55				
Identified regulation2	0.81				
Identified regulation3	0.81				
Amotivation1	0.76				
Amotivation2	0.84				
Amotivation3	0.76				
Value added1	0.80				
Value added2	0.97				
Value added3	0.76				
Value added4	0.74				
<b>Capacity</b>					
Role overload1		0.68			
Role overload2		0.59			
Role overload3		0.78			
Role overload4		0.63			
Role overload5		0.84			
<b>Competences</b>					
Occup. self-efficacy1			0.85		
Occup. self-efficacy2			0.73		
Occup. self-efficacy3			0.82		

Occup. self-efficacy4	0.73
Occup. self-efficacy5	0.61
Training1	0.64
Training2	1.10
<b>Support</b>	
HR support services1	0.81
HR support services2	0.73
HR support services3	0.75
HR support behaviour1	0.85
HR support behaviour2	0.79
HR support behaviour3	0.79
HR support behaviour4	0.75
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	
Role conflict1	0.78
Role conflict2	0.64
Role conflict3	0.85
Role conflict4	0.62
Role conflict5	0.64
Role ambiguity1	0.53
Role ambiguity2	0.61
Role ambiguity3	0.52
Role ambiguity4	0.88
User friend. of HR forms1	0.90
User friend. of HR forms2	0.93
User friend. of HR forms3	0.82

### 3.6.3 Scale Evaluation

After developing validated and reliable scales, the psychological quality of these constructs can be further assessed by using discriminant and convergent validities. Convergent validity is the degree to which concepts that are related theoretically are indeed related in reality. Discriminant validity is the degree to which concepts that theoretically should *not* be related are, in fact, *unrelated* in reality (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). We can use the correlation matrix to assess convergent and discriminant validities on the basis of our constructs (Table 10) by assessing whether the inter-correlations between constructs that measure the same concept are higher than the inter-correlations between constructs that measure different concepts. Indeed, we found relatively high inter-correlations between constructs reflecting a single concept (0.12 to 0.63) and relatively low inter-correlations between constructs measuring different concepts (0.00 to 0.43).

Table 9: Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Goodness-of-Fit Indices

Goodness of Fit measures	Desire		Capacity		Competencies		Support		Policy & procedures	
	TM	OM	TM	OM	TM	OM	TM	OM	TM	OM
<b>Chi-square value</b>	994.12	190.83	110.99	9.14	130.14	32.35	271.95	24.17	934.65	179.76
<b>DF</b>	179	59	14	5	19	13	43	13	149	51
<b>Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)</b>	0.83	0.94	0.93	0.99	0.94	0.98	0.90	0.99	0.83	0.94
<b>Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)</b>	0.78	0.91	0.86	0.98	0.88	0.96	0.85	0.97	0.78	0.91
<b>RMSEA</b>	0.098	0.069	0.121	0.042	0.112	0.056	0.106	0.043	0.106	0.073
<b>Comparative Fit Index (CFI)</b>	0.88	0.95	0.92	0.99	0.94	0.99	0.93	0.99	0.85	0.95

TM = theoretical model. OM = optimised model

Table 10: Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<b>1. Intrinsic motiv.</b>	3.20	0.88	1.00											
<b>2. Identified regul.</b>	3.06	0.88	0.44**	1.00										
<b>4. Amotivation</b>	4.34	0.76	0.26**	0.12*	1.00									
<b>5. Value added</b>	3.94	0.84	0.35**	0.30**	0.49**	1.00								
<b>6. Role overload</b>	3.08	1.02	-0.12*	-0.06	0.22**	0.12**	1.00							
<b>7. Self efficacy</b>	3.87	0.67	0.34**	0.19**	0.20**	0.28**	0.09*	1.00						
<b>8. Training</b>	3.60	1.04	0.15**	0.08	0.10*	0.23**	0.00	0.28**	1.00					
<b>9. HR support serv.</b>	3.02	0.94	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.02	0.12**	0.17**	0.13*	1.00				
<b>10. HR support beh.</b>	3.55	0.80	0.16**	0.18**	0.18**	0.18**	0.10*	0.23**	0.26**	0.63**	1.00			
<b>11. Role conflict</b>	3.75	0.81	0.09	-0.02	0.37**	0.24**	0.42**	0.13**	0.16**	0.20**	0.28**	1.00		
<b>12. Role ambiguity</b>	3.42	0.73	0.22**	0.09	0.27**	0.20**	0.20**	0.52**	0.26**	0.29**	0.33**	0.32**	1.00	
<b>13. User friend. of HR forms</b>	3.17	0.95	0.20**	0.15**	0.19**	0.15**	0.17**	0.21**	0.19**	0.36**	0.43**	0.31**	0.36**	1.00

\*  $p \leq 0.05$  \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

The discriminant validity of a measure can also be tested by testing for significant differences between groups (Hinkin, 1995). Throughout the analysis, we have assumed that a single factor structure holds for various populations. Since we intend for the scales to be used at various hierarchical line management levels in an organisation, we tested this assumption by comparing lower-level line managers, represented by first-line managers, and higher-level line managers, i.e. those line managers in middle or senior management positions. Various authors have found evidence for significant differences between the managerial work of line managers at lower hierarchical levels and higher hierarchical levels (Blankenship & Miles, 1968; Mintzberg, 1980; Pavett & Lau, 1983). An independent sample t-test shows that the means of both groups do differ significantly for some of the constructs (Table 11).

Table 11: Independent Sample T-test for two Line Management Levels

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Lower-level line managers</b>	<b>Higher-level line managers</b>	<b>T-value</b>
Sample	(n=125)	(n=288)	
<b>Desire</b>			
intrinsic motivation	3.19	3.29	1.05
identified regulation	2.95	3.15	2.19
amotivation	4.34	4.30	-0.58**
value added	4.00	3.86	-1.58**
<b>Capacity</b>			
role overload	3.19	2.96	-2.09**
<b>Competences</b>			
self efficacy	3.65	3.92	3.75
training	3.62	3.58	-0.33
<b>Support</b>			
HR support services	2.83	3.07	2.42
HR support behavior	3.45	3.56	1.26
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>			
role conflict	3.88	3.72	-1.93**
role ambiguity	3.21	3.47	3.33
user friendliness of HR forms	3.15	3.19	0.39

\*  $p \leq 0.10$ . \*\*  $p \leq 0.05$

The instrument should also demonstrate significant differences in line management perceptions across organisations if it is to be useful in discriminating between organisations and in indicating consensus between line managers within organisations. To determine the discriminant validity of the six case companies, multivariate analyses of variance were performed with organisation as the independent variable. Table 12 shows the results of the MANOVA test. There were significant differences between the organisations for all the

constructs except the *user friendliness of HR forms* construct. The F-values (d.f. = 5) ranged from 4.45 for *HR support behaviour* to 20.14 for *role overload*.

Table 12: Multivariate Analyses of Variance with Organisation as the Independent Variable

Constructs	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5	O 6	F-value
Sample	n=66	n=108	n=46	n=108	n=55	n=88	
<b>Desire</b>							
intrinsic mot.	2.97	3.51	2.85	3.35	2.73	3.27	9.74***
identified reg.	3.00	2.82	3.20	3.35	2.87	3.10	4.84***
amotivation	4.28	4.63	4.14	4.35	4.49	4.02	7.78***
value added	3.95	4.14	3.91	4.12	4.19	3.32	14.44***
<b>Capacity</b>							
role overload	3.91	2.81	2.87	3.20	3.43	2.54	20.14***
<b>Competences</b>							
self efficacy	3.67	3.89	3.64	3.77	4.05	4.11	5.74***
training	3.12	3.87	3.91	3.23	3.72	3.73	7.20***
<b>Support</b>							
HR support serv.	3.49	2.84	2.80	2.56	3.19	3.46	15.91***
HR support beh.	3.84	3.46	3.43	3.34	3.68	3.68	4.45***
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>							
role conflict	3.96	3.98	3.71	3.75	3.61	3.39	6.39***
role ambiguity	3.29	3.61	3.22	3.16	3.58	3.59	7.02***
user friend. of HR forms	3.15	3.15	3.13	3.19	3.06	3.26	0.35

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

Intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC) assess the ratio of variation within groups to variation among groups (Bliese, 2000). By assessing the inter-rater reliability within and between the organisations investigated, we can indicate the proportion of the total variance that can be explained by organisational membership (ICC(1)), and the reliability of the group mean (ICC(2)). As Table 13 shows, the ICC(1) values for our constructs are between 0.04 and 0.20 and the ICC(2) values between 0.78 and 0.95. The ICC(1) value of 0.10 for intrinsic motivation indicates that 10 percent of the variability in line managers' ratings of intrinsic motivation is related to the organisation being worked for. The values of both coefficients are within the ranges reported by earlier research: Bliese (2000) suggests ICC(1) values between 0.05 and 0.20 are typical. and ICC(2) values above 0.70 are acceptable. As all our values, except those for the *user friendliness of HR forms* construct, are below 0.20 for ICC(1) and above 0.78 for ICC(2), our values demonstrate excellent inter-rater reliability.

A useful instrument should also be able to discriminate line management perceptions between groups and show consensus within groups in order to demonstrate discriminant

validity. Using groups based on line management hierarchy and organisation, we are able to show that line managers within the same hierarchical level or organisation show greater consensus than line managers spread across line management hierarchies or organisations.

Table 13: Inter-Class Correlation Coefficients

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>ICC(1)</b>	<b>ICC(2)</b>
<b>Desire</b>			
intrinsic motivation	0.78	0.10	0.90
identified regulation	0.73	0.05	0.79
amotivation	0.75	0.08	0.87
value added	0.85	0.15	0.93
<b>Capacity</b>			
role overload	0.84	0.20	0.95
<b>Competences</b>			
self efficacy	0.81	0.06	0.83
training	0.77	0.07	0.86
<b>Support</b>			
HR support services	0.77	0.16	0.94
HR support behaviour	0.84	0.04	0.78
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>			
role conflict	0.78	0.06	0.84
role ambiguity	0.68	0.07	0.86
user friendliness of HR forms	0.89	-0.01	-1.82

The item and scale development process was divided into three parts: (1) item generation, using content validity, (2) scale development, using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to determine construct validity and using reliability assessment, and (3) scale evaluation, using convergent and discriminant validity. Based on these tests we were able to reduce the number of items from 75 to 44 and show that our constructs are reliable and validated.

### 3.7 Discussion

#### 3.7.1 Reflection of Outcomes

Through this paper, we are contributing to the discussion and limited research on the implementation of HR practices on the work floor. We argue that line managers are today often responsible for executing HR practices in the form of selecting, developing, and motivating employees of their team. Although the devolution literature identifies a number of constraints that line managers experience in their HR role, (1) no measures had been established to research the constraints line managers perceive when implementing HR

practices at the operational level, and (2) line managers were never the sole focus in measuring the challenges faced in devolving HR practices to the line even though they were responsible for their implementation on the work floor. In response, we developed a measurement instrument for capturing the implementation of HR practices by line managers and used this instrument with a sample of 471 line managers across six organisations. Using confirmatory factor analyses, we were able to reduce the number of items in the initial instrument. Using psychometric techniques, such as confirmatory factor analysis and convergent and discriminant validity checks, and a reliability assessment, we have demonstrated that the scales are robust and of good quality.

### ***3.7.2 Limitations and Recommendations***

The measurement instrument is subject to some limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, in the present study, mono-method bias is a potential problem since the sole source of data is a survey. However, the pilot case study conducted did support the five-dimensional model of line managers' HR constraints. Second, the five-dimensional model was not cross-validated with an independent sample to evaluate the robustness of the model. An additional sample of at least 100 line management respondents could be used to cross-validate the result. Finally, no criterion-related validity check was used to assess construct validity. In a criterion-related validity check, one tests the performance of the operationalisation against some criterion, which is assumed to be theoretically related to the construct measures. The measure's development does offer some possibilities to test the effect of line management's reluctance to implement HR practices on various organisational outcome measures. In this situation, a possible criterion would be line managers' effectiveness in implementing HRM, as measured by line managers' subordinates or other stakeholders of the line management. Alternative criteria could be the individual performance of employees, the performance of the departments for which line managers are responsible, or organisational effectiveness.

The instrument could also be used to further investigate the relationship between HR practices and firm performance. One could consider the hindrances that line managers perceive in implementing HR practices as a mediating variable, representing the black box between HR practices and firm performance. The implementation of HR practices through line managers could be regarded as a precondition for achieving firm performance.

No research instrument yet existed to examine the consequences of devolving HR tasks to the line. Thus, we were not able to measure the constraints line managers perceive in their

HR role. The new instrument provides an opportunity to explore which of the reluctances perceived by line managers are the most salient. An investigation into the extent that line managers perceive the addressed five concepts as hindering their success with HRM implementation is possible with this instrument.

In investigating the discriminant validity of the scales, we compared the results from the various organisations in which we collected data. The result shows that significant differences between the organisations existed. We conclude from this that the context in which the data are collected is important. We assume that the context affects the constraints perceived by line managers. Depending on the way HR practices are aligned with the business strategy and with each other (configurational approach of HRM), line managers' constraints in implementing these practices may differ depending on background.

As we have stated in the paper, we expect the hierarchical level of a line manager to have an influence on the hindrances experienced. This expectation was assessed using an independent sample t-test. The results showed that lower-level line managers perceive greater hindrances in implementing HR tasks than their more senior colleagues. The results from both groups varied significantly. This distinction could be further evaluated by a gap analysis to determine the degree of consistency or inconsistency in perceptions between these two groups. As such, this instrument offers the opportunity to compare different line management levels based on the constraints to effectively implementing HR practices. It thus offers HR managers the opportunity to support the various line management levels on the basis of their specific needs.

### ***3.7.3 Practical Implications***

The measurement instrument presented in this paper has value for HR professionals because it will enable them: (1) to investigate why line managers do not execute HR practices the way they should; (2) to understand the hindrances that various line management functions experience in different contexts, and adjust their support to meet the demands of the various groups; (3) to measure the influence of these hindrances on the actual performance of line managers when implementing HR practices; and (4) to compare or benchmark the perceptions of line managers in organisations with several business units based on centralised or decentralised HR.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In validating the research instruments presented here, we had three main goals: (1) to develop a research instrument for the HR domain, (2) to improve the factor structure of the scales to establish good constructs, and (3) to reduce the number of items in the constructs.

The original scales in our research instrument came from various backgrounds, and mostly from psychological research. They were developed for specific fields of research and populations. We ‘translated’ these scales for the line management situation related to HRM. Although we knew that these scales would need to be revalidated for the new domain, a surprising number of modifications were necessary to create a reliable research instrument for the HR domain. This emphasises the need to be cautious in using existing scales in a new context: they may need extensive modification if they are to be appropriate for a new situation.

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## Chapter 4

### Constraints of Line Managers' HR Performance: The Impact of Organisational Characteristics

This Chapter is based on: Nehles, A. C., van Riemsdijk, M. J., Looise, J. C. (2010). *Constraints of line managers' HR performance: the impact of organisational characteristics*. Paper accepted for presentation at the Academy of Management Meeting, Montréal, Canada, *Manuscript in Preparation for Submission*

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate which HR constraints line managers perceive in implementing HR practices on the work floor in four Dutch organisations, while taking their organisational characteristics into consideration. The literature on devolving HR responsibilities to the line identifies five factors that constrain HR performance but, so far, has not taken the organisational situation into account. Here, we present four case studies in which our findings on which organisational characteristics influence the perceived HR constraints are based on quantitative and qualitative data from the cases. The qualitative data allow us to explain some of our quantitative results in terms of organisational differences.

## 4.1 Introduction

The devolution of HR responsibilities to line managers is well documented (e.g. Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2000; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). It is also widely accepted that line managers use various HR practices to select, train, develop, coach, appraise, reward and manage their subordinates. However, there is also the perception that line managers are generally reluctant to carry out HR responsibilities (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris, Doughty & Kirk, 2002; Lowe, 1992) and are “neither capable nor motivated to take on these issues” (Hope Hailey, Farndale & Truss, 2005, p. 64).

To us, the devolution literature as so far presented has failed to address three important issues. The first of these concerns the focus to date on HR rather than on the line managers. Devolution constraints are usually identified by HR managers instead of asking line managers what they perceive as constraints to applying HR practices at the operational level (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Torrington & Hall, 1996). Second, the devolution literature similarly concentrates largely on the consequences for the HR function, rather than for the line managers. Transferring HR responsibilities to the line creates an opportunity for the HR function to become a strategic partner in the organisation (Francis & Keegan, 2006). The third issue is that the research to date has largely ignored organisational differences. This is to an extent due to most of the devolution literature being based on single company case studies, making cross-case comparison to uncover any effects of organisational differences impossible.

In this paper, we will show that the way line managers perceive their HR role is dependent on the organisational setting and on how the devolution of HR responsibilities to the line is organised. We investigate this by asking line managers about what they see as constraints and how these affect their HR performance. Through this, we aim to answer the following research question:

*How do organisational differences influence the HR constraints line managers perceive when implementing HR practices?*

This article will be structured as follows. First, we will discuss the HR devolution constraints that have been presented in the devolution literature and will elaborate on why the organisational context has been insufficiently considered. By comparing (both quantitatively and qualitatively) the findings from four case studies, in terms of the HR devolution constraints perceived by line managers, we will attempt to justify the need to take organisational contingencies into account. Finally, we will discuss our results by comparing

them with previously reported findings and present some limitations and suggestions for further research.

#### **4.2 Line Managers' HR Constraints**

Although it is generally accepted that, in strategic human resource management (SHRM), HR responsibilities are frequently devolved to line managers and that they become responsible for the implementation of HR practices (Lowe, 1992; Storey, 1992; Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe, 2004; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), the devolution literature also concurs that, in devolving HR responsibilities to the line, there are certain constraints that make effective HR implementation difficult (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Thornhill & Saunders, 1998; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Larsen & Brewster, 2003).

From the literature, the HR constraints on effective HR implementation by line managers can be summarised as being made up of the following five factors: (1) line managers do not have the *desire* to perform HR responsibilities (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Harris et al., 2002; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006), (2) they do not have the time *capacity* to fulfil these responsibilities alongside their operational responsibilities (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; McGovern, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, Stiles & Truss, 1997), (3) line managers lack HR-related *competences* (Hall & Torrington, 1998; McGovern, 1999; Renwick, 2000), (4) they need, but generally do not receive, *support* and advice from HR managers in carrying out their HR role (Gennard & Kelly, 1997; McConville & Holden, 1999; Bond & Wise, 2003), and (5) they need clear *policies & procedures* covering their HR responsibilities and how to apply them (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Gennard & Kelly, 1997). However, a few other studies have shown that line managers welcome their increased HR responsibilities and can handle them well (Renwick, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). McConville & Holden (1999) reported on line managers who had a positive experience of the HR support offered: HR managers did offer advice and counselling, and the line managers were happy to seek their advice. Whittaker & Marchington (2003) found that line managers reacted positively to being given appraisal responsibilities because they saw this as a valuable area.

Given these inconsistent findings, we argue that the constraints line managers perceive in implementing HR responsibilities are determined by the organisational situation in which they operate. As such, in order to assess which devolution constraints are important to line managers, both management roles and organisational contingencies need to be considered. The existing devolution studies discuss general factors that constrain line managers in implementing HR practices as though they are valid in all organisational situations. However,

devolving HR responsibilities to the line will inevitably also affect the “structure and content as well as the fundamental role of line managers” (Bredin & Söderlund, 2007, p. 817). While line managers are responsible for implementing devolved HR practices on the work floor, responsibility for the general HRM field is shared between various players in the organisation and, in this, line managers and HR managers usually work closely together. The division of labour, cooperation and “partnership” (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003) in this might well be organised differently in different organisations, depending on their structural characteristics (Valverde, Ryan & Soler, 2006).

The case studies presented so far in the devolution literature do not discuss or analyse the organisational context in sufficient detail to allow one to draw out contextual determinants of line managers' HR constraints. Nevertheless, the organisational context does seem to have a significant effect on the role of line managers and their effectiveness in implementing HR practices. It is very probable that the *capacity* for their HR role will be influenced by line managers' responsibilities for subordinates and tasks. McGovern (2003) reported an increasing span of control for line managers and, similarly, McConville & Holden (1999) described more demanding and more complex tasks that line managers were becoming responsible for. Line management HR *competences* are logically dependent on the focus an organisation puts on line management education and training, or the experience they may have gained (Child & Partridge, 1982) in previous positions or through job enrichment opportunities. Although this seems to be a personal characteristic, the organisational situation can insist on a certain education or experience, or even provide them. Additionally, we expect the organisational line management hierarchy to influence the *policy & procedures* constraint. Various authors have provided evidence for differences in managerial work between managers at low hierarchical levels and those at higher hierarchical levels (Blankenship & Miles, 1968; Mintzberg, 1980; Pavett & Lau, 1983). Senior line managers are probably in a better position to recognise their line management HR responsibilities, and act accordingly, than lower level line managers who still need to explore their responsibilities and authorities. Therefore, the HR role of line management is expected to take different forms depending on the assigned responsibilities, the structure of their function and the people they are responsible for.

### **4.3 Methodology**

Having outlined the importance of the line management position in HRM, the constraints line managers experience in their HR role and the organisational contingencies

that probably influence their functioning, we will now discuss the methodology that we used to explore the organisational characteristics that influence the HR constraints perceived by line managers in four Dutch organisations.

#### ***4.3.1 Sample and Data Collection***

Our sample consists of four case studies carried out in the Netherlands. We opted for a cross-sectional research design containing companies of different sizes, backgrounds and characteristics. These were: (O1) a medium-sized national construction and industrial company, with core activities in civil and utility construction, reconstruction and maintenance, housing and infrastructure building, employing 750 people; (O2) a large global defence contractor active in the aerospace, space, defence, security and transportation markets, employing 2000 people in the Netherlands; (O3) a technical maintenance operating company, that is part of a larger national infrastructure and accommodations company and advises, designs, installs, manages, implements and maintains installations and technical systems in buildings, employing 1500 people; and (O4) the operations business unit of the Dutch division of an international mail services organisation, that is primarily responsible for the collection, sorting and distribution of mail, employing around 40,000 people in the Netherlands.

Our population is made up of the line managers at various hierarchical levels in these organisations that supervise a team of operational employees. In the four organisations, a mixed method involving both qualitative and quantitative research was used. All the line managers (population = 709) were provided with either a link to an online questionnaire or a paper version of the questionnaire, containing questions about their desire, capacity, competences, support and policy & procedures to perform HR responsibilities. They were given three weeks to complete the questionnaire, which took approximately 20 minutes. For this quantitative part, 370 line managers replied: a response rate of 52 percent.

Of these, 39 line managers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews each lasted approximately 1 to 1.5 hours and also contained questions about the five factors presented above.

The results of the survey were presented to the HR management team in each organisation. The HR managers had the opportunity to pose questions and comment on the results. These discussions on the quantitative results provided us with additional insights into the respective organisational situations.

Table 1 presents some means and frequencies of organisational characteristics of the four case studies. The average age of the participating line managers was over 40 years, and was highest in O2 and O4. Most of the respondents were men, in line with the population. The highest female percentage was found in O4. The sample includes line managers from various hierarchical levels. First-line supervisors were categorized as low hierarchical level, whereas all line managers higher in the hierarchy were categorised as high-level line managers. In all the case studies except O4, the majority of line managers were in the high hierarchical level category. All the line managers included from O4 were team leaders and thus first-line supervisors (low hierarchical level category). On average, the line managers in O4 were the least-well educated, and those from O2 the highest educated. The line management experience of the sample naturally varied, but the majority of the line managers had been performing this function for more than ten years. The line managers in the sample were responsible for varying numbers of people: those in O4 had the highest span of control and line managers in O3 have the lowest.

Table 1: Frequencies and Means per Case Study

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>O1</b>	<b>O2</b>	<b>O3</b>	<b>O4</b>
<b>Sample</b>	quantitative	66	108	108	88
	qualitative	8	7	9	15
<b>Age</b>		42.98	46.76	41.95	46.79
<b>Sex</b>	man	98.5%	96.3%	95.3%	92.0%
	woman	1.5%	3.7%	4.7%	8.0%
<b>Hierarchy level</b>	high	62.1%	55.1%	68.2%	0%
	low	37.9%	44.9%	31.8%	100%
<b>Education level</b>	secondary	9.1%	1.9%	0.9%	47.7%
	vocational	43.9%	3.7%	47.2%	46.6%
	tertiary	47.0%	94.4%	51.9%	5.7%
<b>Experience</b>	0-1	1.5%	3.7%	6.5%	2.3%
	1-2	3.0%	9.3%	1.9%	4.5%
	2-5	18.2%	15.9%	17.6%	12.5%
	5-10	22.7%	14.1%	28.7%	33.0%
	>10	54.5%	57.0%	45.4%	47.7%
<b>Span of control</b>	0-10	50.0%	38.7%	73.6%	0%
	11-20	21.2%	34.9%	24.5%	1.1%
	>21	28.8%	26.4%	1.9%	98.9%

#### 4.3.2 Measures

As no scales previously existed to measure the HR constraints of line managers, we developed a research instrument to investigate the capacity, desire, competences, support and policies & procedures as perceived by line managers. In order to develop items that were

likely to produce a good content validity, we based them on pre-tested scales found in the psychological and marketing literature that are regarded as reliable. These items were carefully converted into terms that seemed appropriate for the HR domain of line managers, and the reliability and validity of these items were then re-tested for this specific research domain. For those constructs for which we could not find pre-tested ones, we developed items from scratch. A pilot study among 30 line managers in four different organisations was used to gain an initial understanding of the hindrances line managers perceive in their HR role and to develop the required new items. The five factors were each measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('disagree') to 5 ('agree'). Table 2 presents the five concepts, the scales used to measure them and the resulting Cronbach's Alpha.

The reliability and validity of the newly developed items are good. The confirmatory factor analysis revealed a model with a good fit. A factor analysis was carried out for each of the five concepts separately. The goodness of fit and RMSEA measures respectively for each concept are as follows: 0.94 and 0.069 for *desire*; 0.99 and 0.042 for *capacity*; 0.98 and 0.056 for *competences*; 0.99 and 0.043 for *support*; and 0.94 and 0.073 for *policy & procedures*.

Table 2: Concepts. Scales. Items and Cronbach's Alpha of the Variables

Concept	Scales	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Capacity</b>	Role overload (Reilly, 1982)	5	0.88
<b>Desire</b>	Situational motivation scale (Guay, Vallerand & Blanchard, 2000)	9	0.79
	Value-added (developed on basis of pilot case study)	4	0.77
<b>Competences</b>	Occupational self-efficacy (Schyns & van Collani, 2002)	5	0.80
	Training (developed on basis of pilot case study)	2	0.80
<b>Support</b>	HR support services (SERVQUAL, Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988)	3	0.76
	HR support behavior (SERVQUAL, Parasuraman et al., 1988)	4	0.80
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	Role conflict (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970)	5	0.80
	Role ambiguity (Rizzo et al., 1970)	4	0.65
	User friendliness of HR forms (developed on basis of pilot case study)	3	0.88

#### 4.3.3 Analysis

The quantitative results were analysed first. We looked for significant differences between the four case studies, using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) or an independent sample t-test. The quantitative data allowed us to determine significant

differences between the constraints line managers with various educational levels, years of experience, spans of control and hierarchical positions perceive in the various organisations with their distinct organisational characteristics.

These quantitative results are later supported by qualitative data, in particular quotes from line managers in the four case studies. The differences in the intensity of the perceived HR constraints in the four organisations became apparent from the qualitative data; that is, the knowledge the researchers gained during the presentations and the quotes from the line managers regarding their HR role. In this way, the qualitative data helped in formulating appropriate conclusions about why line managers experience constraints when performing their HR role. Each of the five factors was regarded individually.

#### 4.4 Results

In order to answer our research question “How do organisational differences influence the HR constraints line managers perceive when implementing HR practices?”, we need to compare the results of the perceived HR constraints for each organisation with one another and take the organisational characteristics into account when analysing the differences in the perceived HR constraints on line managers. We therefore compared the four case studies in terms of each of the five HR constraints and Table 3 shows the multivariate analysis of variance of the five constraints between organisations.

Table 3: Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Constraints between Organisations

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>O 1</b>	<b>O 2</b>	<b>O 3</b>	<b>O 4</b>	<b>F-value</b>
Sample	n=66	n=108	n=108	n=88	
<b>Desire</b>	3.53	3.77	3.79	3.42	8.81***
<b>Capacity</b>	3.90	2.81	3.20	2.54	28.46***
<b>Competencies</b>	3.45	3.88	3.54	3.91	9.36***
<b>Support</b>	3.65	3.17	2.95	3.57	17.61***
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	3.46	3.58	3.35	3.41	2.46*
role conflict (R)	3.93	3.98	3.72	3.37	10.90***
role ambiguity (R)	3.29	3.61	3.16	3.59	9.51***

\*  $p \geq 0.05$  \*\*  $p \geq 0.01$  \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

Perceptions of the identified constraints differed significantly between the four organisations investigated. In particular, the means of the *capacity* and *support* factors varied significantly among the organisations. The significantly lower mean scores for *capacity* in O2 and O4 imply that line managers in these organisations perceive they have less time for their HR responsibilities than line managers in O1 and O3. Line managers in O3 however perceive

that they are significantly less well supported by their HR managers than the line managers in the other three organisations, as can be seen by the lower mean score for this factor in O3.

Table 4: Independent Sample T-test for Constraints between Line Hierarchy Levels

Constructs	Lower LM	Higher LM	T-value
Sample	n=195	n=173	
<b>Desire</b>	3.54	3.77	3.57***
<b>Capacity</b>	2.92	3.19	2.46**
<b>Competences</b>	3.76	3.64	-1.54
<b>Support</b>	3.32	3.25	-0.96
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	3.41	3.49	1.14

\* p >= 0.05 \*\* p >= 0.01 \*\*\* p >= 0.001

Table 5: Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Constraints between Education Levels

Constructs	secondary	vocational	tertiary	F-value
Sample	n=51	n=125	n=193	
<b>Desire</b>	3.42	3.48	3.82	16.89***
<b>Capacity</b>	2.63	3.13	3.10	4.79***
<b>Competences</b>	3.84	3.60	3.75	2.55*
<b>Support</b>	3.63	3.31	3.18	6.78***
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	3.45	3.36	3.51	2.04
role conflict (R)	3.46	3.69	3.86	5.20***
role ambiguity (R)	3.56	3.22	3.50	6.43***

\* p >= 0.05 \*\* p >= 0.01 \*\*\* p >= 0.001

Table 6: Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Constraints between Experiences Levels

Constructs	0-2	2-10	>10	F-value
Sample	n=32	n=149	n=188	
<b>Desire</b>	3.76	3.60	3.66	1.09
<b>Capacity</b>	2.65	2.90	3.23	6.98***
<b>Competences</b>	3.44	3.62	3.83	5.83**
<b>Support</b>	3.34	3.31	3.26	0.22
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	3.29	3.36	3.55	4.83**
role ambiguity (R)	3.12	3.34	3.53	5.74**

\* p >= 0.05 \*\* p >= 0.01 \*\*\* p >= 0.001

Table 7: Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Constraints between Spans of Control

Constructs	0-10	11-20	>21	F-value
Sample	n=152	n=77	n=136	
<b>Desire</b>	3.69	3.75	3.54	3.57**
<b>Capacity</b>	3.35	2.94	2.77	12.06***
<b>Competences</b>	3.51	3.76	3.90	10.78***
<b>Support</b>	3.17	3.20	3.47	5.80***
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	3.41	3.51	3.46	0.57
role conflict (R)	3.84	3.84	3.57	4.59**
role ambiguity (R)	3.22	3.52	3.59	9.98***

\* p >= 0.05 \*\* p >= 0.01 \*\*\* p >= 0.001

Tables 4 to 7 present multivariate analyses of variance of the perceived HR constraints between the organisational characteristics hierarchical category, education level, experience in a line management function and span of control. From this, we conclude that one's level in the organisational line management hierarchy affects line managers' perceptions about their own *desire* and *capacity*. The means of the two groups (high and low hierarchical positions) differ significantly from each other, as shown by the t-value in Table 4. Higher level line managers seem to have more desire and more capacity to carry out their HR responsibilities. The relatively high F-value for *desire* in Table 5 indicates that there are significant differences between the desires of line managers having secondary, vocational and tertiary education to carry out their HR responsibilities. The highest educated line managers seemed to be the most motivated in the investigated organisations. Table 6 presents the HR constraints on line managers with various levels of experience, showing that experience influences the perceived constraints in terms of *capacity*, *competences* and *policy & procedures*. Line managers with more experience in their function seem to perceive a greater capacity plus more competences and supportive policies & procedures in their HR role. The span of control of a line manager (Table 7) significantly affects the constraints sensed on their devolved HR responsibilities. The line managers' *capacity* for their HR responsibilities is most strongly affected by the span of control. The MANOVA shows that *capacity* is significantly lower for line managers supervising relatively large numbers of people than for those with few supervisees.

Having provided a broad overview of the results of the quantitative analyses, we will now consider each factor in more detail, discussing the quantitative and qualitative results linked to each HR constraint together with some qualitative information provided by the organisations.

#### **4.4.1 Desire**

Line managers generally seemed to accept their HR role and were willing to apply HR practices. They do so largely because they realise that the HR practices can bring added value to the performance and atmosphere in their team. They are not equally 'enthusiastic' over every aspect of their HR responsibilities however. Conversations with employees are preferred over administrative tasks or chastising employees. Line managers especially seem to enjoy people-oriented activities, like resolving conflicts, conducting performance appraisal interviews or simply just talking to their staff socially:

*"See, if you like managing, then part of this is also coping with people...that you have a feeling for their needs."* (O2, 2)

*"I like it a lot. Let me carry out all the HR responsibilities. This is why I became a line manager."* (O4, 5)

#### *4.4.1.1 Organisational Influences on the Perception of Desire*

The line management function seems to be differently organised in O1 and O4 than in O2 and O3. We see differences in (1) the span of control, (2) the level of education, (3) the hierarchical level and (4) the responsibility for HR tasks. Line managers in O1 and O4 were less motivated than those in O2 and O3. There are several reasons for this difference.

Line managers with a medium span of control (responsible for 11 to 20 employees) have the greatest desire to carry out their HR responsibilities. This would seem to be the ideal number of people for line managers to be responsible for. More senior and highly educated line managers appear to have more desire to perform their HR responsibilities than low level and less educated line managers. The majority of line managers in O2 are higher level line managers with a high level of education, whereas all the line managers in our survey from O4 were first-line supervisors with a much lower level of education. The tasks that line managers are supposed to perform must be perceived by them as relevant:

*"Why (do I perform HR tasks)? Because it is a part of my function. My function includes, among others things, running the department as efficiently and effectively as possible. I need to do this with the people. HR instruments are a tool for working with people. If I did not have seventeen people but seventeen machines, then I would have other tools...Thus, this is just one of the instruments I need."* (O2, 3)

*"...I am convinced of the fact that, in the final analysis, people are the capital, and this is what you need. This makes or breaks the whole organisation. I mean, another software package you can just buy, and what does not work tomorrow you buy somewhere else the day after tomorrow. But your people, basically you build a long relationship with them. I think HR is very important. You also recognise that when people feel positive, they will get along well with each other."* (O2, 4)

*"I like to keep a good atmosphere in my team."* (O4, 3)

Lower level line managers (as in O4) seem to be more burdened with administrative tasks than higher level line managers (those in O2). Having a lot of responsibility for administrative tasks and being expected to complete standardised forms reduces the added value seen in HR tasks:

*“Performance appraisals are only done once per year. My employees do not work better because of this. Smaller, more personal, talks that are not documented are much more valuable in enhancing performance than the documented ones.” (O4, 3)*

*“Concerning the administrative tasks, I actually think that HR should play an important role in this...Instead of for example looking every week as to how often John has been ill and what he has had...of course I need to know what people have. But if I have to check how often John has been ill, I really need to question why, and that is more difficult to determine. I should be relieved from these tasks by witchcraft.” (O2, 4)*

#### *4.4.1.2 Resolving a Lack of Desire*

Although the desire of line managers in O4 to carry out HR tasks is comparably low, and some complain about the dubious added value of some of the administrative tasks they have to do, they still complete them because they feel they have no other choice. They perceive an external motivation or identify a regulation in performing their HR role, and this seems to balance out the lack of relevance they perceive in some of their HR tasks:

*“After delivering the mail, registering the hours of my people has priority ... administrative tasks I always try to do as well as possible, because otherwise the delivery staff complain about their salaries at the end of the week.” (O4, 3)*

*“I always take the time to do my administrative tasks. I have to do this because I get problems if I don't finish them. ...If I don't finish the administrative tasks by Friday, then I need to stay here until 8.00 p.m. to finish them.” (O4, 5)*

Alongside the effects of the four organisational characteristics assessed in Tables 4 to 7 on the *desire* of line managers, the qualitative data reveal two more organisational characteristics that seem to be of importance in determining line managers' desire: (1) the quantity and quality of their HR tasks and responsibilities, and (2) the perceived relevance of these tasks. However, by installing some form of external motivation, an organisation seems able to overcome any limited desire by line managers to carry out their allocated administrative HR tasks.

#### *4.4.2 Capacity*

Most line managers recognise a lack of capacity for performing HR practices. They find it difficult to manage their time between the various responsibilities they have. They especially see their administrative tasks as costing a lot of time:

*“Time is always an issue. For example, some administration tasks are always left over.”* (O4, 2)

*“I would like to get rid of the hours administration. That takes a tremendous amount of time, but also other administrative tasks.”* (O4, 5)

#### *4.4.2.1 Organisational Influences on the Perception of Capacity*

As referred to above, the more experienced and the more highly educated line managers seem to need less time to perform their HR practices. Table 4 suggests that higher level line managers have greater capacity to perform HR tasks. These managers are usually directly responsible for fewer people and so have more time per individual employee. In our survey, the line managers in O4 had the least capacity to perform HR tasks (Table 3), and were all first-line (low level) managers. Line management hierarchy does not seem to directly influence the amount of time line managers have for their HR responsibilities, but the span of control does seem to vary with level.

A lack of capacity only seems to be an issue in O2 and O4. In both O1 and O3, the line managers had sufficient time to carry out their HR tasks (Table 3). The managers in O4 have a significantly wider span of control than line managers in the other organisations (Table 1), and this greater span of control means that finding the time to coach individual employees can become difficult.

In O2, the limited capacity issue is a result of a recent organisational change that has absorbed a lot of line managers' time. This temporary problem was accompanied by dual responsibility for people in two countries:

*“I have thought too little, but this has especially been to do with last year, when we had quite an overload situation. This has now changed, and I hope that, in practice, it means that I can spend more time on certain things than I used to.”* (O2, 1)

*“No...see, in the Netherlands I have sufficient time, but in France I just have too little time at the moment. Actually one should just spend more time in France, like I do here...two, three days a week. But, well, the travel of course interferes. I have enough time for the Dutch part, but not for the French part as well.”* (O2, 2)

#### *4.4.2.2 Resolving a Lack of Capacity*

Line managers resolve problems linked to their wide span of control by delegating some HR responsibilities to experienced employees in their team or to administrative staff. They especially favour delegating administrative tasks:

*"I try to delegate as many things as possible to one of the delivery staff, especially those I believe an experienced worker could do well... such as holiday planning." (O4, 4)*

*"I try to lose tasks by delegating them to people in my team. Some experienced delivery workers are willing to take them on. For example, I don't do HR planning myself. This gives me extra time, and I don't need to control it because my employees do it well." (O4, 5)*

By delegating some of their tasks to experienced employees, or by completing them outside office hours, they manage to get them all finished on time. However, the quality of the task application cannot always be guaranteed:

*"I don't like administrative tasks, such as Harmony. I do this on Monday morning. My colleagues start at 8:30, but I start at 5:30 in the morning. Then I am alone and feel at ease. When my colleagues start working, everyone in the Netherlands starts using this program and then it takes ages. Next, the whole system gets stuck and that wastes a lot of valuable time." (O4, 5)*

*"I always get everything done, but I sometimes doubt whether I do everything well... Sometimes I rush through things and this is why some HR tasks are not well performed." (O4, 4)*

*"I type out the performance appraisal talks at home, because I don't have enough time during my work time." (O4, 3)*

As with the *desire* factor, the *capacity* for HR tasks is also influenced by some additional organisational characteristics, such as (1) the quantity and quality of HR tasks, and (2) organisational change. For the time capacity issue, line managers in the investigated organisations have found two solutions: they delegate HR responsibilities to experienced staff or perform HR tasks outside office hours.

#### **4.4.3 Competences**

In general, line managers perceived their HR-related competences as sufficient to perform HR practices well. Although line managers in all four organisations perceive themselves as competent, there were significant differences between the four cases.

##### *4.4.3.1 Organisational Influences on the Perception of Competences*

Line managers in O2 and O4 perceived themselves as significantly more competent than those working in O1 and O3 did. Perceived competences for managing people do not seem to

increase with increasing seniority or education level (Tables 4 and 5). However, experience and span of control do play a role:

*“The longer you perform tasks, the easier it becomes and the better you grasp things and observe them. The more experience you have in carrying out conversations, the easier it becomes.”* (O4, 3)

The more experienced line managers perceive themselves to be more competent than their less experienced colleagues. The longer that line managers are in a line management function and the more people they supervise, the more competent they feel they become in what they do. Thus, line managers in O2 and O4 feel more competent because in O4 they have a wide span of control, and in O2 they have a lot of line management experience.

In order to enhance the competences of line managers, organisations usually offer training courses on aspects of HR, sometimes specifically linked to the goals of the line management function. The line managers in O2 and O4 evaluated the offered training courses as more valuable than line managers in O1 and O3. In both, O2 and O4, a lot of attention had been given to offering training courses specifically designed for line management. Line managers seemed to appreciate these courses. O2 has its own training centre that offers a wide range of training courses from which line managers can choose. O4 offers additional line management education that focuses on the people management tasks of line managers, referred to as logistics supervisors, in a mail service organisation. O1 and O3 offer general training courses, but no specific education for line managers.

*“There are specific training courses that I follow regarding performance appraisals and those kinds of things.”* (O2, 3)

*“...I have also followed a lot of training courses, also management courses and so on. And change management, thus I have actually done everything. You really learn a lot of things there.”* (O2, 2)

*“Quite many (training courses), also about a wide range of things: about performance appraisals, education for team coaching, education for middle management, a training course on informatics and personal strength training.”* (O4, 4)

#### 4.4.3.2 Resolving a Lack of Competence

The line managers in the four case organisations feel competent in performing their HR role because they delegate the more difficult or unpleasant issues to HR managers or

specialists and ask for support when required. Further, if they are afraid of making mistakes, they often hand over responsibility to specialists or call in advice and help:

*“In the event of a conflict, for example a delivery person who is not doing certain things and therefore needs to be suspended, I hand all responsibility to the HR consultant.”* (O4, 4)

*“Especially during difficult situations, I find it essential to have somebody by my side...”* (O3, 8)

In addition to the organisational characteristics highlighted in Tables 4 to 7, the HR competences of line managers are influenced by the sophistication of training courses and educational programmes offered by the company. If line managers feel they lack the competence to resolve a given situation, they are willing to ask HR managers or specialists for support or hand the responsibility over to a specialist.

#### **4.4.4 Support**

Generally, line managers perceive themselves to be well supported by HR managers as reflected in the following positive reactions from line managers about the support they receive:

*“In my opinion the sounding function of HR is good, they are open-minded and give feedback.”* (O1, 5)

*“I ask, or I just drop in, or I make an appointment, and I always have the feeling that I am at the right place.”* (O2, 1)

However, some line managers do not need any support from HR managers or do not see a need to be supported by HR:

*“I don't think highly of HR consultants. They are not really useful. If I have a question I persevere. I myself don't need HR consultants. They undoubtedly do a lot behind the show, but I don't really see this.”* (O4, 3)

*“I hardly ever go there. I don't really need it. I know what to do regarding HR aspects of my job.”* (O1, 7)

##### **4.4.4.1 Organisational Influences on the Perception of Support**

The more highly educated line managers were less satisfied with the support they receive from HR managers (Table 5). In particular, they expected more services from the HR managers. Line managers who were responsible for a large number of staff were in general

more satisfied about the support they received than those with few supervisees (Table 7). It would seem that HR managers focus their attention more on line managers with a large span of control and support them better.

Here, we can further highlight three additional organisational characteristics: the service-orientation of the HR manager, the structure of the HR function and the form of support demanded.

#### *4.4.4.2 Service-Orientation of HR Manager*

The HR support provided by HR managers is organised in various ways. Some HR managers have a so-called open-door policy and are reactive in offering support to line managers. Others organise meetings where line managers from different departments can discuss issues with the HR manager or help each other. Again others are very proactive in offering line managers help and assistance in for example carrying out performance appraisals.

In O1 and O3, the line managers often ask HR consultants for their opinion on issues they are having with employees. They ask them to join in employee discussions, sit in on job interviews, performance appraisals or grievance talks in order to have a second opinion or obtain specialist feedback:

*“Although I carry out the first talks alone (job interviews),...I bring in HR for the second interview in order to gain a second opinion, to look at the applicant from their point of view and to mutually evaluate whether it is a good applicant.” (O3, 4)*

*“...to get some arbitrage, some independent person joining in... The HR consultant joins the conversation, not to lead the discussion, but in a supporting role.” (O3, 8)*

*“For example they join me on visiting the construction site to communicate, as a form of service.” (O1, 6)*

#### *4.4.4.3 Structure of HR Function*

We can see differences regarding the structure of the HR function and its organisation. In O1 and O3, there is a physical distance between HR managers and line managers because the HR managers are responsible for more than one location and are therefore often not visible or reachable for the line managers. In O1, however, this lack of proximity is balanced by the strong service orientation of the HR managers towards the line managers, showing interest in line management issues and advising line managers on how to solve issues.

As a consequence of local distance between both parties, we can present differences in communication among the four cases. In O1 and O3, communication from the HR department to line managers is weak:

*“Communication regarding training opportunities could be better.” (O1, 4)*

*“Yes (I get support in difficult situations), but you need to pull them in. You need to show them...as in I have such a high sickness level, I know what the reason is, I will do the conversations alone and if I really don't see any way out then you will have to join me. This is how it goes.” (O3, 1)*

*“Zero, there is no communication. Nothing more than good morning, good evening, have a nice weekend, nothing else.” (O3, 2)*

When comparing the supporting role of HR managers in the four case studies (Table 3), it appears that line managers in O3 are significantly less satisfied about the supporting role played by HR than those in the other three organisations. Given the physical separation in O3, there is very little contact between some HR managers and the line managers. Line managers miss a sparring partner from HR: someone to give them feedback on how to coach or manage people, and also information about actions they can take on the basis of performance appraisal forms, with sick employees, someone with whom to discuss how to solve difficult situations and who could assist as an expert:

*“As a line manager I feel like I am on an island regarding employee performance and appraisals. Just like...I do it in my own way, when this is right nobody says anything about it...but when this is wrong, nobody says anything about it either.” (O3, 4)*

*“What I also miss is exchanging ideas about reviewing employees' performance before appraisal interviews are due.” (O3, 2)*

*“I would like to have more consultations, even if it was only informally.” (O3, 6)*

Line managers become dissatisfied about the service level delivered when HR managers are invisible, not reachable or do not respond quickly to their requests:

*“I always get support when I call or mail. It works quite fast.” (O4, 2)*

*“The HRM department is not always that quick.” (O1, 4)*

*“The reaction to training requests is not always professional. It takes a long time or I don't get any reaction at all.” (O1, 7)*

*“...and we don't have anything here, nothing at all (HR support). I cannot even call him, because then I get his voicemail and I need to wait until he calls back. If it happens once it is*

*not too bad, but it happens all the time. I think that somebody like him needs to be subservient to the organisation.” (O3, 2)*

#### 4.4.4.4 Form of Support Needed

What line managers consult their HR managers about seems to depend on the services and consultations they can get elsewhere. If the organisation offers services through a Shared Service Centre or provides information on an intranet site, through an E-HRM application, or other specialist services, such as a works council or a legal department, line managers may opt to consult them instead of their HR managers. Table 8 indicates that line managers always demand support when it comes down to legal matters.

Table 8: Multivariate Analysis of Variance between Forms of Support Needed

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>O 1</b>	<b>O 2</b>	<b>O 3</b>	<b>O 4</b>	<b>F-value</b>
Sample	n=66	n=108	n=108	n=88	
Application of HR responsibilities	3.25	3.57	3.56	3.56	1.32
Juridical support	3.71	4.03	4.12	4.05	1.57
Finding and using HR processes	3.34	3.36	3.44	3.83	3.11**
Administrative processes	3.33	3.53	3.46	2.85	4.82***
Faster support services by HR	2.85	3.34	3.68	3.80	8.69***
More and better HR policies	2.86	2.95	3.56	3.61	10.52***
Advice with personnel problems	3.22	3.37	3.52	3.74	2.95**
Pers. support with applying HR resp.	2.77	2.50	2.90	3.08	4.82***
Pers. support on using HR instruments	2.82	2.56	2.94	2.55	2.61*
Best practices of others	3.11	3.63	3.50	.	4.72***

\*  $p \geq 0.05$  \*\*  $p \geq 0.01$  \*\*\*  $p \geq 0.001$

There is some variation in the form of support line managers need in the four organisations. In terms of HR support behaviour, line managers in O4 especially need more advice and personal coaching on applying HR responsibilities. Line managers in O3 and O4 demand significantly more HR support services than their colleagues in O1 and O2, especially faster services as well as more and better HR policies. The kind of services that line managers in O3 expect from HR managers are: drawing up contracts, recruiting new personnel, assistance and guidance in performing job interviews and performance appraisals, and organising training courses:

*“I expect HR to formulate contracts and to provide a fast service. For example, if I have a job applicant and I notify that they need a contract, then I expect the contract to be ready the next day or the day afterwards.” (O3, 1)*

*“No, you shouldn't have to apply for everything yourself. I would prefer it if the HR department offered training courses, then you would actually get the training that HR thinks a team leader needs.” (O3, 7)*

#### 4.4.4.5 Resolving a Lack of Support

When line managers are dissatisfied with the quantity and quality of support they receive from HR, they will search for support elsewhere. They may get support from non-HR individuals in their surroundings. As Table 9 shows, most of the support needed is from HR managers, but line superiors, colleagues and deputy are also asked for advice. Works councils and health and safety executives are also perceived as valuable sources of support.

Line managers in O3 were least satisfied with the support they received from HR managers. As a consequence, they contact the HR department for support less often than line managers in the other organisations (Table 9).

Table 9: Multivariate Analysis of Variance between Sources of Support

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>O 1</b>	<b>O 2</b>	<b>O 3</b>	<b>O 4</b>	<b>F-value</b>
Sample	n=66	n=108	n=108	n=88	
HR department	3.76	3.71	3.55	3.85	1.14
Superior	3.61	3.08	3.61	3.92	7.93***
Shared Service Center	.	.	2.56	3.31	10.20***
Secretary	2.42	2.91	2.63	.	1.89
Administrative staff	3.08	2.10	2.62	3.37	14.99***
Substitute	2.24	2.60	3.10	3.96	19.85***
Management team	3.27	2.67	3.16	.	5.63***
Colleague line managers	3.12	3.19	1.72	4.06	54.57***
Works council	1.98	1.68	2.21	2.86	17.69***
Health and safety executive	2.57	2.45	2.87	3.82	24.08***

\* p >= 0.05 \*\* p >= 0.01 \*\*\* p >= 0.001

However, it was line managers in O4 that particularly demanded support from non-HR sources, such as their superiors, administrative staff, their deputy fellow line managers, works councils or the health and safety executive. It seems that HR managers are asked about specific issues and rules/regulations but not over personnel management issues or day-to-day queries. For advice over people issues, line managers tend to ask non-HR sources and only consider the HR department when their direct environment cannot support them:

“(If I don’t have sufficient competences) *in situations where something unusual is going on, a poorly performing employee for example, ... then I will first talk to a fellow line manager or to a HR manager to get some feedback.*” (O2, 1)

“*I don’t find it so bad (that I don’t get support from the HR manager). Of course, I also have my direct superior, whom I can ask specific questions.*” (O3, 6)

“*... I tend to ask my superior or a fellow line manager to join me in a meeting when it might be difficult.*” (O4, 6)

Differences found between the cases are based on the organisational characteristics presented in Tables 4 to 7 and on three additional characteristics: (1) the service-orientation of the HR manager, (2) the structure of the HR department and (3) the form of support needed. As a solution to poor support from HR managers, line managers seek support elsewhere; for example, they ask other line managers or their superiors for advice.

#### **4.4.5 Policy & Procedures**

Whether line managers perceive the policies and procedures they have to work with as sufficient and valuable depends on (1) the clarity of line management’s HR role, including their knowledge of their HR responsibilities and authorities, and (2) on the clarity and comprehensibility of how they should perform their HR role. Overall, policies and practices were seen as sufficient and valuable, with no major differences found between organisations.

##### **4.4.5.1. Organisational Influences on the Perception of Policy & Procedures**

Whereas HR forms and instruments were clear and understandable in all four organisations, the clarity of a line manager’s HR role, in parallel with their operational role, measured in terms of role conflict, differed significantly between organisations. Line managers in O4 perceived significantly greater role conflict than those in the other three organisations. Their low level in the management hierarchy, their relatively low education level and their wider span of control seemed to play a part in this. In general, lower-level line managers seem to experience significantly greater role conflict (Table 4), probably because they have a larger range of influences from the various managers above them. First-line managers usually have close contacts with their immediate superior, but are also influenced by HR managers and senior managers. Line managers in O4 are also the least-well educated in our sample (see Table 1), and less educated line managers seem to perceive greater role conflict (Table 5). A low education level seems to lead to greater insecurity concerning the

HR role of a line manager. Further, when line managers are responsible for many employees, they may feel that they get conflicting advice from all sides on what they have to do.

Another reason for this greater role conflict in O4 is that line managers there experience an obligation to perform what they see as unnecessary tasks, i.e. administrative routines and performance appraisals. They are given an increasing number of administrative tasks without understanding why. They perform them because they have to, but they do not understand why these tasks are not performed by administrative (HR) staff or secretaries. Some line managers wish to have greater authority in deciding if and when they perform HR practices:

*“Sometimes it is unpleasant that a lot of things become standardised and that they enforce a lot of tasks...actually we are talking about the fact that we have more and more administrative tasks. The number of extra tasks has increased a lot during the last few years. And they are constantly throwing new self-service management applications at us.”* (O4, 4)

*“Performance appraisals are only done once per year. My employees do not work better because of these. Shorter, more personal, talks that are not documented are much more valuable in producing better performance than the documented ones.”* (O4, 3)

*“Holding quarterly and weekly work meetings, these are tasks that belong to my function, but sometimes there is nothing to discuss. But you have to carry them out anyway. This is a kind of obligation.”* (O4, 6)

Role ambiguity is significantly greater among line managers in O3 than in the other case companies. They have the lowest span of control of all the line managers in our sample and slightly less experience in a line management function than the line managers in the other organisations (Table 1). A low span of control and limited experience are seem to be related to greater role ambiguity (Tables 6 and 7). Having limited responsibility for people and limited experience in this area seems to lead to less clarity about planned targets and where to find the norms and guidelines to direct this work. In comparison, line managers with a wide span of control and a lot of experience know exactly what is expected of them, as in O4.

Another reason for role ambiguity is a lack of standardisation. Line managers in O3 and O4 experience application differences between departments. They want greater standardisation between groups and departments and this require rules, norms and procedures:

*“I think, if you take ten line managers, that you will get ten different approaches to an application.”* (O4, 10)

*“They set rules but these are not complied with, and they don't check at all whether the rules are complied with.”* (O4, 12)

*“Actually I expect clear explanations from HR ...I sometimes talk to fellow line managers and they do it in a different way than I do.” (O3, 4)*

Conversely, O2 line managers experience too many rules and an over strict interpretation of the rules. Well educated line managers (as in O2) seem to desire greater freedom in how to interpret and use the procedures. They believe that they can best decide how to use instruments and forms, and they want to do this according to their own time schedule:

*“...they are going to stop using People1st (an appraisal tool)...and then I will no longer be able to enter any data as a line manager. This is because I am so-called too late according to the agenda of HR.” (O2, 2)*

*“...I think I should still be able to enter data in e-People 1<sup>st</sup>, even after three months. I just don't have time at the moment. That is sometimes not possible because someone decides that everything has to be finalised before a deadline and makes it no longer possible afterwards. I think this is a childish mentality.” (O2, 2)*

*“They are interpreted very strictly (the rules), whereas I think some creativity should be possible to maybe work towards some solutions.” (O2, 1)*

#### 4.4.5.2 Resolving a Lack of Policy & Procedures

When line managers perceive the *policy & procedures* to be insufficient to clarify their HR responsibilities and methods of application, institutional organisational reinforcements can be a solution that enables line managers to perform their HR tasks. Line managers in O4, for example, are appraised on the basis of their HR responsibilities by their superiors, and O2 offers line managers an HR agenda that details all their HR tasks and responsibilities:

*“There is an HR annual calendar, and from this you can find all the relevant information.” (O2, 3)*

*“I get assessed on how I perform in the quarterly and weekly work meetings...You are also assessed on your supervision.” (O4, 5)*

*“I know which HR tasks I am responsible for because of the objectives I set with my superior. We agree on these objectives in advance.” (O4, 8)*

The perception of *policy & procedures* is influenced by a wider range of organisational characteristics than the ones we measured quantitatively. The perception of being responsible for unnecessary things and the extent of standardisation between departments and groups are additional characteristics that differentiate organisations from each other. As a solution to

lacking policies and procedures, organisations bring in institutional reinforcements, such as supervisor appraisals of HR performance and the issuing of HR agendas.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

The four cases highlight that organisations differ in the ways that they organise the devolution of HR responsibilities to the line and the subsequent management role of the line manager. Organisational contingencies influence the way line managers perceive their HR role and handle their HR responsibilities. Therefore, the HR constraints perceived by line managers differ in the four organisations investigated.

We could already show in Table 1 that the four organisations differed; indeed this was a factor in their selection. The work and management roles of line managers require differing levels of education and experience (Child & Partridge, 1982). When line managers are responsible for highly educated personnel, with fairly complex task content, then their own education and experience level should be comparable or higher in order to adequately fulfil the supervision and management role. We also saw that the level in the hierarchy and the span of control of the line managers in the various organisations differed. Line managers occupying a higher level or with a wider span of control seem to have additional responsibilities and therefore also face different HR constraints. We will now discuss the organisational contingencies that we could identify for the five HR constraints on the basis of the qualitative data.

##### **4.5.1 Constraint Contingencies**

The *desire* of line managers to perform HR tasks depends on the perceived relevance of their tasks and responsibilities, as well as the quantity and quality of these tasks. If they have the feeling that their HR tasks and responsibilities are relevant, and can bring added value to the performance of their team, its motivation or employee wellbeing, then they are more motivated to perform, and will put more effort into their people management role. In such a situation, line managers would not be reluctant to perform HR responsibilities, a claim made by Hall and Torrington (1998) and Hope Hailey, Farndale and Truss (2005), but are fully engaged in performing their HR role. However, being responsible for many administrative, and largely routine, HR tasks lowers the desire of line managers to engage with their HR role and responsibilities. Nevertheless, external motivation and recognised regulations can motivate line managers to perform such HR tasks anyway, even if they are not convinced of their value. This finding is in line with the results of McGovern (1999), who found that line

management involvement in HRM requires both institutional reinforcements and personal motivation, and that personal motivation is especially important for their engagement.

The *capacity* of line managers to handle their HR tasks is also related to the quantity and quality of their HR tasks and their span of control. The more HR tasks, especially time-consuming or non-challenging ones such as basic HR administration, and employees that line managers are responsible for, the less time they have left for the more personal individual HR tasks and people management activities. The problems of line managers having too many HR responsibilities and wide spans of control have also been mentioned in earlier work, such as by Harris et al. (2002), who describe additional responsibilities of the line, by McConville and Holden (1999), who report more complex and more demanding tasks, and by McGovern et al., (1997) and Renwick (2003), who describe wider spans of control for the line management. As a consequence of the resulting time pressures (McConville, 2006), line managers tend to delegate some of their responsibilities to experienced employees, secretaries or administrative staff. Organisational changes also affect line managers' capacity to perform HR practices. Line managers need to adapt to new environments and new roles, and this can take time.

The HR *competences* of line managers are influenced by the sophistication of training courses and educational programmes offered by their organisations. Those line managers who reported well-developed training courses and educational programs for line managers perceived their own HR competences to be higher than those managers who had not enjoyed such opportunities. Also the breadth of experience of a line manager in a management function plays a role in the development of HR-related competences. When organisations select people for a line management position who already have experience in a similar role, or in a role with people management responsibilities, or give them the opportunity to gain experience through exchange programmes, job rotation programmes or job enlargement and enrichment programmes, they will find it easier to manage their own HR responsibilities than less experienced colleagues. A lack of competences is handled by delegating HR responsibilities back to HR managers or specialists, or by asking HR specialists for feedback or help.

Furthermore, the HR performance of line managers is dependent on how the *support* function is organised. The physical distance between HR experts and line managers and the visibility of HR managers to the line, the service-orientation of HR managers and the form of support needed all play a role in how actively line managers seek advice or coaching from HR managers and in the quality of the contact between the two parties. McConville and Holden (1999) and Bond and Wise (2003) also mention the need of proximity of the HR manager as a

necessity for good support. The form of support requested depends on the line managers' HR tasks and responsibilities and on their education and experience in a line management function. When line managers miss pro-active actions and feedback from the HR department, they desire a sparring partner with whom they can discuss personnel problems. According to Whittaker and Marchington (2003), a partnership between HR and line managers is desirable because it will increase HR performance. Additionally, a clear division of tasks between HR and line managers, and the communication between both parties, plays a role in how effectively line managers implement HRM. If they do not know what HR managers are responsible for, or how HR tasks are divided between the two parties because this has not been communicated to them, they can form incorrect expectations about HR services. If line managers do not see HR managers on a regular basis they will look for support elsewhere, such as from their own superior or fellow line managers, and could therefore make incorrect decisions. Similarly, if they have bad experiences with support from HR managers because they are not always accessible, they might look elsewhere.

Within the *policy & procedures* category, the perception of being responsible for unnecessary things and differences in set standards between departments and groups were found to be additional influential organisational characteristics. Policies and procedures tend to become clearer if line managers are given rules, forms, guidelines and norms on how to perform their HR practices, because this can (1) help them understand how to perform HR practices and (2) ensure the practices are performed consistently across departments. According to McGovern (1997) and McGovern et al. (1999), line managers will perform their HR responsibilities better if they are supported by institutional reinforcements. Institutional reinforcements include documented descriptions of a line manager's HR responsibilities, such as in job descriptions, HR responsibility lists published on the intranet or elsewhere, and being appraised on one's HR responsibilities by superiors. Although institutional reinforcements, as well as rules, forms, guidelines and norms, can lead to better responses in the event of lacking policies and procedures, in some organisations, as we saw in this paper, line managers can perceive such a reduction in freedom as hindering their effective performance of their HR tasks.

#### ***4.5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research***

This research has presented comparisons of means of HR constraints between the four case organisations, and shown that these are related to different line management hierarchies, educational levels, experience levels and spans of control. In conducting the MANOVAs, we

added the fixed variables one at a time in order to be able to compare the means of the groups. However, we did not investigate potential higher order effects of the fixed variables. That is, we did not consider possible influences of one organisational characteristic on another, and the effect of this on the HR constraints. In order to overcome this limitation, we would suggest using a structural equation model (SEM) in future research, not only because our fixed variables appeared somewhat correlated but also because of the relatively high correlation between the dependent variables. A SEM can uncover the influence of each fixed variable on each dependent variable by taking possible moderation effects into account. Future research should preferably consider all the organisational characteristics found in this research (both quantitatively and qualitatively) in a single model.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Although many HRM scholars seem to agree that line managers are weak HR performers, and agree on a set of constraining factors that lead to this poor performance, there has been a lack of knowledge on the reasons behind these constraining factors and why their saliency varies so much between organisations. We found that a number of organisational characteristics can influence line managers' perceptions of the HR constraints they face. The qualitative data revealed additional organisational characteristics to those we measured in the four case study surveys. Therefore, future research should quantitatively investigate these newly identified organisational constraints in a wide range of organisations to investigate their generalisability. The HR constraints experienced will vary with which and how many HR responsibilities are devolved, the quality of specific training courses for line managers, how service-oriented the HR department is and how it is structured, the form of support line managers need, the perception of being responsible for unnecessary tasks, and standardization between departments. Thus, in order to determine and put emphasis on those factors which constrain line managers in performing HR practices effectively, we need to know the organisational situation in which line managers operate and its effect on the line management role.

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## Chapter 5

### Line Managers as Implementers of HRM: Are They Effective?

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**Abstract**

It has been argued that line managers can never be effective implementers of HRM because of the following five factors: they are not willing to perform HR tasks, they do not have the time alongside their operational responsibilities, they lack sufficient competences to handle HR matters, they need support of HR specialists, and they lack the policies and procedures to tell them what they have to do and how to achieve this. We have therefore investigated which of these five factors are the most salient for the effective implementation of HR practices by line managers. Using surveys, line managers were asked which factors they perceive as most challenging, and their subordinates were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the way line managers apply HR practices on the work floor. We found that line managers actually are effective in implementing HR practices: they consider themselves effective, and their subordinates also experience them as effective. Only HR-related competences are salient for effective HR implementation, but capacity, support and policies and procedures are not seen as such. Perhaps surprisingly, line managers that are reluctant to perform HR practices turn out to be the most effective in practice. Although line managers perform HR tasks very well, there remains an important role for HR specialists in training and supporting the line.

## 5.1 Introduction

It is generally accepted that well-designed Human Resource Management (HRM) can help organisations achieve a competitive advantage and thereby improve bottom-line performance (Lado & Wilson, 1994; Huselid, 1995). When referring to the effectiveness of HRM, researchers usually measure the effectiveness of HR practices and are thus exploring their effectiveness (Huselid, Jackson & Schuler, 1997; Kane, Crawford & Grant, 1999; Wright, McMahan, Snell & Gerhart, 2001; Chang, 2005) rather than the effectiveness of HR implementation. However, the effectiveness of HRM depends not only on the presence of effective HR practices but also on the effectiveness of HR implementation (Huselid et al., 1997; Gratton & Truss, 2003).

Even if HR practices are effectively designed, HRM may still be ineffective if they are not implemented effectively on the work floor. According to Khilji & Wang (2006, p. 1180), 'in many organizations, intended HR practices are not properly implemented'. Therefore, developing first-class HR practices is only the first step towards the goal. The manner and context in which these practices are applied also plays a vital role (Wright & Nishii, 2006).

The problem is, however, that line managers are responsible for implementing HR practices in their daily work with employees (Guest, 1987; Flood, 1998; Storey, 1992; Lowe, 1992) but that they are generally seen as reluctant (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris, Doughty & Kirk, 2002; Lowe, 1992) and 'neither capable nor motivated to take on these issues' (Hope Hailey, Farndale & Truss, 2005, p. 64). McGovern, Gratton, Hope Hailey, Stiles & Truss (1997, p. 26) even believe that 'attempts to devolve HRM to the line in any grand sense can only be regarded as quixotic'.

Literature of devolving HR responsibilities to the line (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris et al., 2002; Renwick, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003) identifies a number of factors that constrain line managers in implementing HR practices effectively: (1) they do not have the time to perform HR practices (*capacity*), (2) they are unwilling to take on their HR responsibilities (*desire*), (3) they lack HR-related *competences*, (4) they need *support* from HR professionals, and (5) they need *policies and procedures* to guide them in performing their HR responsibilities. Such authors have found these five factors to be relevant for the performance of HR practices by line managers but, to date, we do not know which are the most salient for effective HR implementation. Therefore, in our research, we first examined which of the factors challenged line managers the most and, second, we measured the effect of those factors on line managers' HR implementation effectiveness. To achieve this research objective, we conducted a survey

in which we investigated line managers in carrying out their HR role, and their subordinates as judges of HR implementation effectiveness.

Our methodological approach therefore differs from those used in previous research on HR devolution in three fundamental ways. First, we used a research instrument to investigate line managers' reluctance to become actively involved in HR in a quantitative way. The five factors had previously been identified through case study research, but no scales existed to measure which were the most salient. Second, in previous research, explanations for line managers' reluctance to take on HRM duties have often been sought from HR managers rather than the line managers themselves (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Torrington & Hall, 1996). In these case studies, admittedly sometimes in combination with line managers, trade officers or employees, it was often only HR managers who were asked what they regarded as the drawbacks of devolving HR practices to the line, and what hindered line managers in carrying out HR practices. Third, we investigate the effects of the five factors on an output, namely the effectiveness of HR implementation by line managers. Some authors argue that devolving HR responsibilities to the line cannot be successful because line managers are simply not effective in implementing HR practices on the work floor (Bond & Wise, 2003; Hope Hailey et al., 2005; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006). We measure HR implementation effectiveness by asking line managers' subordinates about their satisfaction with the way their line managers carry out the HR activities in practice. Wright and Nishii (2006, p.11) note that while 'the actual HR practices exist objectively, yet must be perceived and interpreted subjectively by each employee'. It is the employees' experience of implemented HR practices and how these practices affect them that will eventually determine organisational performance (Khilji & Wang, 2006). Research by Rousseau (2001), Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and by Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) support the view that it is employees who should evaluate HR effectiveness.

## **5.2 Five Devolution Factors**

Line managers need time to implement HRM successfully. However, unlike HRM specialists, alongside their people management responsibilities they also have operational responsibilities, including authority for financial, technological and human decisions. They are responsible for keeping production running and in order to achieve this they need to perform various tasks, of which HRM is but one. Line managers might well perceive conflicting demands and competing priorities between operational and HR tasks (Hope Hailey et al., 2005; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Cunningham and Hyman (1999) present a case

study in which line managers were informally handing back HR responsibilities in order to cope with production responsibilities. The 'constant demand to deal with a range of problems' (McConville, 2006, p.645). both operational or personnel. can result in a perception of overload in the line manager's HR role (Harris et al., 2002; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003).

Restructuring (McConville & Holden, 1999; McGovern et al., 1997) often results in line managers getting increased workloads. They complain about additional responsibilities (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Harris et al., 2002), more complex and more demanding tasks (McConville & Holden, 1999). wider spans of control (McGovern et al., 1997; Renwick, 2003), a lack of uninterrupted time (McConville & Holden, 1999) and more paperwork (McConville, 2006). Often time pressure and pressure related to achieving business targets lead to problems for line managers in devoting sufficient time to communicating and consulting with subordinates (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; McConville, 2006; McGovern et al., 1997; Marchington, 2001; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003) or result in them giving such activities low priority because of short-term operational priorities (Gratton et al., 1999; Renwick, 2000. Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Perry & Kulik (2008, p. 263) observe that 'this short-range focus may result in people management that is fragmented. inconsistent and generally less effective'.

If line managers experience a lack of capacity to spend what they see as adequate time on HR responsibilities, and complain about overload between their operational and HR roles, we doubt whether they will be able to effectively implement HR practices on the work floor. That is, only line managers who are granted the capacity to spend time on HR issues can implement HR practices effectively.

*Hypothesis 1: The greater the capacity that line managers are given to spend time on performing HR practices, the more effectively they will implement these practices on the work floor.*

Capacity is the first condition that needs to be met in order to implement HR practices effectively. However, even if line managers are given the time to perform an HR role, they may not want to spend time on people management or fail to see the value added by such efforts. Therefore, a line manager's willingness to perform HR tasks is an essential precondition for successful HRM implementation. Even if all the organisational conditions for effective HR implementation are met, if line managers do not want to become engaged in HRM, nothing will eventually happen. Only when they understand that spending time on people management issues can be beneficial for themselves, their team or the performance of

their team, will they try their hardest to apply HR practices effectively. While some managers are enthusiastic about acquiring HR responsibilities, many feel that HR responsibilities are pushed upon them and are therefore reluctant to get involved (Harris et al., 2002).

A low level of desire can result from a lack of motivation or willingness to spend time on HR tasks. Motivation can be created, either in the form of personal incentives (Harris et al., 2002; McGovern, 1999) or institutionalised incentives (McGovern, 1999; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). In terms of personal incentives, line managers show little interest in the subject (Brewster & Larsen, 2000), and are not convinced that HR work is something they should spend much time on (Renwick, 2003). Regarding institutional incentives, the HR role is not generally included in line managers' performance objectives and line managers are only evaluated on achieving targets related to profits or sales and not in the area of managing people (McGovern et al., 1997). Such a lack of institutional incentives can also affect the personal motivation of line managers to perform HR practices and lead line managers to prioritise operational issues over HR issues (Harris et al., 2002; McGovern et al., 1997). As Whittaker & Marchington (2003, p.250) explain 'because line managers have many other pressing priorities than managing and developing the people working for them, it is likely that people management issues will be taken less seriously than production or service goals'.

The literature on HRM devolution doubts whether line managers have the desire to perform HR practices with their subordinates, and thus questions whether they can effectively implement HR practices (Bond & Wise, 2003; Harris et al., 2002; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). However, according to Huselid (1995), willingness is essential for performing tasks effectively. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: The greater the desire of line managers to perform HR practices, the more effectively they will implement these practices on the work floor.*

There is a need for HR-related competences if one is to successfully implement HRM. Even if line managers have the time and motivation to perform HR practices, if they do not know how to apply these practices, or to solve employee performance issues, implementing these tasks on the work floor might be difficult. Accordingly, they will do what they think is right, but this might not be the desired or correct way to carry out these practices.

Line managers often lack specialist knowledge on HRM. for example on legal requirements and agreed practices (Lowe, 1992; Hall & Torrington, 1998) and have limited people management skills (McGovern et al., 1997). They implement HR practices based on what they see as common sense (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995) or fail to deal with issues

early enough (Harris et al., 2002). According to Brewster and Larsen (2000, p. 208), ‘there is a danger in allocating HR responsibilities to line managers who do not know about relevant legislation, pay too little attention to managing trade union relationships, or resolve problems in unnecessary expensive ways’. Competences in performing HR activities can be developed through training. Some authors have shown the need for continual and systematic training in HR activities (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; McGovern, 1999; Renwick, 2000). However, they also recognise the lack of sufficient or adequate training courses for specific HR issues (Bond & Wise, 2003; Lowe, 1992) and a ‘leave well alone syndrome’ (Harris et al., 2002, p.222).

Line managers themselves also report concerns about the level of specialist expertise they feel is required to manage HR issues (Harris et al., 2002; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Hope Hailey et al. (2005) and Whittaker and Marchington (2003) argue that line managers’ skills and competences in HR practices are inadequate and that a lack of training will undoubtedly affect line managers’ effectiveness. On the basis of this statement, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3: The more HR competences that line managers have for performing HR practices, the more effectively they will implement these practices on the work floor.*

Line managers usually feel a need for support from HR professionals. Also, some HR professionals think that they should support the line because line managers have insufficient HR knowledge. Supporting line managers on how to solve people issues, advising them on legal issues and procedures, or sharing best practices with them, can help line managers carry out their HR role more effectively.

The literature shows that line managers need content-related advice and coaching from personnel specialists on how to perform HR activities (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris et al., 2002; Hope Hailey et al., 1997). It is even argued that line managers cannot carry out their HR responsibilities at acceptable levels without the assistance of HR professionals (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Lowe, 1992) who coach and to encourage them to meet their HR responsibilities, and for consultation about non-routine matters (Bond & Wise, 2003; Hall & Torrington, 1998). However, HR professionals do not always provide line managers with the services they need (Bond & Wise, 2003) because they do not have the time to advise them, are unable to provide effective support, or are reluctant to abandon their remaining HR responsibilities and play a new organisational role in supporting line managers (Gennard & Kelly, 1997; Hall & Torrington, 1998). Whittaker and Marchington (2003, p. 256) found in a

case study that 'HR was shut up in its ivory tower, out of touch with commercial realities, anonymous and lacking visibility, leading some to suggest that there was a lot of cynicism about the function'.

Authors such as Gennard and Kelly (1997) believe that, without support from HR professionals, line managers are unable to acquire sufficient competences in people management skills to progress organisational effectiveness. On this basis, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 4: The more HR support that line managers perceive they receive from HR professionals, the more effectively they will implement these practices on the work floor.*

Line managers experience a need for a clear overall HR policy and for accompanying procedures to clarify *which* practices they should use and *how* they should do so at the operational level. For their HR role, they lack a clear role definition (McConville, 2006) and therefore are unclear about their roles and responsibilities (Lowe, 1992). Still, many line managers believe that managing people is HR's responsibility (McGovern et al., 1997). Case studies reveal that there is significant perceptual divergence between line managers and HR professionals on aspects of line manager involvement in HRM (Harris et al., 2002; Maxwell & Watson, 2006). According to McConville (2006), line managers can perceive role dissonance and ambiguity when their role is not clearly defined.

HR departments tend to worry that line managers might manage people in an inconsistent way (Bond & Wise, 2003; Harris, 2001; McConville, 2006; Sisson & Storey, 2000), and so they try to prevent line managers interpreting, adjusting and fine-tuning HR practices according to their individual idiosyncratic understandings (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Harris, 2001). To achieve this, they introduce 'clear up-to-date written information' (Bond & Wise, 2003, p. 70), 'highly structured, depersonalised procedures' (Harris et al., 2000, p. 223) and 'detailed personnel procedures and codes' (Harris et al., 2002, p. 224), as well as frameworks, handbooks, toolkits and telephone helplines (Hall & Torrington, 1998) to ensure that line managers use HR practices as intended.

Thus, it seems necessary to first consult line managers about their HR responsibilities and authorities (Lowe, 1992; McGovern, 1999) and then to remove individual judgements and potential bias in interpreting and using HR practices by defining the way in which HR activities should be performed in practice. If this is not done, and line managers lack policies and procedures on which HR practices they should follow, and how, their effectiveness in implementing these practices is likely to suffer. Providing line managers with assistance in the

form of guidelines, instruments, forms and rules is expected to improve the effectiveness of HR implementation.

*Hypothesis 5: The greater the number of clear policies and procedures that line managers perceive they receive, the more effectively they will implement these practices on the work floor.*

To summarise, line managers who have time to devote to their HR responsibilities, who want to get engaged with their HR role, who have the competences to perform these tasks, who receive support from HR professionals and who are provided with clear policies and procedures on how to implement HR practices should be more effective in implementing such practices than those line managers who do not have the time, are unwilling, are not competent, go unsupported and are not provided with policies and procedures on how to perform their HR role.

### **5.3 Methodology**

#### **5.3.1 Population and Data Collection**

Data have been collected through a survey in two organisations, an international naval defence company and a national construction company. For our independent variables, i.e. the *five devolution factors*, our population is made up of line managers at various hierarchical levels in these two organisations, all supervising teams of operational employees. Our disaggregated sample is 174 line managers. For measuring our dependent variable, *line managers' HR implementation effectiveness*, the research population is all those subordinates supervised by the line managers investigated. Here, our disaggregated sample amounts to 1065 subordinates. Matching the data of both samples, the line managers and their subordinates, one to one was not possible because of the anonymity guaranteed to the line managers. Instead, we matched the data of both samples by matching the line managers and subordinates of a single department to a line management group and subordinate group respectively. In order to aggregate data, one needs to ensure consistency in the answers by respondents in the same group. For this, the standard deviations and the inter-class coefficients (ICCs) should be low, reflecting a low variance from the mean value. The standard deviations and ICCs of all variables are presented in Table 1 and demonstrate that the mean is a good reflection of the data gathered. For the line management group, we were able to accept standard deviations and ICC values that would usually be perceived of as too

high to accept the mean because, in approximately half of the departments, there was only one line management respondent, and in those where we investigated multiple line managers, there were only three line managers on average. The aggregated sample size is 74.

Table 1: ICC and Standard Deviation of the Variables

	<b>ICC</b>	<b>s.d.</b>
<b>Capacity</b>	0.42	1.10
<b>Desire</b>	0.12	0.61
<b>Competences</b>	0.14	0.72
<b>Support</b>	0.17	0.71
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	0.02	0.63
<b>Personnel administration</b>	0.13	0.66
<b>Recruitment &amp; selection</b>	0.06	1.03
<b>Career development</b>	0.13	0.83
<b>Career evaluation and rewards</b>	0.07	0.87
<b>People management</b>	0.12	0.77

### 5.3.2 Measures

#### 5.3.2.1 Independent Variables

In order to measure the factors necessary for successfully implementing devolved HR tasks, we developed a research instrument to investigate the capacity, desire, competences, support and policies & procedures as perceived by line managers. When developing items, one tries to ensure content validity in a measure. In order to use items that are likely to produce a good content validity, we used pre-tested scales found in the psychological and marketing literature that are regarded as reliable. These items were carefully translated into terms appropriate for the HR domain of line managers, and the reliability and validity of these items were then re-tested for this specific research domain. The five factors were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('disagree') to 5 ('agree'). The scales, number of items and Cronbach's Alpha are presented in Table 2. The reliability and validity of these newly developed items are good. The confirmatory factor analysis revealed a model with a good fit. A factor analysis was carried out for each of the five concepts separately. The goodness of fit and RMSEA measures respectively for each concept are as follows: 0.94 and 0.069 for *desire*; 0.99 and 0.042 for *capacity*; 0.98 and 0.056 for *competences*; 0.99 and 0.043 for *support*; and 0.94 and 0.073 for *policy & procedures*.

### 5.3.2.2 Dependent Variable

The HR implementation effectiveness of line managers is defined as the satisfaction felt with line managers, as implementers of HR practices. As it is the perceived effectiveness of the implementation process that is of interest, subordinates of line managers were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the way their line managers execute HR practices on the work floor using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('not satisfied') to 5 ('very satisfied'). Subordinates are stakeholders in the HR implementation process by line managers. We measure this satisfaction on the basis of an indication of line managers' perceived effectiveness in implementing the following five HR practices: personnel administration; recruitment & selection; career development; evaluation & rewarding; and people management. The selection of HR practices was based on Truss (2001). The 26 items making up the effectiveness measure were subjected to a factor analysis. We used Principal Component Analysis, with varimax rotation, to seek out the most reliable factor structure. Five factors, representing the HR practices named above, were retrieved involving a total of 19 items. The HR implementation effectiveness of line managers is an aggregated measure of these five HR practices.

Table 2: Concepts, Scales, Items and Cronbach's Alpha of the Variables

Concept	Scales	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Capacity</b>	Role overload (Reilly, 1982)	5	0.88
<b>Desire</b>	Situational motivation (Guay, Vallerand & Blanchard, 2000)	9	0.79
	Value-added (developed on basis of case study)	4	0.77
<b>Competences</b>	Occupational self-efficacy (Schyns & van Collani, 2002)	5	0.80
	Training (developed on basis of case study)	2	0.80
<b>Support</b>	HR support services (SERVQUAL. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988)	3	0.76
	HR support behavior (SERVQUAL. Parasuraman et al., 1988)	4	0.80
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	Role conflict (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970)	5	0.80
	Role ambiguity (Rizzo et al., 1970)	4	0.65
	User friendliness of HR forms (developed on basis of case study)	3	0.88
<b>HR implementation effectiveness</b>	Personnel administration	5	0.64
	Recruitment & selection	2	0.78
	Career development	4	0.82
	Evaluation & rewarding	5	0.87
	People management	5	0.84

### 5.3.2.3 Control Variables

To reduce the risk of false results due to correlations among the variables of interest in our constructs, we control for the following other variables in our statistical analysis: the demographic variables of age, experience as a line manager, education and span of control, and the organisation investigated. Older or more experienced line managers may implement HR practices more effectively not because they are better supported or have a greater desire to perform these tasks, but because they have done it more often than their younger colleagues. Line managers with a high education level might be able to apply a wider general knowledge or common sense in using HR practices than less well-educated line managers. The span of control, over small or larger groups of subordinates, might affect the effectiveness of HR implementation not because line managers are affected by one of the independent variables but because if they are responsible for more people they may simply spend more time on HR issues (McGovern et al., 1997). These variables were dummy coded (five age dummies, three experience dummies, three education dummies and three span of control dummies). As the organisations investigated differed by sector, size and products, this is also controlled for (construction company = 1; naval defence company = 0).

## 5.4 Results

According to the devolution literature, line managers perceive there to be five factors that constrain them in implementing HR practices and thus they do not implement these practices effectively. In order to investigate whether line managers are indeed reluctant to take on HR responsibilities, we calculated the mean scores for the five factors. By this, we revealed whether line managers, on average, are willing to perform HR practices, have the capacity to spend time on these tasks, have the competences needed to fulfil their HR role successfully, receive support from the HR department, and are provided with policies and procedures that inform them as to which HR tasks they are responsible for and how they should perform these practices with their subordinates.

The means, standard deviations and correlations of the independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 3. The means show that line managers themselves do not perceive many constraints in implementing HR practices. The means of all the factors are reasonably high (3.08 to 3.97). Although the devolution literature proposes that line managers are reluctant to take on HR responsibilities, our results reveal that the line managers were able to manage their time between operational and people issues, were willing to take on HR responsibilities, did perceive themselves as competent in the HR area, did receive sufficient

support from the HR department and did receive clear policies and procedures to fulfil their function. For the capacity factor, the deviation from the mean is reasonably high (s.d. = 1.01), indicating that line managers do differ in their capacities to undertake HR activities. A major factor in this large spread was a difference in the mean scores of the two companies. Supporting the line managers' positive opinions about their own HR performance, subordinates also evaluated the implementation of HR practices as effective. The mean subordinate score for HR implementation effectiveness was 3.54. Thus, the subordinates are generally satisfied with the way line managers apply HR tasks in practice.

In order to investigate which factor is most salient for effective HR implementation, we carried out a multiple regression analysis to test the formulated hypotheses. Given that all our hypotheses propose a direct effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable, and that the independent variables are correlated with each other (as shown in the correlation matrix), all the independent variables were included in a single model to calculate the best fit with the HR implementation effectiveness of line managers. The demographic and organisational control variables were added in a stepwise manner.

We used three regression models, as presented in Table 4: (1) without control variables, (2) with demographic control variables, and (3) with demographic control variables plus the contextual control variable construction company (=1 if construction company; =0 if naval defence company). In the first model, we see that the *capacity*, *desire*, *competences* and *support* factors have a significant effect on line managers' HR implementation effectiveness. However, the effect of the *desire* factor is in the opposite direction to what we had anticipated: negative rather than positive. The most salient factor for effective HR implementation is the support factor: the more support line managers receive from HR professionals, the more effectively they implement HR practices.

The demography of a line manager seems to have only a marginal effect on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in our model, whereas the contextual control variable does affect the relationship between the *capacity* and *support* factors and HR implementation effectiveness. These relationships become non-significant when controlling for context.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

	Means	s.d.	Capacity	Desire	Competences	Support	Policy & proc.	Comp. A	Comp. B	Age	Experience	Education	Span of control	HR Impl. Effect.
<b>Capacity</b>	3.08	1.01	1											
<b>Desire</b>	3.97	0.50	-0.09	1										
<b>Compet.</b>	3.83	0.58	-0.02		1									
<b>Support</b>	3.46	0.63	0.18	0.48***	0.08	1								
<b>Policy &amp; procedures</b>	3.56	0.50	0.31***	0.47***	0.39***	0.40***	1							
<b>Comp. A</b>	0.28	0.45	0.53***	0.31***	0.30***	0.43***	-0.06	1						
<b>Comp. B</b>	0.72	0.45	-	0.31***	0.30***	-0.43***	0.06	-1.00	1					
<b>Age</b>	44.94	7.51	-0.17	-0.08	0.21	-0.33***	-0.06	-0.27**	0.27**	1				
<b>Experience</b>	3.99	1.07	0.04	-0.10	0.16	-0.11	0.10	0.13	-0.13	0.50***	1			
<b>Education</b>	3.88	1.22	-0.20*	0.20	0.27**	-0.31***	0.07	-0.59***	0.59***	0.28**	-0.10	1		
<b>Span of control</b>	4.27	1.56	-0.08	-0.01	0.04	-0.07	-0.18	-0.04	0.04	-0.15	0.13	-0.13	1	
<b>HR Impl. Effect.</b>	3.54	0.45	0.27**	-0.23	0.05	0.28**	0.10	0.44***	-0.44***	-0.03	0.19	-0.17	-0.13	1

Confidence level: \* <= 0.10. \*\* <= 0.05. \*\*\* <= 0.01

The proportion of the variability in the HR implementation effectiveness of line managers that is explained by the five factors increases when the control variables are included, as shown by the increase in the R squared value. Adding the control variables to the model improves the prediction of HR implementation effectiveness by 14% (from 0.24 to 0.38). The F-ratio also decreases (from 3.70 to 1.98) after adding the control variables, indicating that the regression model without the control variables predicts HR implementation effectiveness better than the regression model with the control variables. However, the F-ratio in both cases is significant at least the 95% confidence level.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
<b>Constant</b>	3.24***	3.39***	3.28***
<b>Capacity</b>	0.08*	0.09*	0.03
<b>Desire</b>	-0.35***	-0.30**	-0.28**
<b>Competences</b>	0.16*	0.18*	0.21**
<b>Support</b>	0.22***	0.25***	0.15
<b>Policies &amp; Procedures</b>	0.02	-0.11	-0.01
<b>Vocational education</b>		-0.43*	-0.45*
<b>Secondary education</b>		0.13	0.07
<b>31-40 age</b>		0.00	0.01
<b>51-60 age</b>		0.04	0.07
<b>61+ age</b>		0.05	0.04
<b>10-20 subordinates</b>		-0.15	-0.14
<b>20 or more subordinates</b>		-0.15	-0.11
<b>0-5 years experience</b>		-0.17	-0.08
<b>6-10 years experience</b>		0.09	0.09
<b>Construction company</b>			0.28
<b>N</b>	64	64	64
<b>F</b>	3.70***	1.98**	1.98**
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.24	0.36	0.38
<b>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.17	0.18	0.19

Dependent variable: line managers' HR implementation effectiveness

Confidence level: \* <= 0.10. \*\* <= 0.05. \*\*\* <= 0.01

In terms of the *capacity* factor, a positive relationship between a line manager's capacity to spend time on HR practices and their HR implementation effectiveness was hypothesised. We indeed found a positive relationship, which is significant at 90% for both models 1 and 2. However, when including the investigated organisation as a factor, the relationship became non-significant. The generally formulated Hypothesis 1 can therefore be supported at a 90% confidence level, but is not supported when controlling for context.

We hypothesised a positive effect of a line manager's *desire* to perform HR practices on their HR implementation effectiveness. However, rather than a positive effect, a negative effect was found. In other words, the more *desire* line managers have to take on their HR responsibilities and the more motivated they are to apply them, the less effective their subordinates perceive the implementation of those practices. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is not confirmed.

Hypothesis 3 is supported because the more HR *competences* that line managers perceive they have, the more effectively they are viewed as implementing HR practices on the work floor. The effect of a line manager's competences on their HR implementation effectiveness becomes stronger when taking their age and experience into consideration and stronger again when controlling for the investigated organisation.

The greater the *support* line managers perceive themselves receiving from HR professionals, the more effectively they implement HR practices. Models 1 and 2 support this hypothesis because an increase in support to line managers of '1000 units' leads to an increase in implemented HR practices effectiveness of '220 units'. However, this relationship becomes non-significant if we take the context into account. We can therefore support Hypothesis 4 in general but cannot confirm it when controlling for investigated organisation.

The *policy & procedures* factor is not shown to be significantly related to HR implementation effectiveness and. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is not confirmed.

In general, we can conclude that the more capacity line managers have to apply HR practices, the more HR competences they have and the greater their support from HR professionals, the more effectively they will implement HR practices on the work floor. However, when we control for context, only line managers' HR-related competences are significantly and positively related to their effectiveness in implementing HRM.

## 5.5 Discussion

Our results are not consistent with the views presented in the devolution literature. We found that line managers are less constrained in performing their HR responsibilities than the literature suggested. We did not find that line managers were failing in their HR role as indicated by a number of authors (Hope Hailey et al., 2005; Lowe, 1992; McGovern et al., 1997), but rather that they seem to have accepted their HR role and found a way to carry out the expected HR practices to the satisfaction of both themselves and their subordinates. What might be the reasons for these different findings? One possibility relates to the fact that our research is quantitative, whereas earlier research was qualitative. It is possible to draw more

distinctive conclusions when measuring concepts such as desire by using a range of constructs and items rather than simply by asking if one is motivated or not. The likelihood of getting socially desirable responses from line managers is reduced when asking them to complete an anonymous survey. Alternatively, the different outcomes may be related to the different research populations investigated in the devolution literature and in our research. Earlier case study research focused mostly on questioning HR professionals (sometimes in combination with line managers) to identify the constraints faced by line managers in their HR work. Perhaps, line managers and their subordinates have a different view on the success of devolution than their HR colleagues. Another possible reason for the distinctive results could be timing. Most of the case studies reported in the devolution literature were carried out between 1995 and 2003. Perhaps it is simply that, over the last 15 years, line managers have learnt to accept their HR role, have improved their HR skills and have learnt to share their time between operational and personnel responsibilities. Maybe, also, HR professionals have accepted that they need “to let go HR responsibilities” (Hall & Torrington, 1998), have improved their supportive behaviour and services, have learnt to provide line managers with clearer role descriptions and expectations, and have also provided clearer guidelines and instruments with which to perform the HR role.

Our results have highlighted the importance of context, and this should be taken into account when researching the effectiveness of devolution. Differences in the ways that organisations devolve HR responsibilities to the line, and train or support line managers in performing their HR role, can result in either effective or ineffective HR implementation. Further, the relationship between the HR department and line management and the commitment of top management to HR devolution seem to influence the way line managers implement HR practices. Thus, the differences in HR implementation effectiveness among organisations can be explained by the way organisations manage the devolution process.

Our research indicates that line managers are willing to accept and execute HR responsibilities and have the desire to carry out HR practices that involve their subordinates. Surprisingly, however, the line managers in our study who were most strongly motivated to perform HRM responsibilities performed their HR activities less effectively than their less motivated colleagues. This result is clearly at odds with the general view expressed in the devolution literature: that a desire by line managers to execute HR responsibilities is salient for effective HRM implementation (McGovern, 1999; Harris et al., 2002. Whittaker & Marchington, 2003).

A possible reason for our contrary finding is that we measured HR implementation effectiveness based on the opinions of employees. For employees it does not matter whether their line manager believes in the designed HR practices, and is therefore willingly applying them, since employees can only judge the actually implemented HR practices. If line managers are not enthusiastic about applying the designed HR practices, by interpreting them in their own way and fine tuning them to an individual situation they will become effective in what is understood to be effective on the work floor. Alternatively, it may be that line managers willingly apply the designed HR practices but that employees do not appreciate standardised procedures and depersonalised instruments and prefer a personal approach with individual decisions: they might prefer informal feedback over a formal performance evaluation. It does not seem to matter whether line managers are motivated or not, they can still be effective in implementing HR practices. For HR specialists this means that they do not need to appoint line managers who are motivated or see an added value in performing HR responsibilities, it is sufficient to push the present line managers into putting more time and effort into their HR responsibilities. According to McGovern et al. (1997) and Whittaker and Marchington (2003), line managers need to have both personal and institutional incentives to perform HR practices. However, our finding is that it is institutional reinforcement that is critical; the personal motivation of line managers is much less so. For line managers it is only important that they know what they have to do, they do not have to like it.

More and better policies and procedures do not lead to more effective implementation of HR practices. Although our findings indicate that line managers are generally satisfied with the amount and the quality of the policies and procedures they receive, this does not improve the way they apply HR practices. Reasons for this missing relationship might be either that line managers receive policies and procedures that do not help them in applying HR practices, or that they can be effective without them. Perhaps, after years of being responsible for HR tasks, line managers no longer need job descriptions that tell them which HR practices they are responsible for, or guidelines and toolkits that tell them how they should handle HR responsibilities. An alternative reason could be that they have never found any need for policies and procedures because they apply HR practices according to their own interpretation and understanding. If so, this is a development that HR professionals were trying to avoid (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Harris, 2001) through structuring and depersonalising procedures (Harris et al., 2002). The slightly negative but non-significant effect of policies and procedures on line managers' HR implementation effectiveness that we found could be explained by the fact that the more they use standardised instruments and depersonalised

procedures, the worse employees evaluate their effectiveness. That would indicate that employees prefer individual, personalised ways of applying HR practices over standardised and depersonalised approaches.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The devolution literature argues that line managers are ineffective in implementing HR practices on the work floor because five factors restrain them from applying HR practices effectively. However, we found that line managers are actually quite well-equipped to carry out their HR responsibilities and that they are perceived by their subordinates as effective in implementing HR practices. The results highlighted that in the relationship between the five devolution factors and effective HR implementation the context matters. Our findings suggest that the more competences that line managers have, the more effectively they implement HR practices and the more desire they have to perform HR practices effectively, the less effectively they implement HRM. Thus, our conclusion is that only one of the five claimed factors is positively salient for HR implementation effectiveness.

## 5.7 References

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## Chapter 6

### Discussion

## 6.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this thesis has been to investigate the constraints line managers perceive in applying HR practices on the work floor, and the effect of these constraints on their effectiveness in HR implementation. We first identified which constraints were seen as hindering, and then developed scales in order to test these constraints and validate the research instrument. Next, we investigated the differences in perceived constraints in a range of organisations and, finally, we measured the effect of the HR constraints on line managers' HR implementation effectiveness. Table 6.1 presents the results and theoretical implications of these investigations. Now, in this chapter, the journey towards the concluding of the thesis is discussed, focusing on the results and the new aspects uncovered in the research. Further, we highlight the contributions as well as the limitations of this research and move on to discuss suggestions for further and future research. The theoretical and practical implications of this thesis are then addressed.

## 6.2 Summary of Findings

Our starting point for this research was the *empirical problem* discussed in the devolution literature. It has been stated that an increasing number of HR responsibilities are being devolved to line managers, but that line managers experience constraints in applying HR practices, which makes their implementation of these practices ineffective. Case study research has identified ever more constraints resulting in line managers not implementing HR effectively. However, to us, just identifying these constraints did not seem sufficient because they were (1) collected from individual cases, (2) not placed within a comprehensive model and hence (3) their predictive power was never tested. This led to a classic situation of increasing complexity without a better understanding of what was going on. We saw it as time to apply Occam's razor, which is a justification for preferring simple models over complex ones (Domingos, 1999). An additional problem with previous research, alongside its casuistic nature, was that it usually relied on HR managers' perceptions of reality. It seemed to us more logical to actually ask line managers what made HR implementation difficult for them. These problem statements resulted in four papers that investigate different aspects of the research and respond to various research questions (see Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1: Paper, Research Questions, Results and Theoretical Implications of this Thesis**

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Theoretical Implications</b>
1. Identifying first-line managers' HR constraints on implementing HR practices effectively	To what extent do first-line managers themselves perceive the five factors identified so far as hindering or fostering their HR implementation success?	Line managers perceive <i>capacity</i> , <i>competences</i> , <i>support</i> and <i>policy &amp; procedures</i> as constraining, but not <i>desire</i> . The significance of the factors is dependent on the organisational context and personal characteristics.	First-line managers recognise the five presented factors as relevant hindrances to successful HR implementation. However, they do not perceive any lack of desire to perform their HR role. The organisational context seems to affect the importance of the perceived factors as there are large differences between the business units studied.
2. Development and validation of scales for HR constraints on line managers	What measures are effective in researching the constraints perceived by line managers in implementing HR practices?	The scales for line managers' HR constraints are simplified using a number of measurement validity approaches, such as confirmatory factor analysis, convergent and discriminant validity and Intra-Class Correlation Coefficients (ICC). This resulted in excellent goodness-of-fit indices and good reliabilities.	We have developed scales for a research instrument that measures line managers' HR constraints when performing HR practices. No scales had previously existed to measure HR implementation constraints, and the five factors were based on case study research. Although the scales were based on previously validated scales in other domains, quite some moderations were necessary to produce

			both stable and reliable scales for the line.
3. Differences between organisations regarding constraining HR factors	How do organisational differences influence the HR constraints line managers perceive in implementing HR practices?	We found more organisational characteristics than previously assumed and thus measured. The measured ones are: educational level, experience in line management function, hierarchical level of line manager and span of control. Additional organisational characteristics were found in the qualitative data.	Additional organisational differences found affecting the perceived HR constraints are: quantity and quality of HR tasks, their perceived relevance, sophistication of training courses, organisation of support function, HR service-orientation, kind of support required, HR responsibility perceived unnecessary tasks, and non-standardization. Line managers and organisations find solutions in order to overcome the impact of these constraints.
4. Effect of HR constraints on line managers' HR implementation effectiveness	Which of the five factors identified in the literature as constraints on the effective HR implementation are salient to line managers' HR implementation effectiveness?	<i>Competences</i> was the only positive significant factor on HR implementation effectiveness, while <i>desire</i> has a significant and negative influence. <i>Capacity, support</i> and <i>policy &amp; procedures</i> do not affect the HR implementation effectiveness of line managers.	Employees appreciate line managers who are not motivated to perform HR practices according to the rules, but prefer a personal, idiosyncratic style. Of the five constraining factors, only <i>competences</i> significantly increases the effectiveness of line managers' HR implementation.

### **6.2.1 Chapter 2**

By studying the devolution literature (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995, 1999; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Harris, Doughty & Kirk, 2002; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2000, 2003; Thornhill & Saunders, 1998; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003), we were able to boil the many problems mentioned in devolving HR responsibilities to the line down to five factors that are regularly assumed to constrain line managers when implementing HR practices on the work floor, namely: desire, capacity, competences, support and policy & procedures. The formulated research question reads as follows: *“To what extent do first-line managers themselves perceive the five factors so far identified as hindering or fostering their HR implementation success?”*

In order to pilot-test these five factors, first-line managers in four companies in the Netherlands were interviewed about what *they* perceived to hinder them in their HR role. Four of the five factors were indeed recognised as potential constraints in HR implementation by line managers. As regularly depicted in the devolution literature, some line managers lacked sufficient time (capacity) to perform HR practices effectively, perceived themselves as not sufficiently competent to handle all the HR responsibilities, found they were insufficiently supported by HR and that they lacked clear policies and procedures concerning their HR role. However, they did perceive themselves as having the desire to perform their HR role, and saw clearly the added value of the HR practices. Thus, desire, one of the five factors discerned from the literature, did not seem to be a constraint on effective HR implementation. However, taking into consideration that quantitative investigations could reveal some lack of desire among line managers, we decided to keep this factor in our model. Further, we gained valuable insights into the HR role of first-line managers and what is important in terms of the five factors. In addition, this initial survey did not result in any additional hindering factors being added by these line managers. Although we already had a quite elaborate operationalisation of the five factors in order to measure these factors, the pilot case study helped us in further operationalising the factors in order to develop scales that measure the line managers' HR constraints in their HR role and that are suited and understandable to the line management population.

### **6.2.2 Chapter 3**

In Chapter 3, the following research question was explored: *“What measures are effective in researching the constraints perceived by line managers when implementing HR practices?”* In order to produce items with good validity, we relied on reliable, previously-

tested scales whenever possible. Given that no suitable scales could be found in the HR literature, we looked in psychological and marketing literature to identify good and reliable items, and developed scales on the basis of the pilot case study. The items identified needed to be reformulated to fit the situation of line managers in performing HR tasks. We managed to collect data from 471 line managers in six organisations in the Netherlands. The organisations were selected on the basis of organisational characteristics, such as the industry, the devolution of HR responsibilities to the line managers and the structure of the HR function. By first getting the commitment of the organisations' HR management teams for our research, preparing line managers before they received the questionnaire and sending them reminders, we were able to achieve the good overall response rate of 51%. In order to validate our scales, we used exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, reliability assessment, discriminant and convergent validity and inter-rater reliability to examine the content and construct validity of our scales. The process of scale purification, based on the confirmatory factor analysis, reduced the original 75 items to 44 items, resulting in reliable and validated scales that were relevant to the situation of line managers applying HR practices at the operational level.

### **6.2.3 Chapter 4**

Comparing the results from the various organisations through the analysis of variance and qualitative data from interviews, we concluded that the results did vary significantly between the organisations studied. On this basis, the research question for Chapter 4 became: *“How do organisational differences influence the HR constraints perceived by line managers in implementing HR practices?”* Line managers in some organisations did seem able to better divide their time between operational and personnel responsibilities than in others, or were more satisfied with the support they received. Studying the reasons for these differences using the quantitative and qualitative results from four of the six organisations (only four organizations agreed to collect qualitative data next to the quantitative ones), we found that the differences could be explained by organisational contingencies between the case companies. The organisations differed from each other in terms of which and how many HR tasks they devolved to line managers, line management's HR responsibilities, the managers' span of control over operational employees, the education level and experience required to fill a line management position in the organisation, the hierarchical position of the line manager, previous organisational changes, the sophistication of offered training courses and educational programmes, the way the HR function was organised (close to the line or service-oriented), the kind of support required by line managers, differences regarding standardisation between

department or units, and line managers' perceptions of being responsible for tasks they perceive as needless. Line managers' HR constraints in performing HR practices were found to be dependent on the organisational situation, determined by which organisational characteristics were present in an organisation. The more constraints line managers perceive in their HR role, the more creative they, or the organisation, becomes in finding solutions to these issues, because, at the end of the day it is the line manager who has to perform these practices no matter which or how many constraints concern them. In terms of the *desire* constraint, external motivation and identified regulations were found to motivate line managers to perform their HR role. They create *capacity* for their HR tasks by devolving some of their HR responsibilities to experienced employees, secretaries or administrative staff. Before the HR *competences* of line managers become inadequate to solve personnel problems, they hand back the responsibility for issues such as disciplinary talks or lay-offs to HR managers, or ask them for advice and help on how to solve such issues. If line managers are unsatisfied with the *support* they receive from HR managers, they may search for support elsewhere, e.g. from fellow line managers or their superiors. Addressing the *policy & procedures* factor, organisations resolve issues by issuing rules, forms, guidelines and norms to line managers on how to perform HR practices and ensure HR responsibilities are evident by providing line managers with institutional incentives. In this chapter, we were able to demonstrate that different organisations organise the devolution of HR responsibilities and operational HR implementation differently and that, therefore, the line managers involved in our survey perceived various extents of constraints in their HR role.

#### **6.2.4 Chapter 5**

Having developed and applied reliable scales, we could begin to analyse the data. The descriptive results have high means for all of the five factors, indicating that line managers do not perceive many constraints in performing their HR role. Line managers thus have the desire and competences to perform HR practices as well as getting the support and policy & procedures they need to satisfactorily apply HR practices. They have, however, somewhat less capacity for their HR role compared with the other factors. However, we still cannot call the capacity factor a constraint, because the mean value is still high. Based on these general results, we must disagree with the devolution literature that states that line managers fail to do a good HR job because they are constrained by their own desire, capacity and competences as well as the support and policy & procedures they receive: they actually do just fine.

What is left to ask is, when line managers do perceive constraints in performing their HR role, does this actually affect the effectiveness of how they implement HRM? Or, more formally, *“which of the five constraining factors are salient for line managers’ HR implementation effectiveness?”*

We decided to test the effect of line managers being constrained from this predicament. After all, if line managers are seriously hindered in performing HR tasks, their subordinates are the ones to suffer. That is, serious hindrances will lead to real experienced deficiencies. We measured HR implementation effectiveness by asking line managers’ subordinates how satisfied they were with the way their line managers carry out HR practices. It was only possible to measure the dependent variable, and therefore the effect of the HR constraints on line managers’ HR implementation effectiveness, in two of the six organisations studied (as explained later, the other four organizations suffered from the economic crisis and therefore decided to not participate in the effectiveness part of the research). Overall, subordinates evaluated their line manager’s implementation of HR as quite effective; they were satisfied with the way the line managers performed their HR role at the level of the operational line. In order to more precisely assess the effect of the HR constraints on line managers’ HR implementation effectiveness, we aggregated the subordinates’ data to the data of their department and performed a multiple regression analysis, using personal and organisational characteristics of the line managers as control variables. Somewhat surprisingly, only the competences factor had a significant positive effect on HR implementation effectiveness, while the capacity, support and policy & procedures factors were not significantly related to HR implementation effectiveness. Therefore, line managers’ competences to perform their HR role are most salient for their HR implementation effectiveness. So, although case studies have identified five factors that can contribute to explaining the ineffectiveness of line managers when it comes to HR implementation, in fact these factors, with the exception of the line managers’ self-perceived competences, by and large do not explain or predict line management effectiveness. Therefore, we conclude that the problems line managers do perceive in dividing their time between operational and personnel responsibilities, the perceived lack of support from HR managers and in terms of policies & procedures do not necessarily make them bad implementers of HR practices since their subordinates evaluate their HR performance positively. Further, it would seem that subordinates use different criteria than their line managers or HR managers in evaluating effective HR implementation.

The desire of line managers to carry out an HR role was found to be significantly negatively related to HR implementation effectiveness. In other words, the more motivated

line managers are to perform HR practices, the worse they are perceived in performing such tasks on the work floor. The reason for this may be that the more line managers want to do it right, the more they stick to the guidelines and rules set by HR. They play it 'by the book' and hence lack the necessary room for manoeuvre and freedom in applying HR practices according to their own benefits. This can have two consequences for employees: (1) the bureaucratic behaviour of line managers towards their HR responsibilities might scare employees because the latter feel threatened to perform well whatever the cost, or (2) employees fear that, when line managers apply the intended HR practices, they lose the possibility of benefitting by building mutually beneficial idiosyncratic deals between themselves and their line managers (Rousseau, 2001b; Rousseau, Ho & Greenberg, 2006). This result provides rich insights into what employees appreciate in terms of HR implementation: the personal, idiosyncratic way is preferred to "doing it right".

### **6.3 Contributions**

This thesis contributes to previous knowledge on HR devolution and implementation effectiveness in a number of ways. First, to date, explanations for line managers' reluctance to engage in HRM have been mostly identified by questioning HR managers rather than the line managers themselves. Often in such case studies, only HR managers are asked what they regard as the drawbacks of devolving HR practices to the line and what hinders line managers in performing HR practices. Perry and Kulik (2008) even asked HR managers how well line managers were trained or supported by their organisation. Exceptions to this approach include the research by McConville and Holden (1999) and by McGovern, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, Stiles and Truss (1997), which focused on the consequences of devolution for the line and therefore used line managers as the sole respondents. Whereas the consequences of devolution are mostly discussed from the viewpoint of the HR department, and the role HR managers could then play in becoming more strategic, we have shown that it is important that the consequences for line management should also be explored as they are responsible for implementing HR practice on the work floor (Guest, 1987; Lowe, 1992; Storey, 1992) and are the ones who determine its effectiveness (Brewster & Larsen, 1992). Our results show that line managers do recognise the five proposed factors as potential hindrances in carrying out their HR responsibilities, but that in practice the overall effect is very limited. That is, they do not perceive severe constraints in performing their HR responsibilities.

Second, we developed a research instrument to investigate the line managers' HR constraints in a quantitative way instead of adopting the qualitative case study approach that

has been used by devolution researchers. By using a validated measurement instrument, we could measure line managers' perceived constraints on a scale from 1 to 5 and explore which characteristics were the most significant in implementing HR practices on the work floor. In addition, we collected qualitative data to help interpret the results of the quantitative data. It is especially our combination of quantitative and qualitative methods that contributes to a better understanding of HR implementation by line managers. Our findings and research method once again show that one should be very cautious in making generalisations from single case study findings. While this form of research is very useful for identifying and understanding possible constraining factors, testing with a large sample is of the essence. Not only in order to apply Occam's razor - to identify which factors are salient and which are not - but also to avoid the risk that a problem found in one particular case is then proclaimed as a universal cause for line managers' ineffectiveness in handling devolved HR practices.

Third, we showed that the expected constraints are not as relevant for HR implementation effectiveness by line managers as is generally claimed. By using line managers' HR implementation effectiveness as an outcome variable, we could investigate the effect of the line managers' constraining factors on their HR implementation effectiveness. At the same time, we also investigated the effectiveness of line managers in performing their HR role. The devolution literature tends to link line managers' constraints in performing HR practices to ineffective implementation of those practices on the work floor (Bond & Wise, 2003; Hope Hailey et al., 2005; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006), but does not actually measure this effect. We did measure it, and discovered that there is no significant relationship between most of the constraining factors and HR implementation effectiveness.

Fourth, we used a multi-respondent analysis to measure the effect of line managers' HR constraints on their HR implementation effectiveness. In addition to line managers, who reported on characteristics they perceived as constraining when implementing HR practices, their subordinates were also involved in evaluating the effectiveness of their line managers in implementing HR practices. Rather than using self-reporting measures of line managers' HR implementation effectiveness, we thus called on an external party to assess line managers in their HR role.

Fifth, through this research we contribute to the discussion on whether HR effectiveness should be measured at the employee level rather than at the HR or management level. According to Wright and Nishii (forthcoming), employees need to perceive and subjectively interpret the HR practices that are implemented by line managers. It is employees' perceptions of implemented HR practices, and how these practices affect them, that will

eventually determine organisational performance (Khilji & Wang, 2006). Research by Rousseau (2001a), Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) support the view that it is employees who should evaluate effectiveness. This is how we measured HR implementation effectiveness in this study, and we would argue that our findings valuable results on line managers' effectiveness in applying HR practices.

## **6.4 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research**

Although we have just described the contributions of our research in positive terms, there are also a couple of limitations that need to be recognised and addressed in further research.

### **6.4.1 Lack of Theoretical Foundations**

This thesis is based on an *empirical problem* that has been discussed by authors such as Brewster and Larsen (1992, 2000), Guest (1987), Lowe (1992), Marchington (2001) and Storey (1992), and explored by case study research reported in the devolution literature (Bond & Wise, 2003; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Harris et al., 2002; McConville & Holden, 1999; McGovern et al., 1997; Renwick, 2000, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). However, the explored constraints suggested following devolution are not theoretically based nor developed from a theory. This lack of a theoretical foundation needs to be addressed in further research.

A suitable theory for developing the five factors that are seen as constraining line managers in implementing HR practices effectively is the theory on causal attributions (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967). Attribution theory is concerned with causal principles that people use to explain behaviour, whether it be one's own behaviour, others' behaviour or episodic events (Nishii, Lepak & Schneider, 2008). It is argued that people interpret the causes of behaviour and this then determines their attitudes and behaviours (Kelley & Michela, 1980). The causes of certain actions are analysed by unravelling what effects can be attributed to which factors present either within the person (internal) or external to the person, namely within the environment (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Weiner, 1974). Each of these two forces is made up of two contributing factors. The personal force contains power (*ability*) and motivation (*trying*), while the environmental force contains *opportunity* and *luck*. Whether a person can attain the desired goal depends on the relationship between the difficulty of an environmental task and the person's ability, but success also requires that one tries (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1974). A line manager's performance in implementing HR

practices can be viewed in terms of personal and environmental forces, in which the personal forces are the *desire* (try, effort) to perform the HR tasks and the HR-related *competences* (ability), and the environmental forces comprise the *support, capacity* and *policy & procedures* (whether there is an opportunity to perform). An alternative application of this theory combines ability and environmental forces, in the sense of “can”. A line manager’s HR performance depends on whether a person “can” manage their time so as to perform HR practices (*capacity*) and “can” handle the *policies and procedures* regarding their HR responsibilities and how to perform HR tasks.

Having argued that the theory on causal attributions could be a valuable theory on which to base the five constraining factors, one should not forget that this thesis has concluded that most of the five factors are not relevant in explaining HR implementation effectiveness. Do we need a theoretical basis when these factors are not relevant? Maybe it would be more logical to search for a theoretical basis for what employees actually want from their line managers, or what they attribute to the effectiveness of HR implementation by line managers, and look for those factors that enable line managers to perform accordingly. Since it is how employees evaluate line managers on their implementation of HR practices on the work floor that is important, and as they seem to demand more personal approaches in implementing HR practices, their locus of causality should be studied. In order to gain an understanding of the needs of employees when it comes to HR implementation, the attribution theory could again help, but this time by exploring the causal explanations that employees attribute to line management’s behaviour in applying HR practices. Whereas Nishii et al. (2008) chose to investigate the attributions employees made about management’s motivation for using particular HR practices, we would opt to explore the attributions employees make about their line management’s implementation of HR practices on the work floor.

#### **6.4.2 Limited Sample**

Although, to our knowledge, the current thesis is the first study to measure the actual effect of devolution constraints on implementing HRM at the operational level (using employee scores), our sample is very limited. Our initial plan had been to collect relevant additional data from each of the companies in which we had first assessed the HR constraints but, due to the financial crisis starting at the end of 2008 in the Netherlands, only two companies participated in the “effect” part of the research. Further, given the need to guarantee anonymity to the participants, we were not able to aggregate the data of line managers and their subordinates at the individual line management level but only at the

department level. This left us with an aggregated sample of 74, despite the large number of participating subordinates (n=1065). Having promised anonymity, it was difficult to improve on the limited aggregated sample because respondents were anxious about giving honest answers if there was any risk of their answers being traced back to them with potential consequences. Despite this limitation, in comparison to the case study approaches that were only able to identify possible constraining factors, we were able to test the effect of these potential constraints on outcome and show whether these constraints did limit HR effectiveness to the extent suggested elsewhere (Bond & Wise, 2003; Hope Hailey et al., 2005; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006).

Our research design provides the opportunity not only to measure this effect using multiple regression analysis, but also to analyse the effect of HR constraints on HR implementation effectiveness through a multi-level analysis. Line managers and employees demonstrate individuals from two different levels in the organisation, an individual and a management level. According to Klein and Kozlowski (2000), organisations are by definition multi-level entities and therefore multi-level research is preferable when employees are nested within teams (led by a line manager) and when having multiple observations (various subordinates) of a single person (the line manager).

#### ***6.4.3 Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship***

An additional limitation of our research is our limited knowledge about the personal relationships between the line managers and their subordinates, and how this relationship influences the way subordinates evaluate their line manager's HR implementation effectiveness. According to Gratton and Truss (2003), one should take the behaviours and values of line managers into consideration because, in their attitudes, conversations and body language, they can send out clear messages to employees. For our dependent variable, we asked subordinates how satisfied they were with the way their direct supervisor applied various HR practices, in order to evaluate the HR implementation effectiveness of line managers. By not considering the leadership behaviour of line managers (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), and the relationship between line managers and their subordinates, we do not know whether the HR implementation effectiveness of line managers is evaluated positively because line managers apply HR practices well, or because they treat their subordinates well. A way to overcome this limitation would be to also measure the relationship between line managers and their subordinates, for example by applying a leader-member exchange (LMX) approach (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro &

Cogliser, 1999; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997), which measures the quality of the manager-employee relationship, or the perceived supervisor support (PSS) approach (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski & Rhoades, 2002; Rhoades Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006), which measures the degree to which supervisors value employees' contributions and care about their well-being. By using LMX and/or PSS as control variables, we could draw clearer conclusions on the way line managers apply HR practices and therefore whether they implement HRM effectively or not.

#### **6.4.4 Self-Evaluation Bias**

Finally, we need to address the limitations resulting from self-evaluation bias. According to the theory of self-enhancement (Colvin, Funder & Block, 1995; Kwan, John, Kenny, Bond & Robins, 2004; Paulhus, 1998; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008; Taylor & Brown, 1994), human beings have an excessively flattering view of themselves, and of things associated with the self. It is defined as “a self-perception (that) is overly positive” (Kwan et al., 2004, p. 94) and makes people take a too favourable view of themselves. A comparable limitation related to attribution theory is that people attribute success to themselves or to their actions, and failure to environmental or external factors (Geare, Edgar & Deng, 2006). The risk is that line managers will give an overly positive view of their HR performance and search for external HR constraints such as poor support from HR managers rather than admit to internal HR constraints such as their own lack of desire to perform HR tasks.

To address this issue in our research, we should ideally have controlled for self-enhancement bias in order to achieve an objective measure of the constraints perceived by line managers in implementing HR practices. This could be achieved by either comparing self-perceptions to perceptions of others or by comparing self-perceptions to how one is perceived by others (Kwan et al., 2004). In our situation, we would need to measure the discrepancy between line managers' self-perceptions and the way these line managers are perceived by knowledgeable others (Kwan et al., 2004). The multi-constituency approach (Tsui, 1987; Tsui, 1990) suggests that it would be beneficial to collect data from multiple stakeholders surrounding the line manager, including subordinates, senior managers, and HR managers (Paauwe, 2004), in order to include insights from their various perspectives.

However, we doubt the ability of senior managers, HR managers and employees to accurately evaluate HR constraints facing line managers in implementing HR practices as it is not these groups but only the line managers who perform the job. As discussed when describing the contribution our research has made, our initial idea was to focus exclusively on

line managers when identifying any constraints they might perceive in their HR role, and not to join the band of researchers that use HR managers to evaluate devolution challenges (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Hall & Torrington, 1998; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Torrington & Hall, 1996): as line managers are the ones responsible for implementing HR practices, they should be the ones to evaluate any challenges faced in implementing them.

## **6.5 Suggestions for Future Research**

The thesis suggests opportunities to explore some unresolved or yet to be researched issues in the relationship between devolution and HR practices. From the findings of this thesis, a number of issues that should be addressed in future research can be deduced. These include investigating possible moderator effects between devolution factors and HR implementation effectiveness, adding organisational characteristics to the model and distinguishing between different forms of HR practices and their effect on our model. Below, each of these suggestions for future research will be discussed in more detail.

### **6.5.1 Model Adaptations**

Our goal in this thesis was to test the direct effect of HR constraints on HR implementation effectiveness. Having done this, future research could investigate any moderation effects of the five factors. Given that most of the factors did not influence HR implementation effectiveness, assessing any moderator effects, of for example desire, could shed light on the influence of such effects on the relationship between capacity and HR implementation effectiveness. This could, for example, indicate that line managers who perceive significant role overload could still implement HR practices well provided they have the desire to achieve this. In addition, our scales provide the opportunity to model the effect of some of the underlying constructs of the five factors on HR implementation effectiveness, such as role ambiguity or role conflict. Role ambiguity and role conflict could mediate the relationships between both *support* and *competences* and HR implementation effectiveness, as competence reduces uncertainty with regard to role expectations (Adobor, 2006; Schuler, 1980) and contact with ones superior and being assisted by the supervisor can help in role clarification and priority setting (Lankau, Carlson & Nielson, 2006).

Our research highlighted the important role of organisational characteristics in determining the success of devolution. Therefore, in future research, one should add organisational contingencies to the model. For example, a high span of control has been found to have positive effects on role conflict and perceived role overload (Miles & Perreault,

1976). Sims and Szilagyi (1976) found that whereas employees on low occupational levels welcomed task variety, those on higher occupational levels perceived increased task variety as undesirable because it added to an already complex task environment. Role overload is negatively affected by restructuring and increased workloads (McConville & Holden, 1999; McGovern et al., 1997), more complex and more demanding tasks (McConville & Holden, 1999) and wider spans of control (McGovern et al., 1997; Renwick, 2003).

### **6.5.2 Modelling HR practices**

Future research could contribute to understanding the effect of HR practices on organisational performance by adding to the model of Wright and Nishii (forthcoming). This model demonstrates that there is a difference between intended (designed by the HR department), actual (implemented by line managers) and the perceived (experienced by employees) HR practices that shape employee attitudes and eventually affect performance. We have determined the effect of line managers' HR implementation constraints on HR implementation effectiveness. Further, HR implementation effectiveness, as we measured it, is comparable to the perceived HR practices since subordinates were asked to evaluate the perceived implementation of HR practices. Thus, we know what the effect of line managers' HR implementation constraints are on perceived HR practices. As the constraints that line managers perceive in implementing HR practices affect the way they actually implement these practices, and as the way line managers actually implement HR practices affects the way employees perceive these practices, one can view actual HR practices as a mediator between HR implementation constraints and the perceived HR practices.

According to the Academy of Management publications by Gratton and Truss (2003) and Huselid, Jackson and Schuler (1997), HR can only be effective when the HR practices are effective – that is, vertically and horizontally aligned or technically and strategically effective – and the HR implementation is also effective. Line managers are implementing HR practices when “translating HR policies into action” (Gratton & Truss, 2003, p. 76). In this model, HR practices and HR implementation are the determinants of HR effectiveness as both have an effect of the effectiveness of HRM. As we now know how HR constraints affect HR implementation effectiveness, we could adapt the presented model by making the latter a mediator between HR constraints and HR effectiveness.

## 6.6 Implications

This thesis has implications for both academia and for practice. The theoretical implications offer ways to overcome theoretical drawbacks and contributes to scientific discussions, whereas the practical implications offer ways to improve organisations and solve organisational problems. Many organisations face the issues of how to successfully devolve HR responsibilities to line managers and how to motivate and manage line managers so that they perform HR practices effectively. From the start, we recognised the need to address this topic, especially in HR departments that are responsible for supporting line managers. For such organisations, this thesis can hopefully offer some valuable practical implications.

### 6.6.1 Theoretical Implications

Although previous research had identified a number of factors that could constrain HR implementation on the work floor (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; McConville & Holden, 1999; Renwick, 2003; Torrington & Hall, 1996; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003), this thesis has shown that while line managers do perceive these factors to be relevant (Chapter 2) they do not perceive these factors as very constraining (Chapter 5).

Accepting these factors to be the relevant ones, we developed scales to measure them, and validated these to build a proper research instrument. This instrument has valuable theoretical implications, as it (1) offers other researchers the opportunity to measure HR implementation constraints, or (2) to measure only some of the constraints, (3) provides us with the opportunity to repeat our research in the same organisations to establish longitudinal research findings, or (4) to use the instrument to investigate HR constraints in other organisations, other industries, or other countries.

Whereas previous researchers have only argued for a negative effect of HR implementation constraints on the effectiveness of HR or HR implementation (Bond & Wise, 2003; Brewster & Larsen, 1992; Hope Hailey et al., 2005; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006), this thesis has *measured* these relationships and shows that these constraints, with the exception of the *competences* factor, do not, in fact, have a significant negative effect on HR implementation effectiveness. That is, the suggested causal relationship is wrong.

Contrary to what we had been led to expect, and therefore hypothesised, this thesis found that the more *desire* line managers have to implement HR practices well, the worse they do it in the eyes of their subordinates. Whereas researchers such as Bond and Wise (2003), Harris et al. (2002), Kulik and Bainbridge (2006) and Whittaker and Marchington (2003) hypothesised a positive relationship between line managers' *desire* and their HR

implementation effectiveness, we were able to demonstrate a negative one. Subordinates do not appreciate highly motivated line managers who implement HR practices according ‘to the book’, but prefer line managers who idiosyncratically interpret and implement HR practices in a way that suits the needs of employees rather than HR. This lends some support to the suggestions by Rousseau et al. (2006) on idiosyncratic deals or I-deals. In their view, “idiosyncratic employment arrangements are special terms of employment negotiated between individual workers and their employers” (2006, p. 977). However, our research led us to conclude that these idiosyncratic deals can be much more flexible than the employment relations described by Rousseau et al. (2006), and could be regarded as individual arrangements between the supervisor and subordinates that are not part of the formal employment contract, and could be temporary in nature. Line managers are perceived as better supervisors when they are not highly motivated to perform HR practices in the way laid down but are more willing to negotiate I-deals with their subordinates.

Additionally, we now know why line managers in different organisations perceive differing extents of HR constraints, and why devolution can be successful in one organisation and not in another. This has to do with organisational characteristics that differ between organisations. Firms differ in the way they organise the devolution of HR responsibilities to the line, and in the management role played by the line manager. Organisational contingencies influence the way line managers perceive their HR role and handle their HR responsibilities.

### ***6.6.2 Practical Implications***

For organisations, the development of a research instrument and scales for measuring HR constraints of line managers is valuable for identifying which factors are hindering line managers in their organisation and how the organisation can support them in improving their HR implementation abilities. Bredin and Söderlund (2007) propose a change from having line managers with HR responsibilities added to their tasks, to the introduction of competence coaches in project-based organisations, who are situated in the line structure but become solely responsible for personnel responsibilities, thus leaving line managers to focus on their technical or operational responsibilities. We believe, however, that line managers are capable of also managing HR responsibilities, because (1) we found that the five supposedly constraining factors were not as constraining as hypothesized, (2) subordinates evaluated line managers as effective HRM implementers, and (3) the HR constraints did not generally affect implementation effectiveness. Rather than the proposed drastic structural changes in the

management of operational people, organisations should focus on overcoming specific weaknesses identified using our research instrument. For example, the support services offered by HR managers could be improved if a bad score is given to the support factor, or more sophisticated training or educational programmes could be organised for the line managers if their HR-related competences are questioned, especially in their selection state. The research instrument also enables organisations to reassess line managers' HR constraints after implementing changes to see if they have had the desired effect.

This thesis also suggests that organisations could largely disregard complaints by line managers concerning their own capacity and the organisation's policies & procedures as these factors did not have any significant effect on the effectiveness of HR implementation in our study. Naturally, these factors should not be completely ignored because they might then have a significant detrimental effect on HR implementation effectiveness. Essentially, if line managers are trained and are sufficiently motivated to fulfil the HR role to the satisfaction of their subordinates, they seem able to handle time constraints and overcome unclear policies and procedures.

It would seem more important that organisations first select line managers who are willing to implement HR practices in a personal way and who are trained to carry out HR practices. Once selected, it becomes HR's responsibility to increase HR-related competences and to support them well. Here, the training issue seems to be the most critical, as having the required competences has a significant positive effect on HR implementation effectiveness.

Further, organisations should ensure that their HR managers support line management and acquire a service orientation. Although support was not significantly related to HR implementation effectiveness after controlling for the organisational context in our study, it was significant without this control. Therefore, the need for support should be taken seriously. Also the analysis of variance presented in Chapter 4 showed significant differences between organisations in terms of the *support* factor. In order to deliver effective support to line managers, it is necessary that the HR department (1) is available, (2) is interested in operational issues, (3) communicates with the line in order to shape realistic expectations of what line managers should expect from them, with whom they can consult and when to expect answers, and (4) builds a partnership with the line in which line managers and HR managers become partners in improving team performance and the wellbeing of employees.

This thesis offers organisations some advice on organising the line management function. First, line managers should know what they are responsible for and should perceive this responsibility as important for the organisation. Institutional reinforcements, such as job

descriptions or performance appraisals covering HR responsibilities, are ways to communicate the importance and relevance of effective implementation to the organisation. Second, organisations should not bother line managers with unnecessary or very time-consuming administrative HR tasks as such tasks can decrease line managers' desire to perform HR practices and can distract them from their more important people management responsibilities. E-HRM tools and Shared Service Centres can be valuable solutions to the time pressures on line managers if well-implemented and easy to use. Finally, line managers should not be made responsible for too many subordinates because a wide span of control can result in insufficient people management time for individual subordinates or in delegating HR responsibilities to little-prepared employees. Effective HR implementation in such a situation is only possible when line managers have their other responsibilities reduced or receive significant support from others such as administrative personnel.

## **6.7 Conclusions**

With this thesis we aim to contribute to the devolution literature by first identifying *which* factors really constrain line managers in their HR role; second, by *measuring* these factors quantitatively; third, by *analysing* these factors from the perspective of the organisational context; and fourth, by *testing* the effect of the constraining factors on the effectiveness of line managers in implementing HR practices. The identified constraining factors were: desire, capacity, competences, support and policy & procedures. It was already visible from the pilot case study (Chapter 2) that the intensity of these factors varied by organisation, and this was further investigated in Chapter 4. Scales for measuring these factors were developed that delivered a stable and reliable research instrument (Chapter 3), which was then used to test the effect of the constraining HR factors on the effectiveness of line managers' HR implementation (Chapter 5). Of the five factors, only line managers' competences had a positive significant influence on the way in which line managers implemented HRM, while a desire to apply HR practices well (i.e. 'by the book') led to ineffective HR implementation in the eyes of subordinates. This thesis has shown that line managers are much better implementers of HR practices than many researchers and HR practitioners seem to believe, and that they have both understood and accepted their HR role.

## 6.8 References

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## Appendix A

### First-Line Management Interview Framework (Dutch)

## **Agenda**

1. Inleiding over onderzoek
2. Introductie van geïnterviewde
3. Huidige situatie t.a.v. HR-activiteiten
4. Redenen om HR-activiteiten uit te voeren
5. Belemmeringen bij uitvoeren van HR-activiteiten

### **1. Inleiding over onderzoek**

- Onszelf voorstellen
- Inleiding over het onderzoek (doelen)
- Doel van interview
- Anonimiteit

### **2. Introductie van geïnterviewde**

- Naam
- Geslacht
- Leeftijd
- Wat doe je nu? (functie)
- Hoe lang werk je al in deze functie?
- Hoe lang werk je al voor dit bedrijf?
- Wat heb je daarvoor gedaan? (functie. bedrijf)
- Wat voor opleiding heb je gedaan? (technisch/management. MBO/HBO/universiteit)
- Uit hoeveel mensen bestaat je team? (span of control)
- Wat voor opleiding hebben zij gehad?

### **3. Huidige situatie t.a.v. HR-zaken**

- Hoeveel tijd per week besteed je (gemiddeld) aan HR-activiteiten?
- Wat doe je dan? (HR-activiteiten en/of algemeen managen van personeel)
- Hoeveel tijd zou je aan HR-activiteiten willen besteden?
- Doe je het alleen of samen met de HR-afdeling?
- Zijn er ook anderen die HR-activiteiten uitvoeren (voor jouw team)?

#### 4. Redenen om HR-activiteiten uit te voeren

- Waarom voer je HR-activiteiten uit?
- Vind je het leuk om HR-activiteiten uit te voeren? Waarom?
- Waarop zijn je eigen functioneringsgesprekken gebaseerd (is het uitvoeren van HR-activiteiten erin opgenomen)?
- Staan je HR-verantwoordelijkheden in je functieomschrijving?
- Is de HR-rol van lijnmanagers deel van het bedrijfsbeleid? (genoemd in. gecommuniceerd door hoger management)
- Helpt het uitvoeren van HR-activiteiten je om je (bedrijfs)doelen te halen? Hoe?

#### 5. Belemmeringen bij het uitvoeren van HR-activiteiten

- Is er iets dat je hindert bij het uitvoeren van HR-activiteiten? Verklaar
- Wat is je mening over de instrumenten die je krijgt?
- Waar komen de HR-instrumenten die je gebruikt vandaan? (centrale HR-afdeling)
- Zijn de instrumenten die je gebruikt concreet genoeg voor je om ze te kunnen gebruiken? Waarom wel/niet?
- Weet je welke HR-instrumenten je geacht wordt te gebruiken? Waarom wel/niet?
- Weet je hoe je geacht wordt deze instrumenten te gebruiken? Waarom wel/niet?
- Krijg je richtlijnen voor het gebruik van HR-instrumenten? Helpen deze richtlijnen je? Waarom wel/niet? Heb je meer of andere richtlijnen nodig voor het gebruik van HR-instrumenten? Zo ja, welke?
- Wat geef je prioriteit, bedrijfszaken of HR-zaken? Waarom?
- Ben je betrokken bij het maken van HR-beleid? Hoe?
  - Denk je dat je betrokken zou moeten zijn? Waarom wel/niet?
- Heb je het gevoel dat je genoeg HR-kennis/HR-vaardigheden hebt om de HR-activiteiten uit te voeren? Waarom wel/niet?
- Heb je training gevolgd over het uitvoeren van HR-activiteiten?
  - Zo ja, was die waardevol en was die voldoende? Waarom wel/niet?
  - Zo nee, denk je dat je training nodig hebt? Wat voor soort?
- Heb je ondersteuning nodig bij het uitvoeren van HR-activiteiten?
  - Wat voor soort ondersteuning?
- Krijg je de ondersteuning die je nodig hebt (van HR of van iemand anders)? Waarom wel/niet? Van wie?

- Vraag je (de HR-afdeling) om ondersteuning/advies?

**Algemeen**

- Is er iets anders wat je hindert wat we nog niet besproken hebben?
- Van alles wat we in dit interview hebben besproken. wat moet het meest veranderen t.a.v. het uitvoeren van HR-activiteiten? Waarom?

DANKJEWEL

## Appendix B

### First-Line Management Interview Framework (English)

### **1. Introduction of interviewee**

- Name
- Gender
- Age
- What do you do now (business function)?
- How long are you already in this function?
- How long in company?
- What did you do before (function. company)?
- What is your educational background (technical. managerial. HBO. university)?
- How many people are in your team (span of control)?
- What is the average education level of your team?

### **2. Current situation regarding HR issues**

- How much time per week (on average) do you spend on HR issues?
- What does that include (which HR practices)?
- How much time are you willing to spend on using HR practices?
- How much time do you think you should spend on using HR practices in order to use them effectively?
- Do you do it alone or together with the HR department?
- Are there also HR practices used by other people (on your team)?
- Is there anybody else supervising your workforce? Does this help you?

### **3. Reasons for using HR practices**

- Why do you use HR practices?
- Do you like using HR practices? Why?
- Are there incentives for you to use HR practices (financial and non-financial)?
- What are your performance appraisals based on (is using HR practices included)?
- Are your HR responsibilities included in your job description?
- Is the HR role of line managers part of the business policy (stated in. communicated by higher management)?
- Does using HR practices help you to reach your business goals? How?

#### 4. Reasons for not using HR practices

- Is anything hindering you in using HR practices? Please explain!

##### *Practices*

- What is your opinion about the practices you are provided with?
- Where do the HR practices you use come from (central HR department)?
- Do you know what is expected from you in using HR practices?
- Are the practices concrete enough for you to use them? Why not?
- Are you provided with guidelines for using the HR practices? Do you need guidelines for using HR practices (do they help you)?
- Are the HR practices you use in line with the overall business strategy?
- Do the HR practices you use help you to reach your business goals (short term, long term)? How?
- What do you prioritise, business issues or HR issues? Why?
- Are you involved in HR policy making? How?
  - Do you think you should?

##### *Ability*

- Do you feel you have enough HR knowledge/ HR skills for using HR practices?
- Did you receive any training for using HR practices?
  - If yes, was it valuable and was it sufficient?
  - If no, do you think you need any? What kind of?
- Do you need support for using HR practices?
  - What kind of support?
- Do you get the support you need (from HR or someone else)? Why not? From whom?
- Do you ask (the HR department) for support/advice?

##### **General**

- Is there anything else hindering you that we have not discussed yet?
- From all things discussed in this interview, what needs to change most regarding the use of HR practices? Why?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!



## Appendix C

Measurement Instrument to Measure Line Managers'

HR Constraints (Dutch version)

## Vragenlijst over de HR-rol van lijnmanagers

Promotieonderzoek door Anna Nehles, Universiteit Twente

### Het Onderzoek

Deze vragenlijst gaat over de rol van lijnmanagers bij het uitvoeren van het HR beleid en de mogelijke uitdagingen die zij daarbij ervaren. Door het aantrekken, ontwikkelen, beoordelen en begeleiden van medewerkers hebben lijnmanagers namelijk ook een HR-rol. Wij vragen in dit onderzoek naar uw eigen opvattingen, en naar uw eigen ervaring als lijnmanager met HR taken en verantwoordelijkheden.

Wij zullen onder andere vragen naar de tijd die u aan HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken besteedt, uw motivatie om de HR activiteiten uit te voeren, uw eigen competenties voor HR, de ondersteuning van de HR afdeling (HR consultants en SSC-HRA) en de richtlijnen en procedures voor het uitvoeren van uw HR-taken. Het invullen van deze vragenlijst zal max. 20 minuten in beslag nemen. Bij voorbaat hartelijk dank voor u bijdrage!

### Vertrouwelijkheid en anonimiteit

Iedereen die deze vragenlijst ontvangt moet zich vrij kunnen voelen om de vragenlijst in te vullen. Daarom zijn vertrouwelijkheid en anonimiteit van het grootste belang. De Universiteit Twente zal volstrekt vertrouwelijk met de ingevulde vragenlijst omgaan. Individuele vragenlijsten komen nooit bij xxx terecht. De rapportage die de Universiteit Twente maakt zal volstrekt anoniem zijn. Er zal nooit gerapporteerd worden op een wijze waardoor resultaten tot een individu herleidt kunnen worden.

### Vragen?

Heeft u vragen over dit onderzoek dan kunt u contact opnemen met Anna Nehles (zie contactgegevens).

### Contactgegevens:

[Drs. Anna Nehles](#)

Universiteit Twente

Postbus 217

7500 AE Enschede

[a.c.nehles@utwente.nl](mailto:a.c.nehles@utwente.nl)

Tel: 053-4893648

Fax: 053-4892159

E-mail:

## 1. HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken

In het volgende deel zullen wij vragen stellen over uw leidinggevende functie, met een focus op de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken die u voor uw team moet uitvoeren. Leidinggeven betekent niet alleen het het leiden, aansturen, motiveren en coachen van uw team. Lijnmanagers zijn ook verantwoordelijk voor bepaalde HR-activiteiten.

### Voor welke van de volgende HR-activiteiten bent u verantwoordelijk?

- Administratieve taken mbt het leiden van uw team
- Personeelsplanning en -mutaties
- Selecteren van potentiële nieuwe werknemers
- Evalueren, trainen en beoordelen van uw medewerkers
- Vaststellen en bespreken van salaris(verhoging)
- Begeleiding, adviseren en motiveren van uw team

***Met HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken worden in het vervolg die activiteiten bedoeld die u hier aangegeven heeft!***

## 1. Tijdbesteding aan HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken

Wilt u bij onderstaande vragen aangeven hoeveel tijd u zelf (in uw functie) aan de genoemde taken besteedt (van 1 t/m 5)? Als de stelling voor u niet van toepassing is, kruis dan 6 aan.

### Administratieve taken m.b.t. leiden van uw team

	Weinig tijd			Veel tijd			n.v.t.
Urenregistratie/accorderen in Keur	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Ziekteverzuim	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Archivering van personeelsgegevens	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Vertalen van het organisatiebeleid naar uw team	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Veiligheid	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Beheren en analyseren van personeelsgegevens (uit de personeelsadministratie c.q. personeels- informatiesystemen voor operationele doeleinden)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Kwaliteit van de arbeid (arbeidsinhoud, arbeidsomstandigheden, arbeids- verhoudingen, ergonomie van de werkplek, omgevingsklimaat e.d.)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	

### Personeelsplanning

	Weinig tijd			Veel tijd			n.v.t.
Introductie van nieuwe medewerkers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Functie-indeling	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Functie beschrijving	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Competentiebepaling	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Personeelsmutaties (plaatsing, overplaatsing, ontslag, promotie)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Operationele personeelsplanning (afstemmen van personeelsbeschikbaarheid en personeelsbehoefte in relatie tot de operationele planning)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	

### Aantrekken en selecteren

	Weinig tijd			Veel tijd			n.v.t.
Aantrekken van potentiële werknemers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Selectie (brievselectie, bijwonen van selectiegesprekken, tests of assessment centers, selectie van nieuwe medewerkers)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	

### Evalueren

	Weinig tijd			Veel tijd			n.v.t.
Evalueren van bestaande trainingen en opleidingen en bepaling van opleidingsbehoeften e.d.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Opleiden en instrueren van uw werknemers (inclusief introductie cursus, functie- en taakgerichte opleiding)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Loopbaanbegeleiding	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Werkoverleg met uw medewerkers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
Voeren van beoordelingsgesprekken	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	

Voeren van funtioneringsgesprekken	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>
Bewaking van de gemaakte afspraken uit de beoordelings- en funtioneringsgesprekken	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>

**Belonen**

	Weinig tijd			Veel tijd		n.v.t.
Vaststellen van salarissen	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>
Verhoging of vermindering van salarissen	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>
Bespreken van salarissen	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>

**Begeleiden**

	Weinig tijd			Veel tijd		n.v.t.
Oplossen van conflicten tussen leden van uw team	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>
Adviseren van uw werknemers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>
Onderhouden van harmonieuze groepsrelaties binnen uw team	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>
Ziekteverzuimbegeleiding (voeren van gesprekken met medewerkers tijdens hun ziekteperiode)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>
Sociale begeleiding (persoonlijke gesprekken, individueel gerichte personeelsbegeleiding)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>

Wilt u nu ook aangeven hoeveel tijd u *zelf* (in u functie) aan de genoemde taken zou moeten besteden om een optimaal resultaat te willen bereiken (1 minder, 2 gelijk, 3 meer)?

**Administrative taken m.b.t. leiden van uw team**

	minder tijd	evenveel tijd	meer tijd
Urenregistratie/acorderen in Keur	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Ziekteverzuim	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Archivering van personeelsgegevens	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Vertalen van het organisatiebeleid naar uw team	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Veiligheid	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Beheren en analyseren van personeelsgegevens (uit de personeelsadministratie c.q. personeelsinformatiesystemen voor operationele doeleinden)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Kwaliteit van de arbeid (arbeidsinhoud, arbeidsomstandigheden, arbeidsverhoudingen, ergonomie van de werkplek, omgevingsklimaat e.d.)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>

**Personeelsplanning**

	minder tijd	evenveel tijd	meer tijd
Introductie van nieuwe medewerkers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Functie-indeling	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Functiebeschrijving	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Competentiebeoordeling	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Personeelsmutaties (plaatsing, overplaatsing, ontslag, promotie)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>

Operationele personeelsplanning (afstemmen van personeelsbeschikbaarheid en personeelsbehoefte in relatie tot de operationele planning)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
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**Aantrekken en selecteren**

	minder tijd	evenveel tijd	meer tijd
Aantrekken van potentiële werknemers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Selectie (brieveselectie, bijwonen van selectiegesprekken, tests of assessment centers, selectie van nieuwe medewerkers)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>

**Evalueren**

	minder tijd	evenveel tijd	meer tijd
Evalueren van bestaande trainingen en opleidingen en bepaling van opleidingsbehoeften e.d.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Opleiden en instrueren van uw werknemers (inclusief introductie cursus, functie- en taakgerichte opleiding)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Loopbaanbegeleiding	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Werkoverleg met uw medewerkers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Voeren van beoordelingsgesprekken	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Voeren van functioneringsgesprekken	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Bewaking van de gemaakte afspraken uit de beoordelings- en functioneringsgesprekken	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>

**Belonen**

	minder tijd	evenveel tijd	meer tijd
Vaststellen van salarissen	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Verhoging of vermindering van salarissen	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Bespreken van salarissen	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>

**Begeleiden**

	minder tijd	evenveel tijd	meer tijd
Oplossen van conflicten tussen leden van uw team	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Adviseren van uw werknemers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Onderhouden van harmonieuze groepsrelaties binnen uw team	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Ziekteverzuimbegeleiding (voeren van gesprekken met medewerkers tijdens hun ziekteperiode)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Sociale begeleiding (persoonlijke gesprekken, individueel gerichte personeelsbegeleiding)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>

**Kunt u aangeven in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent (van 1 t/m 5)?**

- |   | Mee oneens                            |                                       |                                       | Mee eens                              |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Ik moet HR-activiteiten uitvoeren waar ik eigenlijk geen tijd of energie voor heb.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 2. Mijn werkdag heeft onvoldoende uren om al de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken uit te voeren die men van mij verwacht.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 3. Het lijkt of het uitvoeren van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken nooit afkomt.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 4. Soms heb ik het gevoel dat de dag te kort is.  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 5. Vaak moet ik mijn verplichtingen voor mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken afzeggen.  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 6. Het is nodig dat ik een prioriteitenlijstje maak om alle activiteiten die tot mijn leidinggevende taak behoren, te kunnen uitvoeren.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 7. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken gehaast en wellicht minder zorgvuldig uitvoer om alles af te kunnen krijgen. | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |

## 1. Motivatie HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken uit te voeren

Hieronder vindt u 24 uitspraken over uw eigen motivatie om HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken uit te voeren. Kunt u voor de volgende stellingen aangeven in hoeverre u het ermee eens bent (van 1 t/m 5)?

### Waarom houdt u zich bezig met het uitvoeren van HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken?

	Mee oneens			Mee eens	
1. Omdat ik vind dat het uitvoeren van deze activiteiten interessant is.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. Omdat ik dit doe voor mijn eigen bestwil.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Omdat men van mij verwacht dat ik deze activiteiten verricht.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. Er zullen wel goede redenen zijn om deze activiteiten te verrichten, maar ik zie ze niet.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Omdat ik het prettig vind deze activiteiten te verrichten.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Omdat ik vind dat het goed voor me is om deze activiteiten uit te voeren.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7. Omdat het iets is wat ik moet doen.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. Ik voer deze activiteiten uit maar ik ben er niet van overtuigd dat ze de moeite waard zijn.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. Omdat het leuk is deze activiteiten te verrichten.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. Dat heb ik zelf zo besloten.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11. Omdat ik geen enkele keuze heb.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12. Ik weet het niet, ik zie niet in wat deze activiteiten me opleveren.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
13. Omdat ik me prettig voel bij het uitvoeren van deze activiteiten.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
14. Omdat ik geloof dat het verrichten van deze activiteiten belangrijk voor me is.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
15. Omdat ik het gevoel heb dat ik het moet doen.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
16. Ik verricht deze activiteiten, maar ik ben er niet zeker van dat het verstandig is hiermee door te gaan.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
17. Omdat het de mensen in mijn team helpt te groeien, zichzelf te verbeteren en te ontwikkelen.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
18. Omdat deze activiteiten me helpen mijn team aan te sturen.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
19. Omdat het me helpt de juiste mensen met de juiste vaardigheden op de juiste plaats te krijgen.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
20. Omdat het me helpt bij het bereiken van mijn productieafspraken.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
21. Omdat het zorgt voor een goede werksfeer.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
22. Omdat het me helpt mijn medewerkers op een eerlijke en consistente manier te behandelen.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
23. Omdat het me helpt de mensen in mijn team te motiveren.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
24. Omdat ik menselijk belang altijd de prioriteit geef boven zakelijk belang.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

#### 4. Competenties voor het uitvoeren van HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken

Hieronder vindt u een aantal uitspraken over uw eigen HR kennis en vaardigheden om uw HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken uit te voeren. Kunt u voor de volgende stellingen aangeven in hoeverre u het ermee eens bent (van 1 t/m 5)?

- |  | Mee oneens               |                          |                          |                          | Mee eens                 |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Ik kan kalm blijven wanneer ik geconfronteerd word met moeilijkheden in het uitvoeren van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken, omdat ik kan terugvallen op mijn vaardigheden. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Wanneer ik geconfronteerd word met een probleem bij het uitvoeren van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken, dan vind ik meestal verschillende oplossingen.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Wat er ook gebeurt in het uitvoeren van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken, ik kan het gewoonlijk wel aan.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. De ervaringen die ik in het verleden in mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken heb opgedaan, hebben me goed voorbereid op mijn HR-toekomst.                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Ik bereik de doelstellingen die ik aan mezelf stel in het uitvoeren van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Ik ben voldoende gewapend om de eisen van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken het hoofd te bieden.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

De volgende vier stellingen gaan over cursussen die u gevolgd heeft m.b.t. HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken en de ervaring die u heeft in het uitvoeren van deze verantwoordelijkheden.

Kunt u voor de volgende stellingen aangeven in hoeverre u het ermee eens bent (van 1 t/m 5)? Als de stelling voor u niet van toepassing is, kruis dan 6 aan.

- |   | Mee oneens               |                          |                          |                          | Mee eens                 | n.v.t.                   |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. De cursussen die ik gevolgd heb zijn belangrijk om de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken goed te kunnen uitvoeren. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Het cursusaanbod was voldoende om de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken goed te kunnen uitvoeren.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Mijn ervaring als lijnmanager is belangrijk om de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken goed te kunnen uitvoeren.     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Ik heb voldoende ervaring als lijnmanager om de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken goed te kunnen uitvoeren.       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## 1. Ondersteuning bij het uitvoeren van uw HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken

Hieronder vindt u een aantal uitspraken over de soort ondersteuning die u nodig heeft om uw HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken uit te kunnen voeren en van wie u deze ondersteuning krijgt. Vervolgens willen wij ons op de ondersteuning van de HR afdeling concentreren en u vragen een aantal stellingen hierover te beantwoorden.

Kunt u voor de volgende stellingen aangeven in hoeverre u het ermee eens bent (van 1 t/m 5)? Als de stelling voor u niet van toepassing is, kruis dan 6 aan.

### Ik heb behoefte aan

	Mee oneens			Mee eens			n.v.t.
1. ondersteuning bij het uitoefenen van de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
2. ondersteuning in juridische aangelegenheden.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
3. ondersteuning bij het vinden en gebruiken van de HR -procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
4. ondersteuning bij de administratieve processen.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
5. een snellere dienstverlening door de HR afdeling.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
6. meer en beter personeelbeleid ( <i>b.v. ziekteverzuimbeleid</i> ).	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
7. advies over de omgang van bepaalde specifieke personeelsproblemen ( <i>b.v. onvoldoende prestatie van individuen</i> ).	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
8. persoonlijke begeleiding bij het uitvoeren van de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
9. persoonlijke begeleiding bij het gebruik van de HR-instrumenten.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
10. best practices van anderen.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
11. meer en betere ontwikkelingsprogramma's. ( <i>b.v. behoud van staf, management development programma's, medewerkers development programma's</i> ).	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	

### Bij het uitvoeren van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken krijg ik ondersteuning van:

	Mee oneens			Mee eens			n.v.t.
1. de HR afdeling/HR consultant	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
2. mijn leidinggevende	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
3. Shared Service Center (SSC-HRA)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
4. mijn secretaresse	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
5. administratieve medewerkers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
6. mijn vervanger	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
7. het managementteam /directieteam	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
8. mijn collega lijnmanagers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
9. de ondernemingsraad	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	
10. de arbodienst	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	

De volgende 18 stellingen gaan om de ondersteuning die u van de HR afdeling en speciaal van de HR consultants krijgt. Kunt u voor de volgende stellingen aangeven in hoeverre u het ermee eens bent (van 1 t/m 5)?

**Wat is uw mening over de ondersteuning die u van de HR afdeling krijgt?**

- |   | Mee oneers               |                          |                          | Mee eens                 |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Als de HR afdeling belooft iets te doen binnen een bepaalde tijd dan gebeurt dit ook.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Als ik een probleem heb en hiermee naar de HR afdeling ga dan toont men oprechte interesse om het op te lossen.              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. De HR afdeling verleent de dienst direct zoals het moet, in één keer goed.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. De HR afdeling levert de diensten op het tijdstip dat ze belooft.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. De HR afdeling staat erop foutloze HR gegevens te beheren.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. De HR consultants (of het SSC-HRA) informeren mij precies over het tijdstip waarop bepaalde diensten geleverd zullen worden. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. De HR consultants verlenen mij hun diensten snel en adequaat.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. De HR consultants zijn altijd bereid mij te helpen.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. De HR consultants zijn nooit te druk om mij op mijn verzoek te helpen.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Het gedrag van de HR consultants wekt mijn vertrouwen.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1. De contacten met de HR afdeling geven mij een vertrouwd en veilig gevoel.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. De HR managers zijn beleefd en geïnteresseerd in mij.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. De HR managers beschikken over de kennis die nodig is om mijn vragen te beantwoorden.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. De HR consultant geeft mij individuele aandacht.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. De bereikbaarheid van de HR consultant sluit aan bij de wensen van de klanten.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Op de HR afdeling werken medewerkers die mij persoonlijke aandacht geven.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. De HR afdeling heeft het beste met mij voor.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. De medewerkers van de HR afdeling begrijpen de specifieke problematieken van het lijnmanagement.                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## 1. Beleid en procedures voor het uitvoeren van uw HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken

Hieronder vindt u een aantal uitspraken over het HR-beleid en de procedures die u ter beschikking staan bij het uitvoeren van uw HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken.

Kunt u voor de volgende stellingen aangeven in hoeverre u het ermee eens bent (van 1 t/m 5)?

### Ik ervaar de volgende conflicten bij het uitvoeren van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken:

- |   | Mee oneens                            |                                       |                                       | Mee eens                              |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Bij het uitoefenen van mijn HR-verantwoordelijkheden moet ik dingen doen die eigenlijk anders zouden moeten.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 2. Ik werk met tegenstrijdig HR-beleid en -richtlijnen.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 3. Ik krijg HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken toegewezen zonder de bijbehorende menskracht om het uit te voeren.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 4. Ik moet regels en gedragslijnen negeren om bepaalde HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken uit te voeren.  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 5. Ik werk met twee of meer groepen die ieder op geheel verschillende wijze opereren, bij het uitoefenen van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken. | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 6. Ik krijg onverenigbare verzoeken van twee of meer personen betreffende de HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken.                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 7. Ik voer HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken uit die acceptabel zijn voor de ene persoon maar niet worden geaccepteerd door anderen.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 8. Ik krijg HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken toegewezen zonder voldoende middelen om deze taken uit te voeren.                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 9. Ik voer overbodige taken uit bij het uitoefenen van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheden.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |

### Voor mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken geldt:

- |  | Mee oneens                            |                                       |                                       | Mee eens                              |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Ik weet over hoeveel bevoegdheid ik beschik om mijn HR taken uit te voeren.                           | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 2. Ik heb duidelijke, geplande doelstellingen voor mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken.                | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 3. Ik mis richtlijnen en gedragsregels om me te helpen.  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 4. Ik weet dat ik mijn tijd op de juiste wijze indeel.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 5. Ik weet wat mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken zijn.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 6. Ik moet gevoel krijgen voor het uitvoeren van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 7. Ik weet precies wat er van mij wordt verwacht in het kader van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken. | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 8. De uitleg van wat er moet gebeuren bij het uit-   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |

oefenen van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken is duidelijk.

1. Ik moet werken met vage aanwijzingen en opdrachten bij het uitoefenen van mijn HR verantwoordelijkheid en taken. <sub>1</sub> <sub>2</sub> <sub>3</sub> <sub>4</sub> <sub>5</sub>

**Wat is u mening over de HR-formulieren en -richtlijnen die u ter beschikking heeft?**

- |  | Mee oneens                            |                                       |                                       |                                       | Mee eens                              |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. De HR-formulieren die mij ter beschikking staan zijn duidelijk en begrijpelijk.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 2. De HR-formulieren die mij ter beschikking staan zijn concreet genoeg om ze te kunnen gebruiken. | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 3. Ik vind de HR-formulieren gemakkelijk te gebruiken.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 4. Ik weet hoe ik de HR-formulieren die mij ter beschikking staan, moet gebruiken.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |
| 5. De richtlijnen die ik krijg helpen me mijn HR-verantwoordelijkheden uit te oefenen.             | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> |

## 1. Algemene gegevens

**Wat is uw leeftijd?** .....

**Wat is uw geslacht?**

man

vrouw

**Hoelang bent u werkzaam bij WorkSphere?**

0 tot 1 jaar

1-2 jaar

2-5 jaar

5-10 jaar

langer dan 10 jaar

**In welke vestiging bent u werkzaam?**

Hoofdkantoor Maarssen

Amsterdam

Den Haag

Eindhoven

Elsloo

Elst

Emmen

Groningen

Hengelo

Leeuwarden

Roosendaal

Rotterdam

Tilburg

Utrecht

Zwolle

**Geeft u leiding aan leidinggevende medewerkers?**

Ja

Nee

**Hoelang bent u werkzaam in uw huidige functie?**

0 tot 1 jaar

1-2 jaar

2-5 jaar

5-10 jaar

langer dan 10 jaar

**Hoelang bent u werkzaam in een leidinggevende functie?**

0 tot 1 jaar

1-2 jaar

2-5 jaar

5-10 jaar

langer dan 10 jaar

**Wat is de hoogste opleiding die u heeft voltooid?**

Lagere school

Voortgezet onderwijs (MAVO, HAVO, VWO)

Middelbare Beroepsopleiding (MBO)

Hogere Beroepsopleiding (HBO)

Universiteit

**Heeft u aanvullende opleidingen/cursussen gevolgd om uw functie als leidinggevende uit te kunnen oefenen?**

- Ja
- Nee

**Hoeveel mensen werken onder uw directe verantwoordelijkheid (dagelijks contact, rechtstreeks verantwoordelijk)?**

- 0
- 1 t/m 5
- 6 t/m 10
- 11 t/m 15
- 16 t/m 20
- 21 t/m 25
- 26 of meer

**Hoeveel mensen werken onder uw indirecte verantwoordelijkheid?**

- 0
- 1 t/m 5
- 6 t/m 10
- 11 t/m 15
- 16 t/m 20
- 21 t/m 25
- 26 of meer

**Wat is de hoogste opleiding die de mensen in uw team/afdeling hebben voltooid?**

- Lagere school
- Voortgezet onderwijs (MAVO, HAVO, VWO)
- Middelbare Beroepsopleiding (MBO)
- Hogere Beroepsopleiding (HBO)
- Universiteit

**Mocht u nog vragen en/of opmerkingen hebben, dan horen wij dat graag.**

.....

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.....

***Hartelijk bedankt voor uw deelname!***



## Appendix D

### Scales (short version) to Measure Line Managers' HR Constraints (English version)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The English version of the items are not validated, however most of them are the original items.

Table 1: Factor Analysis Dimension Desire

<b>Intrinsic motivation</b>
1. Because I think that this activity is interesting
2. Because I think that this activity is pleasant
3. Because this activity is fun
4. Because I feel good when doing this activity
<b>Identified regulation</b>
5. Because I am doing it for my own good
6. Because I think that this activity is good for me
7. By personal decision
8. Because I believe that this activity is important for me
<b>External regulation</b>
9. Because I am supposed to do it
10. Because it is something that I have to do
13. Because I don't have any choice
12. Because I feel that I have to do it
<b>Amotivation</b>
13. There may be good reasons to do this activity. but personally I don't see any
14. I do this activity but I am not sure if it is worth it
15. I don't know; I don't see what this activity brings me
16. I do this activity. but I am not sure it is a good thing to pursue it
<b>Value added</b>
17. Because it helps the people in my team to grow. improve and develop themselves
18. Because it helps me to supervise my team
19. Because it helps me to get the right people with the right skills in the right place
20. Because it helps me to reach my production goals
21. Because it creates a good work atmosphere
22. Because it helps me to treat employees in a fair and consistent way
23. Because it helps me to motivate people in my team

Table 2: Factor Analysis Dimension Capacity

<b>Role overload</b>
1. I have to perform HR responsibilities which I don't really have the time and energy for.
2. I need more hours in the day to perform all the HR responsibilities which are expected of me.
3. I can't ever seem to get caught up with performing my HR responsibilities.
4. Sometimes I feel as if there are not enough hours in the day.
5. Many times I have to cancel my commitments to my HR responsibilities.
6. I find myself having to prepare priority lists to get done all the HR responsibilities I have to do. Otherwise, I forget because I have so much to do.
7. I feel I have to perform HR responsibilities hastily and maybe less carefully in order to get everything done.

Table 3: Factor Analysis Dimension Competences

**Occupational self-efficacy**

1. I can remain calm when facing difficulties in performing my HR responsibilities because I can rely on my abilities.
2. When I am confronted with a problem in performing my HR responsibilities. I can usually find several solutions.
3. Whatever comes my way in performing my HR responsibilities. I can usually handle it.
4. My past experiences in my job have prepared me well for performing my HR responsibilities.
5. I meet the goals I set for myself in performing my HR responsibilities.
6. I feel prepared for most of the demand in performing my HR responsibilities.

**Training**

7. The courses I followed were relevant for performing my HR responsibilities.
8. The course offerings were sufficient for performing my HR responsibilities.

Table 4: Factor Analysis Dimension Support

**HR support services**

1. When the HR department promises to do something by a certain time. they should do so.
2. When I have problems. the HR department should be sympathetic and reassuring.
3. The HR department should be dependable.
4. The HR department should provide their services at the time it promises to do so.
5. The HR department should keep their records accurately.
6. The employees working in the HR department should tell me exactly when services will be performed.
7. The HR managers should be expected to deliver prompt services.

**HR support behaviour**

8. The HR managers should always be willing to help me.
9. The HR managers should be never too busy to respond to my requests promptly.
10. I trust the HR managers.
11. I feel safe in my transactions with the HR department.
12. The HR managers are polite and interested in me.
13. The HR managers have the necessary knowledge to answer my questions.
14. The HR department gives me individual attention.
15. The availability of the HR department is convenient to their clients.
16. The employees working in the HR department give me individual attention.
17. The HR department has my best interest at heart.
18. The HR department understands the specific needs of the line management.

Table 5: Factor Analysis Dimension Policy & Procedures

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**Role conflict**

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1. I have to do things that should be done differently in performing my HR responsibilities.
  2. I work under incompatible HR policies and HR guidelines.
  3. I receive an HR assignment without the manpower to complete it.
  
  4. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out my HR responsibilities.
  
  5. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently in performing HR responsibilities.
  6. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people regarding my HR responsibilities.
  7. I perform HR tasks that are accepted by one person but not by others.
  8. I receive an HR assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.
  
  9. I work on unnecessary things in performing my HR responsibilities.
- 

**Role ambiguity**

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10. I know how much authority I have.
  11. I have concrete, planned goals for my HR responsibilities.
  12. I lack HR policies and guidelines to help me.
  13. I know that I have divided my time in performing my HR responsibilities properly.
  14. I know what my HR responsibilities are.
  15. I have to feel my way in performing my HR responsibilities.
  16. I know exactly what is expected of me in performing my HR responsibilities.
  17. I am uncertain as to how my HR responsibilities are linked.
  18. Explanation is clear of what has to be done in performing my HR responsibilities.
  19. I have to work under vague directions and orders in performing my HR responsibilities.
- 

**User friendliness of HR forms**

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19. The HR instruments I am provided with are clear and understandable.
  20. The HR instruments I am provided with are concrete enough to use them.
  21. I find HR instruments easy to use.
  22. I know how to use the HR instruments I am provided with.
  23. The guidelines I get help me to perform my HR responsibilities.
-

Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

De Lijn Maakt het Verschil:

Lijnmanagers als Effectieve HR Partners

## **Inleiding**

Lijnmanagers zijn verantwoordelijk voor het uitvoeren en implementeren van het HR-beleid op de werkvloer. Goede HR implementatie is voor hen ook essentieel, omdat zij voor de operationele output en de prestaties van hun team verantwoordelijk zijn. Zij voeren allerlei HR-activiteiten uit, zoals beoordeling en het vaststellen van beloning, training en ontwikkeling van medewerkers, hun selectie en eventuele disciplineren, etc. De ervaring, maar ook onderzoek op het gebied van verschuivingen van HR-verantwoordelijkheden richting lijnmanagement leert echter dat de uitvoering van HR-taken door lijnmanagers lang niet altijd goed verloopt. In de literatuur worden daarvoor vijf oorzaken onderscheiden: (1) gebrek aan motivatie om HR-taken uit te voeren, (2) gebrek aan tijd voor de HR-verantwoordelijkheden, (3) gebrek aan HR gerelateerde competenties, (4) gebrek aan ondersteuning door HR-managers, en (5) gebrek aan duidelijk beleid & procedures.

Deze vijf factoren zijn gebaseerd op *empirische* waarnemingen als gevolg van de verschuiving van HR-verantwoordelijkheden van HR-specialisten naar lijnmanagers. Ze zijn (1) verzameld uit individuele case studies, (2) niet theoretisch onderbouwd of in een cognitief model geplaatst, en (3) hun effect op de implementatie is nooit getest, maar wordt verondersteld. Bovendien is een probleem dat veel onderzoek de verklaringen voor het matig implementeren van HR door de lijn niet bij het lijnmanagement maar bij HR-managers meet. Logischerwijze worden vervolgens doorgaans voornamelijk de consequenties van het verschuiven van HR-taken naar de lijn voor de HR-functie besproken en blijven de lijnmanagers zelf buiten beeld. Dat leidt ons tot de volgende onderzoeksvraag:

*Welke van de vijf in de literatuur geïdentificeerde belemmerende factoren voor het effectief implementeren van HR activiteiten zijn relevant en belangrijk voor een effectieve HR implementatie door lijnmanagers?*

## **Resultaten**

Door het bestuderen van de literatuur over de verschuiving van de HR-verantwoordelijkheden in *hoofdstuk 2* konden we de vele geopperde problemen beperken tot vijf factoren die steeds terugkeren als belemmeringen voor het effectief uitvoeren van de HR-rol van lijnmanagers, namelijk: motivatie, tijd, competenties, ondersteuning en beleid & procedures. Van deze vijf theoretische factoren werden er vier als daadwerkelijke belemmeringen van lijnmanagers geïdentificeerd in ons kwalitatieve pilot-onderzoek onder vier bedrijven. Lijnmanagers zeggen dat ze (1) tijdsdruk ervaren en dus te weinig tijd aan hun HR-taken kunnen besteden, (2) te weinig relevante HR-competenties hebben om alle HR-

taken goed uit te kunnen voeren, (3) onvoldoende ondersteuning van de HR-afdeling krijgen en (4) een gebrek aan beleid en duidelijke procedures voor hun HR-rol ervaren. Met de vijfde factor, motivatie, zit het echter wel goed en ze erkennen allemaal de toegevoegde waarde van hun HR-taken. Motivatie kwam dus niet als belemmerend factor uit de pilotanalyse, maar werd voorlopig niet geschrapt omdat het slechts om een eerste pilotonderzoek ging. De geïnterviewde lijnmanagers konden geen andere belemmerende factoren voor hun HR-rol noemen, dus de vijf eerder gevonden factoren lijken wel volledig te zijn. Omdat we in de pilot werkten met diepte-interviews, kregen we bovendien een duidelijk beeld van de operationele HR-rol van de lijnmanagers, en daarmee belangrijke informatie voor een goede operationalisatie van de vijf factoren.

*Hoofdstuk 3* toont de ontwikkeling van de schalen voor het meten van de HR belemmeringen van lijnmanagers. Om schalen met een goede kwaliteit en validiteit te kunnen produceren, hebben wij, als het kon, eerder geteste schalen gebruikt. Omdat de HR-literatuur geen adequate schalen voor deze factoren kent, hebben wij items uit de psychologische- en marketingliteratuur gebruikt en voor deze populatie aangepast. De items werden door data van 471 lijnmanagers uit zes bedrijven gevalideerd. De inhoudelijke- en constructvaliditeit van de schalen werd door middel van confirmatieve factoranalyse, betrouwbaarheidsanalyse, discriminante- en convergentevaliditeit, en inter-raterbetrouwbaarheid gemeten. Het uiteindelijke meetinstrument dat zo werd gemaakt toont goede psychometrische karakteristieken.

De sterkte van de belemmerende factoren die lijnmanagers ervaren verschilt tussen bedrijven. Wij concluderen in *hoofdstuk 4* dat organisatorische verschillen tussen de onderzochte bedrijven de verschillen in de sterkte van de belemmerende factoren verklaren. Door middel van kwantitatieve en kwalitatieve data konden de volgende verschillen tussen organisaties duidelijk worden gemaakt: (1) het type en het aantal gedecentraliseerde HR-taken, (2) De gedelegeerde HR-verantwoordelijkheden, (3) de ‘span of control’ van de lijnmanager (4) de benodigde opleiding en ervaring om lijnmanager te kunnen worden, (5) de hiërarchische positie van de lijnmanager, (6) organisatorische veranderingen, (7) de kwaliteit en ontwikkeling van aangeboden trainingen en opleidingen, (8) de manier waarop de HR-functie ingericht is, (9) de soort ondersteuning die van HR-specialisten verwacht wordt, (10) verschillen tussen de mate van standaardisatie van de HR-uitvoering tussen afdelingen, en (11) de perceptie van verantwoordelijkheid voor taken die als onnodig worden ervaren. Als lijnmanagers veel belemmeringen in hun HR-rol tegenkomen worden zij, of de organisatie, creatief in het bedenken van oplossingen om de belemmeringen weg te nemen. Het maakt niet

uit hoeveel belemmeringen lijnmanagers ervaren, zij zijn en blijven voor het uitvoeren van deze taken verantwoordelijk. Daarom wordt er door de HR-afdeling of lijnmanagers zelf gewoon een weg gevonden om de benodigde tijd aan de HR-taken te besteden. Niet gemotiveerde lijnmanagers worden extern gemotiveerd en hun worden regulaties opgelegd om hun doelen te halen. Gebrek aan tijd wordt door het delegeren van HR-verantwoordelijkheden naar ervaren medewerkers of administratieve medewerkers opgelost, soms ook gewoon door langer doorwerken of thuis dingen afmaken. Om met hun eigen HR-incompetenties om te gaan, gaan lijnmanagers moeilijke of onprettige taken terug aan HR-managers delegeren. Als ze van hun HR-manager niet (op tijd) goed en praktisch ondersteund worden, gaan lijnmanagers elders ondersteuning zoeken, bijvoorbeeld bij college lijnmanagers, hun eigen baas, de ondernemingsraad of de ARBO dienst. Lijnmanagers die te weinig beleid en procedures ervaren krijgen additionele institutionele aanpassingen, zoals taakomschrijvingen of beoordelingen op basis van hun HR-uitkomsten.

In *hoofdstuk 5* wordt de kwantitatieve data geanalyseerd. Lijnmanagers ervaren niet veel belemmeringen in het uitvoeren van hun HR-rol. In tegenstelling tot wat de HR literatuur beschrijft, zijn lijnmanagers wel als effectieve uitvoerders van het HR beleid te betitelen, en zijn daarvoor de genoemde “belemmeringen” geen werkelijke belemmeringen. Dat vinden zij zelf, zij ervaren immers weinig belemmeringen, maar dat vinden hun ondergeschikten ook, omdat zij hun tevredenheid over de implementatie van HR-taken uitspreken. Om te bepalen welke belemmering dan nog het meeste effect op de uitvoering van HR-taken heeft, werd een regressieanalyse uitgevoerd. De resultaten laten zien, dat de meeste factoren geen effect hebben op hoe goed lijnmanagers HR-taken uitvoeren. Alleen de HR-competenties van lijnmanagers hebben een positief effect op hun effectiviteit. Meer tijd, betere ondersteuning en beter beleid en procedures zullen de effectiviteit van lijnmanagers in hun HR-rol echter niet verbeteren. Motivatie heeft een effect, maar dat is negatief. Hoe meer motivatie lijnmanagers hebben om hun HR-taken goed uit te voeren, des te minder voeren zij ze, volgens hun medewerkers, daadwerkelijk goed uit. Een mogelijke verklaring voor dit opmerkelijke gegeven kan zijn, dat als lijnmanagers HR-taken goed willen implementeren ze dicht bij het beleid en de richtlijnen van de HR-afdeling blijven. Zo geven zij echter een belangrijk deel van hun flexibiliteit en handelingsvrijheid in de uitvoering van deze taken op. Dat wordt mogelijk niet op prijs gesteld door medewerkers - die de effectiviteit van lijnmanagers beoordelen - omdat zij nu juist graag wat flexibiliteit in de uitvoering zien en hopen als dat nodig is gunstige ‘deals’ te kunnen sluiten met hun direct leidinggevende. Deze studie geeft dus nieuwe informatie over wat medewerkers bij lijnmanagers en de uitvoering

van hun HR-rol op prijs stellen, namelijk een goede persoonlijke relatie eerder dan het goed (strikt) uitvoeren van HR-taken.

### **Implicaties**

Dit proefschrift heeft implicaties voor zowel de wetenschap als de praktijk. De wetenschappelijke implicaties zijn de volgende. Ten eerste, ook al heeft eerder onderzoek aangetoond dat de HR-implementatie door lijnmanagers op de werkvloer moeizaam kan verlopen, dit proefschrift laat zien dat hoewel lijnmanagers deze problemen herkennen, ze deze – met uitzondering van de factor competentie - niet als belemmerend voor de effectieve implementatie van HR-taken ervaren. Ten tweede zijn de ontwikkelde schalen om HR-belemmeringen van lijnmanagers te meten als valide en betrouwbaar getest en bieden de volgende mogelijkheden: (1) ook andere onderzoekers kunnen hiermee de HR-belemmeringen van lijnmanagers adequaat meten, (2) alleen de meest saillante factoren kunnen gemeten worden in plaats van alle vijf, (3) het geeft ons mogelijkheden om ons onderzoek in dezelfde organisaties te herhalen en daarmee longitudinaal te onderzoeken, zodat ook causale relaties gemeten kunnen worden en (4) het instrument is te gebruiken om HR belemmeringen in andere organisaties, industrieën of landen te onderzoeken. Ten derde heeft dit onderzoek laten zien dat het verwachte effect van de HR-belemmeringen op HR-effectiviteit niet optreedt, omdat de HR-implementatiefactoren niet per se een negatief effect op de effectiviteit van de HR-implementatie hoeven te hebben, zoals in eerder onderzoek verwacht, maar, met uitzondering van de factor competenties, geen of zelfs een positief effect op het uitvoeren van HR-taken op de werkvloer kunnen hebben. Ten vierde, medewerkers stellen geen hoog gemotiveerde lijnmanagers op prijs die HR-taken op een gestandaardiseerde manier gaan gebruiken, maar prefereren lijnmanagers die de HR-taken op een door de medewerker gewenste manier interpreteren en implementeren. Als laatste, door organisatorische verschillen ervaren lijnmanagers verschillende of een verschillende mate van belemmeringen in verschillende organisaties en kan de verschuiving van HR-taken van HR-managers naar lijnmanagers in één bedrijf positief uitvallen en in een ander negatief.

Verder kunnen wij een aantal praktische implicaties en aanbevelingen voor bedrijven benoemen. Ten eerste heeft dit proefschrift laten zien dat lijnmanagers HR-verantwoordelijkheden effectief kunnen implementeren, omdat (1) de vijf aangenomen belemmerende factoren niet zo belemmerend zijn, (2) ondergeschikten hun lijnmanagers als effectieve uitvoerders van HR-taken percipiëren, en (3) de HR-belemmeringen niet per se een negatief effect hebben op de effectiviteit van de HR implementatie. Voor HR-afdelingen

betekent dat, dat ze op specifieke factoren kunnen focussen en lijnmanagers gericht kunnen ondersteunen. Ten tweede kunnen bedrijven klachten van lijnmanagers over een gebrek aan tijd of onduidelijke beleid & procedures wat minder serieus nemen omdat deze factoren geen significant effect op de effectieve uitvoering van HR-taken geeft. Als HR-afdelingen aandacht aan de opleiding en motivatie van lijnmanagers besteden, dan lijken zij tijd- en beleidsproblemen zelf op te kunnen lossen. Ten derde lijkt het belangrijk dat bedrijven lijnmanagers selecteren die gemotiveerd zijn HR-taken op een persoonlijke manier te implementeren en die competent zijn HR-taken uit te voeren. Daarna wordt het de verantwoordelijkheid van de HR-functie de voor HR benodigde competenties te verhogen en lijnmanagers goed te ondersteunen. Het trainen lijkt daarbij de belangrijkste HR opdracht, omdat het effect van competenties op de HR-effectiviteit het hoogst is. Ten vierde zouden bedrijven erop moeten letten dat HR-managers goede ondersteuning geven en dat zij als dienstverlener voor het lijnmanagement acteren. Wij konden laten zien dat bedrijven sterk verschillen wat de effectiviteit van de ondersteuning voor het lijnmanagement betreft en dat zij daarom op de volgende punten voor een goede dienstverlening van de HR-managers zouden moeten letten: (1) bereikbaarheid, (2) geïnteresseerd zijn in en op de hoogte zijn van de operationele problemen van lijnmanagers, (3) goed communiceren met het lijnmanagement over verwachtingen, ondersteuningsbronnen en terugkoppeling van adviezen, en (4) een partnerschap met het lijnmanagement opbouwen en zich gedragen als hun sparringpartner. Als laatste biedt dit proefschrift bedrijven zo advies over hoe zij de lijnmanagementfunctie vorm kunnen geven: (1) Lijnmanagers zouden moeten weten voor welke HR-taken zij verantwoordelijk zijn en waarom die taken belangrijk zijn voor het bedrijf. Bedrijven kunnen HR-verantwoordelijkheden in taakomschrijvingen of beoordelingen vastleggen om het belang te communiceren. (2) Bedrijven zouden lijnmanagers niet met onnodige of tijdsroovende administratieve taken moeten belasten omdat deze taken hun motivatie verkleinen en van het begeleiden van medewerkers kunnen afleiden. E-HRM applicaties en Shared Service Centers kunnen waardevolle oplossingen voor het tijdsgebrek van het lijnmanagement zijn. (3) Bedrijven zouden moeten voorkomen dat lijnmanagers voor te veel mensen verantwoordelijk zijn, omdat dit wederom tijdgebrek zou kunnen veroorzaken, resulterend in te weinig begeleidingstijd per medewerker of in het delegeren van HR-verantwoordelijkheden aan derden en dat is ongewenst.

## Curriculum Vitae

Anna Bos-Nehles was born on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1980 in Cologne, Germany. She holds an M.A. in Economics from Maastricht University, where she studied International Management. During her study, she completed internships in the Human Resources Development Department of Shell in London, U.K. and in the Personnel Marketing Department of Lufthansa Technik in Hamburg, Germany, and studied one semester at the École Supérieure de Commerce, Rouen, France. In December 2004 she started her PhD project at the University of Twente in the department Operations, Organization and Human Resources about the HR role of line managers, which is based on her own research proposal. She presented her research at international conferences, including the Academy of Management Meeting, IWP conference, the International HRM Conference, the International Workshop on HRM, the Workshop on Strategic HRM, and the HRM Network Conference. She has taught courses on human resource management and organization theory and has supervised both Bachelor's and Master's theses. During her PhD project she has co-organized two PhD conferences in the Netherlands. She served as a board member of the 9<sup>th</sup> PhD Conference on Business Economics, Management and Organization Science (2006) and as chair of the Doctoral Consortium HRM Network Conference (2007). She currently works as an assistant professor at the University of Twente, Department of Operations, Organization and Human Resources.

## Publications

- Nehles, A. C., Terhalle, A. M., van Riemsdijk, M. J., & Looise, J. C. (2010). *Line managers as implementers of HRM: are they effective?* Manuscript under review.
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- Nehles, A. C., van Riemsdijk, M. J., & Looise, J. C. (2010). Constraints of line managers' HR performance: the impact of organisational characteristics. *Paper accepted for presentation at the Academy of Management Meeting, Montréal, Canada.*
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- Nehles, A.C., Terhalle, A.M., van Riemsdijk, M.J., & Looise, J.C. (2009). Line managers as implementers of HRM: are they effective? *Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Dutch HRM Network, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.*
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Nehles, A.C., Kok, I., van Riemsdijk, M.J., & Looise, J.C. (2005). Implementing HRM: a first-line management challenge. *Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Dutch HRM Network*, Enschede, the Netherlands.