

**Collaborative HRM Delivery: Surfacing the Features
and Associated Impacts that Emerge in Line
Manager-HR Professional Relationships**

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Declaration

The author hereby declares that, except where duly acknowledged, this thesis is entirely his own work.

Signed: _____

Jamie Power
September 2009

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and in memory of my father.

Abstract

Collaborative HRM Delivery: Surfacing the Features and Associated Impacts that Emerge in Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

Jamie Power

The notion of line managers assuming an increased involvement in the human resource management issues relating to their direct reports is not a contemporary phenomenon. With the adoption of strategic human resource management practices, line managers, as a group, are specifically identified, through devolution approaches, as the drivers and deliverers of HRM policy and practice to support the strategic integration of HRM with the wider business strategy and moreover, integrate HRM policy and practice within the line management function. However, the research in the field predominantly categorises the division of roles and responsibilities and, as such, the actual relationships that are forged have not been addressed in the same level of detail. Consequently, acknowledging the vociferous calls for research to advance upon the studies that simply frame the roles and impacts of line managers and HR professionals, this research focuses on the relationships formed by and between line managers and HR professionals with reference to HRM delivery.

The research itself is approached from an interpretivist orientation and embodies a single case research design in the context of a semi-state organisation, where the units of analysis were individual line managers (20), individual HR professionals (14), individual business-unit HR Managers (4) and individual Group HR Managers (2). By utilising social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the extent of line manager and HR professional interaction and relationships has been illuminated, ranging from close to distant, in conjunction with identifying the tangible and intangible exchange content, the preferred face-to-face mediums of exchange and the varying degree of dependency within such relationships. Additionally, the development and impact of trust and reciprocity have been explored by adopting a social penetration (Altman & Taylor, 1973) lens to relationship tie development. Finally, a sense-making perspective (Weick, 1995) has informed how and why line managers and HR professionals form perceptions of their role and relationships and how the quality of relationships is evaluated.

Specifically, the features of line manager-HR professional relationships were found to be: not homogenous in their categorisation; influenced by respective experience and competency levels; cross-functional with associated mixed authority and dependence features; geographically and perceptually distant and trusting and not reciprocal in a calculative manner. The quality of relationships was evaluated in terms of the relationships formed between the respondents, the degree of conflict between them and the receipt or absence of credible outcomes from collaborating. Turning to the impacts of such relationships, reflecting the existing literature in the field, the line manager and HR professional respondents experienced positive (requesting and receiving support and guidance, knowledge sharing and enhanced respective understanding and appreciation) and negative outcomes (competency concerns, stress, work overload and finding time to collaborate). Furthermore, the organisational impacts included: strategic integration of HRM practice, forging of close ties and realising and releasing social capital embedded in line manager-HR professional collaborations.

Importantly, this research study has contributed both in terms of theory development in relation to social exchange, knowledge and understanding on line manager-HR professional relationships with reference to HRM delivery and furthermore, has achieved this within an Irish organisational context. As such, this research (and taking cognisance of the limitations of adopting single descriptively-orientated case study methodology) may provide both a useful framework and serve to identify additional opportunities for further research in the field, in conjunction to offering a variety of practical implications and recommendations.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to present the impetus and rationale for conducting this study anchored in the devolution of Human Resource Management (HRM) to line managers. In particular, the focus of this research is on the collaborative relationships between line managers and HR professionals in enacting and implementing a partnership approach to delivering HR policy and practice. In pursuit of this, the chapter explores the location of the research within the wider literature, the background to the research and the development of the research question itself. Furthermore, the existing studies in the area are reviewed and the gaps that have been identified within this literature are presented. Finally, the structure for the remainder of the document is introduced.

1.1 Background to the Research

With the advent of rising costs, increases in competition and the subsequent pressures on performance, organisations are challenged to seek new strategies and management approaches to enable all levels and functions to operate more effectively (Ulrich, 1998; Gibb, 2001; Harris et al., 2002; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005a; Teo & Crawford, 2005, Ulrich et al., 2007; Ulrich et al., 2008; Wright, 2008). These changes, in turn, have provided the impetus for the HR function to develop more strategically positioned HRM configurations and competence expectations (Ulrich, 1998; Renwick, 2000; Boxall & Purcell, 2000; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Ulrich et al., 2008). Concurrently, in the public sector domain, the last decade has seen an increased demand for value-for-money and enhanced operational efficiency which may potentially be achieved through the transformative processes of new public management, drawing from private sector orientated models to inform public sector management practice (Humphreys & Worth Butler, 1999; Boyle & Humphreys, 2001; Pollitt, 2002; Ferlie, Hartley & Martin, 2003; O’Riordan, 2004; Brown, 2004; Teo & Crawford, 2005; Cunningham, James & Dibben, 2006; Poole, Mansfield & Gould-Williams, 2006; McGuire et al., 2008).

For Wright & McMahon (1992), the premise of strategic human resource management (SHRM) is that of a deliberate pattern of planned human resource deployments intended to facilitate the achievement of organisational goals.

Recognising the imperative to become strategic in the way that human resources are managed, PUMA (2002), Aghazadeh (2003), Stavrou & Brewster (2005), Wright et al. (2005) and Ulrich et al. (2007) argue that the HRM agenda may need to change. This change may necessitate a reflection on the dynamics of the current public and private sector environment, adapting structurally to this and internally, increasing the efficiency and accountability of service provision (Cunningham, James, Dibben, 2006).

In a similar vein to Wright & Mc Mahon (1992) and accepting the argument put forward by Aghazadeh (2003), McConville (2006) additionally posits, from a public sector perspective, that SHRM “...offers a rich array of practices to allow organisations to adapt and respond to environmental changes” (p.637) and notes that one such approach is to devolve HRM responsibility, thereby involving line managers in the delivery of HRM itself. Reporting the role line managers may play in HRM provision, McNeil (2003) notes that as a group, they are positioned to embrace the confluence of strategic and operational priorities. Furthermore, line management positions are recognised in the literature as those that have a direct and general responsibility for achieving the goals of the organisation, while providing advice and direction to employees under their control (Nehles et al., 2006; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; CIPD, 2007b). Legge (1995) argues that this involves “...coordinating and directing all resources in the business unit” (p.74) including human resources, and as such, line managers may play a pivotal role in “*Bringing HR policies to life*” (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003, p.1).

In attempting to define the concept of devolvement of HRM to line managers, the consensus in the literature over the last decade or so identifies devolution as a process of involving and giving responsibility for the management of transactional day-to-day HRM activities to line managers (Krulis-Randa 1990; Brewster & Soderstrom 1994; Renwick 2000; Holt Larsen & Brewster 2003). From a strategic perspective, Harris et al. (2002) recognise devolution as a business-led model of HRM, where line managers are deliberately included as key stakeholders in both the decision-making and implementation of HRM policies and practices, a view also supported by Ulrich & Brockbank (2005b) and Perry & Kulik (2008). In developing

the ‘involving and giving responsibility’ perspective of devolvement of HRM to line managers, Cascon Pereira et al. (2006) make explicit the requirement to accompany devolved responsibility with devolved authority.

The notion of line managers assuming an increased involvement in HRM is however, not a contemporary phenomenon. Guest’s (1987) and Storey’s (1992) models of HRM both identify a central role for line managers in the delivery of HRM. Guest (1987) presents the rationale for involving line managers in HRM in his observations that, “...*personnel managers must give it [sole ownership and responsibility for managing human resources] away*” (p.51). Similarly, Storey’s (1992) strategic model of HRM emphasises that the human resources of an organisation may lead to sustainable competitive advantage and as part of this, the management of human resources should not be treated as a tertiary activity. Instead, it should be assumed by each and every level of management within the organisation. As such, Storey’s (1992) position resonates with that of Guest (1987), in that line managers are identified as key vehicles for the delivery of HRM.

Acknowledging dynamic organisational environments and conditions, some of the literature summarised and presented in table 1.1 captures the requirement to improve HR effectiveness and competitiveness through integrating HRM into the core of the organisation and within this, involving line managers in day-to-day HRM provision. From table 1.1, the arguments for integrating HRM within the core of the organisation have provided impetus for the deliberate involvement of line managers in HRM in both public and private organisational contexts. In amplifying this rationale, line manager involvement in HRM may be adopted as a strategic option to provide a more integrated approach to HRM (Brewster & Holt Larsen, 2000) and to place responsibility for HRM with managers closest to their employees (Thornhill & Saunders, 1998; Renwick, 2000; Whittaker & Marchington 2003; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003). In addition, devolving HRM to line managers may speed up decision-making on HRM issues (Renwick, 2000 and Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003); contribute to value-for-money from HR expenditure and enable a strategic as opposed to an exclusively transactional focus on HRM implementation (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Budhwar, 2000 and Renwick, 2003).

Table 1.1 Arguments Supporting Line Manager Involvement in HRM

Perry & Kulik (2008)	<i>“When organisations adopt a devolution strategy, line managers assume more responsibility for people management activities” (p.269)</i>
Ulrich & Brockbank (2005a)	<i>“...partnerships ensure that, while both parties bring unique competencies to their joint task, their combined skills are more than the sum of their parts” (p.236).</i>
Papalexandris & Panayotopoulou (2004)	<i>“...competitive advantage can only result from HR practices which are jointly developed and implemented by human resource (HR) specialists and line managers” (p.281).</i>
Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003)	<i>“...with more of their work being handled from the line, there is less need for so many people in the “overhead cost” HR department” (p.230).</i>
Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003)	<i>“Management is about managing people and money, and they [the line] can only achieve what they need to achieve by managing those things correctly” (p.267).</i>
Budhwar (2000)	<i>“...local managers are able to respond more quickly to local problems and conditions” (p.142).</i>
Renwick (2000)	<i>“...we all bring different things to the team” (p.194)</i>
Cunningham & Hyman (1999)	<i>Through devolving HRM “...the function will be liberated to concentrate upon strategic activities associated with a personnel metamorphosis to “human resource management” (p.10).</i>
Ulrich (1998)	<i>Line management can “...lead the way in integrating HR strategy into the company’s real work” (p.126).</i>
Storey (1992)	<i>“...people management decisions ought not to be treated as incidental operational matters or be sidelined into the hands of personnel officers” (p.26).</i>
Guest (1987)	<i>“...if HRM is to be taken seriously, personnel managers must give it away” (p.51).</i>

Acknowledging the strategic importance of managing human resources (and within this, the potential for line management involvement), Gunnigle et al. (2006) note that one of the most significant characteristics of the management literature over the past

decade has been an “...increased interest in achieving a closer alignment between business strategy and human resource management.” (p.40). Supportive of this position, Ulrich (1998), Whittaker & Marchington (2003) and Ulrich & Brockbank (2005a) similarly recognise that senior management may need to be proactive in developing and implementing integrative strategies to facilitate line managers in enacting and supporting HR policy and practice throughout the entire organisation (CIPD, 2007a). Of particular relevance to this research, based on a semi-state organisation (a quasi-public sector organisation in the public sector domain but possessing many private-sector practices and mandates (Hastings, 1994)), incorporating the dual perspectives and demands of public and private sector domains, Fleming (2000) argues from a public management perspective that “...each personnel section should reorientate its activities to take a more strategic/developmental approach facilitated by the devolution of responsibility for ‘day-to-day’ human resource matters to line managers” (p.34).

The growing body of research on the devolvement of HRM to line managers indicates that the concept of the aforementioned shared responsibility for HRM by both line management and HR professionals may be realised in practice in both public and private contexts (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Budhwar, 2000; Renwick, 2000; Currie & Procter, 2001; Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Brewster et al., 2004; Papalexandris & Panayotopoulou, 2004; Mesner-Andolsek & Stebe, 2005; IRS, 2006a: 2006b; Cascon Pereira et al., 2006; McConville, 2006; Maxwell & Watson, 2006; Watson et al., 2007; McGuire et al., 2008). The IRS (2006b) survey of 58 UK organisations reports that line managers are becoming increasingly involved in the delivery of all aspects of HRM, either as the sole provider, or in partnership with HR professionals. In more than 60% of responding organisations in the IRS research, line managers had assumed an increased responsibility similar to the HR role assignments in the Cranet (2006) international survey of HRM practice. In particular, increased line manager responsibility was evident in the areas of staffing; training; performance management and employee relations and to a lesser extent in health and safety, equal opportunities and HR administration (IRS, 2006a: 2006b; Cranet, 2006). The IRS (2006a; 2006b) research echoes the earlier findings of Mc Conville & Holden (1999), in which line

management were identified as having significant involvement in the day-to-day transactional delivery and administration of HRM.

With particular reference to the changing patterns of line manager involvement in HRM in Ireland, the findings from Brewster et al.'s (2004) research indicates growth in line management involvement in the core HRM activities indicating a 28% increase in recruitment and a 25% increase in training during the period 1995-2000. However, they also signal that there is no evidence of complete devolvement to the line, indicating that a collaborative partnership is the norm. This finding is also associated with the earlier Irish-based line manager involvement studies of Heraty & Morley (1995) and Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003), where line managers were found to play a role in transactional HR activities in conjunction with HR professionals. Finally, the recent Irish Training and Development Report (CIPD, 2009), captures from a training and development perspective, the prominent role of line managers as a customer, stakeholder and deliverer of training and development interventions for their staff.

1.2 Locating the Research

As previously alluded to, devolving HRM may result in line manager involvement in HRM which may, in turn, manifest in an emerging collaborative relationship between line managers and HR professionals in the implementation and enactment of HRM. The background to the research and within this, the location of line manager involvement in HRM, lies within strategic HRM theory (specifically in the seminal models of Guest, 1987 and Storey, 1992). In turn, these studies have facilitated the formulation of a number of other research studies that have championed the key delivery role of line managers in HRM (Lowe, 1992; Brewster & Soderstrom, 1994; Legge, 1995; Beer, 1997; Ulrich, 1998; Thornhill & Saunders, 1998; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999). Within the last decade, HRM practice and research has strategically positioned itself from the fringe to the heart of organisations (Mesner-Andolsek & Stebe, 2005) and had permeated each and every level of the organisation, including line managers. As a result it has attracted significant attention by both academics and practitioners alike (Budhwar, 2000; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Brewster et al., 2004; Mesner-Andolsek & Stebe, 2005; Cranet, 2006; IRS, 2006; Cascon Pereira et

al., 2006; Maxwell & Watson, 2006; Watson et al., 2007; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Dany et al., 2008; Perry & Kulik, 2008; Zhu et al., 2008; McGuire et al., 2008; CIPD, 2009).

It is within the strategic human resource management literature (Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000; Boxall & Purcell, 2000; Greer, 2001, Ferris et al., 2002; Armstrong & Barron, 2002; Edgar & Geare, 2005; Francis, 2006) that the area of line manager involvement in HRM evolves into a collaborative focus of line managers and HR professionals with reference to HRM provision (Papalexandris & Panayotopoulou, 2004; Maxwell & Watson, 2006). Emphasising the collaborative aspects of line manager-HR relationships, Othman & Poon (2000) identify that a key element of strategic HRM theory is the “...*need for the components of an organization’s HRM practice to cohere with one another in supporting its strategy*” (p.467). Within the context of this study, this may result in a collaborative relationship arising between line managers and HR professionals, which will be introduced proper in section 1.4 of this chapter. It is by exploring the relationship between line managers and HR professionals that this research seeks to make its contribution.

Wright & McMahon (1992), in their mapping of theoretical approaches to strategic human resource management (SHRM) research, suggest that adopting a behaviourally-based perspective may address the issue of explicating the processes through which such relationships occur (Mullins, 2002). In attempting to illuminate the role behaviours of both line managers and HR professionals in the enactment of a collaborative approach to HRM, Social Exchange Theory (SET) has particular utility as it focuses on the interaction within exchange relationships. The premise of SET is underpinned by the concept that exchange is the product of social interaction as opposed to purely formal economic binding contracts (Aryee et al., 2002; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Zafirovski, 2005).

Interactions are argued to drive the exchange process through reciprocal obligations and the object of study should hence be the actions and interactions of exchanging individuals (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Molm, 2003; Wu et al., 2006). In a similar

vein, Donaldson & O'Toole (2007) contend that social exchanges, through the behaviours of exchanging actors, focus on relationships as the exchange actors seek to "... *balance their social involvement so as to satisfy as fully as possible their private interests*" (Huston & Burgess, 1979, p.4). One of the central tenets of the theory of social exchange is that exchange relationships between specific actors may be viewed as actions dependent on receiving rewarding reactions from others (Blau, 1964). Correspondingly, stressing the interdependency of exchange actors in collaboration, Neves & Caetano (2006) assert that trust is at the core of each and every relationship and has a mediating affect on the behaviours of those involved in an exchange process.

Supporting this view, Ferrin et al. (2006) and Schoorman et al. (2007) view trust and subsequently commitment, as potentially moderating the impact of power and fairness in an exchange relationship. The utility of a social exchange perspective to the collaborative line manager-HR professional relationship is that the approach may facilitate the exploration of exchange in contexts where resources are at times unequally distributed, thereby reliant upon trusting and reciprocal behaviours (Homans, 1961; Emerson, 1972; Blau, 1964; Liden & Graen, 1980; Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992; Druckman, 1998; Aryee et al., 2002; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Wu et al., 2006; Donaldson & O'Toole, 2007).

From distilling the pertinent literature on the specific theory of social exchange, criticisms have been levied by some authors at the theory suggesting that it may view relationships from a collective perspective (Levi-Strauss, 1969; Ekeh, 1974; Cole et al., 2002). To reconcile the potential conflict of adopting a collective relational social exchange perspective to an individual focus on exchange actors, an intermediate theory of social penetration is also deployed. Social Penetration Theory (SPT) (Altman & Taylor, 1973), acting as a conduit between the theoretical perspective and primary research focus, serves to link the collective social exchange theoretical basis to the more individualistic sense-making processes (Weick, 1995) of individual exchange actors in collaboration.

1.3 Research Question

Recognising that the involvement of line managers in HRM may result in collaborative line manager-HR professional configuration, the primary goal of this study is to contribute to further illuminating the understanding of this relationship. The impetus for this approach is that the existing body of literature has concentrated on quantitatively framing the division of role and responsibilities for line managers and HR professionals respectively and moreover, identified positive and negative individual impacts experienced. However, the actual relationships experienced by collaborating line managers and HR professionals are not addressed to a similar degree. As such, a 'black box' has developed in terms of the paucity of understanding about the relationships between line managers and HR professionals in comparison to the division of responsibilities between them and the resulting impacts they experience from collaborating for the purposes of HRM delivery.

Therefore, this research seeks to illuminate the interactions and exchanges between line managers and HR professionals in an effort to generate new understanding and to address the gaps in the existing literature. To achieve this objective, a descriptive research question is developed to compliment the single case study research design, the interpretivist nature of the research study and qualitative methods deployed (developed in more detail in chapter 5). Consequently, this research seeks to answer the following research question:

What are the features and associated impacts of the line manager-HR professional relationship that emerge in the realisation of collaborative HRM?

To investigate the research question, an interpretivist orientated case study is utilised and is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. This research strategy incorporates in-depth semi-structured interviews with line managers, HR professionals, Group HR Managers and business-unit HR Managers to capture the practice and impacts of collaboration, in conjunction to documentary analysis to explore the strategic underpinning and emergence of the collaborative line manager-HR professional relationship.

1.4 Existing Literature on Line Manager–HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

As previously introduced and reflective of the aforementioned research question, involving line managers in HRM may result in the formation of a collaborative relationship with the HR professionals themselves. Discussed in more depth in Chapter 2, collaborative HRM delivery represents the professional working relationships formed by line managers and HR professional for the specific purpose of HRM delivery. Within this remit, both line managers and HR professionals interact and exchange with each other in assuming complimentary roles and behaviours towards HRM delivery through collaboration. Moreover, line managers assume a ‘hands on’ HR delivery role in terms of managing their direct reports and, in turn, HR professionals facilitate and support line managers in achieving this brief in addition to contributing to HRM policy and practice at a strategic level.

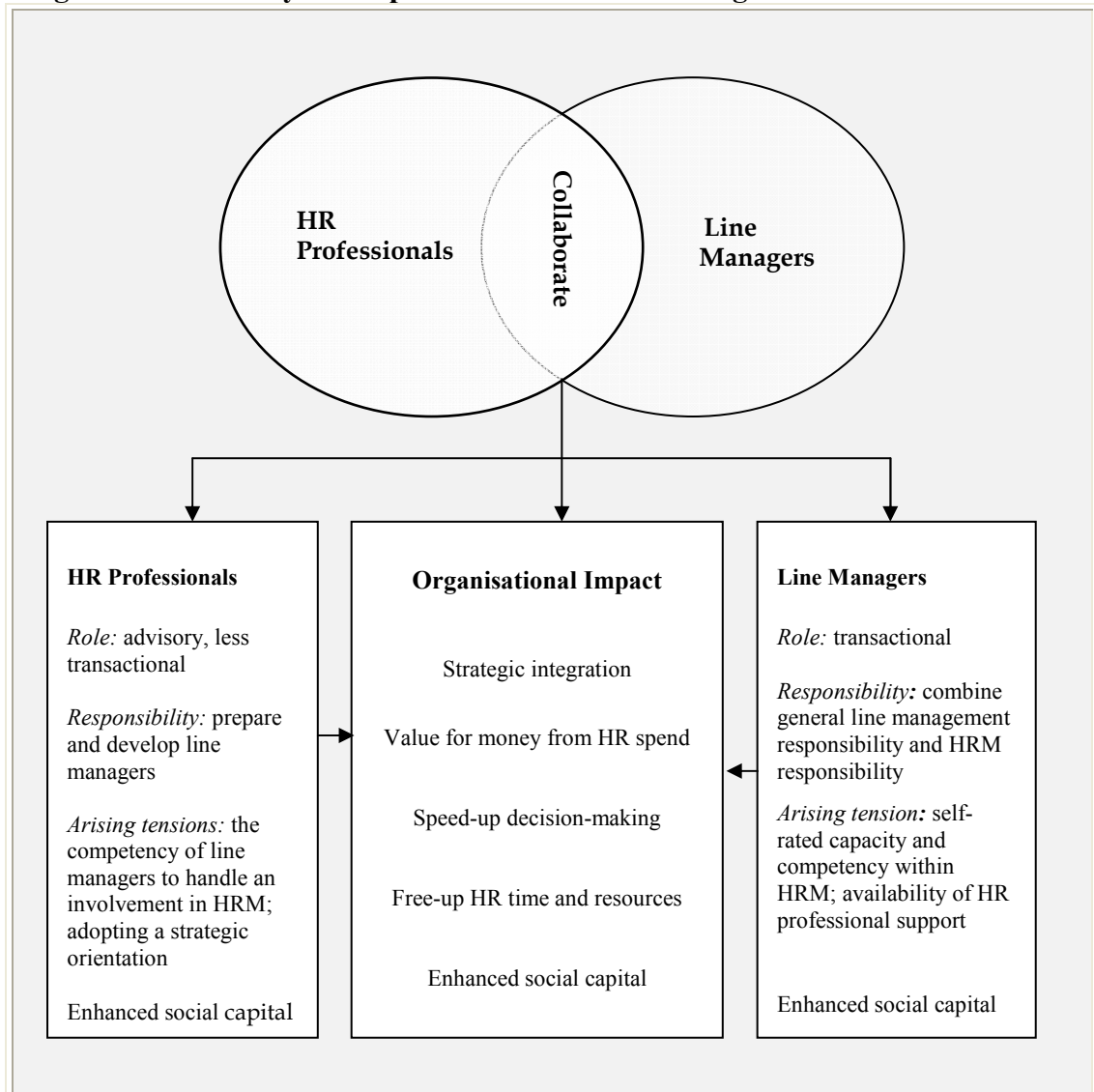
In depicting the emergence of this relationship, figure 1.1 illustrates the potential impacts on the roles and responsibilities of both line managers, HR professionals and finally, the organisation. Figure 1.1 illustrates that as the recipients of HRM responsibility, the impact of devolvement on line managers may manifest in them assuming additional sets of HR roles and responsibilities. Line managers, in turn, may be required to assimilate HR responsibilities in conjunction with their existing management brief (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003). A number of studies have found line managers welcome their new HRM role, although this may be conditional on being sufficiently prepared to fully enact and deliver effective HR provision (Renwick, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Nehles et al., 2006).

Concomitantly, a number of other studies also present the alternative view, indicating that line managers may not welcome the prospect of assuming responsibility for HRM (Harris et al., 2002; IRS, 2006). Reasons cited in the literature for this reluctance include the pressures on line managers of combining the traditional managerial role with additional HRM responsibilities (Harris et al., 2002; McConville, 2006 and Nehles et al., 2006) and the on-going availability of HR professional support (Harris et al., 2002).

The notion of combining HR responsibilities with the traditional managerial remit is also addressed by Cunningham & Hyman (1999) who raise the issue of line

management preparation. In their study, they note that for some responding managers, there had been inadequate training in HRM practice, citing a one-day training course in a disciplinary procedure, little follow-up development and a complete absence of employee relations training in another case. Emphasising the paucity of developmental opportunities to facilitate the devolvement of HRM activities to line managers, Renwick's (2000) research found that inadequate HR preparation for line managers frequently resulted in confusion over accountability and responsibility for HR enactment. Similarly, McConville & Holden (1999) echo these findings in that line managers are often under prepared in terms of discharging their HR responsibilities. As a result, line managers are being held accountable for the activities, behaviours and performance of their staff with little discretion to adapt rewards systems or adjust staffing levels as a result of strategic-level budgetary constraints and/or an absence of HRM competence, resulting in the perception of being "*...piggy in the middle*" (McConville & Holden, 1999, p.421).

Figure 1.1 Summary Conceptualisation of Line Manager Involvement in HRM



Reinforcing the pressures evident in the line manager and HR relationship, Renwick (2000) and Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003) propose that line managers may translate and disseminate HR policy and practice to elicit commitment and performance from their teams. However, Cunningham & Hyman (1999), McConville & Holden (1999) and the IRS (2006a), signal that line managers potential lack of HR competency, time and resources may prevent them from fully discharging their HR remit.

As a consequence of line managers assuming an involvement in HRM, the roles and responsibilities of the HR professional may, in turn, evolve to focus on strategic HRM ‘business partner’ roles assisting and facilitating line managers in the implementation of their HR remit (Storey, 2001; Harris et al., 2002; Holt Larsen &

Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2003; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005a; Ulrich et al., 2008; Caldwell, 2008). Within this however, Budhwar (2000) highlights that HR professionals may struggle in maintaining the standards of HRM delivery as well as cope with their own emerging strategic responsibilities. Compounding this issue, research from the IRS (2006b) identifies that HR professionals are concerned about the competence of line managers to effectively deliver HRM, a finding also reflected in a recent CIPD (2007a) survey where it is noted that HR professionals would like to devolve more HRM to line managers but issues of their (line managers) skills, priorities and competency challenge this goal. In summary, both positive and negative accounts of line manager and HR professional collaboration have emerged in the literature as a result of the inherent tensions attributed to assuming additional or different roles and responsibilities (Perry & Kulik, 2008). The emerging complexity of line manager involvement and potential collaboration in HRM indicates that structural and relational issues may mediate the efficacy of their interaction. This, in turn, leads to the subsequent discussion which attempts to reconcile these issues through the identification of such gaps in the existing research base.

1.5 Gaps in the Literature

The role that line managers play in HRM has received increasing attention in the HR, however, little is known about the relationships formed by and between collaborating line managers and HR professionals in terms of “...*what behaviours and competencies are required to perform these roles, what factors inhibit line manager effectiveness and what factors facilitate it, and the nature of the relationship between HR and the line*” (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2007, p.ix).

In terms of progressing the research beyond the polarised characterisation of positive and negative impacts on line manager and HR professional collaborative roles and responsibilities, it is proposed to expand the level of research enquiry in terms of the realisation of the collaborative line-HR relationship. In pursuit of achieving this goal and to effectively contribute to understanding in the area, various calls in the literature are presented as the basis for this particular research direction. Morley et al. (2006) observes that, “*Devolution of HR responsibilities to line managers is now*

seen as something of a defining issue in human resource management” (p.614), and thereby warrants a contemporary research focus. Further supporting this position, Dany et al.’s (2008) research exploring the distribution of responsibilities between HRM specialists and line managers signals that the *“HRM-LM relationship requires more in-depth exploration”* (p.2109).

As this research is based on public semi-state organisation, cognisance is placed on the public arena in which line manager involvement in HRM also occurs, and as such, Feldman (2005) highlights that *“...we need more research about how to manage public organizations”* (p.958). In a similar vein, Brown (2004) signals that limited attention has been afforded in research and academic inquiry in terms of HRM in the public sector.

An area of research in which an expanded level of focus is called for centres on explicating the increasingly dynamic and complex interrelationship between line managers and HR professionals. Supportive of this, Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003) argue that the complexity of the collaboration is compounded by the fact that the labels of ‘HR department’ and ‘line management’ encompass numerous levels of organisational positions and, as such, should be addressed in any subsequent research on the topic. A more concentrated focus on the interactive elements of the collaborative relationship, through the incorporation of multiple responding actors, may assist in fully capturing the research phenomenon, as proposed by Harris et al. (2002) and more recently by Dorensbosch et al. (2006).

It has also been highlighted in some of the literature that scant attention has been placed on identifying the operationalisation of line manager-HR professional collaboration and the inherent assignment of roles and responsibilities within this relationship. Evidence of this is found in Harris et al. (2002), where it is argued there is limited understanding about the structure of line manager-HR professional collaboration in terms of the *“...shape they have taken and their appropriateness from the perspective of the different stakeholders”* (p.218). More recently, Watson et al. (2007) have reiterated the necessity to enhance understanding of *“Partnership*

working between HR unit level specialists and first-line managers” (p.46), echoing a previous position held by Renwick (2000:2003) from the public sector standpoint.

Recently, Perry & Kulik (2008) and Dany et al.’s (2008) research on devolution and line manager-HR professional relationships respectively call for future research to explore what activities are devolved to the line and, moreover, to identify organisational strategies for securing ‘buy in’ to devolution and subsequently collaborative HRM working relationships. In response to the paucity of literature on the operationalisation of the line manager-HR professional relationship, *“There is a strong sense that HR has been more successful in selling its message to senior management than to line managers and employees, and more attention will need to be devoted to the latter”* (CIPD, 2003, p.26), and therefore, exploring collaborative HRM has merit.

An additional proposed research contribution is in relation to broadening the scope of the line manager-HR professional collaboration in the context of supporting organisational and HRM strategy, as opposed to the dichotomous focus on line managers and HR professionals. As Valverde et al. (2006) note, traditional studies have focused on the HR department as opposed to the entire HR function (which includes line managers) and, as such, research in this area has merit. Echoing this position, Zhu et al.’s (2008) research on HRM devolvment, signals that more research is warranted on the extent *“...to which HRM is integrated into the organizations core business operations”* (p.850). Stressing the importance of the *“...anatomy”* (Morley et al, 2006, p.609) of these interrelationships and the interdependence of exchanging actors within the HR function, Bowen & Ostroff (2004) argue that research on these relationships, as opposed to the properties of HR configurations, would contribute to further enhancing understanding of the issues. By concentrating on this relationship aspect, this research proposes to explore the efficacy of line manager-HR professional collaboration in supporting the HR strategy, following the advice of Maxwell & Watson (2006) by including *“...the social dynamics of divergent and convergent views and their outcomes”* (p.1168).

In conjunction with responding to the various calls for further research within the line manager-HR professional collaboration literature, and with particular reference to an Irish organisational context, this study seeks achieve methodological in addition to theoretical contributions. In relation to methodology, this research seeks to recognise the lack of an integrated approach to the study of interactive and collaborative actors in HRM (Valverde et al., 2006 and Bjorkman & Soderberg, 2006) by addressing and incorporating both line manager and HR respondents and furthermore, Group HR and business-unit HR Manager viewpoints. Furthermore, in response to Cascon-Pereira's et al. (2006) call for research to “...go beyond the existing but simplistic studies that quantitatively frame these perceptions as positive or negative” (p.147), this research encompasses a descriptive and interpretive approach to illuminating understanding on line manager-HR professional collaboration through exploring the issue within a semi-state.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 develops the context for this study, in terms of the strategic nature of HRM, with specific reference to the devolvement of HRM to line managers. In particular, it outlines the role of SHRM in creating and fostering change by focusing attention on the drivers for change in the management of human resources. Furthermore, from a distillation of the literature, it is posited that line managers are assuming a transactional role in HRM policy and practice.

Chapter 3 focuses on relationships, and more specifically, the social exchange perspective of cross-functional relationships. Based on this theory, and incorporating a strategic human resource management underpinning, a framework for the line manager-HR professional relationship is also developed relying on social penetration theory and sense-making.

Chapter 4 provides a synthesis of the HRM and SET literature reviewed and incorporates social penetration theory and sense-making towards the development of

the research framework associated with this study. In addition, a series of propositions are presented to support the overall research question.

Chapter 5 illustrates the methodological approach adopted for the study itself. Within this, the foundation and justification for the research design is formulated and the methods adopted are presented.

Chapter 6 presents the findings from the research activity undertaken, accounting for line manager, HR professional, HR Manager and Group HR professional respondents with regards to their experiences of, and impacts accruing, from collaborative HRM.

Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the findings for the primary research in relation to the literature reviewed and the previously developed research framework and research propositions.

Finally, Chapter 8 presents the conclusions that have been drawn from this research on line manager-HR professional collaboration in the context of collaborative HRM delivery. Within this, cognisance is taken of the limitations of the research exercise and recommendations are proposed regarding future research avenues and practical implications.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to present the rationale for conducting this programme of research by providing an introduction to the focus of the study which has been reinforced by the relevant literature in the area. In doing so, the gaps in the existing body of literature on line manager and HR professional collaboration and its potential impact, have been identified and a resultant justification as to how this research aims to respond to these is offered. Chapter 2 now turns to addressing the wider context of line manager involvement in HRM and collaborative HRM delivery itself.

Chapter Two: SHRM and the Role of Line Managers and HR Professionals

2.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce HRM and the potential role that line managers may assume within it. With this in mind, the evolutionary and strategic nature of HRM is presented which, in turn, introduces the role of line managers who form a central focus for this study. As involving line managers in HRM provision may result in the formation of a collaborative line manager-HR professional relationship, consideration is given to this and the possible impact that this relationship may generate at an individual and organisational level.

2.1 The Emergence of Strategic Human Resource Management

Prior to exploring the emergence of strategic HRM, cognisance is taken of the development of people management practice in general, as Mamman & Rees (2004) note that the discipline of HRM “...means different things to different people” (p.117), highlighting that the concept, both in the management literature and practice, has been subject to considerable debate and ambiguity (Krulis-Randa, 1990; Keenoy, 1990; Legge, 1995; Torrington & Hall, 1996; Hope-Hailey et al., 1997; Storey, 2001, Lucas, 2002; Paauwe & Boselie, 2005). Mindful that delineating this debate is beyond the specific scope of this research (see Guest, 1987; Storey, 1992; Keenoy & Anthony, 1992; Legge, 1989, Hendry & Pettigrew, 1990; Keenoy, 1990; Caldwell, 2002; Beardwell et al., 2004, Gunnigle et al., 2006; Wright, 2008 for an in-depth focus) a brief distinction of HRM in comparison to traditional personnel management is offered.

A review of some of the literature in the area (Guest, 1987; Maund, 2001; Storey, 2001; Armstrong & Barron, 2002; Torrington et al., 2002; Mamman & Rees, 2004 Paauwe & Boselie, 2005; Alcazar et al., 2007), suggests that while similarities exist between the content of personnel management and HRM, the integrative and business-led focus is what really differentiates HRM as a distinctive approach to people management (Hoque & Noon, 2001; Armstrong & Barron, 2002). Moreover, and of particular significance, Legge (1989) who even questions the paradigm shift of personnel into HRM, recognises that the involvement of line managers in the delivery of human resource activities is one facet that distinguishes HRM from personnel management.

In further depicting the evolution of personnel management to HRM towards strategic HRM by reflecting an increasingly business and organisational-led focus, the issue of the integration of HR practice with organisational strategy has been identified as a defining concept (Tyson, 1987; Storey, 1992; Walker, 1992; Mabey et al., 1998; Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000; Boxall & Purcell, 2000; Gibb, 2001; Greer, 2001, Ferris et al., 2002; Christensen-Hughes, 2002). In essence, strategic human resource management (SHRM) encapsulates the amalgamation of collective HR practice into a coherent HR strategy, which, in turn, may be complementary to the overarching organisational strategy (Tichy et al., 1982; Beer et al, 1984; Devanna et al, 1984; Wright & Mc Mahon, 1992; Boxall, 1994; Delery & Doty, 1996; Mabey et al., 1998; Gratton et al., 1999; Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000; Boxall & Purcell, 2000; Christensen Hughes, 2002; Ferris et al., 2002; Armstrong & Barron, 2002; Verreault & Hyland, 2005, Boswell, 2006). As such, Green et al. (2006) asserts that SHRM represents “...*both horizontal fit of HR practices and vertical fit between HR practices and business strategies*” (p.561), representing strategic decisions about the utilisation and design of human resource practices, with respect to supporting organisational strategy (Christensen Hughes, 2002; Wood et al., 2006).

In short, Beardwell et al.’s (2004) depiction of HRM as a management discipline ranges from a traditional personnel management approach to workforce management, to the adoption of viewing employees as resources capable of development and, in turn, the fusion of HRM policy and practice with the wider organisational strategic direction, culminating in a strategic approach to HRM delivery and practice (Guest, 1987; Storey, 1992; Tyson, 1997; Bratton & Gold, 1999; Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000; Ferris et al., 2002). Reflective of this evolutionary perspective, Schuler & Jackson (2005) identify that strategic human resource management is rooted “...*in human resource management, which in turn grew out of personnel management*” (p.12).

2.2 Strategic Human Resource Management: The Catalyst for Line Management Involvement in HRM

As previously alluded to, a strategic orientation to HRM may enable the devolvement of human resource management delivery to line managers. As noted in Chapter 1 and reflective of this, line managers may be more familiar with the execution of the overall organisational operations and by virtue of their roles, are closer to their own staff (Mac Neil, 2003). Simultaneously involving line managers in the provision of HRM may enable HR professionals to strive to assume a more ‘business partner’ role: “...*HR should become a partner with senior and line managers in strategy execution, helping to move planning from the conference room to the marketplace*” (Ulrich, 1998, p.124).

Aghazadeh (2003) and more recently, Stavrou & Brewster (2005) and Wright et al. (2005) recognise there may be profound changes needed to transform the HR function in terms of its delivery, structure and processes. This, in turn, may incorporate a more significant role for line managers. As evidence of this, a recent CIPD (2007a) survey has noted that 53% of responding organisations in the UK have restructured their HR function in the last year. In addition, a further 81% have done so in the last five years to “...*enable the HR function to become a more strategic contributor*” (p.2) and also with particular relevance to this research, restructuring the HR function has included a greater involvement of line managers in HR delivery (CIPD, 2007a).

In championing the case for delivering SHRM practice, Ulrich (1998) argues that the way in which organisations structure the HR function, including the individuals who provide HR services, may be the cornerstone for supporting organisational effectiveness. More recently, Ulrich & Brockbank (2005b; Ulrich et al., 2008) have reiterated that HR professionals need to concentrate on transforming the HR function to a strategic thinking and value-adding centre. With reference to a move towards a more strategic approach to HRM in the Irish public sector, modernisation agendas articulate the necessity to professionalise HRM policy and practice, to make efficient use of resources and provide excellent operational HR service (Humphreys & Worth Butler, 1999; Fleming, 2000; Boyle & Humphreys, 2001; O’Riordan, 2004).

Ulrich (1998) also vociferously signals that the human resource function cannot transform itself alone, identifying that “...every line manager who must achieve business goals” (p.125) are charged with embracing the management of human resources as part of their remit. Supportive of this role for line managers, Greer (2001) concurs that SHRM should be “...adjusted, accepted and used by line managers and employees as part of their everyday work” (p.123). Ulrich & Brockbank (2005a) concur that what will distinguish organisations is the strategic manner in which they structure and staff their core functions and in particular HR. Finally, Papas & Wooldridge (2007) note that line managers within HRM “...play a pivotal role in developing new ideas, reshaping firm capabilities, and affecting strategic renewal” (p.344).

With reference to how organisations structure and staff their HR function to pursue a more strategically orientated HR, Whittaker & Marchington (2003), from their case study analysis, illustrate the evolutionary nature of strategic human resource management. To start, Whittaker & Marchington (2003) reflect the traditional personnel management approach embodying welfare and associated personnel administration. Furthermore, the progression towards a more strategic orientation to HRM is associated with HR professionals adopting a ‘business partner’ role serving and collaborating with line managers. In turn, total business integration may be achieved as a consequence of the culmination of strategic human resource management practice, integrating HRM policy with the wider business policies and involving line managers in HRM delivery, thereby enabling HR professionals to concentrate on strategic organisational goals and direction of the function (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003).

2.3 Locating the Line Manager Role in SHRM

Each manager and supervisor responsible for running operational departments or sections in organisations, are deemed to be in line manager positions (Gunnigle & Flood, 1990). With specific reference to the function of line manager positions, the CIPD (2007b) view line managers as assuming first line responsibility for managing a work group and being held accountable to a higher level of management. Additionally, Hales (2005) identifies that the position of a line

manager represents the initial level of management to whom non-managerial employees report to, involving “...*performance-oriented supervision is at the core, surrounded by a penumbra of additional managerial responsibilities relating to stewardship, translating strategy into operations, unit management and, exceptionally, business management*” (p. 501).

As alluded to in Chapter 1, MacNeil (2003) distinguishes the role of line managers from general management by their intermediate location in the management structure, possessing a unique ability to “...*to influence both strategic and operational priorities*” (p.294). In further echoing this point, Wai-Kwong et al. (2001) similarly argue that a line manager position is located between “...*the strategic apex and operating core of organisation*” (p.1325), and as such, may be positioned to adapt strategic policy into workable practice (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003: 2007). Cognisance is taken of the hierarchical categorisations of line managers within the literature namely, first, middle and senior (Maxwell & Watson, 2006), however for this research, any manager with direct responsibility for staff in terms of scheduling their work, leadership and developmental responsibilities is considered a line manager, irrespective of their hierarchical position.

The pivotal role of line managers in translating and delivering HRM for their direct reports is further captured in the earlier observations of Legge (1995) and more recently by Hutchinson & Purcell (2003) and CIPD (2007b). In arguing the case for line managers assuming a delivery role for HRM, Guest (1987) states that in the adoption of HRM and subsequently SHRM, the integrative nature of HR practice may require, as previously introduced, a devolved structure incorporating line managers. In a similar vein, Storey’s (1992) agrees that the integrative and strategic nature of HRM requires that “...*people management decisions ought not to be treated as incidental operational matters or be sidelined into the hands of personnel officers*” (p.26).

The recurring theme in the contemporary management literature also identifies an increasing pattern of assigning responsibility for HRM to line managers (Brewster & Larsen, 2000; Budhwar, 2000; Harris et al., 2002; Renwick, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Mesner Andolsek & Stebe, 2005; Cascon-Pereira et al., 2006; Watson et al., 2007; Dany et al., 2008; Zhu et al, 2008; Perry & Kulik, 2008). In further emphasising this pattern of line manager involvement in HRM in the public sector domain, Harris et al. (2002) reports that since the 1980s, the trend has been to devolve responsibility for HRM to line managers and through this, human resource management practice may become aligned more closely with organisational strategy.

More specifically in relation to the manifestation of line manager involvement in HRM, Hutchinson & Purcell (2003) illustrate that the responsibilities of line managers have developed to include a HRM remit within activities such as recruitment and selection, discipline and grievance management, performance management and communication. From the public sector HR perspective, the transformative processes associated with moving from a traditional bureaucratic to an agile, efficient and responsive structure, facilitating team-working and an enhanced involvement role for line managers requires “...*greater involvement by managers with their staff, the quality of management, and consequently the efficiency with which services are delivered, is greatly enhanced*” (O’Riordan, 2004, p.69).

Within public sector organisations which are frequently characterised by complex environments, numerous stakeholders, bureaucracy and a restricted ability to deploy financial profit incentives (Boyne, 2002; Kelman, 2005), it is argued that managers “...*have less freedom to react as they see fit to the circumstances that they face*” (Boyne, 2002, p.101). HRM devolution to line managers may potentially alleviate this position, by enabling line managers to become formally involved in the decision-making and implementation of HRM policy and practice at each and every level of the organisation (Christensen & Per Laegreid, 2001; Teo & Crawford, 2005; McGuire et al., 2008).

2.3.1 Involving Line Managers in the Delivery of HRM

In viewing line managers involvement in HRM, Harris et al. (2002) purport that it is indicative of a “...*business model of HRM*” (p.218), to which Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003) posit the view that this is “...*received wisdom*” (p.228). Acknowledging that line manager involvement is not a contemporary phenomenon, Hutchinson & Purcell (2007) identify that the breadth and depth of their involvement has significantly increased: “*Line managers have, of course, always had some responsibility for people management, but what is new is the broadening and deepening of their involvement*” (p.ix).

In practical terms, research output from the IRS (2008) involving 121 organisations in the UK, identified that 4 in 5 (80.2%) have devolved HRM responsibility to line managers. Identifying HRM devolution within the literature is problematic as confusion arises around the terms decentralisation (the location of HR professionals) and devolution (reallocation or transferring of HRM related roles and responsibilities to line managers) (Cascon-Pereira et al., 2006). For this study, line manager involvement in HRM echoes the devolution concept identified by Cascon-Pereira et al. (2006), as line managers in the context of collaborative HRM, are assuming HR roles and responsibilities that were traditionally the province of HR professionals and before them personnel specialists.

Within HRM devolution strategies, line managers are purposefully included as key stakeholders in decision-making and implementation of HRM policies and practices (Valverde et al., 2006) as part of organisational strategy (Harris et al., 2002). Inherent in this involvement, Cascon-Pereira et al. (2006) make explicit the requirement to accompany HR responsibility with requisite authority to enable line managers to fully discharge their HRM remit. This issue is further identified in the literature, where it is noted that in some instances, involving line managers in HRM has involved merely transferring tasks and responsibilities (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999), but with a lack of authority in terms of decision making power (Currie & Proctor, 2001, Harris et al., 2002), budgetary power (McConville &

Holden, 1999; Mc Conville 2006) and expertise power (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003).

With reference to the assignment of the various HRM responsibilities, there are variations in the degree to which HRM tasks are devolved to line managers, indicating that line managers may have particular preference for certain HRM activities (Budhwar, 2000; Mesner-Andolsek & Stebe, 2005). To illustrate this, research from the IRS (2006a) presented indicates that specialist activities such as of performance (46%); health and safety (18%); staffing (47.5%); equal opportunities (40%) and employee relations (54%) reflect line managers varied involvement in HRM.

The consensus within the IRS (2006a) survey findings is that a partnership of shared responsibility exists between HR and line management, with more than 60% of the responding organisations reporting a shared approach to HRM provision. Furthermore, in related IRS (2006b) research, the detailed changes to the HRM responsibility of line management are also captured. From the IRS (2006b) data, the direct relationship of line managers with their employees is reflected in the high percentage of responsibility for issues such as team briefing (91%); team development (55%); appraisal and performance management (49%) and training (39%). In terms of the prominence of a shared line manager-HR professional responsibility, this is reflected in the practices of grievance management (90%); disciplinary management (88%); recruitment (81%) and induction (72%). Also supporting this position, data from the international Cranet (2006) survey, in relation to the assignment of HRM responsibility, signals that “... it is common for most EU countries for HR to be responsible with the assistance of the line” (p.24) for the activities of recruitment and selection, training and development, responsibility for workforce expansion/reduction and pay and benefits.

Research on line manager involvement in HRM in an Irish context is somewhat limited. Early research conducted by Heraty & Morley (1995) indicates that there

is evidence of devolvement of transactional HRM activities to line managers. An international HRM study by Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003), illustrates the comparative rankings of the various countries (Ireland included) in the Cranet survey with respect to their degree of devolvement. In turn, Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003) identify that Ireland's position regarding devolution levels has remained in the least devolved category for almost a decade.

Regarding the changing patterns of HR devolvement to line managers in Ireland, over 1995-1999/2000 period, Brewster et al. (2004) illustrate that line manager involvement in recruitment is increasing from (28%) in 1995 to (46%) in 1999/2000. A similar increase is noted with respect to the increasing involvement of Irish line managers in the field of training and development of employees, with an increase of responsibility (55%) by line management over the period of the study. The outputs from Brewster et al.'s (2004) research also indicate that while line manager involvement in the core HRM activities has risen steadily from 1995-1999/2000, there is no evidence of complete devolvement to the line but *"...rather the specialist HR function retains considerable input into, and responsibility for, core HRM activities"* (p.46). Dany et al. (2008) advocate such a configuration where neither line managers nor HR professionals assume sole responsibility in HRM delivery, as line managers may not possess the capacity to focus exclusively on HR issues and simultaneously, HR professionals may focus too specifically on HRM issues, potentially neglecting wider business and operational concerns.

In presenting the evidence on the extent and the breadth of devolved HRM responsibilities, a comparative summary of devolvement studies is depicted in table 2.1 which summarises international research on line manager involvement in both public and private organisational HRM provision over the last decade or so. These studies suggest that line manager involvement in HRM is reflected in the specific areas of recruitment and selection, training and development, managing industrial relations, performance appraisal, workforce expansion and reduction and communications.

Table 2.1 Comparative Summary of Line Manager Involvement in HRM

Author	Year	Country	Type of Research	Organisational Context	Line Manager Involvement in:									
					Recruitment and Selection	Training and Development	Pay, Benefits and Reward	Industrial Relations, discipline and grievance	Performance Management and Appraisal	Workforce Expansion/Reduction	Health and Safety	Communication		
IRS	2006a	UK	Quantitative	179 Public and Private organisations	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			
Papalexandris & Panayotopoulou	2006	Greece	Quantitative (drawn from Cranet)	150 Greek firms	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Cascon-Pereira et al	2006	Spain	Case-study	Hospital	✓				✓			✓		✓
Cranet	2006	International	Quantitative	Public, private, service, non profit	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Mesner Andolsek & Stebe	2005	European	Quantitative (drawn on Cranet)	Public and Commercial organisations	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Brewster et al.	2004	UK & Ire	Quantitative	Public, private, service, non profit	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Holt Larsen & Brewster	2003	International (22 countries)	Quantitative (drawn from Cranet)	Public, private, service, non profit	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Hutchinson & Purcell	2003	UK	Qualitative	Retail, finance, professional services, IT, NHS	✓	✓			✓					✓
Whittaker & Marchington	2003	UK	Case-study	Large food processing plant	✓			✓	✓					
Budhwar	2000	UK	Quantitative and Qualitative	6 manufacturing industries		✓	✓	✓			✓			
McConville & Holden	1999	UK	Case-study	2 Hospitals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Poole & Jenkins	1997	UK	Quantitative	Institute of Management fellows and members		✓	✓	✓						✓
Cunningham & Hyman	1995	Scotland	Quantitative	45 establishments (9 public sector)	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓

2.3.2 Collaborative (Line Manager-HR Professional) HRM Delivery

In terms of identifying collaborative HRM delivery, and of particular relevance to the material to be discussed in Chapter 3, concerned with the social features of collaborative relationships, Boxall, Purcell & Wright (2007) note that HR partnerships or collaborative relationships engender such norms of behaviour: “...long-term [HR] partnerships are likely to be fostered that preserve continuity over time, ensure trust among partners, and engender reciprocity and collaboration” (p.215). Moving to HRM delivery specifically, for the purpose of this research, HRM delivery is regarded as the management of human resources in a coherent manner that links people-related activities (attracting, maintaining, training, developing, appraising, rewarding, involving and managing) to the strategy of a business or organisation. HRM delivery specifically involves evoking, implementing and the administration of HRM policies and procedures. The collaboration between line managers and HR professionals has evaded a universal definition in the HRM literature, however, a range of references have been made in relation to this concept both in this body of literature and furthermore, within this chapter. Specifically, the terminology of ‘partnership’, ‘relationships’, ‘sharing responsibility’, ‘codetermination’ and ‘cooperation’ are some of the terms used to denote the collaborative relationships line managers and HR professional assume in the delivery of HRM practice. At a broad level, the collaborative line manager (operational and delivery) - HR professional (facilitative and strategic) delivery approach is reflected in the comments made by MacNeil (2003): “... ‘operational’ or ‘transactional’ HRM activities are devolved to line managers, while HRM strategic decisions remain with the HRM specialist(s)” (p.295).

For the purpose of this research and as already alluded to in Chapter 1, collaborative HR delivery represents the professional working relationships formed by line managers and HR professional for the specific purpose of HRM delivery. Within this remit, both line managers and HR professionals interact and exchange with each other assuming complimentary roles and behaviours. Moreover, line managers assume a ‘hands on’ HR delivery role in terms of managing their direct reports and, in turn, HR professionals facilitate and support line managers in achieving this brief, in addition to contributing to HRM policy and practice at a strategic level.

2.3.3 The Rationale for Collaborative HRM Delivery

As already noted in Chapter 1 and also within this chapter, the rationale for involving line managers in HRM in collaboration with HR professionals may be derived from a strategic intent to align HR strategies with the organisational needs, and thereby requiring line manager collaboration with HR professionals (Budhwar, 2000; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003). As Ulrich (1998) notes, line managers may be pivotal in “...*integrating HR strategy into the company’s real work*” (p.126), due to their proximity and familiarity with employees which may positively impact on the way they implement and enact HR policies (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2007). Likewise, Currie & Proctor’s (2001) NHS research highlights that line managers may positively contribute to strategic change in terms of influencing HRM practice through their involvement within it (Gibb, 2003).

More recently, and also echoing Legge’s (1995) earlier position that line managers are responsible for all resources (including their human resources), by virtue of their management remit, Ulrich & Brockbank (2005a) identify that line managers are likely to have HR responsibilities incorporated into their general management role. In strengthening this position, Hutchinson & Purcell (2003:2007) similarly note that line manager roles have expanded to incorporate both human and technical resource management. Reminiscent of the hard perspective of HRM previously presented by Storey (2001) and Francis (2006), involving line managers in the transactional delivery of HRM may facilitate deriving greater value-for-money from HR spend in terms of reducing the overheads of specialist HR headcount. Furthermore, associated economies of scale in service delivery may be achieved by having each line manager handling local HRM issues as a first port of call as opposed to automatically involving HR professionals (Budhwar, 2000 and Renwick, 2003).

Reflecting the rationale presented in Chapter 1, line manager involvement in HRM delivery may afford them the chance to be directly involved in the HRM issues affecting their own staff and department/function (Thornhill & Saunders, 1998 and Whittaker & Marchington 2003). McGuire et al. (2008) notes from a public sector perspective and with the increasing needs for flexibility that, “...*it would seem more*

appropriate for line managers to take responsibility for people development...as their reactions will be more immediate and appropriate” (p.77). The introduction of more accessible and user friendly self-service HR information systems and organisational intranets facilitating access to policies and procedures, have also enabled line managers to take ownership of HRM issues as guidance and information has become more readily available to them (Renwick & MacNeil, 2002; Papalexandris & Panaayatopolou, 2006; Alleyne et al., 2007). Finally, involving line managers in HRM may also serve to enhance the speed of decision-making processes associated with the area if they are empowered to make local decisions regarding their staff (Budhwar, 2000; Renwick, 2000 and Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003).

2.3.4 Criticisms of Collaborative HRM Delivery

In arguing their case for involving line managers in collaborative HRM provision with HR professionals, Holt Larsen & Brewster (2003), as previously highlighted, consider the approach as “...*received wisdom*” (p.228). However, this assertion is also contested in the literature. For example, the research of Renwick (2000) and McConville (2006) note that the parameters of responsibility for HRM have consistently been ambiguous, which may result in confusion over accountability and responsibility for both HR and line managers in terms of their collaborative remit. From a HR professional perspective it was identified that the involvement of line managers in HRM delivery is not the panacea to HRM effectiveness: “*How can HR deliver consistency of quality when it dumps more work onto the management population? In my view, HR will never just be the strategic role it desires to be. It has to get its hands dirty; it has to accept this reality*” (Crush, 2009, p.30).

Presenting the line manager perspective, the Roffey Park Management Agenda (2009) signals that less than a quarter of respondents (800 respondents - 24%) felt that HR adds value to their organisation. The reasoning behind this assessment is that HR is deemed reactive, out of touch and lacking influential credibility through increased self-service delivery mediums. Furthermore, the CIPD’s president-elect, at the CIPD Ireland Annual Conference (2006) identified that with the utilisation of

remote service centres, small specialist HR teams and business partners at the corporate centre level, has resulted in the HR function ‘disappearing’ in the eyes of many line managers.

Related to the issue of accountability, Holden & Roberts (2000) public and private sector-based international research indicates that line managers may not always receive the requisite authority to discharge their HRM responsibilities. Likewise, McConville & Holden (1999) report similar findings in that line managers may have “...*impotent responsibility*” (p.420), if they are being held accountable for the activities, behaviours and performance of their employees, with little discretion to adapt rewards systems or adjust staffing levels as a result of budgetary or authoritative constraints (Cascon Pereira et al., 2006; Roffey Park Management Agenda, 2009). Mindful of this position, Crush (2009) reiterates that line managers need to manage within the line “...*according to the rules set by HR, but with clear demarcation of where HR steps in*” (Crush, 2009, p.30).

Research on the competency of line managers in discharging their HRM responsibilities (Harris et al., 2002; Nehles et al., 2006; IRS, 2006b; Brandl et al., 2009) highlights that issues such as a lack of line manager competence in HRM areas may restrict them in their ability and negatively impact on their motivation and willingness to effectively deliver HRM, as previously alluded to earlier in this chapter. In this vein, Hutchinson & Purcell (2007) point to three factors which impact on line managers’ willingness and ability to engage in and exercise their HRM responsibilities: lack of skills and knowledge, lack of commitment to people management and competing priorities and work overload. HR professionals also raise concerns about the ability, competence and scope of line managers to deliver upon their HRM responsibilities (IRS, 2006b; IRS, 2008), while a lack of support from HR professionals is noted as being problematic in the literature (Cunningham & Hyman, 199; Bond & Wise, 2003; Nehles et al., 2006). Thornhill & Saunders (1998) case study research on a public sector organisation experiencing privatisation, as an example, criticises the ‘absentee [HR] specialist’ scenario. In this instance, HRM devolution to line managers occurred at the expense of a centralised HR function, largely due to cost cutting measures. The consequence of the absence of

specialist HR professionals negatively impacted on line managers HRM delivery, as line managers were essentially left to their own devices in the absence of professional HR guidance and collaboration opportunities. Finally, McGuire et al. (2008) highlights that devolving to line managers may potentially devalue the importance and the specialist nature of the HR profession and negatively affect HR representation at the strategy table (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999).

2.4 The Impact of Collaborative HRM Delivery

It has been previously alluded to that involving line managers in HRM may foster collaborative relationships with HR professionals (Brewster et al., 2004; Mesner Andolsek & Stebe, 2005; Cranet, 2006; Morley et al., 2006 Valverde et al., 2006). In response, Ulrich (1997) posits that “*Line managers or HR professionals acting in isolation cannot be HR champions; they must form a partnership*” (p.236). The foundation of this partnership or collaboration (HR professionals and line managers) is a reliance on both parties to potentially “*...bring different things to the team*” (Renwick, 2000, p.194). The involvement of line managers in HRM provision may therefore redistribute the delivery mechanisms for HRM which may, in turn, impact on line managers and HR professionals. As such, there may be merit in exploring these areas further.

2.4.1 Impact on Line Manager Roles and Responsibilities

For line managers, assuming an involvement in HRM may impact on their roles and responsibilities as HR professional are increasingly reliant upon them to transmit desired policies and practices (Harris, 2001). Hutchinson & Purcell (2003) identify that through their involvement in HRM, line managers may be “*...carrying out activities which traditionally had been the bread and butter of the personnel or HR department*” (p.6). From the line manager perspective, the impact of devolving HRM may be both positive and negative (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Renwick, 2000; Harris, 2001; Renwick, 2003; Nehles et al., 2006) as they may be viewed as “*...both the purveyors of change and the recipients of change*” (Holden & Roberts, 2004, p.285).

In a positive sense, and as already alluded to, line managers as the vehicle for HRM delivery, may enable them to be directly involved in HRM activities relating to their

own staff, which, in turn, may enhance the speed of decision making on HR issues (Thornhill & Saunders, 1998; Budhwar, 2000; Renwick, 2000 and Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003; McGuire et al., 2008). Equally, a number of studies have also illustrate that many line managers identify that the prospect of assuming responsibility for HRM is not always welcomed. For example, Harris et al. (2002) noted that the line manager respondents may feel uncomfortable in the spotlight and under prepared to exercise their own managerial discretion with respect to enacting their HR responsibilities.

In addition, the IRS (2006b) survey on the extent of devolution of HR activities to line managers, found that fewer than half the line managers responding to the study were enthusiastic about assuming HRM responsibilities. In particular, it is identified that many line managers have been promoted based on their existing skills and abilities to perform their original and often technical duties. Therefore, having to assume HRM responsibilities may require them to develop completely new skills sets, while still maintaining their original responsibilities. This may result in a potential “...*piggy in the middle [situation] caught between the directives of their seniors and the exigencies of the service on the one hand, and the demands and problems of their staff and the consumers of the service on the other.*” (Mc Conville & Holden, 1999, p.421).

Inherent in assuming an involvement in HRM, line managers may also undergo varying levels and degrees of preparation, requiring an investment in time and commitment on their behalf (Nehles et al, 2006). This level of this preparation may also impact on line managers desire to deliver HRM provision (Harris et al, 2002; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Issues of line managers HRM competence are raised by Cunningham & Hyman (1999), where line manager respondents in their research suggest that they had been given inadequate training in HRM practice, citing a one-day training course in disciplinary procedures, with little follow-up training and a complete absence of any employee relations training in another instance. The issue of line manager competence is also reflected in the more recent research of Nehles et al. (2006), in which 30% of the line manager respondents

identified that they lacked the competencies to implement their HRM remit due to the paucity of effective training opportunities provided.

This dissatisfaction with the level of preparedness is also echoed in the earlier findings of Cunningham & Hyman's (1995) devolvement investigation of 45 Scottish, public and private sector organisations. Again, the respondents reported a lack of consistency in line manager training in that problems often arose that had not been covered in the initial training provided. Supportive of the earlier findings of Cunningham & Hyman (1995: 1999), Bond & Wise (2003) more recently report that HR professionals may be accused of neglecting their duties in terms of providing support to line managers for their HR responsibilities by failing to deliver comprehensive preparatory training and on-going specialist support.

The pressure of combining the traditional managerial role with specific HRM responsibilities is a recurring theme in the more recent HR devolvement literature (Holden & Roberts, 2004; McConville, 2006; Morley et al., 2006, Nehles et al., 2006). The difficulty experienced with balancing responsibilities is captured in the research by Whittaker & Marchington (2003), where one line manager respondent reflected, "*Am I straying from the main things I am meant to be focusing on?*" (p.255). Moreover, this particular position is also mirrored by a line manager respondent in Harris et al. (2002) public sector-based study, who felt overwhelmed by the level of HRM responsibility in their general management role, particularly as their expertise was not in the HRM arena. Relatedly, respondents from McConville's (2006) research signalled that due to their HRM role ambiguity in terms of authority and power, they felt constantly pressured from both their staff and HR professionals. In summary, the impact of line manager involvement in HRM, from Renwick's (2000) case study analysis of a public sector NHS Trust, illustrates that "*...differences in opinion existed between HR and line managers*" (p. 192) in relation to HRM implementation which, in turn, impacted on the effectiveness of their relationship.

Collaborative HRM configurations arising between line managers and HR professionals in terms of working together on tasks, sharing responsibility and

combining resources and eliciting each others respective strengths to achieve these goals, introduces the issue of social capital development (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) as an additional impact to line managers. For Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998) social capital may be considered as “...*the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit*” (p.243). Relatedly, and of particular relevance to the following chapter, Woolcock (1998) identifies that within social capital “...*information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks*” (p.153), are central components. Therefore, by collaborating with HR professionals, line managers may receive helpful resources and support (Putnam et al., 1993) to forge ties (Granovetter 1973; Levin & Cross, 2004) and to bridge and bond HRM policy with everyday business management. For, Zupin & Kase (2007) accounting for the impact of social capital is “...*very useful for analysing the effectiveness of the observed devolution of HRM function to line managers*” (p.244), and moreover, the value of the relationship between line managers and HR professionals.

2.4.2 Impact on HR Professional Roles and Responsibilities

As a result of line managers assuming an involvement in HRM, the roles and responsibilities of the HR professional may, in turn, adjust to support and facilitate line managers in the implementation of a HRM remit. For Ulrich et al (2007), Caldwell, (2008), Wright (2008) and Lemmergaard (2009), HR professionals need to respond to such changes and the wider business conditions by demonstrating new competencies and re-inventing themselves and their contribution. Consequently, Ulrich et al. (2007) identifies six key competency areas for HR professionals and of particular relevance to this particular research are the two competence domains of operational executor and credible activist. For HR professionals to be credible they need to be “*respected, admired, listened to*” (Ulrich et al., 2007, p.6) and to be active, they need to take a stand and challenge assumptions and perceptions. Relatedly, with reference to operational execution the “...*operational work of HR ensures credibility if executed flawlessly and grounded in the consistent application of policies*” (Ulrich et al., 2007, p.7). The remaining competency domains, pitched at the strategic level include culture and change steward, talent manager and

organisational designer, strategy architect and business ally (Ulrich et al., 2007; Ulrich et al., 2008).

Specifically in the context of this research, where line managers assume an increased HRM role in the day-to-day management of their direct reports, the role of the HR specialist may “...move on to higher things” (Brewster et al. 2001, p.37), to embrace evolving strategic HR concerns. Recent research by Ulrich et al. (2007) suggests that HR professionals roles may be distinguished on a transactional-transformational basis, where transactional work manifests in service provision and support roles and the latter manifests in strategic roles and consultancy positions.

Research conducted by Storey (1992) on the responsibilities of HR professionals also identified four potential roles, characterised by the degree of intervention and strategy involvement. This research is of particular relevance where line managers assume an increased responsibility for HRM, and HR professionals therefore, may find themselves operating in a more strategic advisory and less interventionary mode to HRM provision (Storey, 2001). Within Storey’s (1992) framework, the HR roles are identified as advisers, handmaidens, regulators and change makers and attention is focused not only to the degree of involvement which HR professionals assume in HRM provision, it also includes a measure to gauge whether such intervention may be strategic or tactical. Of particular relevance to line manager-HR professional collaboration (Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003), the adviser role is characterised by a non-interventionary but strategic approach, where HR professionals may be more likely to be involved as strategic ‘internal consultants’ rather than transactional deliverers of HRM provision (Ulrich, 1997; 1998; Ulrich & Beatty, 2001).

Related to the adviser role, the handmaiden role is a non-interventionary approach in which the HR professional may act as service providers to line managers, in terms of providing specialist advice and direction on HR issues and standards (Caldwell, 2008). In a similar vein to Storey’s (1992) framework, Ulrich & Brockbank (2005b) have also formulated a consolidated typology of HR roles incorporating the human capital developer, functional expert, strategic partner and HR leader (Green et al., 2006). Ulrich & Brockbank (2005b) in commenting on these strategic roles, assert

that HR professionals may “...bring know how about business, change, consulting and learning to their relationships with line managers” (p. 27), through strategy formulation and execution.

Of further interest to this study, Harris et al.’s (2002) research on the devolution of HR responsibilities in the UK public sector examines the potential for adopting a strategic partner role (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005a; Francis & Keegan, 2006; Caldwell, 2008; Wright, 2008) by HR professionals, as a consequence of line managers assuming transactional HR responsibility. A responding HR Manager in Harris et al.’s (2002) research observes that, “Yes, it sounds good to be more strategic but I don’t really know what that could mean and whether I have the necessary skills to undertake that role” (Harris et al., p.223). This respondent further notes they had to transform their role from transactional to strategic as a consequence of line managers involvement in HRM provision which presented a major challenge for the respondent who believed themselves to be competent in transactional as opposed to strategic HRM.

As the devolvement process involves line managers assuming HRM responsibilities that are traditionally the province of HR professionals, Thornhill & Saunders (1998) similarly identify that it is not uncommon for HR professionals to feel that their responsibilities are diminishing. Moreover, Budhwar’s (2000) research on integration and devolvement of HR in manufacturing and pharmaceutical organisations in the UK, highlights the struggle HR professionals may face in attempting to maintain the standards of HRM delivery as well as cope with their own strategic responsibilities. With particular reference to maintaining HR standards, the IRS (2006b) research illustrates that the prevailing rating which HR professionals assign to line managers is ‘adequate’ in terms of their capacity to deliver HRM. Furthermore, line managers were perceived to be performing ‘badly’ in the areas of appraisal, employee engagement and absence management.

The recent research findings of the CIPD (2007a) found that three-quarters of responding UK HR professionals “...would like to go further in the transfer of

people management responsibilities to the line” (p.3), but that obstacles such as “*...line manager priorities, their skills, the time available to them for people management tasks and poor manager self-service”* (p.3), present challenges to achieving this goal. Therefore, the interplay between both line managers and HR professionals in terms of their roles and relationships has implications not only for themselves but also for their collaborative relationship (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2007).

As previously discussed in relation to the impact of developing social capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) for line managers, HR professionals, through their collaborative relationship with these managers, may experience similar impacts. HR professionals who are embedded and participate in collaborative HRM may gain insight into business issues (Dany et al., 2008), in conjunction to spreading the reach of HRM delivery to each level of the organisation (Guest, 1987). Through collaborating with line managers, HR professionals may exhibit reciprocity and trust and this, in a similar manner with respect to the impacts on line managers, may impact on the cross-functional relationship ties they form and create social capital (Granovetter, 1973; Levin & Cross, 2004).

2.4.3 Organisational Impact

The process of involving line managers in HRM provision, and the potential resultant line manager-HR professional collaboration, may also impact on the organisation. The organisational impact may manifest in a variety of ways, including the desired strategic integration of HRM with firstly, line managers and secondly, with the core operations of the organisation. Also within this discussion on the organisational impact of line manager-HR professional collaborative relationship, the confluence of both line manager and HR professional impacts are presented briefly as they have previously been addressed in earlier sections.

Morley et al. (2006) note that during the closing decades of the last century, there was a detectable shift from the transactional preoccupation of HRM to a more holistic and strategic HRM focus on the adapting HR functions. Inherent in such a

strategic integration orientation is the combined responsibility for HRM by various organisational stakeholders and of particular relevance to this research, human resource professionals and line managers (Valverde et al., 2006).

Evidence of the necessity to integrate HRM with organisational strategy, reflected in the previous discussion, is offered by the respondents in Cunningham & Hyman's (1999) research in which HRM may be seen as disconnected from the organisational strategy, resulting in a "...*strictly administrative role...It's not their fault, but they are just limited in what they can do in reality*" (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999, p.16). Moreover, in relation to the rationale for adopting a strategic perspective on HRM, Papalexandris & Panayotopoulou (2004) argue "...*advantage can only result from HR practices which are jointly developed and implemented by human resource (HR) specialists and line managers*" (p.281).

Acknowledging the competitive and financial pressures organisations face and the subsequent necessity for HRM provision to adapt (Ulrich, 1998, Aghazadeh 2003), McConville (2006) notes "...*HRM offers a rich array of practices to allow organisations to adapt and respond to environmental changes*" (p.637). In the context of this research and as previously discussed, organisations may involve line managers in HRM for numerous reasons which may include cost reduction initiatives (Thornhill & Saunders, 1998; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003) and also for HRM delivery efficiency and engagement (Budhwar, 2000; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). For Phillips (2006, the significance of involving line managers is integral to HRM as they are "...*the strongest thing that links employees to the organisation and is therefore very important for [employee] engagement*" (p.15).

The challenge at the organisational level is to facilitate the collaborative line manager-HR professional relationship and to manage the aforementioned positive and negative individual impacts experienced by both line managers and HR professionals. This process may involve providing training and development opportunities in preparation for, and the maintenance of, the collaborative relationship to HRM provision (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995: 1999; Renwick,

2000:2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). This may also require, at an organisational level, addressing and alleviating concerns regarding the efficacy of the collaborative relationship and the competencies of the partners within it.

While social capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) is presented as an individual impact in the previous sections, cognisance is also taken on its impact at the organisational level. In the context of this research (line managers and HR professionals collaboration), the organisation may gain through the potential for individuals to span boundaries and bridge organisational relationships through cross-functional collaboration (Burt, 1992; Aldridge et al., 2002; Wallis et al., 2004). Furthermore, the organisation's employees are exposed to different knowledge bases through collaborative working arrangements and conditions which may impact on their existing roles and contribute to leveraging employees existing intelligence and experience (Wright & Snell, 1999).

2.5 Positioning the Research on Exploring Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

Amongst the aforementioned literature on line management involvement in HRM (Budhwar, 2000; Harris et al., 2002; Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Brewster et al., 2004; Valverde et al., 2006; Maxwell & Watson, 2006; Cascon Pereira et al., 2006; Watson et al., 2007), the consensus, which is founded on the seminal research of Guest (1987) and Storey (1992), is that of an evolving collaborative line-HR relationship. As previously discussed, the forming of this line manager-HR professional collaboration impacts on the roles and responsibilities of both line management and HR professionals and, in turn, may affect the desired organisational outcomes of their collaboration (Harris et al., 2002; Holden & Roberts, 2004).

The on-going discourse within the literature indicates that the concept of the aforementioned-shared responsibility for HRM by both line management and HR professionals is being realised in practice and both the reasons for, and results of, this are varied (McConville & Holden, 1999; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; IRS, 2006; McConville, 2006 and Nehles et al., 2006). As previously noted, much of this

discourse focuses on the impact on roles, responsibilities and relationships of both line managers and HR professionals which, in turn, facilitate the introduction of the research focus i.e. the collaborative relationship between line managers and HR professionals.

2.5.1 Behaviourally-Based Relationship Theory

The significance of a behavioural focus to research is that may contribute to enhancing understanding of the actions of employees within organisations and the motivations behind these actions (McShane & Von Glinow, 2000). The study of behaviour engenders the “...*study and understanding of individual and group behaviour, and patterns of structure in order to help improve organisational performance and effectiveness*” (Mullins, 2002, p.20). The behavioural perspective in SHRM posits that different behaviours (Schuler & Jackson, 1987; Jackson et al. 1989; Singh & Schick, 2007) are motivated and enacted by employees for different strategies that organisations pursue.

For Schuler & Jackson (2005), the behavioural perspective focuses on the interdependent role behaviours as the “...*primary means by which the organization sends role information through the organization, supports desired behaviours, and evaluates role performances is human resource management*” (p.22). In terms of this research, the focus is placed on two groups, line managers and HR professionals for the purposes of exploring collaborative relationships. As such, a behaviourally-based theory may focus on employee behaviour as a mediator between HR practices and the achievement of organisational strategy (Wright & McMahon, 1992). While acknowledging that employee attitudes and their manifested behaviours contribute to the implementation of organisational strategy (Miles & Snow, 1984; Schuler & Jackson, 1987, Dorensbosch et al., 2006), the concern for Takeuchi (2003) is to illuminate the mediating black box of employee behaviour with reference to supporting HRM strategy and organisational strategy. Reflective of this ‘black-box’ proposition, Wright & McMahon (1992) suggest that adopting a behaviourally-based perspective may facilitate exploring the mechanisms through which relationships occur and may further serve to explore the efficacy of line manager-HR professional collaboration (Dany et al., 2008).

In the context of the line manager-HR professional collaboration, there is a paucity of specific understanding with reference to the operationalisation of this collaboration as previously discussed in Chapter 1. The issue of relational behaviour is alluded to in some of previously cited studies within this chapter. For example, one respondent from the research by Whittaker & Marchington (2003) noted that, *“I’ve got a really good relationship with people in HR and we try to work it as a team”* (p.257). However, comments from another respondent in the study present a different picture: *“...sometimes we’re pulling in the same direction and other times we’re pole to pole”* (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003, p.257) counteract this. In a similar vein, a respondent in Renwick’s (2003) research compares line managers and HR professionals to oil and water and furthermore, that they need to mix in order to deliver collaborative HRM.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to introduce the role of line managers in HRM provision, which will serve as the rationale for exploring subsequent line manager-HR relationships. As the precursor to introducing this, the evolutionary concept of HRM has been presented in order to set the context for line manager involvement in a strategic HRM setting. The facets of their involvement in HRM have been identified, with an acknowledgement of the rationale, impact and complexities of the resulting potential collaborative line manager-HR relationship. Chapter 3 now turns to explore the social exchange aspect of collaborative relationships.

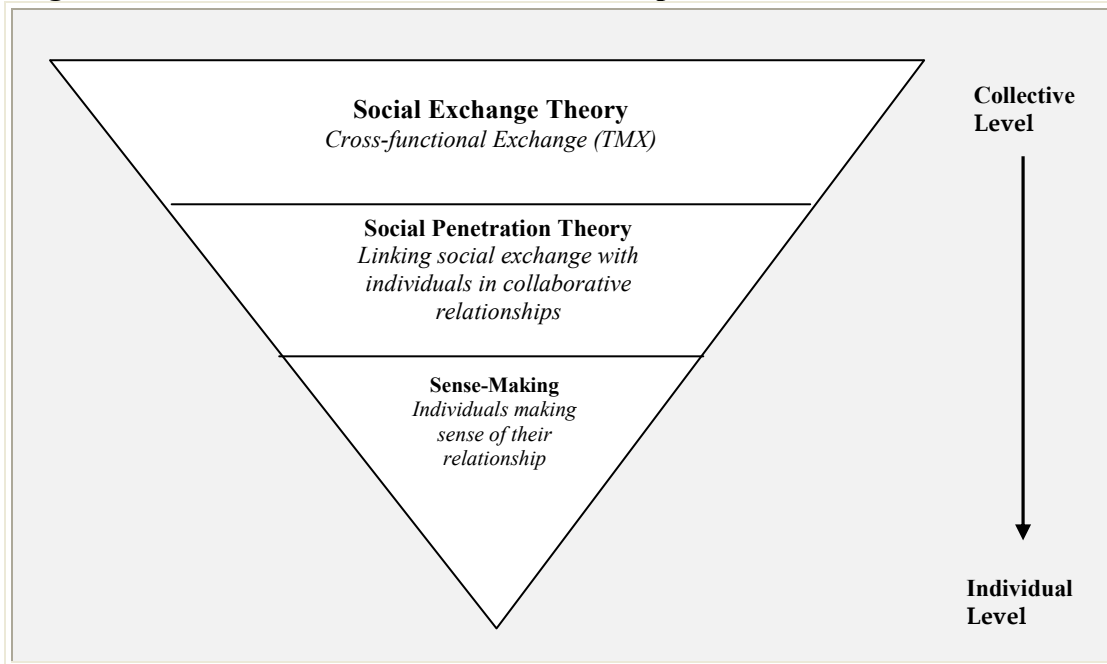
Chapter Three: Conceptualising Collaborative Social Exchange Relationships

3.0 Introduction

In Chapter 2, the scope for collaborative relationships between line managers and HR professionals was introduced, and in turn, it was identified that the nature of these relationships has the potential to impact on collaborative HRM provision. For Lynch (2006), what distinguishes a collaborative relationship from general intra-organisational relationships is that it embodies “...a mutually oriented and interdependent process of continuous interaction and exchange, between at least two reciprocally committed parties” (p.15), thereby involving more than just interaction by also including relational exchange (Macneil, 1974; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). Therefore, it is proposed that by exploring collaboration through a social exchange lens, it may serve to conceptually and empirically illuminate an understanding of the line manager-HR professional relationship.

Pertinent to the research focus of this study on individual members in a collaborative relationship, criticisms may be levied on social exchange theory for viewing relationships from a collective perspective. To reconcile the potential conflict of presenting a simultaneous individual and collective theoretical perspective to the individual focus of line managers and HR professionals relationships, the individual perspective of social exchange theory is emphasised while an intermediate theory of social penetration (SPT) is deployed. SPT, linking the collective social exchange theoretical lens towards exchanging individuals’ relationship development and furthermore, towards the more individualistic sense-making processes of exchange actors, is presented. Reflecting this, figure 3.1 illustrates the overarching social exchange theoretical perspective adopted for this research investigation and illustrates the support of social penetration theory and a sense-making perspective in capturing and increasing the understanding of cross-functional professional collaboration from the individual exchange actor’s perspective.

Figure 3.1 Theoretical Direction of Relationships



As such, the chapter is devoted to the development of a social exchange perspective on line manager-HR professional collaboration with the support of an intermediate theory of social penetration, culminating in an exploration of the sense-making of exchange actors.

3.1 Social Exchange as a Means of Exploring Relationships

Reflecting the importance of organisational relationships, Krackhardt & Hanson (1993) assert that despite formal structures, much of the work within them is facilitated by the multiple cross-functional associations forged by individuals. Reflective of this relationship importance, Wright & Snell (1999) argue “...in most instances our ability to leverage our intelligence, education, and experience depends in some part on how well, to whom, and from whom we exchange information, and ultimately, knowledge.” (p.62). Simply put, the value of interpersonal relationships may be categorised as social capital (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Leana & Van Burren, 1999; Adler & Kwon, 2002), as collaborating individuals may gain access and share resources by developing stabilising norms within their relational ties (Granovetter, 1973; 1983; Putnam, 1995; Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 1998; Aldridge et al., 2002; Uphoff, 2000; Levin & Cross, 2004).

Within this, Klein et al. (2004) posit the view that organisational relationships may be advantageous, as individuals who are socially, as well as formally connected, may gain and share information and resources in a more fluid manner. Moreover, in stressing the importance of these relationship links, in conjunction with formal structure, Krackhardt & Hanson (1993) also apply the metaphor of a skeleton to represent the formal organisation of relationships. Relatedly, they refer to the informal social relationships as the central nervous system that drives the behaviours and subsequent actions and reactions within the organisation itself.

Cognisant of the critical nature of social relationships, commentators in the literature (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Cole et al., 2002; Brandes et al., 2004; Neves & Caetano, 2006; Schoorman et al., 2007; Berninghaus et al., 2007) stress the importance of individual behaviour in supporting formal relationships, tasks and structures, reflecting the behavioural processes within a relationship focus addressed in the latter sections of Chapter 2. By concentrating on the behavioural perspective, in an attempt to illuminate the role behaviours of both line managers and HR professionals in the enactment of a collaborative approach to HRM, the theory of social exchange may have particular utility. Unlike the theories of resource dependence (which are predominantly concerned with power (Pfeffer, 1981)) and agency and transaction cost economics (concerning finance and economics in exchange relations (Jones, 1984)), social exchange theory focuses on the relationship between exchange actors attempting “...to penetrate beneath the veneer of formal institutions, groups, and goals, down to the relational substrate” (Padgett & Ansell, 1993, p.1259).

3.1.1 Social Exchange Theory

For Homans (1979), the process of exchange depicts individuals as social beings and the concept of social exchange by this means acknowledges that social interaction is the foundation of such processes (Blau, 1964). The essence of social exchange theory applied to an organisational setting, as argued by Druckman (1998) and more recently by Donaldson & O’Toole (2007), is that it focuses on cooperative employee exchange (Ho et al., 2006). The exchange process between individuals may be

categorised as material, informational, and symbolic (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992; Druckman, 1998; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), driven by individual exchange actors' self-motivation, insofar as they believe that it is in their best interest to interact (Sweeney & Web, 2007). Taking cognisance of exchange actors interest and motivation, Alford (2002) argues that social exchange may involve anything exchange actors value and thereby indicates that exchanges are not limited to buyer and sellers, but may also be utilised for collaborative purposes.

In introducing the central tenet of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) in exchanging relationships, Blau (1964) observes social exchange as “...*the voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others*” (p.91). Similarly, Harr (2006) notes that exchanging individuals strive to promote stable interactions through their relationships, as the norm of reciprocity denotes that successful exchanges are contingent on mutual satisfaction for their survival. Reflective of the manifestation of such successful exchanges, Jawahar & Harmmsai (2006) argue, “*The basic premise of social exchange theory is that relationships providing more rewards than costs will yield enduring mutual trust and attraction*” (p.645).

Within the seminal and also the more recent social exchange literature (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002; Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005), relationships may be predominantly classified into two categories, namely, social and economic. Subsequently, Ho et al. (2006) argue that economic exchanges are founded on explicit and formal contracts between two parties, in which respective obligations are specified. Conversely, social exchange relationships are founded on an implicit agreement of non-specified obligations governed by the norms of reciprocity and trust (Gouldner, 1960; Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Aryee et al., 2002; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003).

In further distinguishing social exchange from economic exchange, Blau (1964) claims two elements, namely, time scales and the exchange of intangible resources may be used to separate the two forms of exchange. In the first instance, and in terms

of timescales, social exchanges are argued to emerge and develop over long time periods of repeated interaction (Berninghaus et al., 2007), while economic exchanges may be more frequently based on short term and discrete arrangements for single or specific projects (Druckman, 1998; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). Supportive of the long time perspective of social exchange, Emerson (1976) and in a similar vein, MacNeil (1980), also assert that the manifestation of mutual advantage within relationships may require time to manifest. Equally, Aryee et al. (2002) concurs that social exchange is premised on a long-term exchange of favours based on reciprocal obligations and trusting relationships that provide the “...axis upon which social exchange revolves” (p.271).

Secondly, Blau (1964) also suggests that unlike economic exchange, social exchange involves symbolic and even intangible resources, which are governed by reciprocity and unspecified future returns (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). In summarising these key differences, Aryee et al. (2002) contend that social exchange is “...premiered on a long-term exchange of favours that precludes accounting and is based on a diffuse obligation to reciprocate” (p.267). This position is also reflected by Settoon et al. (1996) and Wayne et al. (1997), who posit the view that in order for an actor to achieve an exchange value for their participation in a relationship, the interaction necessitates that reciprocity is sustained.

Cole et al. (2002) highlights that in the eighteenth century, social philosophers such as Adam Smith attempted to understand the workings of social relationships through promoting the ideals of reciprocity. Therefore, Cole et al. (2002) argues that two schools of thought have emerged. Firstly, Homans’s (1961) individualistic approach, founded on individual wants and desires – their self-interest to exchange (Huston & Burgess, 1979; Blau, 1964) and secondly, Levi-Strauss’s (1969) collectivist theory of groups of individuals contributing to society at large (Ekeh, 1974). Unlike Homans (1961) theory which views social exchange between two parties, Levi-Strauss’s (1969) theory centred on building social networks, involving a minimum of three exchanging actors: “...Actor A provides some benefit to Actor B but does not expect reciprocation. Yet A trusts that eventually someone else, say Actor C or Actor D, will provide an equal benefit to A” (Cole et al., 2002, p.145). This research

focusing on individual exchange actors acknowledges that collective social exchange may produce social capital for line managers and HR professional as groups within the organisation; however, it is through the individualistic focus on these exchange actors (their behaviours in terms of trust and reciprocity as opposed to the consensus on the entire line manager or HR professional community) in which this research sits and therefore reflects the individualistic social exchange position of Homans (1979) and Blau (1964). Despite the prevalence of social exchange theory as a construct to explore organisational relationships, from reviewing the literature it appears to have evaded a universal or illustrative conceptualisation. Consequently attention is directed in the following discussion to capturing the underlying tenets of the theory.

As developed in the following illustration of the central tenets of social exchange theory, choice is an integral feature with regards to individuals assessing the rewards and costs of exchanging with one another (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959; Blau, 1964; Molm et al., 2003; Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). However, in the context of this research focusing on line managers and HR professionals, the element of choice is negated as line managers and HR professionals are compelled to exchange with one another due to the absence of substitutes or alternatives. Despite this, the subsequent review of social exchange theory illustrates its particular relevance to this research through its ability to highlight reciprocal, trusting, power and dependence features of relationships (Donaldson & O'Toole, 2007). In addition, even when relationships are not collaborative, adopting a social exchange lens signals which relational-based features are not present between collaborating individuals which may provide significant understanding of the range of relationships between line managers and HR professionals

It is also argued that social exchange theorists merely transplant economic exchange principles in a rational manner to interpersonal relationships by using “...*concepts and principles borrowed from microeconomics*” (Cook, 2000, p. 687). As evidence of this, in terms of the language used within the SET literature the research of Homans (1961), Blau (1964) and Huston & Burgess (1979) use economic terms such as costs, benefits and profit maximisation. However, the focus of social exchange theory does not treat these issues in a pure fiscal or calculated approach; instead, these issues are used to illuminate behavioural action. In a similar vein, the theory of

social exchange, for some, reduces human exchange to a purely rational process of the maximisation of self interest (Gouldner, 1960; Blau, 1964; Sahlins, 1972, Sparrowe & Liden, 1997), inferring that relationships develop in a rational manner and thereby fails to recognise that some relationships do not conform to expected logic or reason (Cook, 2000, Miller, 2005, Zafirovski, 2005). Taking cognisance of this, the following discussion rejects the purely rational approach to social exchange theory and instead acknowledges the varying degrees of economic, social and negotiated and reciprocal exchange and the range of degrees of reciprocity and justice configurations. In addition, within figure 3.1, the incorporation of social penetration and sense-making, as additional lenses, specifically seeks to capture relationship development and the perceptions and expectations of the respondents within this to reflect the breadth and depth of social exchanges.

3.2 The Social Exchange Relationship

It is posited that individuals may be motivated to enter into collaborative exchanges by the rewards that the exchanging actors may bring to them (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). In rationalising this thinking, Blau (1964) states that this exchange behaviour must be “...oriented towards ends that can only be achieved through interaction with other persons” (p.5). The argument here, with reference to interdependency, is that exchanging actors reciprocate positive behaviour towards one another in order to satisfy their mutual interests and maintain the relationship. The reasoning for this, as noted by Huston & Burgess (1979), is that “...people join together only insofar as they believe and subsequently find it in their mutual interest to do so” (p.4). In recognition of the interdependent nature of exchange relationships between individuals, Huston & Burgess (1979) also accept that each party to the exchange may bring their own unique and valued skills and competencies and through their interaction, they may simultaneously satisfy their mutual goals.

As presented in table 3.1, Huston & Burgess (1979) summarise the characteristics of interdependent relations with particular reference to relationship formation, in terms of trust development. From a social exchange perspective on collaborative relationships, they note the influence of repeated interaction over long time periods, the synchronisation and investment between individuals, the establishment of

common goals and the impact of emotions and trust on the exchange behaviour. This, in turn, reflects the position of Cohen & Bailey (1997) and Klein et al. (2004) on the importance of social ties within exchange relationships. Within table 3.1, three references to love, irreplaceability and coupling were omitted as these factors relate to the characteristics of intimate relationships, as opposed to professional working relationships. In further characterising the interdependent characteristics of exchange actors and their relationship, Homans (1961), Gachter & Fehr (1999), Klein et al. (2004) and Farr-Wharton & Brunetto (2007) assert that social connectedness between individuals is needed to maintain and sustain reciprocal and trusting relationships.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of Interdependent Relationships

1. They interact more often, for longer periods of time, and in a wider array of settings;
2. They attempt to restore proximity when separated, and feel comforted when proximity is regained;
3. They “open up” to each other, in the sense that they disclose secrets and share personal information;
4. They become less inhibited, more willing to share positive and negative feelings, and to praise and criticise each other;
5. They develop their own communication system, and become ever more efficient in using it;
6. They increase their ability to map and anticipate each others views of social reality;
7. They begin to synchronize their goals and behaviour and develop stable interaction patterns;
8. They increase their investment in the relationship thus enhancing its importance in their life space;
9. They increase their liking and trust for each other;
10. They see their relationship as irreplaceable, or at least unique.

Source: Adapted from Huston & Burgess (1979), “*Social Exchange in Developing Relations*”, Academic Press, p.8.

In a similar vein, Lawler (2001) signals “...emotions, produced by social exchange, generate stronger or weaker ties to relations” (p.321). This position is also reflected by Gould-Williams & Davis (2005) who argue that positive emotions and trusting relationships result in motivated, empowered and committed exchange behaviour. The factors which may impact on exchange relationships are subsequently addressed in the following discussion.

3.2.1 The Relational Properties of Social Exchange Relationships

As previously alluded to in differentiating social exchange from economic exchange, Zafirovski (2005) argues that the attainment of intrinsic and extrinsic benefits underpin social exchange theory, as exchange is not limited to pure economic transactions, but also the exchange of social behaviours (Gachter & Fehr, 1999). Fink et al (2006) acknowledges that exchange relationships may be depicted on a continuum “...with discrete, arm’s-length relationships at one end, and close, relational exchanges at the other” (p.143). Moreover, Donaldson & O’Toole (2000; 2002) depict a matrix to illustrate the varying relationship types, which of relevance to this research. As such, they identified that relationship types may be categorised as bilateral (each exchange actor’s involvement and participation in the relationship is high), recurrent (transactional-based relationships rather than being dominated by relational-based exchange), hierarchical (a form of governance where a dominant exchange partner dictates the interaction activity) and finally, discrete relationships (where exchange actors view themselves as independent and relationships are not pertinent to their transactional activity). Also, within the social exchange literature, Molm et al. (2003) distinguishes between negotiated and reciprocal exchange. In negotiated exchange, interaction occurs after prior consultation, resulting in discrete binding agreements over the terms and operationalisation of their relationship. Exchange in this setting is predicated on both exchanging actors receiving defined and expected mutual benefit. Conversely, Berninghaus et al. (2007) identifies that reciprocal exchange, having not been subject to prior negotiation takes the form of sequential acts, dependent on reciprocal interaction geared towards developing close collaborative relationships.

Cognisant of the social aspect of exchange relationships in comparison to contractually bound economic exchanges, Cole et al (2002) and Fuller et al. (2006) posit the view that exchanging individuals may be attracted to each other due to the valuable and desired currencies they possess: “*The nature of social exchanges demands that the organization, the leader, or the work team must provide something of value to the employee to initiate/maintain/conclude an exchange*” (Cole et al., 2002, p.152). The resources exchanged between individuals may include goods and services contractually related to the work tasks (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003; Wu et al., 2006), and they may also embody “...organizationally beneficial behaviors and

gestures that are neither enforced on the basis of formal role obligations or elicited by contractual compensation” (Cardona et al., 2004, p.219).

In broadly identifying the relational resources that exchanging actors may contribute and derive within exchanges, Liden & Maslyn (1998) identify that contribution, loyalty, likeability and professional respect are of particular salience underpinning exchanging relationships. For Liden & Graen (1980) and more recently for Bernerth et al. (2007), individuals within exchange may choose to interact with one another based on their respective functional skills, motivation to assume greater responsibility and their trustworthiness (which will be discussed later in the chapter). The contribution of a potential exchange partner may be perceived as to what they can invest and, in turn, deliver in the exchange relationship (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Also of relevance to the social aspect of relationships, loyalty may be conceptualised as the degree of social connectedness and support of the potential exchange actor to their partner and their mutual goals (Bhal & Ansari, 2007).

In a similar vein, Dienesch & Liden (1986) also assert that likeability “...[the] mutual attraction members of the dyad have for each other based primarily on interpersonal attraction rather than work or professional values” (p.625), impacts on the exchange and may facilitate the fostering of behavioural support within a relationship. Related to the perceived contribution of exchange actors, Cole et al. (2002) and previously Liden & Maslyn (1998), signal that professional respect is also another factor in the context of exchange behaviours which may potentially impact on the content and degree of exchange, as exchange actors who do not respect each other may be less willing to share information and collaborate.

3.2.2 The Role of Reciprocity in Social Exchange Relationships

One of the central tenets of social exchange theory is that relationships between exchanging actors may be “...contingent on rewarding reactions from others” (Blau, 1964, p.91), and hence, implies the notion of reciprocity as a feeling of indebtedness (Pervan et al., 2009). The significance of the norm of reciprocity is captured by

Aselage & Eisenburger (2003) who state that, *“The norm of reciprocity, obligating the reciprocation of favorable treatment, serves as a starting mechanism for interpersonal relationships”* (p.491). For this reason, the basic assumption of social exchange theory, for Zafirovski (2005), is that exchanging actors develop and maintain relationships based on the expectation that their efforts will be mutually reciprocated and therefore advantageous. Reciprocation therefore, may manifest in relation to commitment to the relationship, behaviour enactment and trust within collaborative relationships. As such, it is proposed that trust may provide the foundation for commitment within collaborative relationships as Cullen et al. (2000) argue that *“...trust begets trust, commitment begets commitment and trust begets commitment”* (p.234). Commitment, in a general sense, relates to a collaborating individual’s intention to continue participating within a specific relationship and, as such, Morgan & Hunt (1994) identify commitment as *“...an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship endures indefinitely”* (p.23).

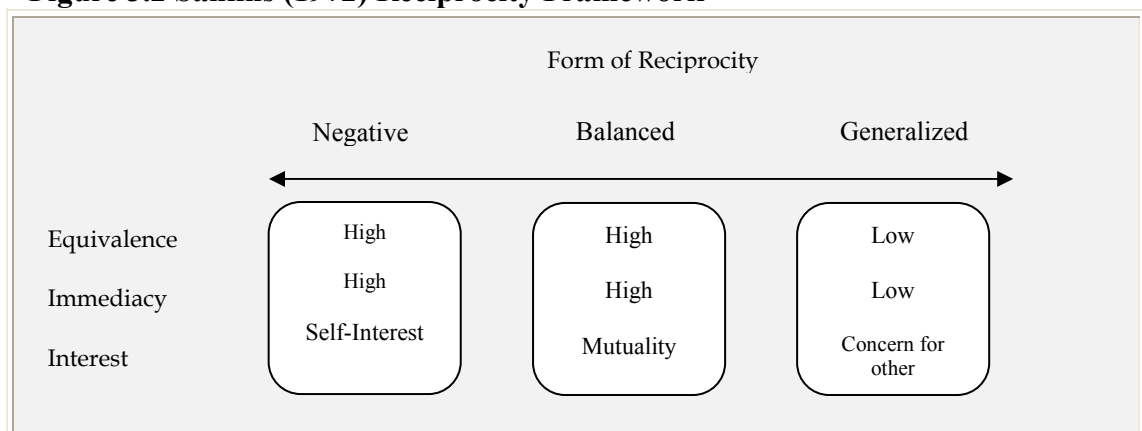
In a similar vein, Aryee et al. (2002) contend the reciprocal nature of social exchange is based on an implicit obligation to respond in behaviour, investment and commitment in the absence of formal contractual stipulations. Moreover, Wu et al. (2006), commenting on the reciprocal element of social exchange, indicate that the reciprocity norm *“...refers to a set of socially accepted rules regarding a transaction in which a party extending a resource to another party obligates the latter to return the favour”* (p.378). Likewise, Settoon et al. (1996), Uhl-Bien & Maslyn (2003) and Wu et al. (2006) acknowledge that in order for an actor to achieve an exchange value from their participation in a relationship, interaction needs to be reciprocated and sustained over a long time period.

In exploring the role of reciprocity in exchange relationships, Berninghaus et al. (2007) argue that collaborative relations emerge within configurations of mutually dependent actors due to each individuals’ unique access and possession of separate and valuable resources (Lawler, 2001). This norm of reciprocity, originally introduced by Gouldner (1960), stipulates that in the context of social exchange,

individuals are indebted to reward positive action (commitment to and treatment within the exchange) with similarly positive reaction and in doing so, this may serve to stabilise the social exchange relationship (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). Wu et al. (2006), in further developing Gouldner's (1960) seminal work, view this obligation to return favours to "...stabilize social systems, pervade every interpersonal relationship, and applies universally to all cultures" (p.378).

In further conceptualising reciprocity and its role within social exchange relationships, since the work of Gouldner (1960) which advocates the universal norm of reciprocity, research has focused on delineating the concept (Sahlins, 1972; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). Consequently, Sahlins (1972) views reciprocity under a number of dimensions, which involve the value, timing, and self-interest of reciprocated behaviour (Pervan et al., 2009). Figure 3.2 outlines these ideas. Sparrow & Liden (1997) posit that Sahlins (1972) differing configurations of reciprocity may be presented on a continuum that is characterised by timing, equivalent returns, and high self-interest (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Molm, 2003; Wu et al., 2006). Generalised reciprocity represents the concern for others and the low degree of equality and immediacy of reciprocation (Sparrow & Liden, 1997). The midpoint of this continuum denotes balanced reciprocity that indicates a concurrent exchange of equivalent resources and rewarding behaviours (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2004).

Figure 3.2 Sahlins (1972) Reciprocity Framework



Source: Adapted from Sparrowe & Liden (1997), "Process and Structure in Leader-Member Exchange", *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 22, no. 2, p.525

The remaining element of the framework captured in figure 3.2 reflects negative reciprocity, where self-interest is argued to dictate the immediacy and equivalence of returns (Sahlin, 1972), presenting the antithesis of generalised reciprocity where individuals reciprocate in order to receive an immediate benefit.

3.2.3 The Role of Trust in Social Exchange Relationships

In conceptualising trust in the context of exchange, Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995) identify it as “...*the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party*” (p.712). Entering into an exchange relationship presents risk and uncertainty for exchange partners (Rousseau, 1998; Bloise, 1999), as exchanging individuals are dependent upon each other to fulfil their mutual collaborative objectives (Aryee et al., 2002; Neves & Caetano, 2006; Schoorman et al., 2007). Similarly reflecting the degree of risk in terms of interaction, Blau (1964) asserts that the initial challenge for actors in an exchange a relationship is to prove themselves trustworthy and then to build upon the level of trust through interacting and exchanging.

Due to the nature of close collaboration, Neves & Caetano (2006) assert that trust is also central to relationships between individuals, potentially influencing the motivations and behaviours of those involved in the exchange process (Brower et al., 2000; Molm et al, 2000; Donaldson & O’Toole, 2007). Furthermore, Whitener (2001) identifies that trust develops within relationships through a social exchange process in which exchange actors, over time, interpret the actions of other actors within the exchange and, in turn, may reciprocate. In reflecting the growing importance of trust in collaborative relationships, Brower et al. (2000) signal that, “*Scholars from many disciplines are turning to trust as a perspective for re-examining many of the basic assumptions about human relationships in organizations*” (p.229).

Bradach & Eccles (1989) view trust as “...a type of expectation that alleviates the fear that one’s exchange partner will act opportunistically” (p.108) and thereby stress that trust in the context of exchange is an expectation that a collaborating individual will not take advantage of their exchange partner. In a similar vein, Noteboom (1996) acknowledges the vulnerability associated with trusting an exchange partner. Trust is a concept that may manifest in many different forms and may also be impacted upon by a multitude of factors within social exchanges and may be related to the degree of reliance and reciprocity embedded in the relationship itself (Bloise, 1999). In addition, McAllister (1995) distinguished that trust may be cognitive (based on individuals reliability and dependability) and also affect-based (concerning the mutual bond, caring and concern). Trust may embody both self-interested trust where an exchange partner believes that trustworthy behaviour will yield positive future returns and secondly, socially-orientated trust where exchanging partners refrain from opportunism because of established norms of behaviour and expectation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

For Ferrin et al. (2006) in the context of HRM research, interpersonal trust may impact directly and indirectly on individual behaviour, performance and commitment to the exchange relationship, as the risk and uncertainty of exchange provide opportunities to demonstrate trustworthiness (Molm et al., 2003). Also supportive of this position, Gomez & Rosen (2001) view trust within relationships as being communicated by the voluntary exchange of information and resources, the recognition of each exchange partners position and subsequently acceptance between individuals as to what may be expected from the relationship. Furthermore, in relation to the role of trust, Blau (1964) and Emerson (1972) accept that there may be potential inequalities in exchange relationships when one party has unequal access to, or power and control over resources (Molm, 1997). Power therefore, may be viewed as a function of dependence of one actor upon another (Emerson, 1972; Cook, Cheshire & Gerbasi, 2006) and, in turn, may impact on the issue of trust (Molm, 1997). Furthermore, regarding the impact of power on trust levels, the social exchange literature posits the view that such issues may become apparent when an exchanging party possess a resource that exchange partner values, in addition to controlling substitutes to the resource being exchanged (Emerson, 1972). Sheehan et

al. (2007) contend that possessing power may make an exchange counterpart vulnerable, which is of particular salience in an exchange relationship where “... *[Power] asymmetries in relations between members*” (Zafirovski, 2005, p.6) exists and trust within relationships may mediate these concerns. Trust in social exchange relationships, therefore, may reflect an individual’s perceived justice within and during interaction episodes, as the relationship is contingent on trusting others to reciprocate and also to not act opportunistically (Molm, 1997; Molm et al., 2003).

In the context of trusting exchange, three sources of justice are associated with such relationships, namely distributive, procedural and interactional justice (Aryee et al., 2002; Teklab et al., 2005; Peelle, 2007). For Homans (1961), distributive justice reflects the “...*equivalence or proportionality between the investment in and... profit from non-economic exchanges*” (p.264), and specifically relates to how individuals evaluate and expect rewards arising from the exchange to be distributed (Molm et al., 2003). Inherent within the practice of exchange itself, procedural justice relates to the fairness in which the goals of the relationship are maintained and achieved (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) and may impact on the roles and responsibilities assumed by the exchanging actors. Finally, interactional justice, concerned with the interpersonal treatment between exchanging individuals (Teklab et al., 2005; Bhal & Ansari, 2007), may impact in either positive and or negative behaviours displayed within the exchange, depending on how each individual perceives the fairness of their treatment during interaction episodes.

Trust in an exchange relationship, as a shared process, may be seen to mediate issues of power imbalance by potentially enhancing commitment to the goals of collaboration: “*Applied to HRM, power provides the HRM function with avenues, or sources of political influence over the management of shared meanings*” (Sheehan, 2007, p.612). Rupp & Cropanzano (2002), Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) and Tzafirir & More (2006) also argue that when exchange actors trust their exchange partner and the organisation in which their relationship is embedded, they may reciprocate that trust by exhibiting non-mandated organisational citizenship behaviours (discretionary behaviours exhibited by individuals above and beyond what is required and expected of them which demonstrates their willingness to

support a particular partner, goal or objective (Organ et al., 2005)). Reciprocating trust, both in the behaviours and activities within collaborative relationships may “...contribute to the establishment of high-quality exchange relationships” (Settoon et al., 1996, p.219), as individuals may be more inclined to invest more in their exchanges when they observe similar responses from their exchange partner (Bhal & Ansari, 2007).

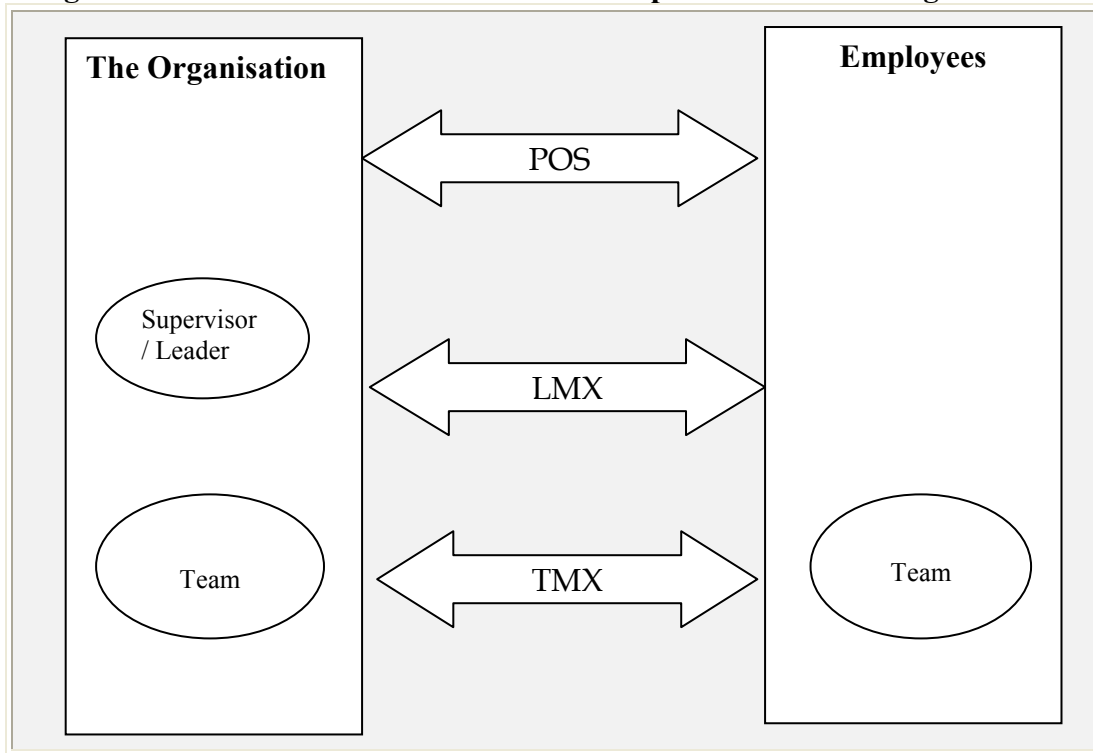
3.3 A Typology of Social Exchange Perspectives on Relationships

As previously mentioned, social exchange theory may be adopted as a means for exploring individual behaviour and orientation, and of specific interest to this study, in the context of collaborative organisational relationships. Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) contend that individuals may form clearly distinguishable social exchange relationships with their immediate supervisor, with their co-workers, and also with the organisation itself and these are outlined in figure 3.3.

Cole et al. (2002) and Brandes et al. (2004) recognise that organisation-employee exchange is conceptualised as perceived organisational support (POS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Wayne et al., 1997; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). In a similar vein, Cole et al. (2002) and Brandes et al. (2004) both identify that employee exchange with their supervisor or manager may be conceptualised in the literature as leader-member exchange (LMX) (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Gerstner and Day, 1997; Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Hui et al., 1999; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Teklab et al., 2005; Bhal & Ansari, 2007).

Traditionally, both POS and LMX have dominated the exchange relationship literature (Seers et al., 1995; Settoon et al., 1996; Huffman & Morgeson, 1999) and these are addressed briefly in the following section.

Figure 3.3 Framework for Multi-Level Workplace Social Exchange



Source: Adapted from Cole et al. (2002), "The Workplace Social Exchange Network: A Multilevel, Conceptual Examination", *Group & Organization Management*, p.148.

With particular relevance for this research on line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships, Cole et al. (2002), further develop social exchange theory and argue the necessity to include a third facet to employee exchange in organisations by focusing on cross-functional or team-member exchange and conceptualise this as team-member exchange (TMX). Reinforcing this view, Brandes et al. (2004) also highlight that relationships with supervisors and managers or the organisation itself are not the only social exchanges occurring within organisations. They argue that social exchanges may also occur across the organisation between employees in different work areas and functions (Seers, 1989; Krackhardt & Brass, 1993), which is of relevance to this research. In advancing the case for applying social exchange theory to cross-functional relationships, Brandes et al. (2004) also posit that "...outside-group relationships matter with respect to both extra-role and employee involvement behaviours" (p. 286), and may encourage exchanging individuals "...to go the extra mile in helping their colleagues" (p.286).

3.3.1 Employee-Organisational (POS) Relationships

Originally, Eisenberger et al. (1986) developed the concept of Perceived Organisational Support (POS) to explain the development of employee relationships and subsequent employee commitment to an organisation and noted that, “...employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (p.501). With particular reference to social exchange theory, employees that feel valued by their organisation, react with positive obligating and trusting behaviours (Wayne et al. 1997). Teklab et al (2005), in commenting on the need for organisations to effectively utilise their relationship with employees for competitive advantage, notes “...it is not surprising that the employee-organization relationship has frequently emerged as a topic of interest for both organizational researchers and executives” (Teklab et al., 2005, p.146). Furthermore, Wayne et al. (1997) also contend that POS is strategically tied to the work history of employees and therefore, reflects the aggregate of feelings of individuals with regards to the treatment they receive from the organisation.

3.3.2 Employee- Leader/Supervisor (LMX) Relationships

Leader-Member Exchange theory (LMX) theory was originally developed by the work of Graen & Scandura (1987) in proposing that leaders develop different types of relationships with various employees (Farr-Wharton & Brunetto, 2007). Similarly, both Dansereau et al. (1975) and Liden & Graen (1980) note with regards to these differing relationships, employees fall into two categories (Heneman et al, 1989). The first category is that of ‘in groups’ in which employees report high quality exchanges with supervisors and managers in which they receive preferential treatment and higher degrees of information and influence (Liden & Graen, 1980). The second category of ‘out-groups’ comprises of employees who report low quality exchanges with their leader/supervisor/manager. LMX research has shown that subordinates reporting a high quality relationship, not only assume greater job responsibilities but also contribute more socially to their relationships (Liden & Graen, 1980; Schriesheim et al., 1999). Hence, the quality of LMX impacts on levels of delegation, increased responsibility, autonomy, and in turn, employees perceive they are receiving and making an enhanced contribution to the organisation (Gomez & Rosen, 2001).

3.3.3 Cross-Functional (TMX) Social Exchange Relationships

In recognition of the demands placed on organisations to make optimum use of their human resources and to realise the social capital embedded within the organisation (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), Yeh et al. (2006) note that organisations are beginning to share and utilise information through structural change and collaboration. Maccoby (2006) argues that collaboration of this nature involves high levels of interactivity between “...groups of interdependent individuals who share responsibilities for outcomes of their organization” (Sundstrom et al., 1990, p.120). Furthermore, Company et al. (2007) indicate that teams and cross-functional groups must excel in addressing both their tasks and in managing the social issues present in their collaboration.

The cross-functional approach within social exchange theory would appear to be an under-utilised construct for exploring employee behaviour when viewed in relation to the POS and LMX research streams and this is, in turn, is reflected in the paucity of research in this specific area. As Cole et al. (2002) notes “...very little research has focused on the work team-employee exchange, or team-member exchange”. In the context of the underlying social exchange theory, the principles of reciprocity and trust are positioned in a cross-functional team-member exchange process, spanning and crossing organisational functions. Seers (1989) indicates that the concept of cross-functional exchange refers to an individual’s relationship with a differentiated colleague and may capture an “...employee’s willingness to exert extra-role behaviours that help other team members and the team (in general) accomplish their goals” (Cole et al., 2002, p.151).

Brandes et al. (2004) also assert that relationships between employees from differing work areas and functions may signify the strategic bridging relationships employees forge outside their own department or function within the same organisation to pursue specialist knowledge and understanding to complement their existing capabilities and to enhance service delivery (Sundstrom et al., 1990; Krackhardt & Brass, 1993; Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Yeh et al., 2006; Company et al., 2007). Additionally, Brandes et al. (2004) contend that employees who have high quality exchanges with their colleagues outside of their immediate work group may be

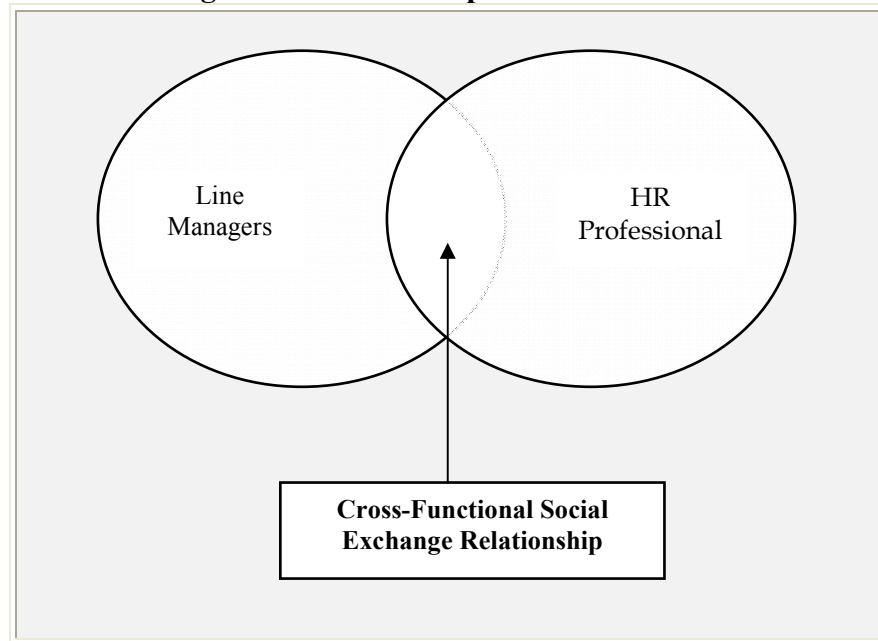
characterised by an enhanced willingness to coordinate resources and information and these relationships “...*should be actively encouraged within organizations among work groups*” (p.296). Therefore, in the context of this research on the relationship between line managers and HR professionals, a cross-functional social exchange lens is explored in the following section based on the recognition that they represent differing functions within an organisation.

3.4 Constructing a Cross-Functional Social Exchange Perspective on the Line Manager-HR Professional Relationship

The discussion of HRM theory in Chapter 2 has laid a foundation for and introduced the rationale for potentially involving line managers in a collaborative relationship with HR professionals through devolution and involvement (Guest, 1987; Storey, 1992; Ulrich, 1998). Concomitantly, the discussion within this chapter has signalled that social exchange theory has particular utility for exploring behaviours in collaborative relationships. Therefore, in attempting to explore the exchange behaviours of line managers and HR professionals, a social exchange perspective is adopted, focusing on the relationship and is conceptualised in figure 3.4.

A social exchange lens may broadly encompass the research focus of collaborative relationships (Ekeh, 1974; Cole et al., 2002), reflecting a similar position from HRM theory which advocates collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships (Guest, 1987; Storey, 1992; Ulrich, 1998). In developing a social exchange perspective on line manager-HR professional collaboration, attention is initially directed towards explicating a theoretical foundation to the research (Whittington, 1993; Ferris et al., 2004; Hitt & Smith, 2005) and furthermore, the relationship between HRM and SET.

Figure 3.4 Line Manager-HR Relationship



Historically, the field of HRM research has not been associated with having a robust theoretical underpinning, with commentators reporting that the reason for this is that HRM is largely an applied field (Bacharach, 1989; Delery & Doty, 1996, Wright & Hegarty, 2005). In recognising that there is a need for improvement in the theoretical application of HRM, Guest (1987) urges that scholars should be proactive in making advances in the field. In response, Wright & Snell (1998), through their work on the theoretical perspectives for strategic human resource research activity, suggest that the literature is not an a-theoretical desert, and furthermore, proffers a number of approaches to the study of the field including behavioural, resource-based, agency/ transaction costs, resource dependence and institutional.

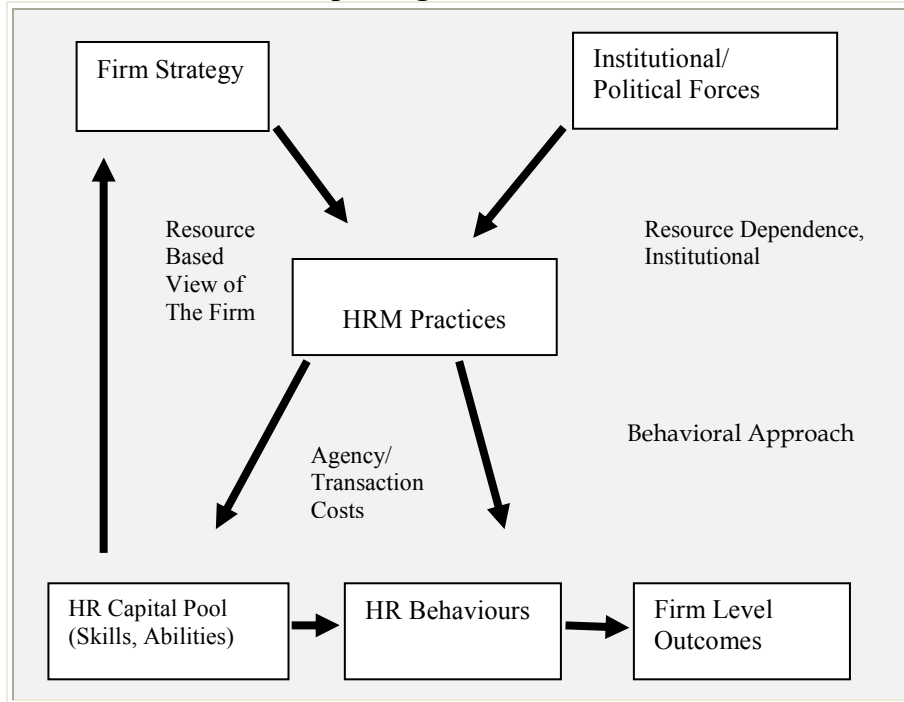
Ferris et al. (2004) also signal that the field of HRM draws on many different social sciences, “*HRM appears to be so broad and complex as to preclude a single grand theory of the entire field*” (p.250), ranging from but not limited to, personnel management, strategic management, organisational behaviour, psychology and industrial relations. In developing a foundation for knowledge and understanding to the research investigation, attention in Chapter 2 has been placed upon the underlying theoretical aspects of HRM and the strategic evolution of the function

and the roles for the actors operating within the HR function. Specifically, the collaborative relationship required for HRM provision (Papalexandris & Panaayatopolou, 2004) alludes to the necessity for this relationship to embody social exchange (Blau, 1964). This, in turn, facilitates the introduction of the research focus on the potential collaborative social exchange relationship between line managers and HR professionals and furthermore, highlights the necessity to further theoretically explore the exchanges between them.

Wright & McMahon (1992), in their influential conceptual model of theoretical frameworks in SHRM research, as depicted in figure 3.5, recognise the criticisms levelled at the lack of robust theory in SHRM research as being valid in relation to past research. However, as they explore the resource-based view of the firm, agency/transaction costs, the behavioural approach, resource dependence and intuitional theory, they contend that these “...*various theories of organization may provide the necessary theoretical foundation that has been lacking in SHRM research*” (p.300).

Acknowledging that the resource-based view provides an indication of why HRM might be linked to economic achievement, Wright & Hegarty (2005) signal, “...*it does not necessarily meet the level of theory of strategic HRM*” (p.166) as it fails to specifically identify the mechanisms through which the relationship between internal resources occurs. Similarly, the agency/transaction cost theory rooted in the field of finance and economics as a means of controlling employee behaviour (Wright & McMahon, 1992) is discounted with reference to this study, as the research is not focused on financial performance. Likewise, the resource dependence model (Pfeffer, 1981) and institutionalism (Scott, 1987), through their focus on political forces are deemed not to be consistent with the objectives of this research.

Figure 3.5 Frameworks for Exploring SHRM Research



Adapted from Wright & McMahon (1992), "Theoretical Perspectives for Strategic Human Resource Management", *Journal of Management*, vol. 18, no. 2, p.299.

However, with particular relevance for this research on line manager-HR professional collaboration, Wright & McMahon (1992) propose that adopting a behaviourally-based perspective may address the issue of explicating the mechanisms through which relationships occur. As Wright and Hegarty (2005) note, much of the research on HRM practices and organisational outcomes is lacking in a specific explanation of how the relationships under investigation develop and endure, which is accommodated in the theory of social exchange (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964).

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a behaviourally-based theoretical lens is adopted to explore the behaviours, and moreover, the relationship between line managers and HR professionals and this is specifically positioned within the aforementioned social exchange theory, deemed to be particularly appropriate for exploring relationships, particularly those of a cross-functional nature (Cole et al., 2002; Brandes et al., 2004).

Concomitantly, the discussion within this chapter has signalled that social exchange theory has particular utility for exploring behaviours in collaborative relationships. The prevalence of the social exchange perspective in the study of relationships is reflected by the volume of research exploring exchange behaviour (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1972; Huston & Burgess, 1979; Liden & Graen, 1980; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne et al. 1997; Cole et al. 2002; Aryee et al., 2002; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Brandes et al., 2004; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Teklab et al., 2005; Berninghaus et al., 2007; Donaldson & O’Toole, 2007). Accepting of the social systems of organisations and the individuals embedded within it, Katz & Kahn (1978) note that “*Social organizations as contrived systems are sets of such planned behaviour events...In small subsystems the functions may be directly observable in the human activities involved*” (p.754). Moreover, in an attempt to explore cross-functional collaboration and the behaviours inherent in this, Nadler & Tushman (1980) highlight that “*...the critical question is not what the components are, but what the nature of their interaction is*” (p.45). As previously introduced, the premise of social exchange theory is that it may serve as a lens to view the relationship between interdependent individuals collaborating within social settings (Blau, 1964), and thereby, may give direction and structure the issues being investigated.

For example, Harris et al. (2002) and more recently Maxwell & Watson (2006), signal that a more concentrated focus on the exchanges within line manager and HR professional collaboration may enhance the understanding of the phenomenon. In a similar vein, Harris et al. (2002) assert that there is a lack of empirical understanding on the key issues of the make-up of line manager-HR professional relationship in terms of the shape and appropriateness they have taken. Relatedly, Morley et al. (2006) argue that the anatomy and the mapping of collaborative HRM relationships necessitates a deep exploration (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Valverde et al., 2006).

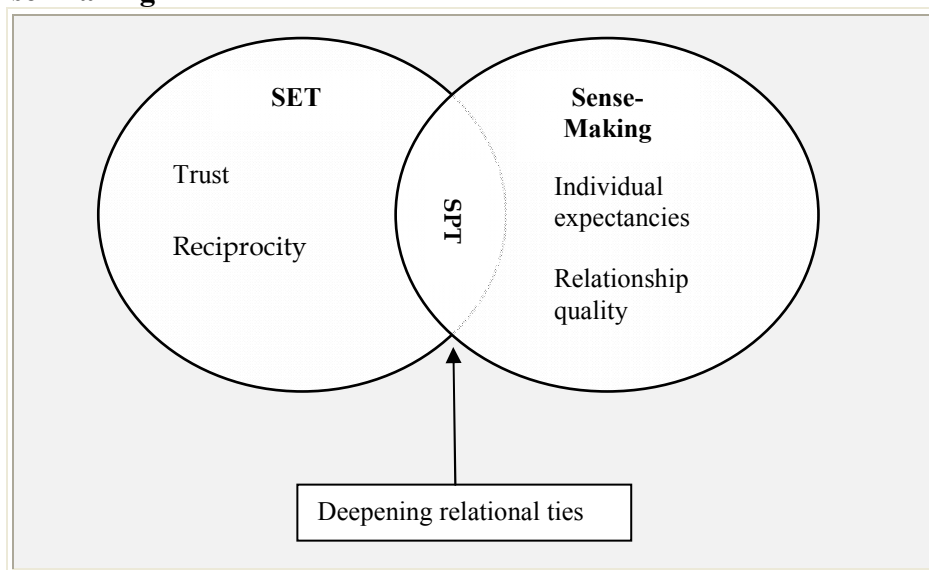
3.4.1 Moving Towards a Relationship Focus

As previously noted, social exchange theory focuses on exchange relationships in terms of the rationale for entering into exchange and the subsequent dynamics of reciprocity and trust and their subsequent impact on the relationship itself (Rupp &

Cropanzano, 2002; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Donaldson & O’Toole, 2007). From developing a social exchange theoretical viewpoint, some authors, as previously mentioned, allude to criticism relating to the ability of SET to support an individualistic research focus (Levi Strauss, 1969, Ekeh, 1974). Cognisant of this issue and reflective of the theoretical direction of this research as illustrated in figure 3.1, an intermediate theory of social penetration may have the scope to link the overarching social exchange theoretical (SET) perspective to the individualistic and context specific sense-making processes of individuals “... *the internal subjective processes which precede, accompany and follow overt exchange*” (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p.5). This approach may then culminate in contributing to an increased understanding of interaction with reference to line manager-HR professional social exchange.

As presented in figure 3.6, analogous to a conduit, social penetration theory accepts that reciprocal and trusting behaviours of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) have relevance to individuals within relationships. Furthermore, SPT’s focus on deepening relationship ties and the social penetration achieved within them may be accounted for by exploring how exchange actors make sense of their expectations of, participation in and the quality of their collaborative relationships (Weick, 1995).

Figure 3.6 Linking Social Exchange Theory, Social Penetration Theory and Sense-Making



Moreover, social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) introduces the notion of how individuals perceive themselves and their exchange partner as they penetrate their relationship (Ho et al., 1998) and accounting for such cognitive perceptions positions a move towards an exchange actor's individual cognitions through a sense-making process (Weick, 1979: 1995: 2005).

3.4.1.1 Defining Social Penetration Theory

Altman & Taylor (1973) developed the theory of social penetration in order to provide a better understanding of *“What people do, say, think, and feel about one another as they form, nurture, and disengage from interpersonal relationships”* (p.3), and moreover, hypothesise about the stages in which social relationships may develop in terms of deepening social interaction. Through focusing on relational expansion via a developmental approach, Taylor & Altman (1987) later identified that their theory *“...deals primarily with overt interpersonal behaviors occurring in social interaction and the internal cognitive processes that preclude, accompany, and follow relationship formation”* (p.258). A more simplified version of the theory is offered by Littlejohn (1992) who identifies social penetration theory *“...as the process of increasing disclosure and intimacy in a relationship”* (p.274).

In a more recent interpretation of the theory of social penetration, Chen et al. (2006) posit the view that social penetration theory (SPT) combines explicit interpersonal behaviours with the internal subjective processes of social interaction and, in turn, provides a framework which *“...delineates the gradual progress of relationship development, from superficial, non-intimate to intimate, deeper levels”* (p.104). In terms of this research on professional collaboration, issues of intimacy are intended to infer close or personable relationships, as its meaning in the original context is not appropriate in a professional work setting.

3.4.1.2 Properties of the Social Penetration Process

Within a social penetration perspective, the relationship development process, in a similar vein to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964, MacNeil, 1980; Sparrow & Liden, 1997; Berninghaus et al., 2007), is argued to arise over time, from a surface

relationship characterised by low breadth and depth, to those of a broader, deeper, and more interconnected nature. More specifically, the stages of relational development for Taylor & Altman (1987), Gudykunst et al., (1987), and Vanlear (1987), originate at an orientation stage where exchange individuals are initially cautious and tentative about their collaboration. However, over time as interaction frequency increases, the relationship is argued to progress and stabilise as the exchange actors become more comfortable in their collaboration (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Within this view of relationship progression, exchange actors from their repeated interaction may form bonds and through their familiarity, learn to interpret and forecast the potential behaviour and position of their exchange counterpart (Taylor & Altman, 1987).

3.4.1.3 The Cost-Benefit Relationship Ratio

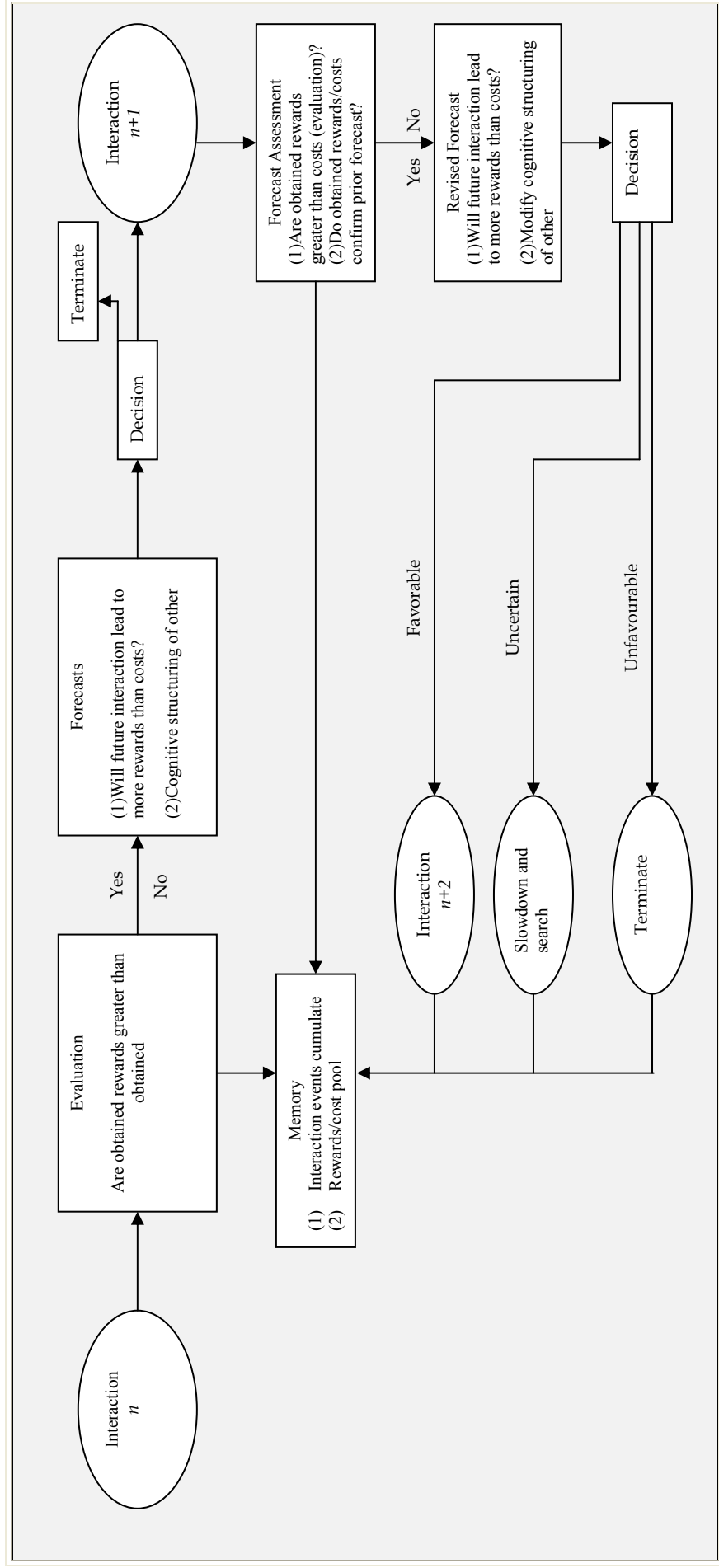
Recognised by Taylor & Altman (1987) and Baack et al. (2000) in a social penetration context, and moreover in the aforementioned social exchange literature (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959; Homans, 1961), a central feature in the orientation of relationships is the calculation of benefits and costs associated with interpersonal exchange. Mirroring the social exchange perspective in terms of self-interest and reciprocity, rewards and costs from a social penetration view may be assessed by individuals on their current and expected interaction activity (Baack et al., 2000). When rewards are deemed to exceed costs, a greater degree of social penetration is generally pursued (Altman & Taylor, 1973). For Taylor & Altman (1987), “*The combined formulations of rewards and costs by Thibaut and Kelly (1959) and Homans (1950, 1961) have been incorporated into social penetration theory in five propositions*” (p.264). These propositions are, in turn, are presented representing the orientation of relationship development from superficial to deeply penetrated social exchange, through the process of exchange actors in relationships making assessments as to whether to continue interacting based on the reward-cost ratio incurred. Altman and Taylor’s (1973) propositions, which centre on the rewards and costs assessed and forecasted regarding collaboration include:

1. *Reward / Cost Ratios*: the balance of rewards and costs in the interaction, the greater amount of rewards over costs, make for a more satisfying relationship;
2. *Absolute reward and cost properties*: the extent of positive and negative experiences from the relationship;
3. *Immediately obtained rewards and costs*: outcome of relatively immediate social interaction;
4. *Forecast rewards and costs*: projections of future outcomes from the relationship;
5. *Cumulative rewards and costs*: the aggregate of rewards and costs received throughout the history of the relationship.

Source: Adapted (original in italics) from Taylor & Altman (1987), "Communication in Interpersonal Relationships: Social Penetration Processes", p.264.

In figure 3.7, Altman & Taylor (1973) indicate that the oval shapes represent the series of "...*verbal, nonverbal, and environmentally orientated behavioral interactions*" (p.34) and the parallel rectangular boxes are representative of "...*the internal subjective processes*" (p.34). The framework offered in figure 3.7 identifies that after each interaction episode, exchange actors cognitively assess and forecast their subsequent interaction, which, in turn, manifests in the decision to increase the interaction (peel back another layer), re-evaluate future interactions or terminate interaction activity (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Figure 3.7 Altman & Taylor's Social Penetration Theory

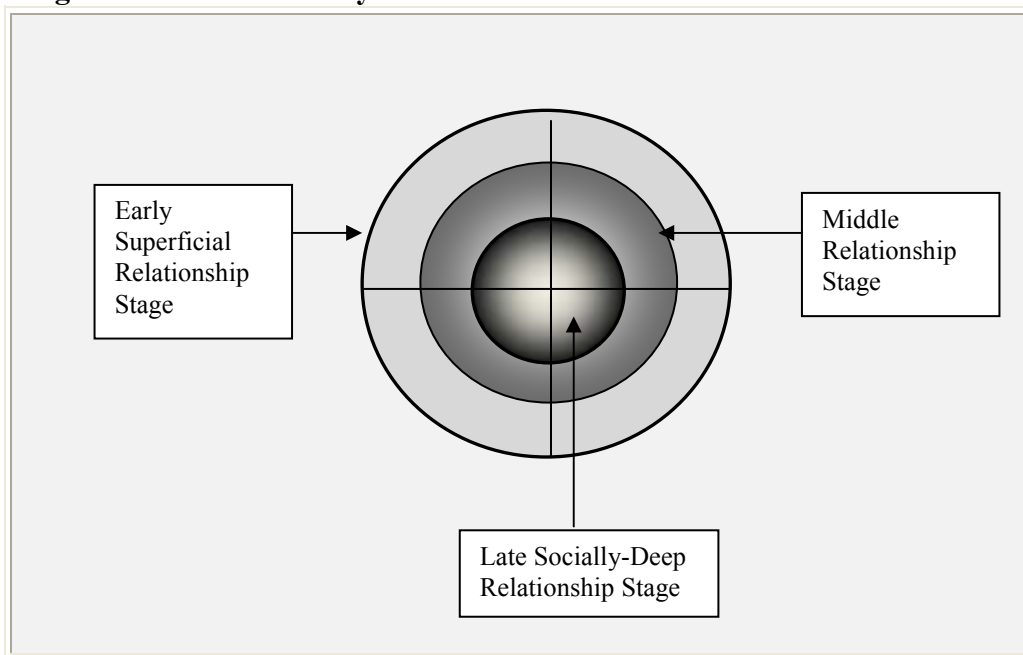


Source: Altman, I. & Taylor, S.A. (1973), "Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships", p.35.

3.4.1.4 The “Onion” Metaphor

Utilising the metaphor of an onion to represent the potential levels and stages involved in social penetration as presented in figure 3.8, Altman & Taylor (1973) argue that individuals are multi-layered and through their interaction with their exchange partner, peel back these layers. Therefore, as exchanging individuals become more familiar with each other through their interaction encounters, they begin to increasingly understand each other by penetrating their respective layers. The diagrammatical representation of the social exchange process of relationship development from stranger-superficial exchange to acquaintance-deeply interconnected exchange may also be used to reflect the breadth, depth and frequency of exchange interaction.

Figure 3.8 Altman & Taylor’s Social Penetration Process



Source: Adapted from Altman, I & Taylor, D. (1973), “Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships”, p.28.

At the outermost layer, exchange items and behaviours, which do not require a deep social relational connection, may be exchanged more frequently, in comparison to more guarded and socially related behaviours located at the core layer (Hays, 1984; Gudykunst et al., 1987). Taylor & Altman (1987) assert that when moving from the outermost layer towards the centre, penetration is often rapid as initial exchanges may not require individuals to form deep rooted social ties. However, as the relationship develops and requires social connectivity, the

degree of penetration may decrease as issues of trust and reciprocity need time to manifest and establish as social norms governing the relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973), reflecting a similar position from SET in that relationships need time to develop social connectedness (Blau, 1964; Aryee et al., 2002; Harr, 2006). Derlega et al. (1987) report that through reciprocal self-disclosure (the amount and degree of what an exchange actor reveals and contributes to the relationship), bonds of social commitment may be created. Within social penetration theory, the self-disclosure that each exchange actor exhibits within the relationship may be interpreted as a reciprocal process as it provides a starting and stabilising mechanism for acquiring and maintaining relational ties (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Vanlear, 1987; Hensley, 1992; Baack et al., 2000). Moreover, Altman & Taylor (1973) recognise that some degree of disclosure is required to enable exchange actors to invest in and determine if their interaction with one another will be rewarding. Likewise, they note that disclosure may also stimulate an exchange actor to reveal him or herself to make themselves appear attractive to their exchanging counterpart.

As similarly represented in social exchange theory (Molm et al., 2000; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), Altman & Taylor (1973) posit the view that *“To disclose to another person, it is assumed, demands a modicum of ‘trust’ by the intended communicator regarding his recipient”* (p.55) as individuals may feel vulnerable when they reveal aspects of themselves. Moreover, the receipt of disclosed information to facilitate a social exchange relationship is generally anticipated on the premise of receiving a similar reaction: *“This ‘trusting-being-trusted’ network is probably one necessary condition for reciprocity of exchange”* (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 55).

By focusing on the level of development within social relationships by building on the relational dynamics of social exchange theory, social penetration theory also addresses the internal subjective processes *“...as a frame for attempting to understand how [their] judgements are made”* (Chen et al., 2006, p.104, in terms of what aspects individuals reveal and contribute about themselves to their exchange partner. This inclusion of the subjective processes of individual

exchange actors embodies to a degree the sense-making lenses of individuals which may manifest in their current evaluations, forecast assessments and memory repositories in order to make sense of their relationship which, in turn, sets the context for the following discussion.

3.4.1.5 Breadth and Depth of Exchange

Related to the onion metaphor of social penetration, Altman & Taylor (1973) indicate that the layers which individuals in exchange may peel back, both within themselves and their exchange counterpart, may be characterised by both breadth and depth dimensions. Breadth is argued to represent the number of major areas that are made accessible to the exchanging actors in the relationship and may include the individual's beliefs, ideas, feelings and emotions (Smith, 1991). With regard to social penetration processes and the uniqueness of individual relationships, Altman & Taylor (1973) signal that “...one can conceive of variations not only in the number of different topical areas (breadth categories) opened to another person, but also in the amount of interaction within each area (breadth frequency)” (p.16).

In a similar vein to the issue of breadth, relationship progression may be conceived as having a depth perspective (Baack et al., 2000), in which their level of relational penetration may be shallow or deep “...a central-peripheral or depth dimension” (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p.17). Corresponding to the onion metaphor, the outermost shell is argued to embody highly visible levels of transactional and exchangeable information “...which can be inferred without extensive social interaction” (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p.18). However, as relationships progress, their functioning may become dependent on social interaction beyond transactional elements and may incur more socially embedded interaction regarding the needs, values and feelings of the exchange actors (Baack et al., 2000, p.41).

3.5 The Individuals in Exchange

While social penetration theory may provide a logical framework for understanding the way collaborative relationships may evolve, it does not

necessarily provide a stand-alone comprehensive lens for illuminating possible underlying processes or patterns that explains how individuals behave within them. For this reason, it tends to emphasise the explicit relationship evolution from superficial to close as a basis for framing interaction, and therefore the underlying interaction process are implicitly assumed in the cognition of the individuals within exchange. To address this imbalance, this final section draws attention to the processes by which individuals may make sense of their social interaction.

For the purpose of this research, sense-making in the wider context of social exchange has particular utility for the line manager-HR professional relationship as:

“...[an] analysis of how FLMs interpret and enact their role has shown how, despite (or, indeed, because of) changes in the breadth of responsibility of their role, FLMs continue to occupy a structurally ambiguous and contradictory position which they attempt to manage through a sense-making process in which they construct a precarious ‘coping’ identity and enact their situation as one which affirms that identity, a process which partially resolves and partially reproduces that ambiguity” (Hales, 2007, p.174).

3.5.1 Defining Sense-Making

Grounded in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Huston & Burgess, 1979) and related to a social penetration focus (Taylor & Altman, 1987), Ring & Van de Ven (1994), Taylor & Lerner (1996) and Watson & Watson (1999) view the establishment of collaborative relationships as a gradual and dynamic process consisting of a *“repetitive sequence of negotiation, commitment, communication and execution stages”* (Lynch, 2006, p.61). However, they also argue that inherent within such relationships is a complex subset of informal social sense-making dynamics, anchored in the cognitive and behavioural dispositions of the exchanging and collaborating actors engaged in them.

Sense-making is literally *“...the making of sense”* (Weick, 1995, p.4), and moreover, it is the process by which human beings organise their experiences

about their situation, roles and relationships and, in part, interpret and rationalise the actions they subsequently take (Watson & Watson, 1999; Brown, 2000; Weick et al., 2005; Czarniawska, 2005; Pfeffer, 2005; Scott, 2007, Grant et al., 2008). Echoing the position taken in social penetration theory (figure 3.7) in which individuals store experiences of their previous interaction to assist them in making informed evaluations and forecasts of current and future interaction, Louis (1980) also accepts the retrospective process of drawing on past experiences to make sense of current situations. Similarly, the correlation between social exchange theory and sense-making is inferred as Thomas, Clark, & Gioia (1993) argue that the process involves “...*the reciprocal interaction of information seeking, meaning ascription, and action*” (p.240). More specifically, March (1984) asserts that the mechanisms involved in making sense of interaction include perception, interpretation, believing and acting processes. Cognisant of these mechanisms, Ring & Van de Ven (1994) purport that sense-making may permit individuals in exchange to construct a shared understanding of each other’s identity as previously underpinned in social penetration theory (Taylor & Altman, 1987).

Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991) extend the sense-making concept further by observing and including sense-giving as an exchange actor’s purposeful process of influencing and persuading the sense-making processes of their exchanging partner to gain their support. The iterative route between sense-making and sense-giving (Rouleau, 2005; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Foldy et al., 2008), may facilitate individuals to understand their particular situation cognitively and, in turn, influence their exchanging counterpart who may assume divergent perceptions about collaborating, in pursuit of establishing a congruent understanding of expected and accepted behaviour (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Roleau, 2005; Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007).

In order to establish that social order within collaboration, exchanging individuals are required to interact to articulate, communicate and negotiate their sense of understanding (Weick, 1995; Taylor & Lerner, 1996; Watson & Watson, 1999).

In this vein, a sense-making and sense-giving perspective may contribute to a social exchange viewpoint of deepening relationship structures whereby exchange actors may begin to interpret and influence each other (Homans, 1961; Huston & Burgess, 1979; Berninghuas et al., 2007). Additionally, sense-making explicitly concentrates on how individuals construct interpretations and act upon them mirroring the reciprocal and trusting dynamics of social interaction (Blau, 1964; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Molm, 2003).

3.5.2 The Properties of Sense-Making

Weick (1995) in his influential publication “Sense Making in Organizations”, identifies seven characteristics of sense-making which include:

1. *Grounded in identity construction*: to inform their collaboration exchange, individuals in exchange seek to discover what they think and know about themselves and their environment;
2. *Retrospective*: individual’s meanings are constructed by reflection;
3. *Enacting*: exchanging individuals are intertwined with their own environment and therefore enact parts of their environment as it simultaneously impacts upon them;
4. *Social*: sense-making requires interacting (conversation, coordination, argument and dialogue) with other individuals;
5. *Ongoing*: sense-making is ongoing, individuals construct sense but may, in turn, reconstruct their sense as future events unfold;
6. *Focused on and by extracted cues*: individuals will be selective in observing cues, link that cue to an idea that clarifies the meaning of the cue, which then alters the general idea to which the cue was linked;
7. *Plausibility*: sense-making does not need to be accurate but it does need to be plausible – it needs to make sense not fact.

Source: Adapted (originals in italics) from Weick (1995), “Sensemaking in Organizations”, p.17,

As posited within Weick’s (1995) seven properties, sense-making originates with a sense-maker and these individuals are “...an ongoing puzzle undergoing continual redefinition” (p.20), in terms of their interaction with others. Reflective

of self-disclosure in social penetration theory (Taylor & Altman, 1987), the notion of self-identity is important to the sense-making process as it influences how individuals present themselves and how they perceive and, in turn, interact with others (Turner, 1987; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). Thus, both exchanging parties may make sense of each other's identity by reflecting on their repertoire of knowledge (Gioia, 1986), from their past experiences (Weick, 1995) and the social norms embedded in their relationship (Turner, 1987; Abodor, 2005).

Individuals within an exchange relationship may naturally create different meaning structures and this may manifest in this research on line managers and HR professionals due to the cross-functional nature and backgrounds of the exchange counterparts (Volkema et al., 1996; Buchel, 2000; Cole et al., 2006). The function of sense-making and sense-giving may enable individuals with initially differing views about the potential for collaboration, to construct a mutually understanding of the situation (through argument, persuasion and informing) to reach a shared subjective view of expected and accepted interaction behaviour (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Through sense-making and sense-giving, individuals are argued to “...*be expected to be enacting their own version of the environment while at the same time, integrating the enactment of other parties into their enactments*” (Ring & Van de Ven, 1989, p.180). Hence, the outcome of this enactment process is the creation of a social order which, in turn, may promote collaboration itself (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994).

Despite the establishment of a shared social order, deviation between the cognitions and sensemaking dispositions of collaborating individuals is likely (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994) and furthermore, to be expected (Turner, 1987). Divergence from previously held expectations may, in turn, drive the need to engage in sense making and sense giving to reconfirm social congruency and solidarity (Turner, 1987; Weick, 1995) within the relationship.

The following sections, reflecting the process adopted by Lynch (2006), attempts to explore the sense-making and sense-giving relationship by focusing on the

various stages in which exchange actors make sense of their relationship i.e. their expectancies and the overall assessment of the quality of collaborative relationships.

3.5.3 Making Sense of Expectancies within Relationships

As identified earlier in relation to both social exchange theory and, in turn, social penetration theory, individuals form expectancies, which influence their motivation to interact with an exchange actor. Doz (1996) argues that the accumulation of previous experience directly and indirectly relates to the exchange counterpart, in conjunction to interpreting their reputation impacts on exchange actor's expectations of their relationship, the tasks to be conducted within it and the exchange actors themselves. Louis (1980), Weick (1995) and Starbuck & Milliken (1998) argue that consciously and unconsciously, individuals develop such positions when "*...they assimilate what is seen to what is expected*" (Weick, 1995, p.46) and these expectancies may, in turn, impact on their behavioural enactment.

Aware of this expectancy-enactment relationship, Weick (1995) identifies that individuals sense-making formations need not be accurate, however, their expectancies are required to conform to plausibility, as previously mentioned. Supportive of this position, individuals in exchange may not always be in receipt of complete information with regards to their role, authority level or remit and therefore, plausible predictions may inform the sense-making processes of individuals in the absence of complete factual knowledge (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). For Weick et al. (2005), in dealing with plausibility "*... interdependent people search for meaning, settle for plausibility, and move on. These are moments of sensemaking, and scholars stretch those moments, scrutinize them, and name them in the belief that they affect how action gets routinized, flux gets tamed, objects get enacted, and precedents get set.*" (p.419). More recently, Adobor (2005) argues a similar position in that individuals expectations may influence how exchange actors firstly, interpret, secondly, evaluate their role in the relationship and thirdly, enact and support their collaboration. In a similar

vein, Hales's (2007) research into line managers' roles identifies their conflicting operational and HRM role and their lack of authority to determine certain outcomes. As such, they engage in sensemaking to develop a coping identity in accordance with what they are expected to achieve.

3.5.4 Making Sense of the Quality of a Relationship

Acknowledging the role of relational norms (reciprocal and trusting behaviours to limit the impact of affective-relationship based conflict (Morgan & Hunt, 1994)) in governing the degree of personal conflictual aspects to the overall quality of relationships, Weick (1995) argues that commitment from exchanging actors is integral in focusing sense-making in terms of the perceived quality of relationships. In terms of binding this commitment between exchanging individuals, Abodor (2005) from a social exchange perspective suggests that trust and the reciprocation of trust is expected and required before and during commitment forming stages.

Due to the reciprocal nature of sense-making (Weick, 1995), individuals within exchange continually evaluate the value of their relationship and the applicability of a sense-making lens at the primary research stage of this research may highlight the "*...less visible context-sensitive dynamics in social life*" (Weick, 2005, p.404) from the perspectives of the research respondents. Evidence of this is also found in Altman & Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory (see figure 3.7), which indicates that individuals repeatedly evaluate and assess the rewards to be obtained from collaborating. For Buchel (2000), three criteria concerning expectancy fulfilment, implementation effectiveness and equity in contributions within relationships parallel the distributive, procedural and interactional justice constructs associated with social exchange theory (Homans, 1961; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Bhal & Ansari, 2007).

In terms of exploring the quality of collaborative relationships, the relationship formed by collaborating individuals is an integral feature. As such, individuals may bring different beliefs and perspectives to a collaborative relationship and

this issue may be heightened in the cross-functional nature of this research. Originating from different professional backgrounds, potentially possessing different frames of reference and specialist skills, knowledge and approaches to work, conflict within relationships may be inevitable (Volkema et al., 1996; Buchel, 2000; Scott, 2007). Reflective of this, Weick (1995) comments, “...*when people individually see what they think, this does not mean that others with other interests see the same things or think the same way*” (p.136).

Conflict, within relationships may be categorised as “...*an expressed struggle between at least two inter-dependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals*” (Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005, p.603) and sourced from a range of issues including: diverging perspectives and individual values, dependence and power issues and ambiguity over responsibility, as previously alluded to in Chapter 2. As a result conflict may have a number of negative impacts on the quality of collaborative relationships as it may “...*promote divisions, diminish trust and weaken relationships, which in turn inhibits open communication, value adding knowledge sharing, learning and ultimately knowledge creation*” (Fitzpatrick & Heraty, 2008, p.8).

In terms of conflict, Pinkley (1990) differentiates between functional conflict (purpose of the relationship), task orientated conflict (activities and roles performed within the relationship) and affective-relationship conflict (the value of the relationship for its members). In this vein, functional and task conflict may prove beneficial to the relationship as it provides a starting point for conflicting individuals to acknowledge their self awareness and provides the impetus for these individuals to strive to accept change in pursuit of achieving a stable and mutually focused collaborative relationship (Volkema et al., 1999). In contrast, relational conflict may be deemed dysfunctional and may have negative implications for the maintenance of social ties (Park et al., 1986; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Ensley, 2002).

In response to the manifestation of conflict associated with relationships, Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991) present an additional view and argue that the process of sense-giving may facilitate opportunities for generating further understanding, arguing current positions and influencing meaning calculations towards new sense-making formations. This mutual reconstruction towards a renegotiated sense of interaction order may enable individuals to “...argue their way in to a new sense” (Weick, 1995, p.145), by revising, confirming or even discarding certain viewpoints in an attempt to re-establish relationship commitment (Weick, 1995; Volkema et al., 1996). Moreover, as previously reflected in social penetration theory, evaluation in terms of relationships is not limited to reflecting upon previous interaction as it may also extend beyond this into forecasts of maintaining interaction and the scope for increasing interaction activity and even terminating the collaboration (Altman & Taylor, 1973). As such, Altman & Taylor (1973) argue “...persons simultaneously interact, access positive and negative facets of what is happening now, extrapolate to the future, form a picture of the other person, and reach some decision about next steps” (p.37).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to introduce the theory of social exchange to serve as a basis for exploring the exchange relationship between line managers and HR professionals in a collaborative HRM provision. Within this, cognisance was also taken in terms of integrating social exchange theory with HRM theory towards attempting to position the research at an individual-level for primary research purposes where additional theoretical supports were drawn upon. Specifically, social penetration theory was utilised as a conduit to link concepts of social exchange with social penetration. This, in turn, facilitated the inclusion of a sense-making focus, incorporating the tenets evident in social exchange theory with the individual cognitive sense-making processes individuals construct to enable them to make sense of and understand their collaborative relationship. Chapter 4 now progresses with a synthesis of the literature previously discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 towards developing a research framework for exploring collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships.

Chapter Four: Literature Summary and Research Framework

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to firstly synthesise the previously discussed literature in relation to line manager involvement in HRM and the potential resultant relationship that may arise from this. With specific reference to the realisation of the research, attention is directed to the social exchange lens for viewing the line manager-HR professional collaborative relationship. Moreover, the deployment of a social penetration focus, linking social exchange theory to an individual-level of analysis in the sense-making processes of line managers and HR professionals engaged in collaborative HRM is explored. In achieving this, 10 research propositions are also presented to reflect the key themes within the literature within the context of this study. Finally, the chapter concludes with the development of a research framework for this descriptive study on collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships.

4.1 Linking the Literature to the Research

Recognising that the involvement of line managers in HRM may result in collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships, the primary goal of this study is to contribute to further illuminating the understanding of these. Drawing from the HRM, SET, SPT and sense-making literatures in an effort to contribute to the existing knowledge base, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

What are the features and associated impacts of the line manager-HR professional relationship that emerge in the realisation of collaborative HRM?

Arising from the material discussed in Chapter 2, it is recognised that collaborative HRM relationships impacts to various degrees on line managers, HR professionals and organisations. Therefore, identifying the experiences of line managers and HR professionals with reference to the realisation of collaborative HRM, as previously illustrated in figure 1.1, is pursued. Reflecting the body of research championing the role of line managers within HRM delivery (Guest, 1987; Storey, 1992; Ulrich, 1998) and the more recent evidence of the roles assumed by line managers in HRM delivery itself (Cranet, 2006; IRS, 2006a:

2006b; CIPD 2007a; CIPD 2009), the first research proposition offered in the context of this study is:

P1: The involvement of line managers in HRM delivery and, in turn, the collaborative relationships formed between them and HR professionals, are key vehicles for HRM delivery.

A deeper exploration in Chapter 2 of the line manager involvement literature signals that the practice of line manager-HR professional collaboration is complex with studies reporting dichotomous and at times, conflicting findings on the willingness of each group to collaborate, the practicality of their collaboration and the overall efficacy of collaborative HRM delivery (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; McConville & Holden, 1999; Budhwar, 2000; Renwick, 2000; Harris et al., 2002; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005a; IRS, 2006b; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Ulrich et al., 2008 CIPD, 2009b). Hence, for this reason, the following proposition is formulated:

P2: A variety of individual and organisational-level factors influence the willingness of line managers and HR professionals to engage in and support collaborative HRM delivery.

4.1.1 Exploring Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

Much of the associated literature focuses on the impact on roles, responsibilities of both line managers and HR professionals, however, a paucity of specific understanding with reference to the operationalisation and social interactions within this collaboration. Therefore, the theory of social exchange may have particular utility “...to penetrate beneath the veneer of formal institutions, groups, and goals, down to the relational substrate” (Padgett & Ansell, 1993, p.1259). In addition, social exchange theory acknowledges that collaborative relationships are likely to be founded on an implicit agreement of non-specified and at times, intangible resources and obligations (Gouldner, 1960; Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Aryee et al., 2002; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Pervan et al., 2009). Taking cognisance of the fact that collaboration within organisations, to achieve and deliver upon mutual goals, is dependent on individuals’ interactions and

exchanges, the third proposition was formulated by drawing upon social exchange theory:

P3: Line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships are characterised by social exchanges in terms of the mediums of interaction and the exchange content.

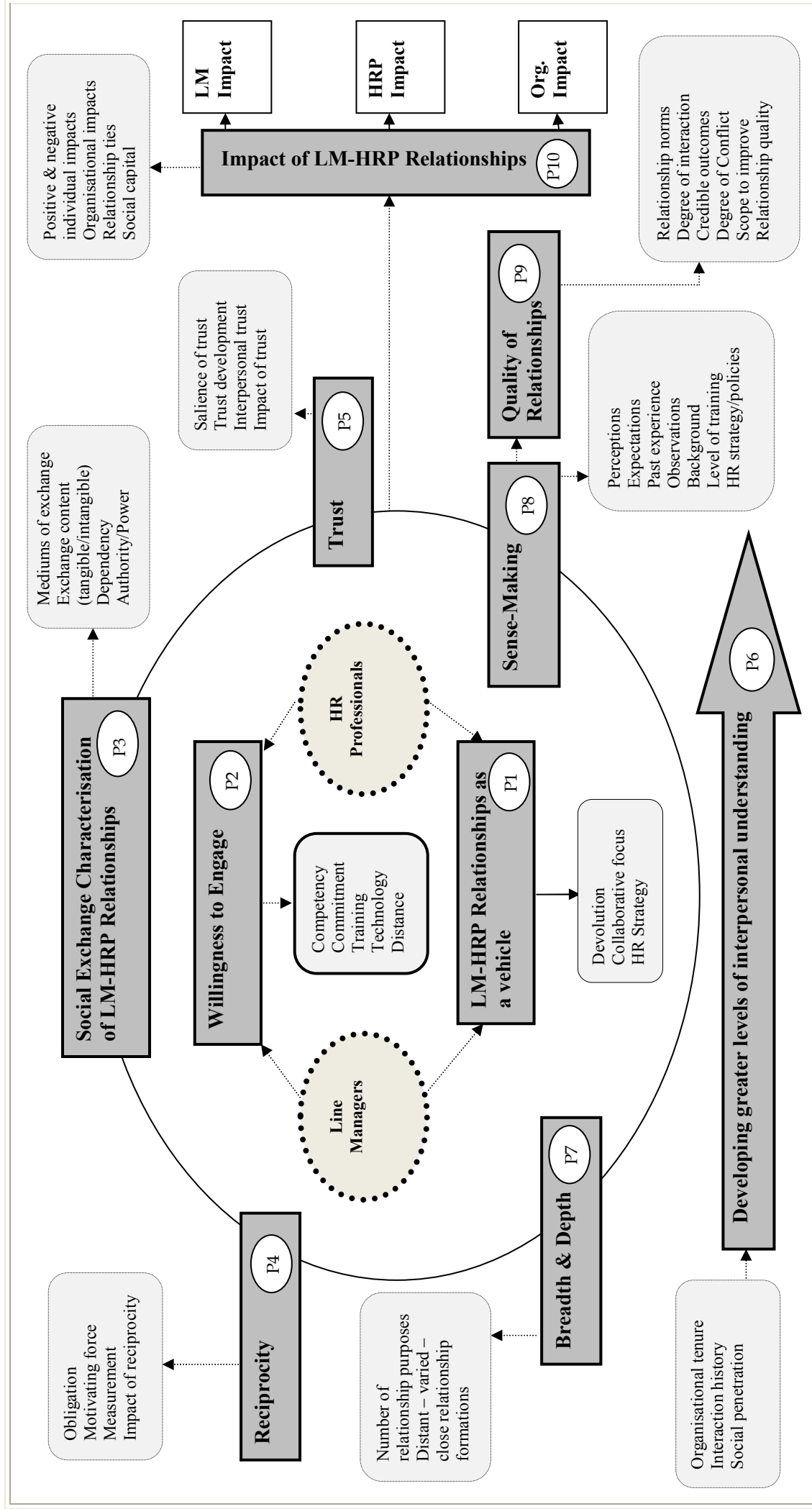
4.2 Research Framework: Collaborative Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

As this research is aimed at illuminating understanding in terms of line managers and HR professionals' collaborative relationship, a research framework is outlined in figure 4.1. This framework aims to capture the operationalisation and potential impacts of this relationship through the aforementioned social exchange lens, the underpinning intermediate social penetration focus and moving towards a sense-making perspective for line managers and HR professionals, with reference to their collaborative relationship. In addition, the research propositions (and the variables used to address each proposition) are mapped within this framework.

4.2.1 Exchange Content within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, social exchanges may embody both tangible and intangible resources, behaviours and actions (Blau, 1964; Druckman, 1998; Gachter & Fehr, 1999; Aryee et al., 2002; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). With reference to the assignment of the various formal HRM activities in the line manager and HR professional literature, research from the Cranet survey (2006) and the IRS (2006a) indicates that transactional day-to-day HRM activities may be shared between line managers and HR professionals. Associated with performing transactional activities, social exchange theory also accommodates for intangible exchange, which in the context of this research, may involve the exchanges between line managers and HR professionals around giving and seeking advice and direction within such relationships (Currie & Proctor, 2001; McConville, 2006; Cascon-Pereira et al., 2006). As such, SET indicates that the relationships themselves are characterised by social exchanges.

Figure 4.1 Research Framework



4.2.2 The Role of Reciprocity within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

As ascertained in Chapter 3, individuals enter into collaborative exchanges to satisfy their self-interest which they may not achieve sufficiently by acting in isolation, and as such, strive to obtain a mutual benefit through reciprocated effort (Gouldner, 1960; Blau, 1964; Aryee et al., 2002; Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003; Wu et al., 2006). Line managers, by assuming HR responsibilities, may liberate HR professionals from the day-to-day transactional HRM provision: “...*the function will be liberated to concentrate upon strategic activities associated with a personnel metamorphosis to human resource management*” (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999, p.10). Moreover, this move may offer line managers the opportunity to interact, translate and deliver HR policy and practice amongst their own staff (Renwick, 2000; Currie & Proctor, 2001; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003). Taking heed of the role of reciprocity in collaborative HRM relationships, Renwick (2003), from his research on line manager-HR professional collaboration, posits the view that “*The line were aware of their responsibilities in HRM, but saw that HR needed to show a reciprocal commitment to the line in general management work also*” (p.271).

In developing the fourth proposition, the role of reciprocity is deemed to be important to collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships as both exchange actors need to contribute and cooperate to achieve their mutual goals:

P4: Reciprocity is a key feature in achieving and sustaining collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships.

4.2.3 The Role of Trust within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

As reflected in Chapter 3, the salience of trust is heightened in collaborative relationships (Blau, 1964; Aryee et al., 2002), due to the unspecified nature of reciprocal obligation, resources and power required to discharge shared responsibilities may not be equally distributed within relationships (Blau, 1964; Molm et al., 2003; Zafirovski, 2005) and as a stabilising mechanism ensuring that

reciprocal roles and behaviours are mutually assumed by line managers (HR delivery) and HR professionals (HR advice and support).

A key form of exhibited trust in the literature is the willingness of HR professionals to involve line managers in HRM through devolution. In presenting the alternative view, HR professionals have also reported a reluctance to trust line managers to implement and enact HR policies and practices based on their judgements of line managers' competence, resources, divergent operational pressures and their short-term managerial focus (Budhwar, 2000; CIPD, 2003; IRS, 2006b; CIPD, 2007a). In terms of trust from the line manager perspective, due to the interdependent nature of their collaboration with HR professionals, line manager respondents identify that they "...rely on HR to keep us right" (Renwick, 2003, p.269) in terms of the quality and standard of their HRM delivery. Similarly, issues of mistrust cited by line managers towards HR professionals may be with reference to inadequate preparation and advice received to assume and maintain their HRM brief (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995:1999; Renwick, 2000; Nehles et al., 2006).

Consequently, the fifth proposition takes cognisance of the role of trust in the context of line manager-HR professional relationships:

P5: Trust is a key feature in the emergence of collaborative relationships between line managers and HR professionals, influencing their interaction and exchange.

4.2.4 The "Onion" Metaphor of Relationship Development within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

As illustrated in the latter sections of Chapter 3 and further evident in the research framework illustrated in figure 4.1, Altman & Taylor's (1973) depiction of the development of social relationships is analogous to that of an onion, suggesting that individuals relationships may penetrate different layers through their on-going interaction. Within this depiction, Taylor & Altman's (1987) analogy may assist in capturing relational development as similarly reflected in social exchange theory (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964), and moreover, the deepening structure (related to Morley et al., 2006 call for greater understanding of the anatomy of

line manager-HR professional relationships) of relationships from mere superficial exchange to those that are premised on more deep and close social interaction. Adopting such a focus to exploring the extent of social exchange within the line manager-HR professional relationship has particular utility as the activities exchanged in such relationships are known but the “...*shape they [the relationships] have taken*” (Harris et al., 2002, p.218) is more ambiguous. Investigating the evolution of the line manager-HR professional relationship as this develops from superficial towards more deep and close dimensions may serve to generate an understanding of their interactions. This mirrors Maxwell & Watson’s (2006) call for research on the social dynamics within such relationships.

Regarding the sixth proposition, acknowledging that by collaborating, there may be scope for relationships to develop from superficial exchanges towards more deep and close interaction, the following proposition is formulated:

P6: Through collaboration, line managers and HR professionals develop greater levels of understanding of each other.

4.2.5 The Breadth and Depth Exhibited within Collaborative Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

In terms of breadth, which refers to the range of issues shared between individuals, research output from the Cranet (2006) survey and IRS (2006a) data reflect the variety of HRM transactional activities while Renwick (2003) and Whittaker & Marchington (2003) highlight the socially supporting HR activities assigned within the line manager-HR professional collaborative relationship. A social penetration focus, in the form of a relational depth dimension, may serve to put into context the level of shared activity in relation to the degree of social dependence of the exchange actors (Altman & Taylor, 1973). As line managers and HR professionals, through their collaborative remit, may have time to establish a degree of social dependency, exploring the extent to which relationship progression and familiarity supports deeper social exchanges by exposing the social dependency and tie strength has relevance within the context of this research (Levin & Cross, 2004).

Concentrating on the relationships formed by and between line managers and HR professionals, the breadth and depth of collaboration may tend to vary depending on what issues are exchanged and the relational connection between them. As such, the seventh proposition is formulated accordingly:

P7: Line manager-HR professional relationships vary in terms of breadth and depth as a reflection of the scope of their collaborative activity.

4.2.6 Making Sense of Line Manager-HR Professional Expectancies within their Collaborative Relationships

Despite the fact that social penetration theory may provide a logical framework for delineating the evolution of collaborative relationships, it does not necessarily provide a comprehensive framework for illuminating individuals' cognitive processes or patterns that enable them to make sense of their interaction and exchanges (Weick, 1995). In terms of line manager-HR manager collaborative relationships, the exchanging actors may expect that their collaboration will produce synergies, changes in HR responsibility, greater utilisation of HR resources, enhanced commitment and may potentially liberate the HR function to concentrate on strategic, as opposed to, transactional concerns (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Renwick, 2000; Harris et al., 2002; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005a). Weick (1995) and the general literature in the latter stages of Chapter 3, argues that the construction of such expectancies may be based on past experiences and, in turn, these expectations may manifest in collaborative enactment.

In attempting to achieve some insight into the respective understanding of both line manager and HR professional roles within the context of their collaborative relationships, the eighth proposition focuses on the issues which may influence these individuals' perspectives:

P8: Multiple issues influence and enable line managers and HR professionals to make sense of their collaborative relationships.

4.2.7 Making Sense of the Quality of Collaborative Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

Due to the iterative nature of sense-making, individuals within exchange continually assess the value of their relationships by making sense and, in turn, sensegiving (Gioia & Chittpeddi, 1996). Specific evidence of this is found in Altman & Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory, where it is argued that individuals, based on their current and past history of interaction, evaluate the rewards to be obtained from interacting. In the context of this research, this evaluation may include the degree of credible HRM support provided by HR professionals (Caldwell, 2008) and the competent delivery of HRM practice by line managers (IRS, 2006b; CIPD, 2007a).

The degree of relational ties may also be an important feature to the perceived quality of the relationships themselves (Granovetter, 1973; Gubbins & Garavan, 2005). Close relational ties may be beneficial to collaborating line managers and HR professionals to gain access to and share information. Equally, Granovetter (1973; 1983; 2005) and Gubbins & Garavan (2005) posit the view that weak or distant ties may also be beneficial for routine transactional exchanges that does not require, nor is clouded by, a complex prior relationship history. Focusing on the processes which individuals adopt to make sense of the quality of their relationships may shed light on and address the paucity of understanding on the relational aspects of line manager-HR professional relationships, "*...sometimes we're pulling in the same direction and other times we're pole to pole*" (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003, p.257; Maxwell & Watson, 2006 and Watson et al, 2007).

For Turner (1987), a stable social order may be reflected within relationships when there is a mutual convergence of the exchange actors cognitions and actions. However, when expectations and reality diverge, conflict may arise in the relationship influencing the quality and outcomes of the relationships themselves and this may be heightened when the exchange actors come from differing backgrounds (Weick, 1995; Buchel, 2000), which is the case in this particular research. Potential sources of conflict and tension within line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships which have the potential to distance these

individuals and negate the outcomes of their collaborative remit, as previously discussed in Chapter 2, include: dissatisfaction with line manager development (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003, Nehles et al., 2006); variation in line managers HRM-related competence (IRS, 2006b); issues of HR-related accountability and responsibility (McConville & Holden, 1999) and moreover, the varying levels of support provided by HR professionals, (Cunningham & Hyman, 199; Bond & Wise, 2003; Nehles et al., 2006).

With reference to the quality of line manager-HR professional relationships, the amalgamation of the outcomes received from collaborating and moreover, the degree of relationship ties formed may impact on line managers and HR professionals' perception of the quality of their relationship and, as such, has informed the ninth proposition:

P9: Both the relationships arising between line managers and HR professionals and the outcomes from collaboration influence the perceptions of the quality of collaborative HRM delivery.

4.2.8 The Impact of Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

As previously highlighted in the latter sections of Chapter 2, the impact of line managers assuming a collaborative relationship with HR professionals may manifest positively (Renwick, 2003) and at times, negatively (Harris et al., 2002). The kernel of the issue appears to centre on the quality of exchange relationships (Aryee et al., 2002; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which, in turn, may be influenced by preparation levels, authority issues and job pressures (Nehles et al., 2006; Mc Conville, 2006). In terms of the organisational impact, the recurring theme in the line manager-HR professional literature is that of a collaborative partnership between HR professionals and line managers which, in turn, has the potential to enhance the integration of HRM with organisational strategy (Ulrich, 1998; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Morley et al., 2006).

Accepting that multiple impacts may arise as a result of line manager-HR professional collaboration, the final proposition accommodates for both individualistic and organisational perspectives:

P10: Impacts arise at the individual and organisational levels from line manager-HR professional collaboration.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to synthesise the literature associated with the line manager-HR professional relationship from a social exchange perspective. Additional theoretical lenses were addressed which operationalise social exchange theory towards an individual research focus on line managers and HR professionals. Furthermore, this chapter has attempted to reconcile these bodies of literature to demonstrate their combined efficacy to support this body of research through the development of the research framework. Within this chapter, specific research propositions were offered in terms of the research activity based on the literature reviewed and with respect to the primary research conducted. The following chapter moves to identify the research methodology which underpins the primary research conducted for this study.

Chapter Five: Research Methodology

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is firstly, to outline the theoretical and philosophical stance influencing the research investigation and secondly, to illustrate the methodological approach taken to this study. Mindful of the descriptive focus of the research and the interpretivist orientated theoretical and philosophical stance employed, a case study research design is developed which seeks to capture the organisational context. Consideration is also given to the rigour of the research design in terms of the underpinning methods, collection and analysis strategies associated with the operationalisation of this study. Finally, the ethical considerations that have influenced the research process are addressed.

5.1 Overview of the Research Process

Commentators on the research process (Brannick & Roche, 1997; Gill & Johnson, 2002; Domegan & Fleming, 2003; Walliman, 2005; Sarantakos, 2005; Kumar, 2005; O’Leary, 2007) purport that detailing a plan of activity, accommodating for the what, how and actually doing (Kumar, 2005), is required in order to meet the objectives of a research study. As previously presented in chapter 1.3, the objective of this study and, in turn the research question, seeks in a descriptive vein, to illuminate the understanding of line manager and HR professional collaborative relationships. Domegan & Fleming (1999) argue that defining the research question enables researchers “...to anticipate activities, information requirements, [and] data sources” (p.43). For this reason, the research process framework outlines the key phases of the research process which include: the formulation of the research question (purpose) which has been discussed both in Chapters 1 and 4; the theoretical and philosophical framework; the research framework (methodology) including the collection techniques (methods) and concludes with the overarching ethical considerations associated with the entire process.

5.2 Philosophical Framework

At a practical level, Burrell & Morgan (1979) argue that all social scientists approach a research investigation via both inherent and overt assumptions about the nature of the social world and the manners in which it may be explored. These

assumptions, bounded by a subjectivist and objectivist dichotomy (see Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Morgan & Smircich, 1980 and Holden & Lynch, 2004 for a thorough discussion), embody the issues of ontology (reality), epistemology (knowledge), human nature and the methodology associated with conceptualising and conducting primary research. Mindful of the philosophical underpinnings to research design, Holden & Lynch (2004) also identify that “...*these assumptions are consequential to each other, that is their [the researcher’s] view of ontology effects their epistemological persuasion which in turn, affects their view of human nature, consequently, [the] choice of methodology logically follows*” (p.398).

For Burrell & Morgan (1979), objectivist research activity manifests in the focus and analysis of measureable, hard and objective variables. Concomitantly, Holden & Lynch (2004) also present the alternative perspective by noting that the terminology of qualitative, anti-positivistic, phenomenological, humanist, interpretivist and social constructionist have become synonymous with and used interchangeably for the subjectivist approach. From the subjectivist perspective, “...*each situation is seen as unique and its meaning is a function of the circumstances and individuals involved*” (Remenyi et al., 2005, p.34), which is of particular relevance to this research seeking to explore the relationship between line managers and HR professionals engaged in collaborative HRM.

Denying the importance of individual subjectivity by adopting an objectivist/positivist lens may result in a generalisation of respective individual’s social exchanges and interactions and their overall relationships (McGrath, 2008), whereas, this research seeks to view the reality and social world from the perspective of the individual respondents themselves. The objectivist/positivist approach, reflective of the natural sciences, is argued to be deployed to test hypothesis, replicability and generalisation (Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Gill & Johnson, 2002), and therefore, is rejected for the purposes of this descriptive study. In contrast to this, and of relevance to this research, the subjectivist/interpretivist paradigm “...*places considerable stress upon getting close to one’s subject*” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.6), by exploring their

subjective meanings, generating qualitative data and researching everyday settings in small samples.

In terms of the philosophical orientation to this study, an ontology of nominalism (accepting that reality is a projection of human consciousness and perception), in conjunction with an interpretivist epistemology (which views social interaction as a basis for interpretation and knowledge creation) is incorporated. Additionally, an intermediate deterministic and voluntary view of human nature is also assumed as individuals are perceived to exercise discretion within established systems and structures. In terms of the methodological underpinning of this research investigation, a subjectivist/interpretivist approach (interpretivist) is deemed to be most appropriate (Gill & Johnson, 2002; Jankowicz, 2005; Saunders et al., 2007), as explanations of subjective accounts are emphasised in an attempt to interpret understanding from the research respondents' personal stance and context (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This type of research usually incorporates small samples, orchestrated to qualitatively capture the totality of the research phenomenon within its operational setting (Remenyi et al., 2005), relying on an inductive approach, where observations from the data contribute to the exploration and understanding (emic) of the research and theoretical focus (Gill & Johnson, 2002; Bryman, 2004). Of particular relevance for this type of research is the emphasis that is placed on understanding the study within a natural setting (Malhotra & Birks, 2003; Walliman, 2005; Remenyi et al. 2005; Cresswell, 2007). In addition, a pragmatic methodologically pluralist approach is adopted which recognises that prior knowledge has informed the primary research as illustrated in Chapter 4.

5.3 Research Design

Utilising Domegan & Fleming's (2003) research design framework, descriptive research is deemed the most suitable for this study in comparison to exploratory or casual research. For Kane (1995), descriptive research involves finding out what is or what has happened in terms of the research phenomenon and this may involve "...*describing attitudes, behaviours or conditions*" (p.13). Moreover, surrounding the research focus itself and supportive of the overall research

question, a descriptive approach concerns itself with the “...*who, what, where, when and how of the relevant issues*” (Domegan & Fleming, 2003, p.64).

The reasons for adopting descriptive-based research within this study include: the aim of the research is to describe (not to establish cause and effect (Kumar, 2005)) the relationship between line managers and HR professionals, including the features and impacts that may emerge in the relationship of collaborative HRM delivery. In addition, the data generated is predominantly of a qualitative nature, emanating from a small sample to probe and capture depth to the information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), as opposed to measurement or comparison of quantitative data from large or multiple samples (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). Although quantification is recognised as a possible aim of descriptive research, description may also arise from qualitative data (Domegan & Fleming, 2003; Zikmund, 2000; Sim & Wright, 2000) and, as such, Hakim (2000) argues “*Qualitative research tends to used most heavily in disciplines where the emphasis is on description*” (p.37), which has relevance for the primary research element of this study (discussed in detail in later sections). Moreover, the research is not concerned with testing hypothesis, alternatively “...*it aims to describe social systems, relations or social events*” (Sarantakos, 2005, p.10). Finally, the degree of formality in the research processes is semi-structured and researcher driven, allowing flexibility and probing where appropriate, compared to an unstructured or totally structured process (Domegan & Fleming, 2003).

Cognisant of the prior knowledge collected from the literature reviewed and the development of a conceptual/research framework to arrive at the research question, Malhotra & Birks (2003) acknowledge that descriptive research designs may be “...*characterised by the prior formulation of specific research questions*” (p.65), and furthermore, that the research design may be pre-planned and structured to a degree to accommodate the research question. Within the interpretivist methodological underpinning and the descriptive direction taken in terms of the research design for exploring line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships, the necessity to capture the research phenomenon, the research respondents and the research context and setting provided the rationale

for pursuing a case study research design to holistically account for all of these components (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2002; Yin, 2003; Stake, 2008).

5.3.1 Case Study Research Design

The case study, as a research design, reflects an empirical enquiry that “...investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly defined” (Yin, 2003, p.13). Of particular relevance to this research, Hammel, Dufor & Fortin (1993), Hakim (2000) and Gerring (2007) note that the case study design may facilitate an in-depth account of the research question concerning the description of social entities such as organisations, events, work teams, roles or relationships. Moreover, Stark & Torrance (2005) view social reality as “...created through social interaction, albeit in particular contexts and histories” (p.33) and adopting case study research design, for this reason, may enable this study to retain the organisational characteristics, in conjunction with accommodating the research focus (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Robson, 2002; Cresswell, 2007).

The arguments which have influenced a case study research design for this study are numerous and include: the development of rich and thick description through in-depth focus (Robson, 2002; Yin, 2003); satisfying descriptive research objectives through supporting a variety of collection techniques (Domegan & Fleming, 2003; Yin, 2003); illuminating case specific contextual understanding of the social entities under exploration (Eisenhardt, 1969; Gummesson, 2000; Baker, 2003) and of further relevance to this particular research, “...study many different aspects, examine them in relation to each other and view the process within its total environment” (Gummesson, 2000, p.86).

In the development of case research design, and in particular, single case research design which is pursued in this research, Yin (2003) signals the importance of gaining a high level of access to the research site. In this vein, Stake (1995) suggests that access issues and levels should be discussed from the outset between

the researcher and the case organisation. The researcher, from conducting the preliminary-pilot stage (Appendix B) of the study within the organisation, had already forged a relationship with two key gatekeepers (Bryman, 2004), and this relationship supported the negotiation process of gaining access, illustrating the contribution of the study and eliciting the internal case organisation's support required. Furthermore, Remenyi et al. (2005) signals that a pilot study may be of benefit to a research design strategy, acting as a "...testing ground for both substantive and methodological issues, and it can help the researcher develop more relevant lines of questioning" (p.174). This pilot-preliminary study, or "...pre-test" (Yin, 2003, p.74) incorporated a survey of 45 line managers who participated in the training and development intervention (in the form of a Certificate in Personnel Practice qualification), in-depth semi-structured interviews with a selection of the case site's Group HR Managers and documentary analysis. The indicative findings from this pilot-preliminary study have a direct bearing on the current research design strategy, namely that it confirms that firstly, line manager involvement is a directive under the case organisation's HR strategy. Secondly, it indicates that line managers are actively involved in the delivery of HRM, and of particular relevance to this research, that line managers and HR professionals do not act in isolation and instead collaborate, all of which has informed the appropriateness of the case site to facilitate the primary research.

5.3.2 Case Study Selection Process

A fundamental issue in relation to the case study research design of this study is the issue of adopting single or multiple cases for data collection (Yin, 2003). Within this, cognisance was taken of the pilot-preliminary research already conducted with the case organisation as previously alluded to (Appendix B), the ability of the researcher to answer the research question (Hamel, Dufor & Fortin, 1993), accommodating epistemological concerns (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Stake, 1995), in conjunction to gaining depth as opposed to mass focus on the research respondents (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003; Stark & Torrance, 2005).

Advocates of multiple case research design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003) signal, from a objectivist/positivist stance, that numerous cases need to be researched to ensure that the understandings gained from each case may generate convincing and replicable theoretical and practical findings (Robson, 2002; Remenyi et al., 2005; Saunders, Lewis & Saunders, 2007). Challenging this viewpoint by supporting single case research study design, Valsnier (1986) claims that “...*the study of individual cases has always been the major (albeit often unrecognized) strategy in the advancement of knowledge about human beings*” (p.11). Bromley (1986) similarly contends that “...*the individual case study or situation analysis is the bed-rock*” (p.ix) for generating understanding, and consequently, the danger of adopting multiple case site research design may reduce the depth of investigation within a case site as “...*the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis*” (Cresswell, 2007, p.76).

For this research study, the justification for employing a single case research design (Yin, 2003; Bryman, 2004) is that the case is “... *information rich because [it is] unusual or special in some way*” (Patton, 1990), as evidenced by its semi-state status embodying the dual characteristics and demands of both public and private sector organisations. Single case research design is therefore adopted by its ability to capture a revelatory context to this research: “...*it makes sense to pick the site that would yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge...While studying one or a few critical cases does not technically permit broad generalizations to all possible cases, logical generalizations can often be made from the weight of evidence produced in studying a single, critical case*” (Patton, 1990, p.174).

5.3.3 Accessing the Case Site

As previously presented, the pilot-preliminary stage of this research (Appendix B), encompassing two years of interaction with Group HR Managers and line manager respondents, has confirmed the requisite relevance and the rich canvass of the research site and assisted in generating the access necessary for operationalising a case study research design (Yin, 2003; Bryman, 2004). In case research, access is of importance because the nature of the investigation requires

that the researcher has ample opportunity and scope to explore the case site (Stake 1995; Yin, 2003; Jankowicz, 2005). From the outset of this study (November, 2005), a relationship was forged with a gatekeepers (Creswell, 2007) at the case site who, in turn, facilitated, accommodated and assisted with the coordination of the research. At the interim stage between the pilot-preliminary research and the commencement of the case research proper, regular meetings and briefing emails helped build and maintain rapport. In June 2008, a meeting was held with the existing gatekeepers in the case organisation to explore the practicalities of recommencing the research investigation. At this meeting an updated terms of reference, research boundaries and instrument approval were sought and gained from the gatekeeper in conjunction to providing a dataset of potential respondents to operationalise the data collection.

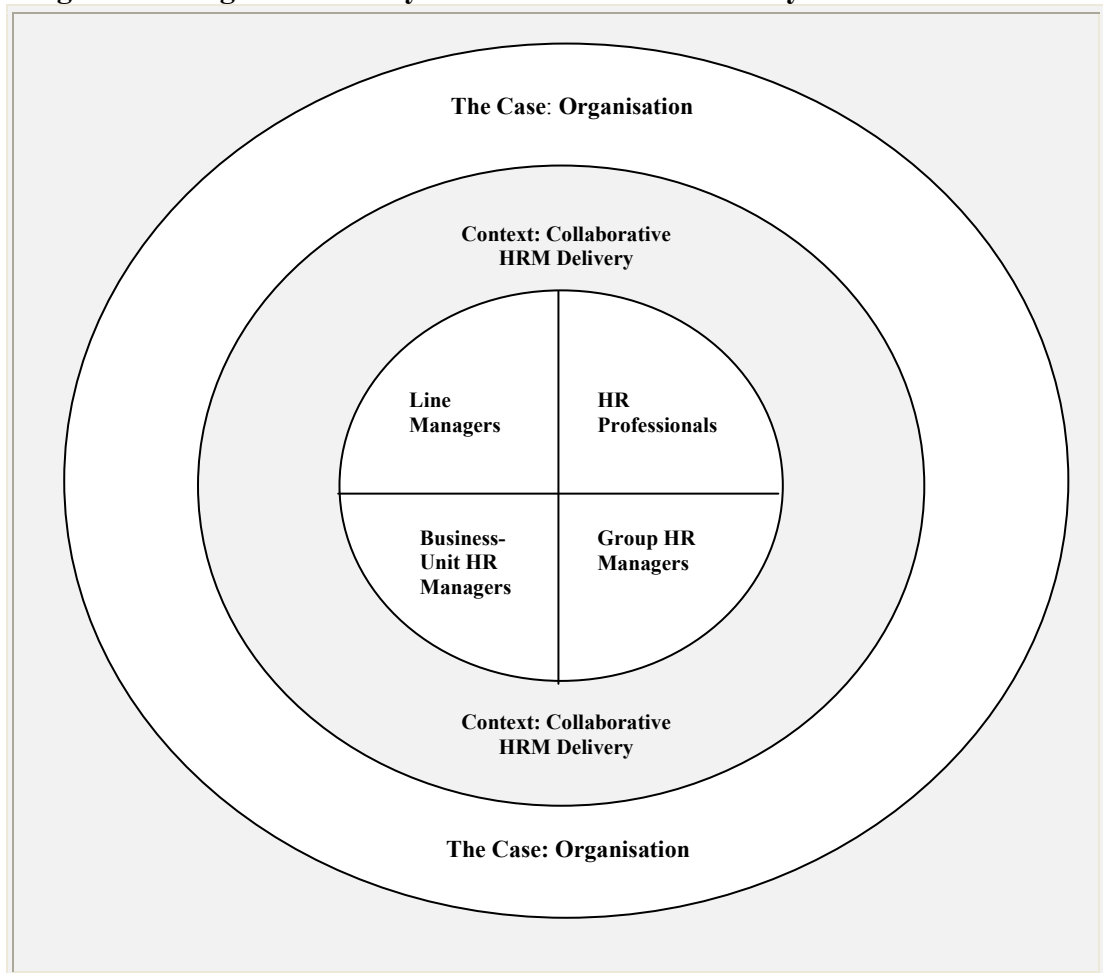
Having previously identified the arguments which have predicated a single case research design, Yin (2003) identifies that there are still further design considerations regarding the level and unit of analysis :“... *this occurs, when within a single case, attention is also given to a subunit or subunits*” (p.42). Therefore, the following discussion focuses on developing the single case research design strategy in more detail.

5.3.4 The Case, Context and Units of Analysis

The research site, as a context for the research, is a diverse setting to explore the line manager-HR professional relationship, from a multiple business unit structure and moreover, from a multiple layered HR structure (for more details on the case site, please refer to Appendix A. For Yin (2003), single case study research designs may be categorised as holistic, possessing a single unit of analysis, which is examined globally in terms of the overall case. Alternatively, and of relevance to this research, single case study research designs, incorporating a subunit or subunits are viewed as embedded case designs (Yin, 2003). As this research incorporates three subunits – line managers, HR professionals and HR Managers, the case research design sits within the embedded category. For the specific focus of this research (based on figure 5.1), the case is the organisation (which sets the

strategies and physical boundaries and also provides the setting for collaboration), and the context for collaborative HRM delivery.

Figure 5.1 Single Case Study Context and Units of Analysis



Source: Adapted from Milner (2007), p.196.

The units of analysis employed within the case study research design are the line managers, HR professionals and HR Managers (40 in total) whose experiences and impacts of collaboration form the central focus of this study. The interrelationships of each of these categories is captured in Figure 5.1.

5.3.5 Validity and Reliability

In adopting an interpretative-led case study research strategy, while it is accepted that research of this type may facilitate a deep understanding of the key issues within a study, results are nevertheless often criticised in terms of “...*objectivity, or rigour*” (Yin, 2003, pp. xiii). Case study research designs, in particular, face

denigration with respect to generalisation outside of the case, researcher bias, and a potential lack of replicability (Bryman, 2004; Sarantakos, 2005), and, in turn, Remenyi et al. (2005) signals that researchers “...need to be prepared for a distinct challenge” (p.168).

Acknowledging such concerns and in relation to validity (“*whether an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure*” (Sarantakos, 2005, p.83)), the advice of Yin (2003) was followed in that semi-structured interviews, in conjunction to documentary analysis, are deployed and triangulated to reinforce construct validity by gathering multiple sources of evidence from multiple sources of respondents. In terms of external validity relating to the issue of the generalisability of findings outside of the case study (Gummeson, 2000; Gomm et al., 2000), Sandelowski (1996) and Bryman (2004) note that case researchers do not conduct cases with the explicit goal of mass generalisation, as cases (and the current research study), are chosen because they meet specific criteria and the inherent research questions and focus are characteristically bound to their respective contexts.

Also impacting on case research design is the issue of reliability, concerning whether the research activities are replicable in terms of operationalisation (Kumar, 2005). Addressing this issue, Yin (2003) suggests that incorporating a case study protocol, containing the “...*instrument as well as the procedures and general rules*” (p.67), may facilitate another researcher to replicate the research. Taking heed of these concerns and suggestions, the case study protocol outlined in table 5.1 includes an overview of this research study, the case selection criteria, data collection methods, duration and case access requirements. The goal of this document is to provide a blueprint of the research study which another researcher might adopt at a later date.

Table 5.1 Case Study Protocol

Activity	Description	Timelines
Protocol Purpose	<p>To guide the single case study research undertaken at the research site relating to the collaborative relationship between line managers and HR professionals.</p> <p>The research aims to accommodate the following research question:</p> <p><i>What are the features and associated impacts of the line manager-HR professional relationship that emerge in the realisation of collaborative HRM?</i></p>	
Case Selection	<p>A semi-state organisation where line managers and HR professionals are charged with collaborative HRM provision</p> <p><i>The Case:</i> The organisation (which sets the strategies and physical boundaries and also provides the setting for collaboration)</p> <p><i>The Context:</i> Collaborative HRM delivery</p> <p><i>Unit of Analysis:</i> Line managers, HR professionals and HR Business-Unit Managers and Group HR Managers, purposively selected and quota sampled across the various business lines</p>	
Case Duration	<p>Pilot stage of research encompassing questionnaire administration and semi-structured interviews to merely identify if collaborative HRM occurs</p> <p>In-depth interviews with the units of analysis and documentary analysis</p>	<p>Sept. 2005- Nov.2006</p> <p>Sept.2008 – January 2009</p>
Case Access	<p>Initial access and introduction to the research site</p> <p>Commencement of pilot stage of the research Completion of pilot stage research</p> <p>Commencement of semi-structured interviews Completion of the primary research</p>	<p>Sept. 2005</p> <p>June 2006 Jan. 2007</p> <p>Sept. 2008 Jan. 2009</p>
Data Collection Methods	<p>Semi-structured interviews with HR Professionals (pilot stage to confirm the applicability of the case)</p> <p>Survey line managers as to their role in HRM and their collaboration with HR professionals (pilot stage to confirm the richness of the case)</p> <p>Commencement of semi-structured interviews with line managers, HR professionals, Business-Unit HR Managers and Group HR Managers</p>	<p>June 2006</p> <p>Oct. 2006</p> <p>Sept. 2008 – January 2009</p>
Data Management and Analysis	<p>NVIVO software programme for transcripts, field written notes and documentary analysis and a manual coding process for additional material (based on themes reflected in the literature review and research framework).</p>	<p>January 2007 – April 2009</p>
Case Study Report	<p>Formal written evaluation report presented to gatekeeper and senior HR manager at the research site</p>	<p>March 2007</p>

Adapted from Remenyi et al. (1998), Robson (2002), Kelliher (2006), Milner (2007)

5.4 Secondary and Primary Research: Summary of Methods, Data Collection and Data Analysis

The following sections address the approach to secondary and primary research data collection undertaken during this research. In relation to the primary data collection, the discussion underpinned by the aforementioned theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, is concentrated on the associated design, administration, validity and reliability of the methods adopted.

5.4.1 Secondary Research and Data Collection

A multitude of secondary research material (“...*data obtained from already published sources such as directories or databases*” (Remenyi et al., 2005, p.289)), was utilised in this research study. Relevant peer reviewed academic journals, books and reports have been obtained from the library catalogue at Waterford Institute of Technology, borrowings from faculty members, inter-library loans and on-line databases including ABI Inform, Emerald, Blackwell Synergy, Science Direct and Business Source Premier. The additional on-line databases and member resources of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development were also employed throughout this research. Further on-line material was accessed, namely in the form of the case organisation’s various websites, and additional print and media sources reporting on the case organisation were also collected. The research site also supplied organisational documentation and further information was sourced from their internal corporate magazine and additional independent websites.

5.4.2 Primary Research and Data Collection

Within case research design as previously highlighted, it is argued that data collection strategies should not be limited to singular data collection methods (Stake, 2003; Yin, 2003) and therefore, methods which may be qualitative, quantitative or a combination “...*can be highly synergistic*” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.538). Relatedly, Cresswell & Plano Clark (2007) advocate that combining research methods may provide an enhanced understanding to the research in question by incorporating different methods to assess the phenomenon under investigation.

Reflective of this approach, qualitative research methods, in the form of semi-structured interviews, are adopted in an attempt to generate “...*thick description*” (Gilmore & Carson, 1996, p.22) in terms of detailed insight into the respondents and the research problem. Fontana & Frey (1998), Mason (2004) and Sarantakos (2005) and Denzin & Lincoln (2008) identify that interviews may be appropriate to capture individuals’ meanings and interpretations, reason processes and social norms within a naturalistic setting.

In relation to this study, as per the intended case study protocol (table 5.4), semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis (to a lesser extent) have been deployed as the specific data collection methods. Other methods such as observation (Adler & Adler, 1998; Adler & Kwon, 1994; Silverman, 2001; Mason, 2004), relying on watching behaviour in the context of collaborative HRM would have been extremely difficult to coordinate and capture as their interaction (often geographically based and, at times, over the phone and email) is generally unplanned, occurring on a need-to basis. While questionnaires presented numerous advantages, namely in the short time to complete and their unobtrusive nature (Zikmund, 2000; Robson, 2002), the difficulty of capturing relational issues through this method, the lack of opportunity to probe respondents and uncertainty regarding response rates negated their value to this study (Bryman, 2004; Kumar, 2005).

5.4.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were chosen as the primary research method for this study based on the philosophical underpinning discussed earlier in this chapter and with reference to the overall research design strategy (Gill & Johnson, 2002; Mason, 2004). Specifically, the ontological position of this study indicates that respondents' knowledge, views, understanding and interactions are meaningful properties of social reality (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). In addition, the epistemological position taken infers that knowledge may be generated by interviewing to access respondents' accounts of reality to determine what constitutes as evidence in terms of their understanding around the research issue (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). As similarly reflected in the overall case research design strategy, the focus of this study is directed at capturing depth, nuance and data roundness (Dey, 1993) and the pursuit of this has influenced an ideographic methodology (Hussey & Hussey, 1997) to build a detailed picture of the respondents, and moreover, the decision to conduct interviews as the primary data collection method.

As a method, interviews vary in terms of the level of their structure. Positioned between structured interviews (Kumar, 2005; Saunders et al., 2007) and unstructured interviews (Silverman, 2006), an intermediate semi-structured

approach may serve to generate flexibility during the course of the interview (Zikmund, 2000; Bryman, 2004), in obtaining information about “...*personal, attitudinal, and value-laden material...which call for social sensitivity in their own right*” (Jankowicz, 2005). As such, this approach was deemed most suitable to accommodate the primary research needs associated with this research by moving away from the rigidity of a predefined line of questioning towards a situation where the interview style may be modified to facilitate follow-ups and probes and also to explore non-verbal cues (posture, pauses, raised voices etc.) which may arise (Sarantakos, 2005). The interviews themselves were not completely rigid as each theme was introduced in an open-ended manner (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005) and, furthermore, each theme had a subset of questions for probing to add clarity to the understanding of the respondents’ responses (Burns & Bush, 2000; Bryman, 2004; Jankowicz, 2005).

Reducing the degree of structure may therefore contribute to the validity of the information collection “...*as the respondent has more and more freedom to express precisely how they think and feel about a topic being discussed*” (Baker, 2003, p.220) and moreover, question wording may be altered and explanations given regarding to what the question attempts to capture and that questions which may appear to be inappropriate for certain respondents may be omitted and further questions may be asked in their absence. Specifically in the context of this research, the interview guide (Robson, 2002; Bryman, 2004; Kumar, 2005) contains the series of questions posed to the respondents, suggestions for prompts and a proposed sequence for these questions (Appendix C) informed by the prior research framework and literature review, grouped under various themes.

The gatekeeper facilitated the identification of the targeted research participants (discussed in the sampling strategy) and, in turn, each of these individuals was contacted in September 2008 with the aim of securing their participation in the project. After initial email and telephone contact, each of the respondents received written confirmation of the interview, the date and time concerned and a statement related to confidentiality (sample correspondence is contained in Appendix C). Each interview was conducted at the research site to facilitate the

respondent's work schedules and to capture their responses in the naturalistic setting. Before each interview, where possible, the author in conjunction with the respondent, ensured that a suitable environment was located to host the interview itself and tested the recording equipment to enable full attention to be afforded to the respondent at the initial meeting stage (Cresswell, 2007).

All respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and were asked to sign a research protocol (Appendix C). Permission was also sought at this stage to formally record the interview. In total, 55% of the respondents gave permission for the interview to be recorded, those that did not consent to audio recording, gave permission for notes to be taken. In these instances, key points were noted from the respondents in the form of *précis* (brief summaries which remain faithful to the respondents assumptions and mode of expression), paraphrasing and synopsis, in conjunction to capturing direct quotations to a lesser extent (Jankowicz, 2005). The length of each interview ranged from 60 minutes to 150 minutes with the average interview duration lasting between 70-90 minutes. At the conclusion of each interview, the respondents were thanked for their participation, permission was sought to re-contact them in the future if further clarification was needed and finally, their confidentiality was reassured. A follow-up letter reiterated these sentiments (Appendix C).

Regarding the legitimacy of interviews as a research method, for Lincoln & Guba (1985), in interpretivist research design, conventional criteria such as, internal and external validity (truth and accuracy of data captured) and reliability (repeatability) may not be easily applied. In addition, Morgan (1983) states "*...different research perspectives make different kinds of knowledge claims, and the criteria as to what counts as significant vary from one to another*" (p.114-15). Therefore, using positivistic criteria to judge interpretative-based research is unmerited (Morgan, 1983; Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Lynch, 2006; Kelliher, 2006; McGrath, 2009). In response, data and method triangulation was pursued to promote the credibility of the primary research (Yin, 2003; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In addition, the case study protocol and interview guides were developed to guide the interviews themselves and to create an audit

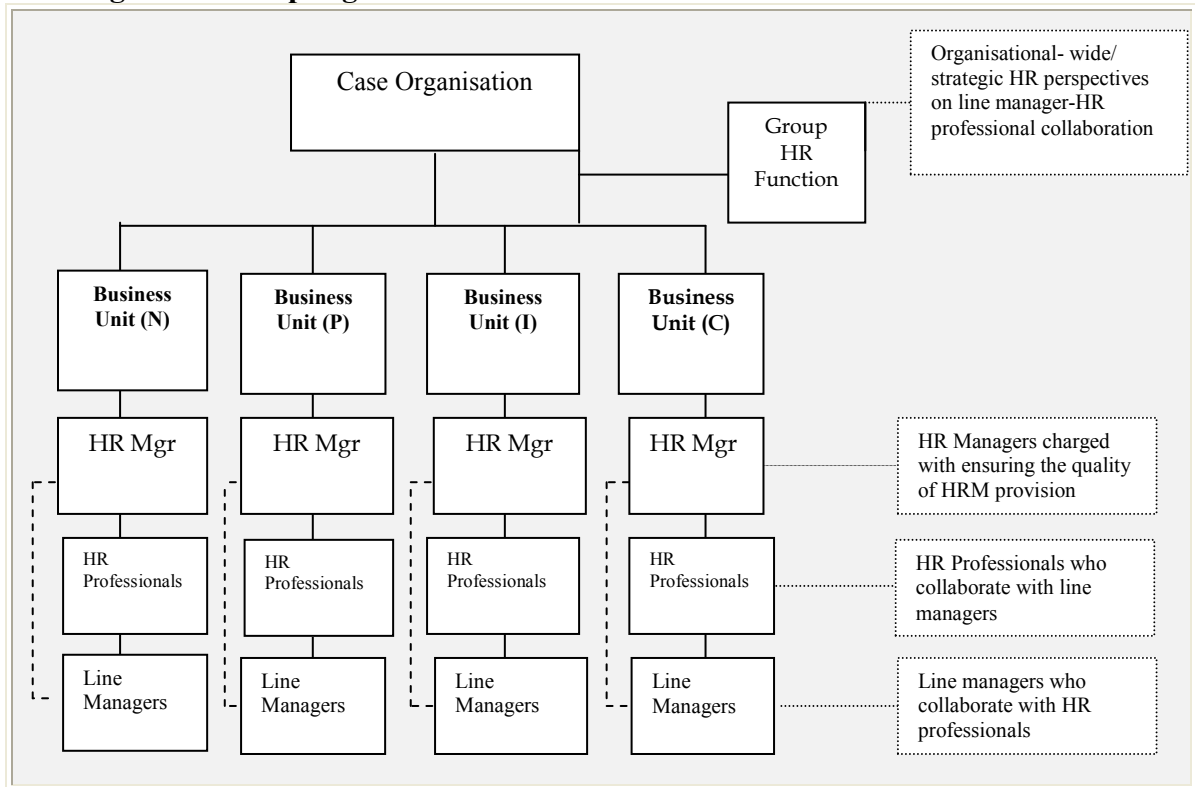
trail in terms of the case study process and the methods deployed to support the transferability and illustrate the dependability of the findings which may serve as a supportive tool for researchers seeking to adopt a similar approach in another setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Robson, 2002; Bryman, 2004; Saunders et al., 2007).

5.4.2.1.1 Sampling Strategy

In terms of identifying who to interview and complimenting the interpretivist nature of the research undertaken, a subjective, non-probability sampling strategy was adopted (Domegan & Fleming, 1999; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Bryman, 2004). Reflecting this approach, Mason (2004) and Kumar (2005) argue that sampling should not be limited to statistics and probability, and as such, interpretive case studies tend to rely upon purposeful sampling techniques of small samples of respondents that are situated in the organisational context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Taking on board the concerns regarding access to the population, cost and time issues and the non-standardisation of a subjective strategy, respondents were intentionally sought as they met pre-specified criteria (see figure 5.2) i.e. “... *the miniature or the mirror of the population under examination*” (Domegan & Fleming, 1999, p.304).

For this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a cross-section of line managers, HR professionals and HR Managers across all of the business units of the case study organisation (figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 Sampling Frame



In terms of the stratification of the targeted respondent population, for each unit of analysis i.e. line managers, HR professionals, Business-Unit HR Managers and Group HR Managers, a separate interview schedule (Appendix C), incorporating different lines of enquiry about the overarching research question, was developed to capture their individual insights and experiences regarding line manager-HR professional collaboration.

To ensure that the sample population was reflective of the case organisation’s structure, the gatekeepers collaborated on the numbers and stratification of the sampling strategy. It was decided, in conjunction with the gatekeepers, that a target of 50 interviews (see table 5.2) was a relevant sample (accepting and anticipating for a degree of non-responsiveness) to explore the collaboration of line managers and HR professionals and this sampling strategy is reflected in table 5.2. To further account for variations in the chosen sample across the various business units of the case organisation, each individual business unit was segmented and stratified pragmatically in terms of headcount with the assistance of the gatekeepers at the case site to ensure a proportionate, representation was

achieved (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Domegan & Fleming, 1999; Saunders et al., 2007).

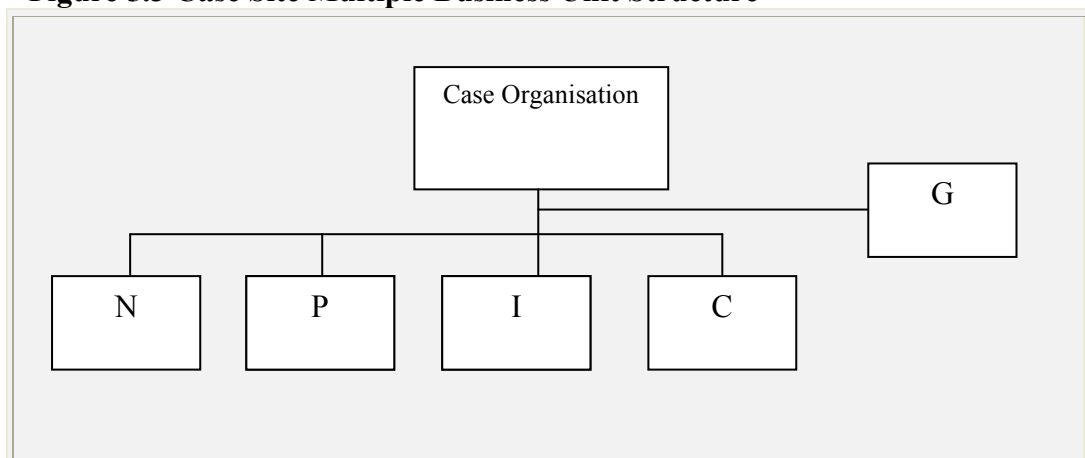
Table 5.2 Sampling Stratification

	Headcount	3500	1250	1300	550		
		Business Unit (N)	Business Unit (P)	Business Unit (I)	Business Unit (C)	Group HR (G)	Target Quota of Interviewees
Line Managers		7	8	7	5		27
HR Professionals		4	4	3	4		15
HR Managers		1	1	1	1		4
Group HR Professionals						4	4
							50

5.5.2.1.2 Summary of the Research Activity, Response Rates and Demographics

As reflected in the case profile (Appendix A) and furthermore, in the sampling strategy, the research site embodies a multiple business unit structure. This section therefore, informs the demographics of the research respondents who participated in the semi-structured interviews, specifically in terms of their context and location within the overall case organisation. In figure 5.3, the four major business units are depicted in addition to the representation of the Group HR function (G).

Figure 5.3 Case Site Multiple Business Unit Structure



In total, 40 respondents from across each of the business-units and the Group HR (G) function participated in the research. Although this figure differs from the target of 50, as projected in the data collection strategy, the targeted figure was inflated in anticipation of, and to accommodate for, a degree of non-responsiveness. In terms of the differentiation between the targeted and actual response rate, the actual figures did not impact on the breadth of information collected as the decision to cease interview administration was implemented when data saturation had occurred, namely when insights provided by the respondents were judged to be repetitious and homogenous to the existing data collected. Reasons offered by the respondents who were requested, but did not participate in the study included: one respondent who had just retired, numerous other respondents who had transferred to different roles which no longer required them to collaborate with line managers or HR professionals and the timing of the data collection (September-January) conflicted with year end reporting requirements and other business priorities. As such, table 5.3 provides a breakdown of the interview respondents based on their individual business unit.

Table 5.3 Summary of Interview Respondents

	N	P	I	C	G	Total
Line Managers	4	3	4	8		20
HR Professionals in the Business-Units	2	3	3	4		12
Business-Unit HR Managers	1	1	1	1		4
Group HR Managers					2	2
Group HR Professionals					2	2

To further highlight the roles of the individual line manager, HR professional, HR Manager and Group HR respondents, the following table (table 5.4) identifies and distinguish by business unit the roles, responsibilities and the degree of HR responsibility assumed by the individuals who participated in this study.

In table 5.4, the HR professionals in the areas of resource planning and Human Resource Development (HRD) and the HR Manager are charged with managing and delivering HRM to the entire 3,500 staff in the (N) business unit. The line managers, due to the technical nature of the business-unit, are heavily involved in technical roles and the size of the respective line managers teams range from 16-70 direct reports. These line managers are responsible for implementing and delivering HRM for their direct reports. Business-unit (P) represents the second business unit of the case organisation. The number of direct reports for the line managers varies from 3-42, however, the nature of the line managers' roles range from the labour intensive plant operations to finance and trading functions requiring less manpower. The HR professionals, charged with providing business unit-wide HRM delivery, represent the HRD (human resource development), Industrial Relations (IR) functions and the Human Resource Information System (HRIS) which is used by line manager respondents.

Table 5.4 Summary Demographics of Interview Respondents

Business-Unit (N)			Business-Unit (P)			Business-Unit (I)			Business-Unit (C)		
Respondent	Role	Responsible for	Respondent	Role	Responsible for	Respondent	Role	Responsible for	Respondent	Role	Responsible for
Business-Unit HR Manager			Business-Unit HR Manager			Business-Unit HR Manager			Business-Unit HR Manager		
N:HRM	Resource planning, succession management, HR policy development	3500 staff	P:HRM	Managing local agreements, IR, staffing levels, HR standards	1250	I: HRM	Setting HR strategies, policies and procedures	1300 staff	C:HRM	Developing and implementing HR policies and strategies	550 staff
HR Professionals			HR Professionals			HR Professionals			HR Professionals		
N:HRP1	Developing Resource Plans	Business - unit wide	P:HRP1	HRD Specialist	Business - unit wide	I:HRP1	Absenteeism, contracts, sick leave, discipline, probations, bonuses and salary reviews	HR Business Partner for Engineering sub group	C:HRP1	Absenteeism, personal development plans, communication	HR support to Billing & Payments
N:HRP2	HRD Specialist	Business - unit wide	P:HRP2	Industrial Relations Manager	Business - unit wide	I:HRP2	Induction, graduate training	Business unit wide	C:HRP2	HR strategy and operational issues around recruitment, T&D, ER	HR support to call centre
			P:HRP3	HRIS Implementation	Business - unit wide	I:HRP3	Home recruitment	Recruitment partner for Engineering and Facility sub group	C:HRP3	L&D Manager	ICT Group
									C:HRP4	Recruitment Manager	ICT Group

PTO for Continuation of Table

Business-Unit (N)			Business-Unit (P)			Business-Unit (I)			Business Unit (C)		
Respondent	Role	Responsible for	Respondent	Role	Responsible for	Respondent	Role	Responsible for	Respondent	Role	Responsible for
Line Managers			Line Managers			Line Managers			Line Managers		
N:LM1	H.V. Support Manager	17 staff	P:LM1	Trading Manager	9 staff	I:LM1	Engineering Manager	190 staff	C:LM1	Operations Manager for I.T. security	7 staff
N:LM2	H.V. Project Manager	30 staff	P:LM2	Financial Strategy Manager	3 staff	I:LM2	Asset Manager	70 staff	C:LM2	Payroll Manager	25 staff
N:LM3	M.V. Manager	26 staff	P:LM3	Plant Manager	42 staff	I:LM3	Emerging Business Manager	11 staff	C:LM3	Billing & Payments Manager	80 staff
N:LM4	Local Area Manager	70 staff/40 contractors				I:LM4	Engineering Manager	60 staff	C:LM4	Head of Catering	30 staff
N:LM5	Customer Services Supervisor	16 staff							C:LM5	Team Leader in NCCC	14 staff
									C:LM6	Archive and Heritage Manager	4 F/T and 32 P/T staff
									C:LM7	Governance and Finance Manager	2 staff
									C:LM8	Audit Manager	9 staff
Group HR											
Respondent	Role	Responsible for	Responsibility								
G:HRM1	Group HR Manager		Leadership and Development								
G:HRM2	Group HR Manager		Strategic Resourcing								
G:HRP1	HR Professional		Support Strategic Resourcing Unit to empower each business to develop plans								
G:HRP2	HR Professional		Support HR Leadership and Development unit								

The third business unit (I) is classified as a distinct business operation within the overall case organisation. In effect, it is a group of businesses which generates, supplies and trades as a collective and operates on an international basis. From table 5.4, the core engineering focus of the case organisation is reflected in the line manager respondent roles and due to the competitive and commercial focus of this particular business unit, the teams which these line managers manage, are considerably larger in comparison to the other businesses within the case organisation. The HR configuration is also somewhat different in that a HR business partner model is followed for the different functional units, whereby each division has a dedicated HR team to provide general and specialist HR activities.

The fourth business unit (C) of the case organisation amalgamates the customer care elements (customer call centre, billing and payments) of the case organisation with the range of group-wide services which cover the entire organisation (payroll, archive, catering, Information & Communications Technology (ICT)). Also reflecting a business partner model, the HR professionals are assigned to defined sections of the business unit and this is reflected whereby the HR professionals are charged with HRM delivery in the Billing & Payments division, the customer call centre and the ICT groups. The line manager respondents included mirror these defined sections, coming from the various support sections of payroll, billing, call centre, catering and ICT.

As an additional lens in which to explore the collaborative working relationships between line managers and HR professionals, respondents from the Group HR function, who contribute to the strategic and interactional aspects of collaborative HRM delivery, were also interviewed. Four HR specialists (two Group HR Managers and two Group HR professionals), coming from the leadership and development, and strategic resourcing specialisms contributed to study.

5.4.2.1.3 Interview Data Analysis

Analysing the data collected from the primary research involved an iterative process of collection and analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) to make sense of the collaborative HRM relationship. To achieve this goal, Dey (1993) advocates a qualitative analysis process

of “...describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how our concepts interconnect” (p.30). To achieve thorough description, the advice of Dey (1993) was followed to gain an understanding of context (situating action), intention (describing the world as it is seen by others) and process (change, circumstances and resulting action) of collaborative HRM.

In classifying the data collected from the interviews, the audio tapes were transcribed verbatim. For the interviews in which hand-written notes were taken, these were also transcribed. This approach was taken as transcripts provide a revisitable and complete record of the interview content and the non-verbal cues indicated by pauses and raised voices (Robson, 2002); Silverman, 2006; Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2006). A process of funnelling (Dey, 1993) followed in which the data was reduced by “...selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). Following the advice of Robson (2002), the a priori research framework (see Chapter 4), which paralleled the literature, identified the various themes to categorise the data. As part of the coding process which followed, these general themes were assigned identifying tags (nodes) and, in turn, the subthemes that emerged were assigned further tags and identifiers (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mason, 2004; Bryman, 2004; Sarantakos, 2005) to facilitate extracting relevant data from the interview transcripts.

In this research, the NVIVO software package made the coding of the data with reference to these nodes and the entire analysis more manageable: “...it’s fair to say that a researcher who does not use software beyond a word processor will be hampered in comparison to those who do” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.44). A justification for this approach to qualitative data analysis is proffered by Ritchie & Lewis (2003) who signal that faced with a web of tangled data, software programmes are advantageous to sort, reduce and manage the data. Furthermore, for Dey (1993), Miles & Huberman (1994), Richards & Richards (1998), Ritchie & Lewis (2003), Mason (2004), Sarantakos (2005), Cresswell (2007) and Saunders et al., (2008), utilising qualitative data analysis software offers many benefits including coding data,

search and retrieval, storage and data linking. It is pertinent to note that the Nvivo package “...did not obviate the crucial role of the researcher” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.208) or de-contextualise the data (Sarantakos, 2005). In this research, it was used as a support to enhance the consistency and transparency of the data categorising process, storing and retrieving data and linking the data towards generating credible findings and conclusions (see Appendix C for the NVIVO nodes used in this research).

Concluding Dey’s (1993) qualitative analysis strategy, the coded data was connected to arrive at patterns, regularities, and, at times, variations. In terms of this research, the patterns between the respective data sources served to assist in drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In displaying data, Miles & Huberman (1994) and Mason (2004) acknowledge that visual displays may be appropriate to the presentation of qualitative data regarding noting patterns, clustering and counting. Similarly, Sandelowski (2001) advocates the use of data display tables and numbers in qualitative research, echoing the earlier position of Dey (1993), who asserts that the use of numbers makes qualitative data “...emerge with greater clarity” (p.198). Therefore, this research sought to generate understanding from “....drawing diagrams, tabulating tables and writing text” (Dey, 1993, p.237) to produce a coherent account of collaborative HRM provision from the experiences and impacts of the individuals who participate within it (Robson, 2002).

5.4.2.2 Documentary Data

In terms of incorporating documents as a research method, Remenyi et al. (2005) argue that they are primarily used to “...corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p.175), (in the case of this research, the interviews conducted with line managers, HR professionals and HR Managers). Documents were also chosen based on the ontological underpinning of the study as written words, text and diagrams are viewed as meaningful components reflecting the social world of the research respondents (Mason, 2004). Furthermore, in relation to epistemology, written and visual texts serve as additional sources of evidence in terms of the research

phenomenon (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). With reference to the case organisation, analysis of in-house printed and electronic documentation, archival records and publicly available material were explored to support the primary research. The justification for doing so is that *“Documentary secondary data are often used in research projects which also use primary data collection methods”* (Saunders et al., 1997, p.160). A specific advantage of employing documentary analysis is that it is an unobtrusive measure possessing the potential for cross-validation of other measures (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Robson, 2002; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Sarantakos, 2005). Supporting this view, Remenyi et al. (2005) concurs that documents may be used to *“...corroborate and augment evidence from other sources...They provide specific details that can support the verbal accounts of informants”* (p.175).

Regarding the documentation provided by the case organisation, specific organisational charts and personnel biographies depicting the relationship channels for the phenomenon of interest, HR strategy documents and diagrams, internal HR workshop notes and line manager training manuals were obtained having developed a long rapport with the gatekeeper (Saunders et al., 2007; Cresswell, 2007). Additionally, archival records from the case organisation in the form of presentation documents, published books, internal papers, diagrams, internal magazine and formal correspondence were also incorporated in the data collection strategy. This internal documentation provided the dual function of reinforcing the individual viewpoints of the case study respondents and also provided valuable insight and knowledge into the organisation which, in turn, fed into the interview questions.

A comprehensive review of publicly available documentation regarding the case organisation was also sourced to *“...corroborate and augment evidence from other sources”* (Yin, 2003, p.81). This included academic articles and conference papers based on the case organisation, case company profile from datamonitor, book publications and information made available from the internet. The use of documentation was advantageous in terms of convenience, cost and access (Sarantakos, 2005); however, cognisance was also taken of their reliability and

validity, which is discussed in the following section. Table 5.5 provides a summary of the overall documentation used in this study and furthermore, how each of these documentary sources impacts on the findings drawn from the primary research in terms of providing background information, informing interview questions and corroborating interview data etc.

Table 5.5 Summary of Documentary Analysis Deployed

<i>Document Type</i>	<i>Source of Document</i>	<i>Purpose of Document</i>			
		<i>Inform Interview Qs</i>	<i>Augment Interview Data</i>	<i>Corroborate Interview Data</i>	<i>Provide Background</i>
Web-Home Pages	Internal	•			•
Web-articles	Internal	•			•
Academic case study	External	•			•
Organisational chart	Internal	•		•	
HR Strategy	Internal	•	•	•	•
HR Workshop notes	Internal	•		•	•
Training & Development manuals	Internal	•	•	•	•
Company reports	Internal	•		•	•
Industry report	External				•
Personnel biographies	Internal		•		•
Print media	External	•	•	•	•
Case company magazine	Internal	•	•		•
Books on the organisation	External	•			•
Unpublished theses	External	•			•
Journal papers	External	•			•

While representing a somewhat less structured method for gaining additional insights into the research phenomenon, some considerations were given to the issue of validity and reliability of the documentation reviewed. Regarding validity, cognisance of the authorship and reason for the document creation was acknowledged (Scott, 1990; Bryman, 2004; Saunders et al,2007) to assess its present value in meeting the objectives of this research, as opposed to its original purpose (Kumar, 2005; Remenyi et al., 2005). As the author represented the sole researcher within this study, the lack of consistency in reviewing key documentation did not emerge (Bryman, 2004; Sarantakos, 2005). Additionally, the subjective application of the method (Saunders et al., 2007) was further controlled for by the development of themes from the priori literature and the research framework (Chapter 4). Cognisance was also taken of the fact that documents may lack objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and this was anticipated for and justification for taking meaning from the documentary sources is linked to the actual interview content, thereby creating an audit trail in terms of the rationale and logic for including relevant segments from the documentary sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

5.4.2.2.1 Documentary Data Analysis

In terms of the focus on analysis of the documentation incorporated within this study, focus was placed on “...*description, identification of trends, frequencies and interrelationships*” (Sarantakos, 2005, p.293). Reflecting Dey’s (1993) describing, classifying and connecting approach and Miles & Huberman’s (1994) data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing framework, the documentary analysis consisted of firstly reducing the data. Within the data reduction, the identification of codes was introduced to highlight the relevant data (identified from the literature reviewed and the research framework themes) from the documents (Dey, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This classification process (Dey, 1993) served to isolate various themes and issues situated within the documents themselves.

In the case of electronic documentation, the analysis was treated in a similar manner to that of the interview data as previously alluded to, in that it was imported into the

NVIVO software package (Robson, 2002; Cresswell, 2007) and then coded. In relation to the printed textual documentation, scanning the documentation and subsequently importing it into NVIVO served to create links to the relevant interview segments (Murphy, 2008). In the limited instances, where this was not possible, a manual process of reducing the data and coding themes appropriately by category was followed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As previously discussed in terms of interview analysis, in displaying data, Dey (1993), Miles & Huberman (1994) and Sandelowski (1996) recommendations to incorporate visual displays, including the quantification and tabulisation of the data was followed. Relatedly, a further aspect of Dey's (1993) and Miles & Huberman's (1994) data analysis strategies is the issue of connecting the data collected to arrive at patterns, regularities, variations and singularities. In this vein, the organisational flowcharts informed the relationship channels for line managers and HR professionals and the multiple business unit stratifications represented in the sampling strategy. Workshop notes in relation to impressions of the HR function within the case organisation also influenced the line of enquiry within the interview guides in terms of the respondents' perceptions of the HRM function and the HR community. The documentation associated with the "HR for Line Managers" programme further informed the line of enquiry and interview questions. Publicly available documentation in relation to the case organisation's operating market, regulation and financial performance were used to underpin the external pressures which were alluded to by the interviewee respondents as a potential catalyst for collaborative HRM. The NVIVO software also facilitated in the linking of these various documents to the codes assigned to the interview data. Finally, due to the confidentiality agreement between the author and the case site, the organisational documentation included in this research has been completely anonymised. A discussion on ethical considerations, presented next, addresses this issue.

5.5 Ethical Issues Governing the Research Process

Throughout the research design process, consideration was taken of the ethical issues in terms of the potential impact of this research to the case organisation, the access to,

and treatment of, the research respondents and also the management and storage of the data collected (Silverman, 2006; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). Thus, in accordance with the research design strategy, the accommodation of ethical concerns was a guiding principle.

The manifestation of this concern is targeted at the case organisation and importantly the respondents who participated in the study (Mason, 2004). Upon negotiating case access, it was agreed that naming the organisation would not add any specific value to this research, so the case organisation itself was anonymised (Jankowicz, 2005). As part of this process, confidentiality was communicated to the research respondents' pre- and-post interview correspondence. At each individual interview, the respondent signed the interview protocol to indicate their voluntary participation and consent and additionally, their confidentiality was communicated by the research in person and also in writing (see Appendix C). In terms of the print and audio material collected during the primary research, security features such as encryption were used to secure the softcopy of this data, while the hard copy data was secured physically at all times. In further accounting for ethical issues governing the research process, the author, by virtue of being a student at Waterford Institute of Technology, is bound by the Institute's research code of ethics. Additionally, workshops in ethical research practice were provided within Waterford Institute of Technology which the author also attended. These workshops were beneficial in understanding the need to remain impartial, to produce un-biased research and to maintain the highest ethical standards.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to develop an acknowledgement of the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings associated with this research. As such, the research embodies an interpretivist orientation in conjunction to adopting a subjectivist (ideographic) methodological stance. The resultant methodology utilises single case study research design given its purported suitability for accommodating the research question and the incorporation of the organisational context. Within the discussion on research design, consideration has also been placed on relating the chosen methods of

semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis to the analysis strategy and moreover, the application, validity and reliability of these methods to the study itself. Finally, ethical concerns have been addressed with reference to the data collection strategy. Chapter 6 turns to present the findings from the research itself.

Chapter Six: Findings

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings that have been gathered from the descriptively orientated primary research conducted at the single case-study research site are presented. A holistic approach is utilised to capture the research focus both from an interactional level, concerning practical issues around line manager and HR professional collaboration and furthermore, a corporate or 'Group' HR functional level embodying contextual issues. To this end, the findings are predominantly structured around the themes reflected within the research framework and the related research propositions. In fulfilling the requirement to preserve the confidentiality of the research site and the respondents who participated in this study, all identifying information has been anonymised.

6.1 Respondents Involvement in HRM Delivery

In an effort to gain an understanding of the involvement of line managers and HR professionals in relation to HRM delivery, each set of respondents were asked about the HRM roles and responsibilities they assumed.

6.1.1 Line Managers Involvement in HRM Delivery

To explore the role that line managers assume in HRM delivery, clarification was first sought from the Group HR Managers to identify what is expected of line managers in delivering HRM. From pursuing this line of enquiry, it was identified that as a group, line managers are charged with being the first point of contact for evoking and implementing HRM policy and practice:

“Line managers are definitely a significant contact in terms of Group HR strategy, for the business line HR strategies they are the first point of call ...Overall, line managers are the vehicles for HR managers and Group HR” (G:HRM2).

Echoing this viewpoint, the HR strategy of the case organisation makes explicit that the role of leadership and people management rests with line management.

“While leadership and people management is primarily the responsibility of line management, the contribution and support of professional HR expertise in the business lines, HR Shared Services and Group HR will be a fundamental

building block in developing the organisational capability which will be critical for the future” (Case Organisation HR Strategy Documentation).

In terms of the specific areas in which line managers are expected to deliver in terms of the HR-related management of their direct reports, the responsibility for implementing HR policies, the general management and the motivation of the workforce, including eliciting discretionary effort, were also identified by another Group HR Manager.

In further elaborating on their involvement in HRM delivery, it transpired that line manager involvement ranges from managing day-to-day operational scheduling and the people issues concerned within this remit; administration of the employee records; ongoing and ad-hoc development and interventions with staff members up to, and including, evoking HRM policy in the case of discipline:

“I am the be-all and end-all for my team... I sign off on payroll, schedule rotas, organise leave, deal with their personal problems, local training issues, I coach once a month, I provide feedback and do appraisals, sit on interview panels, even down to organising social events” (C:LM5);

“Performance, timekeeping, work plans all of that sort of stuff, handling any personal issues they may have in terms of they might need time off or any domestic situations they have so I would be responsible for that. I am the administrator if you like of their time keeping and holidays and all that sort of stuff although the SAP systems manages that very well in itself. Mainly as their line manager I am determining what work they need to do, distributing their work, following up on targets and all that sort of carry on. So it is day-to-day management and there is always work to do when personal issues come up. I haven't had any big ones in this team so far but I have had experience with other ones in previous teams” (C:LM1);

“I suppose it is up to us... to interact with our staff from a motivating point of view, briefings would be all my responsibility and any disciplinary things that would arise, at least at the initial stages, I would be heavily involved and in many cases right up to maybe a sanction”(N:LM5);

“...local IR issues, I sort of deal with myself unless there is something I feel has repercussions beyond my particular job here. So I would tend to deal with a lot of issues that come up by myself simply because I find it easier” (N:LM3).

Focusing on the 20 line manager respondents, the initial responses gained supported the expectations of the Group HR Managers and furthermore, mirrored the HR strategy documentation, in that as a group, line managers were assuming a hands-on role in HRM delivery. In giving a broad overview, the following excerpts from the line manager respondents from across all of the case organisation’s business units (table 6.1), reflect their views of responsibility regarding HRM delivery.

Table 6.1 Line Managers Responsibility in HRM Delivery

Role	Supporting Sample of Interview Excerpts
Authority Level	<p><i>“...we are the first stop shop as it were for any HR issues that arise within the group that we manage here” (C:LM8).</i></p> <p><i>“I am their boss so I can’t really pass the buck onto HR unless it is something heavy where I would be out of my depth” (I:LM2).</i></p>
Requirements of the Role	<p><i>“I would say any line manager worth his salt should be able to handle the initial meeting but know when to go for support. Certainly anyone dealing with staff on a daily basis should be able to handle the nitty gritty” (N:LM5).</i></p>
Breadth of Role	<p><i>“So my job is to make sure that the team that we have here is available to do the work, is properly trained to do the work, has the right experience, the right training and that we get the right mix of people from project managers, team leaders down to the craftsmen so we can handle the various demands placed upon us” (I:LM4).</i></p> <p><i>“I have ultimate responsibility for safety, operations, ensuring we have adequate income for maintaining reasonable availability of the plant for any kind of staff issues or agreements that are done and resolving any kind of IR or ER disputes, recruitment and selection and that kind of stuff and the list goes on” (P:LM3).</i></p> <p><i>“In my case I would be involved in various aspects of people management” (N:LM1).</i></p>

In probing the line manager respondents further about the specific HR related activities they assume, table 6.2 illustrates the areas in which they personally indicated an involvement in HRM delivery. The table has been ranked from 1-10 to indicate the frequency with which each HR role was identified by the line manager respondents. As summarised in table 6.2, managing employee relations activity (discipline, grievances, bullying and harassment claims and investigations etc.), albeit at the initial stages, was returned as the most frequently assumed HR responsibility by the line manager respondents. Just under half of those interviewed identified that they assume an involvement in the resourcing of their teams, namely in the recruitment and selection of new hires and participating on interview panels.

Table 6.2 Summary of Line Managers Involvement in HRM

HR Role	Ranked Frequency of Response
Employee Relations	1 (most frequent)
Resourcing (Recruitment & Selection)	2
Local Training and Development	3
Work Scheduling	4
Personal Development Plans	5
Absence Management	6
Performance Management	7
Briefing & Communications	8
Motivating	9
Health & Safety	10

Likewise, training and development featured heavily in the responses indicating that staff training and development is a key priority for line managers. Actively implementing personal development plans is another area where line managers are taking a proactive role in the development of their direct reports through involvement in setting individualised training and development objectives for them. Absence management also features as an area where line managers are assuming a HRM-related role. Briefing and communications around people management issues and HRM policies and procedures is another facet to the line manager respondents' HR-related responsibility. Finally, health and safety (H&S), due to the technical focus of the case organisation, is a further area of responsibility of line managers in terms of managing the well-being of their staff.

In the course of interviews with the line manager respondents themselves, it did not appear that assuming a responsibility in HRM delivery was an imposition. The respondents presented the view that it was part of their managerial remit to manage their respective teams and that HR issues are 'part and parcel' of doing this. However, it was also noted that the degree of involvement in terms of HRM delivery varies from line manager to line manager depending on the nature of their work and the numbers and competency of their staff:

"I'm very lucky in the staff I have; the quality of the personnel is great"
(N:LM1);

“...you expect that as their first port of call, that I should be one of the first people to pick up if there is an issue and now I only have a team of two people, so my finger would be fairly off the pulse if I didn’t pick up on issues affecting my staff” (C:LM7);

“...the involvement would probably vary with each manager depending on their situation like if they were having a recruitment drive or approaching a performance review deadline” (I:LM1).

The following section moves to illustrate the role of the line managers’ exchange counterpart i.e. the HR professional respondents.

6.1.2 HR Professionals Involvement in HRM Delivery

In total, 14 HR professionals from across each of the case organisation’s business-units participated in this research. Reflecting the strategic role of HR professionals, excerpts from the interview transcripts are presented in table 6.3 which illustrates the practical areas where the HR professional respondents assume a direct delivery role. In presenting the role of these individuals in terms of their involvement in HRM delivery, it illustrates that as a group, HR professionals are simultaneously involved in the transactional implementation of HRM policy and practice and also contribute to the development of these.

Additionally, the HR professionals also identified that a significant proportion of their input into HRM delivery are on the transactional elements in accordance with their respective HR area of speciality. In further exploring this role assumed by the HR professional respondents in the HRM arena, a host of practical day-to-day activities were identified by the HR professionals, in and around their specific HR functional areas.

Table 6.3 Strategic Elements of HR Professionals Role in HRM Delivery

Role	Supporting Sample of Interview Excerpts
Strategic Resourcing	<p>“...for the past year what I’ve been doing is working on developing a resource plan for the business which again has involved going out and talking to all the senior managers and finding out what the issues are - looking at age profiles, where have we gaps, skills gaps not just a numbers game - all that so that’s what I’ve being involved with and basically coming up with where are our gaps, surpluses, all that stuff regarding the resources and what’s needed to meet our needs for the next few years” (N:HRP1).</p> <p>“I am working in the unit called strategic resourcing...and it really is driven by ensuring that [the organisation] has the right capability going forward to deliver on the [organisational] strategy...we spent the first couple of months getting together a methodology for businesses to actually do a strategic resourcing plan, get the businesses buy-in and get a robust process for highlighting or identifying resource requirements embedded in the business so that’s really where we are” (G:HRP1).</p>
Linking Business Requirements with Organisational Strategy	<p>“...we are the strategic end of the learning and development organisation, and our end of it would be looking at the high level requirements of the business linked in with the strategy, so we are the more strategic piece of it involved in the design of initiatives that will support the delivery of the” (N:HRP2).</p>
Aligning Operational Issues with Strategy	<p>“So I would work with them [line managers] on strategy, operational issues-planning all of those types of areas then I would deal with the team leaders on a day-to-day basis” (C:HRP2).</p>
Supporting the Strategic Capability of HRM Delivery	<p>My role is to support the HR leadership and Development unit within Corporate Centre ... Now more detail under that...we run the HR for line managers programme, it would be supporting things like HR capability, it would be providing a service sometimes in relation to psychometrics for managers” (G:HRP2).</p>

A training and development professional from the (I) business unit acknowledged that initially their role was dominated by administration but over time they assumed a more proactive design and delivery role in relation to induction and graduate training:

“So basically when I started my role would have involved a lot of administration, training courses, gathering feedback and that kind of thing. As time has gone on, one of the big projects I started working on was induction for new employees, how that’s all managed because there was different things happening in different areas so to kind of bond that altogether and create a programme. Also I look after the training for the graduates; we take on a number of graduates every year, so coordinating all their entry level training for the first 9 months. So they would be my two big areas and then there is also training administration and organising training courses and monitoring of the training space” (I:HRP2).

Remaining on the specialist role theme, a HRD specialist in the (P) business unit acknowledged that the design and roll-out of middle management development programmes has been their central responsibility of late:

“I suppose my central piece which has been keeping me busy this year would be the development piece, being honest the centrally led middle management development programme” (P:HRP1).

In a similar vein, but with reference to recruitment, the following excerpts demonstrate that HR professionals are often charged with a specific functional responsibility:

“Hiring electrical engineers, covering sabbatical/maternity leave, doing up job specifications, screen c.v.’s, shortlist candidates, forward onto manager, put together interview panel, contact candidates, organise medicals, start dates, induction, set up on payroll etc.” (I:HRP3);

“...so my main function is recruiting like say, IT professionals and telecom professionals, into the business, that would be my main role” (C:HRP4).

Table 6.4 illustrates the areas in which HR professional respondents indicated an involvement in HRM delivery.

Table 6.4 Summary of HR Professionals Activities

HR Role	Ranked Frequency of Response (1 most frequent)
Training and Development	1
Resourcing (Recruitment & Selection)	2
Strategic design and implementation of HR policies	3
Personal Development Plans	4
Absence Management	5
ER	6
Contracts	8
Communications	9
Administration	10
Safety	11

The table has been ranked from 1-11 to indicate the frequency at which each HR role was identified by the HR professional respondents. The specific functional areas of

facilitating the recruitment process, sourcing and delivering training, designing HR policy and procedure all feature heavily. Roles involving interactions with line managers and individual staff members also account for a significant proportion of the HR professional respondents' involvement in HRM delivery, particularly in the areas of managing personal development plans, grievance and discipline handling, mediating and handling employee relations issues. The administrative role regarding the maintenance of employment contracts also features as an aspect of HR professionals' role as is communicating HR policy and practice. Equally, specific HR areas such as HRIS, psychometrics and health and safety are largely dependent on the HR professional's personal degree of expertise and responsibility.

Respondents from the (C) business-unit of the case organisation highlight that their responsibilities range from managing absenteeism, recruitment, learning and development, in conjunction to proactively reporting on the key performance indicators of the business:

“...there are certain things that have to happen in the month around our KPIs, reporting on that, our headcount, absenteeism, briefings, they are all the core pieces of work that has to happen as well as the day-to-day jobs” (C:HRP1);

“I suppose at my level again, I would be involved right across the whole spectrum really and everything at management level you know...so that would be it really” (C:HRP2).

Similarly in the (P) business-unit of the case organisation, the Employee Relations (ER) professional identified that their role involves participating in employee relations issues involving union and wage claims and also extends to bullying and harassment investigations. An additional tier to their role is to conduct safety audits in each of business unit (P) operating locations nationwide. Another HR respondent in the (P) business unit identified their role as implementing and embedding the HRIS information system in the business unit; however, this was not their only function as they also participate as a HR representative on local partnership groups and assist the HRD specialist with management development programmes.

In the (I) business, with the exception of the training and development HR professional (I:HRP2) and the recruitment professional (I:HRP3), the remaining HR professional respondent operates as a generalist HR business partner for a particular sub-group within the business unit. Specifically, the HR business partner for the Engineering Group (I:HRP1) provides an array of HRM services including the management of absence, contract renewals, sick leave management, discipline, probations, bonuses and salary reviews.

6.1.3 Business-Unit HR Managers Involvement in HRM Delivery

In total, 4 business unit HR Managers (representing the major business-units of the case organisation), participated in this research (table 6.5). As reflected in table 6.5, the overarching role of these business-unit HR Managers is to oversee and guide the development and implementation of HRM strategy and delivery.

In the context of this research, as the HR Managers for the respective business-units, they are positioned to contribute to illustrating the understanding of the line manager-HR professional collaborative approach to HRM delivery as they are responsible for ensuring that the HR needs of the business are aligned with the organisation’s strategic direction. Furthermore, they ensure that staff needs and issues are being consistently met by capable and resourceful management structures.

Table 6.5 Business-Unit HR Manager Roles

Business Unit	HR Manager Role	Supporting Sample of Interview Excerpts
N	Resource planning and succession management, manage ER arena	<p><i>“So there is two facets, one is to make sure that right people do the right jobs with the right skills and the other is the industrial piece, that would be a big piece and then out of all that if you look at the side of people having the right skills that feeds into our whole training and development side so that covers all the recruitment, succession planning, training and development and rotations and all that kind of stuff and then the other piece around ER, union relationships, maintaining agreements and keeping the lights on basically”</i> (N:HRM).</p>

T 6.5 ctd	HR Manager Role	Supporting Sample of Interview Excerpts (ctd.)
P	ER, downsizing, portfolio management.	<p><i>"...what I am trying to do is by managers coming back to me telling me what they want I am trying to get them to take ownership for it right. If they don't well then I would have a very clear view that it is HR's responsibility to drive then and you drive them in the best way you can. Ideally you drive them by getting the managers themselves to take ownership but if they refuse to take it then you have to say 'look you are making a bags of that so you better get that sorted' and we sit down and arrange a meeting. So it is to guide it because the HR issues are important and they need to be implemented uniformly throughout" (P:HRM).</i></p>
I	Setting strategy, policies and procedures and guidelines at a high level.	<p><i>"[I] is a group of companies, it is not like (P) where I was which was essentially one business. So (I) is a group, so it is almost like a director role. It is a higher level HR role than I would have seen in the other businesses. So it is about the overall HR strategy for (I) group. (I) has a production business, it has a supply business, it has an engineering business and a consultancy business. So it is a group, so my role is looking at HR practices and policies across all of the group rather than any one particular business. So it is quite a diverse role that is setting strategy, policies and procedures and guidelines at a high level" (I:HRM).</i></p>
C	Developing & Implementing HRM policy and practice	<p><i>"I suppose it is around kind of developing and implementing HR policies and strategies for the customer supply business unit and some of the policies are corporate-wide so it is inputting to the development of those and ensuring we are geared up to implement them. Within that, I have to comply with authority levels and procedures to enable the business to resource itself to implement business plans. So that, in a broad sweep, is what I see my role as" (C:HRM).</i></p>

With specific reference to the issue of line managers and HR professionals collaboratively delivering HRM, these respondents (the business-unit HR Managers) indicated that such an approach is both a philosophy and is being reflected in practice within their respective businesses units:

"Well, that is our philosophy and that is where we want to get to and I firmly believe that if you are a manager of people you are a manager for anything that impacts on them. So if there is a policy or procedure that we are driving out from HR, it is the line manager who should be driving and delivering it" (N:HRM);

"[collaboration] It would be reflected, yeah, and it would be very much my focus as well and again I suppose going back to my own (N) days, I was both soldiers... So I have seen both sides of it and from certainly as a line manager, having practiced as a line manager, I would be very much of the view of saying it is the line managers' responsibility to call the issue to begin with. Number one, to be aware of it and to be mindful of the issues and call it as you

see it and then know the basics of the sort of IR procedures and all that”
(P:HRM).

6.1.4 Group HR Managers Involvement in HRM Delivery

As a consequence of the multiple business unit structure of the case organisation, representation of the Group HR function further contributes to the findings presented by providing an organisational-wide perspective on the strategic underpinnings and context behind HRM delivery at the case site. The specific role of the Group HR Managers, who come from Leadership and Development and Resource Planning perspectives, were identified as guiding HR strategy and within that, contributing a challenging and change role in relation to creating best practice and benchmarking. They also indicated their support role in facilitating the HR community with various processes and specialist services including the development of HR knowledge and skills in the line manager population through the provision of an organisational-wide “HR for Line Managers” programme.

As noted earlier, the positions taken by these Group HR managers is that line managers are seen as a significant a vehicle for HRM delivery due to their proximal relationship with their direct reports:

“They are the people on the ground – they know what’s happening and what’s needed and hence they can best manage and develop their staff and their needs” (G:HRM2).

In commenting on the role of HR professionals, the Group HR Managers identified the multi-faceted approach to HRM delivery, namely, in the balance between operational, administrative and strategic HR functions:

“There are a variety of roles performed within our HR community covering all the specialists, administrative and practical functions of any typical HR function within a large organisation” (G:HRM2).

In further elaborating on the structure of the organisational HR community, a HR Shared Services function (“...centralised processes and functions” (G:HRM1))

handles much of the administrative HR work and furthermore, small HR teams as part of the business-units and under the leadership of the business-unit HR Managers are present, while the Group HR function, as part of the corporate centre, concentrates on many of the strategic elements of HRM for the entire organisation.

Having elaborated on the respondents who participated in this body of research, the following sections explores the background to line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships.

6.2 The Background to Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships at the Case Site

In exploring the background and setting for collaborative relationships between line managers and HR professionals for the purpose of HRM delivery, attention was directed at eliciting the viewpoints of each respondent group in terms of the rationale for collaboration.

6.2.1 The Rationale for Line Manager-HR Professional Collaboration

The line manager and HR professional respondents identified that their collaboration can range from mere transactional requests which typically do not require a strong degree of collaboration to more detailed requests of seeking guidance, direction and support which generally involve much higher degrees of social interaction.

6.2.1.1 Line Manager Viewpoints

Specifically, regarding line managers, the transactional elements of interaction tend to be ad-hoc requests for clarification or isolated queries about particular aspects of HRM policies:

“...maybe if I had a query on rates of pay or something like that I might make an odd phone call but other than that I wouldn't have much contact with them in my day job” (N:LM3).

However, when a line manager needs more specialist advice or has reached their capability limit regarding a particular issue involving one of their direct reports, a more sustained intervention from HR professionals is sought:

“Yeah, the autonomy is there and you tend to go to HR only when you have reached your limit” (N:LM5);

“Inevitably there are a lot of issues you will take yourself, you know if it is a reasonably straight forward issue. I suppose the main time we would involve central HR, first and foremost, if we need some advice or instruction if it was something to do with an agreement that we weren’t directly involved in. They give that overview and they would have an appreciation of the issues in other [work locations]. I suppose secondly if we felt that the issue was going to progress any further” (P:LM3).

If a line manager is seeking direction or support on particular issues, in comparison to seeking a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer or a generic response about certain terms and conditions of existing HRM policy, a heightened degree of personal interaction is needed:

“They are generally around specific issues, interviews, training issues, discipline issues. Yeah specific ...they would be very much around specific events or issues that arise and you just call them in to deal with them” (I:LM4).

Reflective of this, it is generally issues that extend beyond the day-to-day management of direct reports which compel line managers to interact with HR professionals. The reasons behind this include firstly, that line managers are not experts in HRM and also that they do not want to create unwanted precedent by pursuing a course of action which contradicts HRM policy:

“...if I was running into difficulty or if my conversations weren’t going the way I wanted them to go or if I wasn’t sure how to pitch something then I would just go to the local HR Manager and say ‘look basically this is the issue, this is my view as to where it needs to go or this is my suggestion or proposal and ask them how best to deal with it, not use them but bounce and discuss it with him and get feedback from him...If I have a bit of a sticky wicket which I wouldn’t necessarily have, I don’t have extensive HR experience or people management experience so that is why I go to them as they are the experts in that area” (C:LM7);

“My own experience with that is there have been occasions where maybe I have come across as issue locally and I just said ‘before I run this through I will run it by such and such’ and I have found in cases there was something there and it was well worth going through that piece” (P:LM3).

Issues such as sick leave limits, parental leave, ER agreements, managing staff portfolios and awarding grades all warrant interaction with HR professionals as these issues are typically not day-to-day issues encountered by line managers and hence they have little experience or exposure. Additionally, the line manager respondents indicated that the recruitment process, from gaining approval to designing job specifications to sitting on interview panels, requires a strong degree of collaborative working with their HR colleagues. In a similar vein, when training needs arise for line managers’ direct reports, as their manager, they need to interact with HR professionals about signalling the training need and identify possible practical solutions to meeting these needs. As an example, HR professionals have been called upon by line managers to provide psychometric testing as part of the development process of staff to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

On the procedural front, line manager respondents acknowledged that the HR professionals are instrumental in developing and communicating HRM policies and procedures that assist the line manager population in managing their direct reports:

“HR provide good systems and procedures to enable FLMS [front line managers] to do people management” (N:LM2);

“I think they provide a very, very strong backup in that sense. The company has a very good procedural approach in which HR are instrumental in updating and producing new situations because it is a changing world out there” (N:LM5).

Furthermore, it was acknowledged that it was a ‘comfort’ to know that specialist HR support was available as certain line managers admitted that managing people issues was not their particular strength:

“I think for the likes of me certainly, it gives you a bit of reassurance around what support processes you have and it would possibly make me aware of the things I am not currently aware of” (C:LM1);

“I would still say there is a lot of stuff that needs their involvement aside from being a nice to have and that you can run things by somebody. It has been shown in the past that there is value in running it by someone who has an overall picture of what is going on across the company” (P:LM3);

“You are getting help from the specialists because you don’t have the specialism in the area” (I:LM2);

“We would only muddle along without them... it’s good to have that support on tap” (C:LM3).

6.2.1.2 HR Professional Viewpoints

The HR professional respondents supported the viewpoints from the line managers in that their collaboration involves accommodating requests for advice and assistance and furthermore, offering guidance and direction. In exploring the HR professionals’ views on why they feel they need to collaborate with line managers, it was identified that it is challenging to empower line managers to execute HRM delivery and to support them in this without some level of interaction:

“There is no point in me being here if I don’t talk and interact with line managers” (I:HRP1).

Handling requests for specific functional areas such as recruitment and training and development were identified as a significant element to their collaborative relationship:

“Like the sort of things that line managers come to me for would be if they have got a vacancy, if they have an internal job issue” (P:HRP1);

“They would bring training needs or requests to me or if they felt that some issue could be resolved by a training course or something like mentoring because we have an internal mentoring programme. That’s generally it” (I:HRP2).

Solving problems of a HRM nature is an additional reason driving line managers and HR professionals to collaborate, as line managers, although charged with HRM responsibility for their direct reports, may not have the resources and competency in the face of other competing business priorities and as a result, do not want to create precedent by not following established procedure:

“I suppose they would come to me in relation to problem-solving in relation to individual cases possibly that they are facing a situation with an individual and what sort of advice I could give them in relation to how they would approach a particular problem, or what they couldn’t do from a procedural point of view in relation to individuals. So I would help and support them and even do some role playing with them” (C:HRP2);

“...this is the issue we have got [from line managers], please advise what steps we need to go through to ensure that we manage this properly” (P:HRP1).

In terms of their specific roles within HRM delivery, the HR professionals identified that they see themselves as service providers to line managers which further supports the line manager respondents’ views on the role of HR professionals. Within this service delivery role, accommodating requests and providing practical support were identified as key tasks:

“I would see myself as a service provider, I am there to help them manage their staff” (I:HRP1);

“Service provider, I’m there to fill their positions. At the moment there is a lot of administration around my role but from this month on I am beginning to look at the strategic long-term resourcing goals. I’m looking at developing a resource plan” (I:HRP3);

“There is a lot of service provision. I suppose I didn’t think that is what I would be when I got into HR and I didn’t think there was going to be as much having to chase managers, maybe because in the call centre [respondents previous operational role] it was a bit more streamlined coming from that background” (C:HRP1).

Complimenting service provision and delivery, it was recognised that some HR professional respondents view line managers as their internal customers and accordingly, this results in having to interact with them as part of service provision:

“When I am down with the management team here, then it is very much part of the planning you know, I would sit down with the logistics person which I did last week for our resourcing plan for the next year...for example, she will say to me that we need resources early on in the year because our targets with [regulator] have gone up and we need resources in so it is kind of all that planning and working at that level with the management team and then with the team leaders, it is advisory, taking on board what they are saying and putting policies and procedures in place or coming up with new ideas, like we have a lot of new initiatives around team development, individuals in teams and team leader development” (C:HRP2);

“I will provide a service to a line manager in any way I can, as I say I would primarily be asked about IR issues, grievances and discipline but if they wanted advice from me in the filling of a position in their location, if they wanted advice on the people I feel they should be looking at for that position, say head hunt, I will provide my own opinion on it and I’m basically very flexible” (P:HRP2).

It was also identified that by interacting with line managers, HR professionals gained an insight into the role, demands and expectations of the operational end of the business which serves to assist them in appropriately pitching and delivering HRM assistance and service:

“Line managers tend to ground the HR people, they are the tether line stopping the HR balloon going off into space” (G:HRM1);

“You gain a technical understanding and background about the jobs. It gives you an understanding of the business background” (I:HRP3);

“Well I think clearly first of all you get down and real” (G:HRP1).

Picking up on the issues of delivering HRM service, some HR professionals commented that establishing collaborative working relationships makes it easier for them to carry out their job and, in turn, to be better informed about issues that may be occurring on the ground warranting attention:

“...the earlier you hear about it [HR issues] the easier it is to fix so it is in my interest that I maintain those relationships and that people can ring me and let me know what is going on” (P:HRP2);

“Working on the management development programme affords me the opportunity to speak to senior managers and to open the communication channels” (P:HRP3).

Having established a collaborative relationship, HR professionals are also better positioned to advise, as opposed to being seen as interfering, and this also facilitates the process of giving feedback on HRM competency and implementation to the line managers they support:

“It is only by giving people the skills and letting people know how they are doing on a continuous basis, that people can grow and learn and develop” (C:HRP2);

“You are not actually going in telling them what to do, you are going in advising, this is the best practice and this is best policy” (C:HRP4).

Furthermore, in terms of the collaborative interaction, as a means of reassurance, it was identified that line managers may just want to seek out advice and that is a cornerstone of the interaction between them. It was also noted that the interactions and exchanges were not just one-sided with HR professionals commenting that they turn to line managers for assistance regarding the implementation of HRM practices and would contact line managers over a range of issues in a proactive rather than a reactive manner:

“So I would get phone calls from line managers on a daily basis seeking advice but as I said to you earlier on, I would have no difficulty in picking up the phone and looking for advice from them also” (P:HRP2);

“[In relation to a particular HR related training course]...it was HR and the line manager delivering the course to the staff who were actually going to be involved in this process, otherwise it wouldn't have worked like. So we use them for everything” (N:HRP1).

6.2.1.3 Business-Unit HR Manager and Group HR Manager Viewpoints

From the business unit HR Managers perspective, cognisance was also taken of the complexities of HR issues that arise and that by virtue of their general management position, line managers usually do not possess a HRM specialism. Equally, they do not have the scope to take an organisational-wide perspective on certain issues due to their specific managerial remit:

“...the cases they [line managers] would tend to deal with would be tricky disciplinary cases where really you do need somebody who is looking at this, who has been through it before and knows where it is going to end up” (I:HRM);

“...my philosophy is if you [as a line manager] need to ask, then ask because you can do huge damage by taking a back seat” (N:HRM).

In addition, it was articulated that in order for the organisation to deliver on its business objectives, support to line managers in managing their staff is crucial. Furthermore, the primary responsibility of line managers in delivering the HR aspects of their management remit was also acknowledged:

“... the line manager should be calling the shots and the HR function is there then to support them through policies, training and development support and so on. So it is kind of through the interaction of the support services with the line role that the business should deliver it’s requirements” (C:HRM);

“...the more guys that are autonomous and drive the staff themselves, the better chance you have of success” (P:HRM).

The Group HR Managers, in a similar vein, supported the business-unit HR Managers viewpoints in that line managers are the primary vehicle for HRM delivery and as such their role reflects is very much delivery focused:

“[Line manager role] Delivery of HR policies, effective management of workforce, motivation and eliciting discretionary effort” (G:HRM1);

“For the business line HR strategies, they [line managers] are the first point of call” (G:HRM2).

Moreover, the Group HR Managers also identified that there was significant scope for line managers to improve their capacity to implement HRM responsibility and also in the promotional criteria for line manager positions themselves:

“The experience of the individuals would play a large part, a lot depends on their ability, history, experience and intuition” (G:HRM2);

“There is a gap, some exemplary and others not as good. The selection of line managers we now realise is very important. We can improve how line managers are selected with more emphasis on their development capabilities” (G:HRM1).

6.2.2 The Competence of Line Managers to Execute HRM Delivery

In a further effort to establish the basis for explaining why line managers and HR professionals may need to collaborate for HRM delivery, the issue of the competence of line managers to execute HRM emerged.

The line manager themselves identified that they are technically very competent with respect to their core functional role; however, the majority of line managers made it explicit that they did not consider themselves HR experts and that this, in turn, impacts on their perceived competence in HRM delivery:

“I’d say it is the area that I am least competent in to be honest with you because I don’t come from that background but the HR support, in fairness, is quite good when you need it so it is not that it isn’t there” (I:LM4).

In addition, the diversity of staff which line managers are responsible for creates particular challenges: *“I would look at the team of guys I have working for me and there is a whole range of personalities there and they are all different.” (N:LM5).* Furthermore, the degree of preparation line managers receive within the HRM arena also impacts on their confidence in their ability to execute their HRM remit and may, at times, provide the impetus for collaborating with HR professionals to gain assistance and guidance.

It was also noted that within the case organisation, individuals have, in the past, been predominantly promoted into line manager positions as a direct result of their technical competence and ability, with often little acknowledgement for the people skills required to execute a line manager role:

“The way [case organisation] works in my view is if you do the job technically then you are good and then you get promoted on that basis, ok. So you end up moving up the ladder and they you are expected to do a line managers job, so the manager job is thrown at you without any formal training etc” (C:LM1).

Supporting these viewpoints, HR professionals from the Group HR function and the (N) business-unit noted that the organisation has a history of focusing on task related responsibilities in comparison to the softer people skills. Furthermore, this approach is reflected in the promotional criteria for line management roles:

“...the [business-unit], even the wider [case organisation] is a technically focused organisation-process driven and our strengths are in the technically capability. The challenge really is the development of people, to get the balance between the delivery of task and the management of people and the optimum support and development of people for the longer journey because we have gone through a lot of change programmes in [the organisation] as well” (N:HRP2);

“I think that we are still inclined to promote people into managerial roles with a technical competence to a large degree and you know, hope, the people skills will come later. So again, like it is very much dependent on the person. In general I think line managers have desire to deal with their people well but I

think they lack the confidence and maybe the expertise in some places just to do that and they need the HR person for reassurance and guidance” (G:HRP1).

When questioning the HR professionals and the also the Business-Unit HR Managers, a picture emerged suggesting that there is a wide range of line manager HRM-related competency embedded within the case organisation’s businesses. From the Group HR perspective, it was noted that there is a gap between some exemplary and poor performers and improving how line managers are selected and focusing on their capability of developing, leading and motivating their staff may serve to counteract this. In a similar vein, the various HR Managers from across the business-units reflected a similar outlook on line managers’ HRM capability:

“... some managers are very good with people, some managers are in the middle and some managers are very poor with people, so if your selection policy is strong enough to say that ‘yeah our philosophy is that our business line managers have to look after their staff, be HR literate, HR compliant and all that kind of stuff’, unless you reflect that in your selection policy you won’t get consistency” (N:HRM);

“...there’s a range of people in there from the very good to the reasonable guys to a number who just are not up to it in fairness. Now with the people who are not up to it, there are a number of reasons for that. In some cases to be fair to the guys, they have come from an older school and it is not just their strength and they were put into jobs because they had technical strengths and they didn’t possess great people skills. Now where you identify people like that who are genuine decent fellas but maybe they just have the wrong set of skills and maybe they are a bit too old to learn new tricks and all that kind of stuff” (P:HRM).

Acknowledging that a certain proportion of line managers may struggle with exercising their HR remit, the HR Managers in the business-units identified that in certain situations, these managers may be moved to more technical roles requiring a lesser degree of staff and hence, HRM responsibility. Where this was not viable, specific line manager development programmes were established to up-skill line managers in the discipline of HRM:

“A lot of them would never have done much in terms of their own styles, their own behaviours. So we done things like Myers Briggs with them, we brought them through disciplinary procedures you know how to deal with difficult staff, a lot of the very basic HR things that if you get them right with line managers

they don't become a problem further up... The old way was that the supervisor would ignore them which is not particularly good HR practice as it just becomes a problem for everybody else. So we did put in place a specific front-line manager development programme to address that need" (I:HRM);

"I think through things like the PDP process and so on, through coaching and mentoring and all of these kind of measures, the business can support people requiring and developing people management skills to implement HR policies" (C:HRM).

The HR professionals themselves echoed the viewpoints of the HR Managers in the business-units and the Group HR professionals, on the competency of line managers and their ability and willingness to execute HRM delivery:

"...like everywhere, there's a few of them that are hard work like and it is they are just maybe they are not people persons you know" (N:HRP1);

"...you can take a horse to water but you can't make them drink" (C:HRP3);

"Some people are natural at it [HRM implementation] and they need very little training, other people no matter how much training you give them, they still find it a challenge" (C:HRP2);

"Some of them wouldn't know an awful lot about the issue and others would know as much about it as I would do" (P:HRP2).

On this issue of HRM training for line managers, the Group HR Managers identified that each and every level of line management from supervisory, middle to senior all participate in dedicated management development programmes which would contain a significant HR management element. Relatedly, the HR business unit Managers noted that:

"... for everybody from our supervisor level up and for anybody who changes position either by rotation or promotion, they will receive coaching for the first 100 days, we call it the first 100 days initiative" (N:HRM);

"We have a team leader development programme which amongst other things is around equipping people with interpersonal skills and I suppose on the job in terms of people progressing through the ranks if you like" (C:HRM);

"...obviously there is a range of stuff we need to do as well in terms of continually bringing people up to speed and we are doing extensive middle management development programmes now at the minute with managers in

(P) and it is bringing them up to speed on all that kind of range of stuff”
(P:HRM).

Regarding the reality of HRM-related developmental training that line managers receive, the majority of line manager respondents (17/20) have risen through the ranks internally into line manager positions, largely based on their technical competence, thereby supporting the previous findings. Furthermore, all of their HRM related development has occurred in-house through a combination of once-off training courses (i.e. bullying and harassment seminars, competency framework workshops etc.) and as part of a wider management development programme (Front Line Manager Programme, HRM for Line Managers Programme):

“We would, we have over the years done extensive training. I would have done, I am in the company a long, long time now and I would have done a lot of training on interaction and dealing with people...at this stage it is just experience you know but there would have been a lot of training in the past. Yeah, in fairness the company has always been strong on training both technical and the social skills if you want to call them” (N:LM5);

“...certainly when I became a manager as it were, there is lots of development put into you in terms of how to manage people etc. So I don’t think anyone ever, certainly in my experience sort of comes to a managerial position without having some development under their belt in terms of people management skills and knowledge” (C:LM8).

Furthermore, every line manager identified that on-the-job experience was the dominating feature of their HRM- related development:

“The majority of it is learned on-the-job and from observing previous managers” (I:LM2);

“My own experience is certainly on-the-job, a bit of common sense ...a lot of it is trial and error I suppose” (C:LM1).

In four instances, line managers achieved external academic qualifications (MBA’s and Chartered Management Institute). The age profile of line managers, although not a focus of this research, was reflected when one respondent identified *“...we all have grey hair”* (N:LM5) indicating that there is a significant length of tenure and on-the-job experience gained in parallel to specific training courses.

Having presented the background to line manager-HR professional collaboration, the following discussion explores the operationalisation of this working relationship.

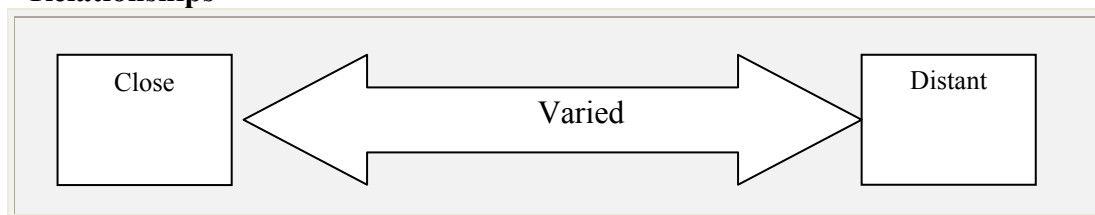
6.3 The Emergence of Social Exchange within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

As highlighted in the previous discussion, line managers interact with HR professionals and vice versa. As line managers are viewed as the key vehicle for HRM implementation and due to the complexity of HRM delivery and the competency of line managers, varying degrees of HR professional support and assistance are deemed necessary.

6.3.1 Degree of Interaction within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaboration

Regarding the actual collaboration between line manager and HR professional respondents, when they were asked about how they perceived the degree of interaction within their collaborative relationships, the responses varied. Namely, a range of responses were returned categorising their (both line managers and HR professionals) collaborative relationships as close, varied and distant (figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Evaluating Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships



6.3.1.1 Close Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

Those respondents (both line managers and HR professionals) who identified their collaborative relationships as close, did so because they are interacting on a regular basis, are well informed and networked about each other's strength and weaknesses and hence, there is a mutual respect and trust. As such, there are close degree relationships:

“I would have a very strong relationship with Group HR because they typically would be the people I would be interacting with” (C:LM8);

“... it is a continuous relationship that involves regular interaction, lots of issues to be dealt with and they are people you can have a bit of fun with as well. You can have a laugh about things; it is not all to the grindstone kind of thing. I do have a giggle with them. Some of them can be very humorous, it is calm relationship and I believe there is plenty of trust there and respect” (P:HRP2);

“I think it is very strong myself, we have the mutual respect” (C:HRP2);

“They are strong relationships, very professional” (C:LM5).

Inherent within the ‘close’ categorisation of collaborative relationships, the specific respondents indicated that they work in close proximity to one another and as a result have a familiar and personable working relationship:

“On a personal level, I would get on with [XXX] and would have a cup of tea and a chat with her so I would be comfortable enough with her to raise issues and she is good at accommodating my requests” (I:LM2);

“...maybe the key to it is the fact that we work well here because we are local and it is only just upstairs if you can’t get somebody on the phone, you know that sort of thing” (N:LM5);

“It would be reasonably close, to use the word facilitative...that would be very much the case, professional and sympathetic in that they know what we are trying to do” (P:LM2);

“I would have a very good relationship with most of the HR group and I get on with them reasonably well. I suppose I know them personally to a certain extent. I have worked with every member of the group on various different projects, agreements and different issues that we had and yeah I would consider them to be good friends above being good working colleagues” (P:LM3).

Additionally, both the line manager and HR professional respondents signalled that close working relationships are also characterised by them having a respect for recognising the credibility of the other. As such, when these individuals observe the practical benefits of their collaboration, it encourages them to maintain and sustain their relationship connections:

“There is nobody I wouldn’t like to deal with [in HR]”. The people in HR have a good understanding of our business from their line experience and this stands to them in terms of their credibility” (C:LM3);

“Well the HR department here has changed a lot and gotten bigger and the structures have changed because we now have business partners. For example there is a recruitment partner for each of the business units and the lines of communication are now much stronger so I think it has gotten a lot better in the last few years. We are much more open now I think” (I:HRP2);

“My own personal ones [relationships]...I would like to think they are good. I would like to think that people would see me and that my inputs would be value-added from their perspective. I would like to think that people feel that they have gotten some value out of our exchanges ...As I say if it enables them to resolve a local problem or make a more effective decision it helps that trust and credibility that I spoke about earlier” (P:HRP1);

“There is a mutual respect for what our roles are and I suppose clarity around the roles... there is an understanding of what is important, there is an atmosphere of accepting and challenging, accepting if that is what has to happen but also challenging and not fearing challenge. So I think that whole relationship works well between HR and line management” (C:HRP2).

Line manager respondents who have large numbers of direct reports also commented on the need to interact with the HR community due to the volume of work required to manage that space:

“[Being responsible for 190 staff] I would have weekly interaction with XXX in HR as I am always doing recruitment of some form, training, performance reviews and salary reviews. She would be my main contact as she is responsible for those areas but I would work with some of her colleagues whether it be on a recruitment issue or likewise with training. Engineering managers run most things and HR provides policy and logistical support – they make sure we don’t get out of kilter” (I:LM1).

Many of the HR professionals also identified that they spend considerable time training and developing line managers to handle HR issues through on-going HR service provision and also in the form of delivering line management development programmes:

“...we developed a front line manager programme, a modular programme ...a lot of the things delivered in that module were HR practices literally interpersonal and self awareness skills for the line managers. A lot of them would never have done much in terms of their own styles, their own behaviours. So we done things like Myers Briggs with them, we brought them through disciplinary procedures you know how to deal with difficult staff, a lot of the very basic HR things that if you get them right with line managers they don’t become a problem further up” (P:HRM);

“The middle managers in the last few years, they have had a big 5 day development programme in (N). It ended last year so 250 managers into that space for 5 days and the supervisors and front line managers had a programme the previous year” (N:HRP2).

6.3.1.2 Varied Line Manager-HR Professional Working Relationships

As reflected in figure 6.1, the respondents (both line managers and HR professionals) reported that their perceptions of their collaborative relationships range from close to distant and somewhere in between these two extremes. In terms of the variation at this middle-ground, the respondents in this category identified that they have generally stable interaction patterns in that they interacted with each other as and when was needed, particularly in relation to seeking HR specialist advice.

In an attempt to identify the potential factors which influence a varied level of collaboration, it was identified that the length of time within the organisation, the evolution of HRM practice and the personalities of individuals themselves all play a part:

“...Probably the older and I’m not trying to generalise here, say the longer you are in an organisation you can become very institutionalised and you probably get used to doing things a certain way. HR, I think, has evolved considerably over the last decade and I think HR have a much stronger influence with people than they used to have. HR people are not now seen as people who sit in an office doing XYZ, they are now seen as taking more an involvement and team working. Some people find that probably difficult to take because they have probably done it a certain way and now we are trying to bring them back, so there would be things like that but I think again that is human nature. Probably personalities come into it but I think in HR you have to put personality aside and you have to treat everybody the same” (C:HRP4).

Regarding the line manager respondents, it was identified that the level of activity, at times, dictates the degree of interaction between themselves and their HR professional colleagues:

“Like there is a relationship there, it is not an in-your-face relationship but you know that they are there to help should you need them and you go to them when you have to go to them about stuff on policy and about other stuff that you just don’t know about” (C:LM1);

“I wouldn’t be onto them daily, it happens in spurts” (N:LM3).

Those line managers, who identified that their interaction with the HR community varies, pointed to their experience and ability to handle HR-related issues as a factor which impacts on the degree of relationship they assume with HR professionals. Namely, confident and competent line managers may not have the same need and urgency to interact as frequently with HR professionals in comparison to newly appointed line managers:

“The way it is supposed to work is that line managers handle issues and the HR guys devise policies and offer support to help us handle issues. By and large that is how it works. Again, I suppose the one thing, Jamie, as with all of these policies and systems, it would depend on the individuals and certain individuals are better equipped to take stuff like that on. Some individuals may struggle and may require more support. It also depends on the individuals experiences, if someone is new in the job they may require more support, if you have someone in the job maybe 15-20 years you would expect that little bit more and that the stabilisers would have come off and that they manage things on the ground themselves” (P:LM3).

The issue of geographic location was identified as a factor in the degree of relationships between line managers and HR professionals. In the case of the Billing and Payments section of business-unit (C), the HR contact person splits their working week across the two office sites and as a result, line managers are in direct contact with them on issues that emerge on a day-to-day basis. Similarly, in the customer call centre, the HR professional is permanently located on-site and the team leaders interact with them face-to-face as required.

It was also identified that the number of direct reports and within this, the amount of HR issues to be raised, also impact on the relationship between line managers and HR professionals. For example, where line managers have a small established team (C:LM7) there is less need to interact with HR professionals compared to line managers with large teams, as the scope increases to interact on recruitment, training, performance reviews and contract issues:

“[Being responsible for 190 staff] I would have weekly interaction with XXX in HR as I am always doing recruitment of some form, training, performance reviews and salary reviews” (I:LM1).

From time-to-time, line manager respondents also indicated that they also call upon the Group HR function with respect to requesting specialised HR services such as psychometric testing to assist the local HR professionals in determining the best course of action to follow in the training and development area.

From a HR professional perspective and supportive of the findings of the line managers themselves, it was identified that it was commonplace to have a degree of variance in their relationships with line managers. However, as HR professionals, these individuals have a responsibility to serve the entire line manager population in a consistent manner:

“...you do have better relationships with some people compared to others and that is just a fact of life but I don’t think that stops you doing the job but it probably makes your job a bit more difficult I would say on both sides” (C:HRP4).

6.3.1.3 Distant Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Working Relationships

Distant relationship connection was characterised as infrequent interaction activity amongst line manager and HR professional respondents. The line manager respondents themselves identified that in terms of the day-to-day management of their direct reports, there is usually minimal interaction needed with HR professionals. The reasons behind this are partly due to the experience of the line manager, the majority of work groups/teams are well established, the collective environment is very stable and also that many of the managers were not currently in a recruitment drive or involved with a heavy degree of training and development:

“I run my own show...I keep a tight eye on my staff; you need to when they are distributed around the country (N:LM1);

“...for a lot of staff issues you wouldn’t be running to them [HR professionals], you deal with it yourself” (N:LM5).

A minority of line managers signalled that their interaction with their HR colleagues is distant as they perceive the HR function and its staff as being geographically distant and out of touch from the core operations of the business, hence the reason why they felt they may not utilise the HR support:

“HR are up there in their ivory tower, they are too strategic and disconnected from local implementation” (N:LM4);

“...they are a couple of steps removed, for example, if I wanted to raise a company-wide issue out of pure respect, I would talk to my line manager who, in turn, would have to talk to the senior manager, he would then get in touch with the relevant HR Manager....because of having to go through this hierarchical structure you are that much more removed ... it would be a bit of a problem because you have to go through this ritual of speaking to your managers first and then individuals” (N:LM3);

“...generally speaking, we don't get involved with HR, they are their area and we are looking after the techie area so there isn't much contact there and I am probably not alone in that... as I say, we might be cocooned here so it is probably not a general thing I just believe there should be some awareness of the HR issues and requirements we might fall foul on...I think there is very little of that” (C:LM1).

On the issue of the degree of geographic distance between line managers and HR professionals (an issue already alluded to), it was recognised that the removal of local HR support in favour of a greater degree of centralisation of HR and the establishment of a centralised shared services function for delivering operational HR, had created a distance issue for some line managers:

“Some managers were more comfortable when HR was doing it so there is a combination of ‘Ah Jesus I don't like doing it, I'd prefer HR to be doing it’ and there is no doubt that HR has become more distant because we have pulled things back. Some of our managers got caught in a situation whereby they had local people to provide a lot of the support and then we are moving on a different journey and trying to push stuff into the line and have a strategic HR function and that is difficult for them. There is absolutely no doubt it is difficult for them and it is difficult for us but it is a journey and it will be a while yet” (N:HRM);

“At the moment we are probably responding ... to serve the need but if you are to be a true real partner to the people in the business you might need a bit more time in your day to go out and do that. That's partly due to the fact that it is a virtual organisation its north, south, east and west so your managers are spread all over the place” (N:HRP2).

The HR professional respondents' interpretation of their collaboration reflects a similar position to that of the line manager respondents. Regarding the issue of distant

relationships, it was identified that as a HR professional role becomes more specialised, the generic collaboration tends to dissolve:

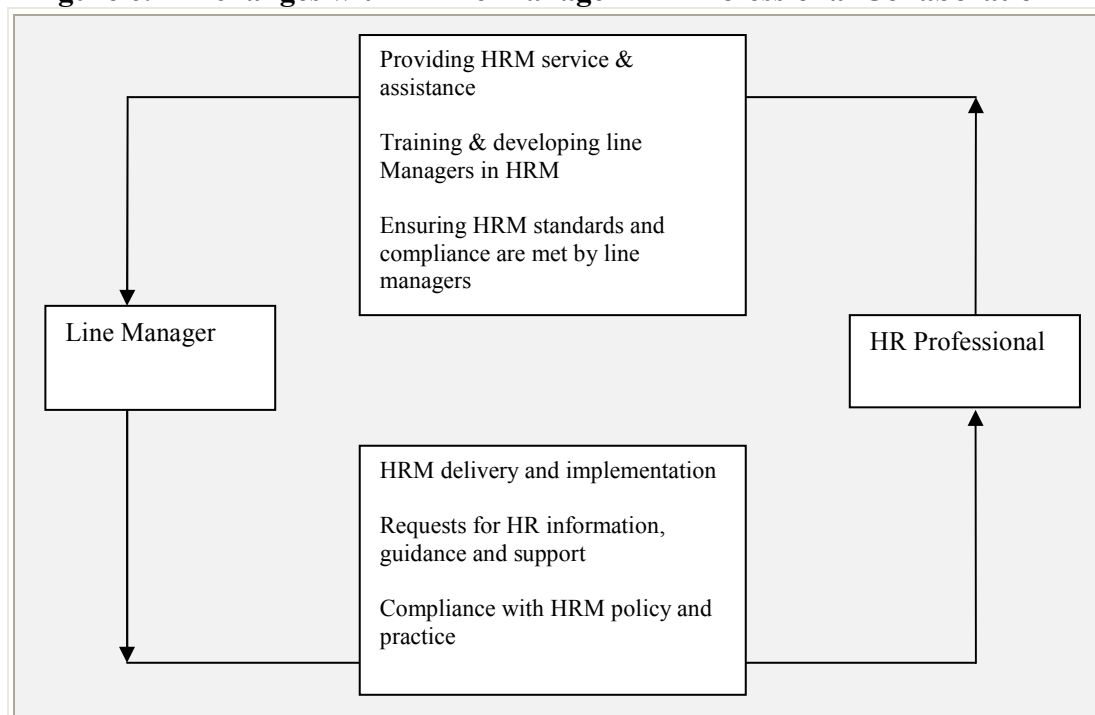
“I’ve found as I have gone more and more into a specialist role I suppose that my link on a day-to-day basis with the line has kind of changed or dissolved. In terms of us specialists, we are usually involved in driving out some initiatives or strategically involved some way in the business. So I have found my own role in terms of direct connection within the businesses much more limited that it would have been previously” (N:HRP2).

Having identified that the collaborative relationships between line managers and HR professionals may vary in terms of their closeness, the following section turns to concentrate on identifying what is exchanged in the actual collaborative relationships themselves.

6.3.2 Exchange Content between Line Managers and HR Professionals

Having ascertained the reasons behind line manager and HR professional collaboration, attention in this section focuses on the content of the exchange and interaction processes (as illustrated in figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Exchanges within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaboration



As alluded to in the previous discussion, as part of a collaborative approach to HRM delivery, various mutually beneficial exchanges and interactions take place between line managers and HR professionals and these are summarised in figure 6.2.

As reflected in the presentation of the findings thus far, the exchanges amongst line managers and HR professionals centre on HRM delivery itself, in addition to preparing line managers competence in this delivery remit through management development activity. Furthermore, it has been established that such exchanges occur within the spectrum of close, varied and distant collaborative relationships.

6.3.2.1 Implementation and Delivery

As already discussed at length in the earlier sections of this chapter, it was identified that line managers are assuming a delivery role in the implementation of HRM practice which, in turn, enables HR professionals to contribute to the strategic aspects of HRM delivery. Furthermore, to support line managers with their practical delivery remit in the context of HRM, HR professionals are increasingly charged with providing specialist HRM services and generalist HR support. In addition, HR professionals are engaged in developing and delivering HRM-related training and management development programmes to up-skill line managers 'soft' skills. In terms of the line managers' delivery role as reflected in figure 6.2, the previous findings have illustrated that they are taking a 'hands on' approach in the interpretation and implementation of HR practices with their direct reports and this has been reflected in the PDP process, as one such example, throughout the case organisation.

6.3.2.2 Requests for Information, Guidance, Support and Intervention

It was noted from both the line manager and HR professional respondents that their interaction and exchange is a two-way process as both parties are interdependent with respect to delivering HRM practice:

"...there would be almost a requirement for line managers to turn to HR"
(C:HRM);

“...that two-way piece happens. Definitely we would be coming looking to them [HR professionals] if we were concerned about agreeing to something that maybe would set a precedent or would put someone’s nose out of joint. Inevitably, if there is something centrally being discussed they [HR professionals] will come back to us” (P:LM3);

“Mostly they [line managers] come for advice and interpretation; I also attend regular meetings with my specific line managers. I would instigate some of the interactions also about seeking probation reports etc. so there would be a two way relationship” (I:HRP1).

Stemming from line manager requests, the HR professional respondents identified that accommodating these issues and problem-solving form a significant proportion of their interaction activity and serves to enhance their credibility by positively impacting on whatever issues line managers may have:

“...they would say we have got a particular need, what are the options available to us, what would you recommend, how would you go about getting ourselves or getting something established to make sure that the issue progresses. On other occasions the issue might be that they want some sort of team building intervention and again they will end up having an initial conversation to just get a sense of what the issue is and then...I would come up with some solutions to the problems that might exist. So that tends to be the way that that operates” (C:HRP4).

6.3.2.3 Ensuring HRM Standards Compliance

Another feature of the exchanges between HR professionals and line managers is with regards to ensuring that HR standards and compliance are being met by line managers who assume a HRM delivery role. Both line manager and HR professional respondents agreed that it is the role of HR professionals to guard and monitor HR standards and implementation across the organisation. As such, some line managers commented that HR professionals regularly contact them to ensure that HR procedures are being consistently complied with:

“Our local HR would come on issues of people not filling in their time sheets and stuff like that or manager not signing off on stuff like that, trivial stuff I would call it” (C:LM1);

“When they would initiate the contact it would generally be around some specific query that they might have. They might enquire about how such and such a thing is going or whatever but it is mainly around if they were looking

for statistics around training. It would mainly be that they have a need to get something done and some information they need back from us to complete some task” (I:LM4);

“...if they come to me it might be around reminding me about completing documentation around training and development plans, probationary reports, absenteeism figures or approvals or looking to support and brief particular issues or initiatives to my staff” (I:LM2).

Three HR professional respondents also signalled that they are approached with requests for advice above and beyond their specific functional remit and found such interaction to positively impact on their existing relationships:

“I often get calls out of the blue moon because I worked on the ground here on the operational end of the Midwest so I am still the face of HR for many. If I meet people in the canteen they might pull me aside and want to query me about something” (N:HRP2);

“I get queries that aren’t to do with my area and I have to redirect them but I think that’s a good thing, that is a positive thing because you know that people trust and respect you to come to ask you even if they know it’s not your area and that you will treat them professionally and redirect them. I actually take it as a compliment” (I:HRP2);

“I have worked in HR for about fifteen years at this stage so people would come to me for advice on different parts of HR like be it personal advice or training requirements or say in regards to say like you know paternity leave, any types of issues of that would say involve people working in the business so it could be business related or personally related as well” (C:HRP4).

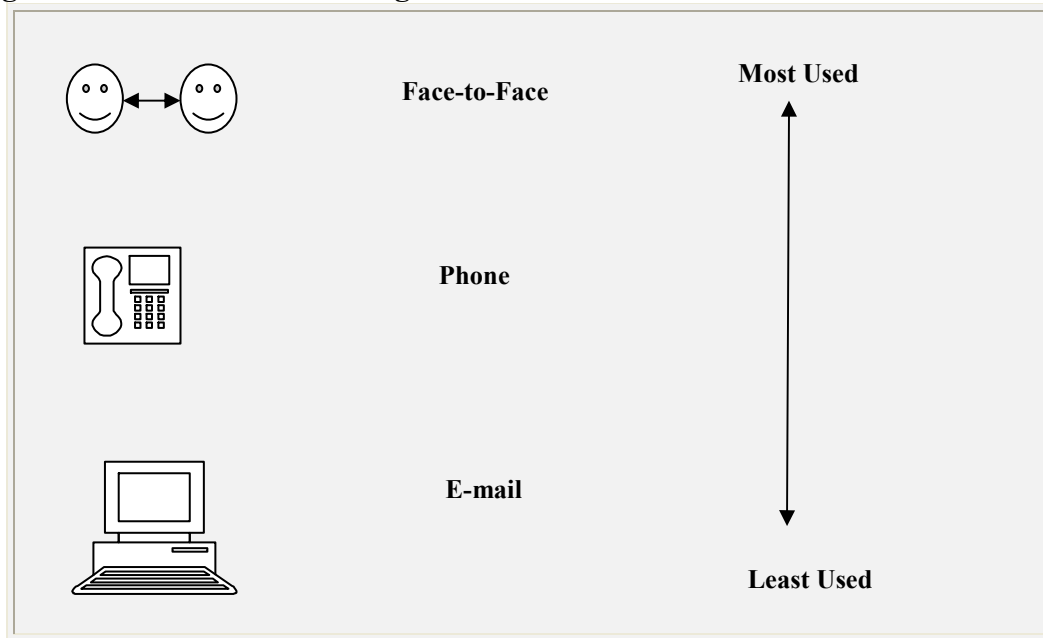
6.3.3 Mediums of Exchange between Line Managers and HR Professionals

To explore the level of social interaction which has been alluded to in the previous sections of this chapter and furthermore, exchange between the line manager and HR professional respondents, they were asked to elaborate on the mediums in which they collaborate. Figure 6.3 illustrates the mediums of exchange between line managers and HR professionals ranked in accordance to the most frequently adopted method of interaction.

Face-to-face interaction, indicating a high degree of social exchange, is the most preferred and adopted means of interaction, followed closely by phone

communications, with email interaction being the least preferred and adopted means of interaction.

Figure 6.3 Mediums of Exchange



In terms of face-to-face interaction, many line managers identified that this approach is favoured for dealing with sensitive issues concerning one of their direct reports:

“Face-to-face is important for sensitive issues and picking up on body language” (N:LM2);

“On sensitive issues, I would try to go in person” (C:LM4).

The casual and social nature of the relationships between line managers and HR professionals was also another factor in face-to-face communication being favoured by all respondent groups:

“We would deal casually on a daily basis with the production supports, it is not formal and I would never call it formal. They come to us and we go to them, they might walk in and say is everything ok. We have I’d say here in [this location], probably a good model in terms of interactions, there are no great barriers there with anybody to be honest about it and the personalities are fairly compatible throughout the whole organisation as well.... We depend

a lot on what I would call the daily friendship of us all, it is a team you know, there's good teamwork here" (N:LM5);

"I would interact on a regular basis with senior managers, middle managers, line managers and indeed staff. I don't have this hierarchy where if you want to talk to me you have to talk to your own line manager first...I don't have that kind of relationship with people" (P:HRP2).

Supportive of the previous findings presented, line manager respondents also identified the issue of geographical distance as a further mediating factor which impacts on face-to-face interaction. The line managers located at head office identified that working in the same building or in close proximity facilitated a personal interaction with their HR colleagues:

"Face to face as the HR Manager's office is in direct proximity" (C:LM5);

"I would nearly always do it face to face because I am in head office and I find I get much more done face to face. That is generally what I prefer to do, that's the way I prefer to work anyway. Plus they are not very far away. They are all upstairs so it is only five minutes walk really to go and find them" (P:LM2);

"Yes I suppose geographically we are reasonably privileged in [in this location] in that we are in Dublin so if there is an issue it is quite simple to come down. That is one of the main reasons I was here this morning is that I have a meeting with one of the guys. So we are reasonably privileged, obviously if you are based down in Cork or wherever, it is a little bit harder to organise the face-to-face" (P:LM3).

Telephone contact was identified as a suitable means of interaction for obtaining specific responses about queries on certain aspects of policy and also for arranging face-to face meetings. Line managers reported that they may ring their local HR contact person if they were not on site to request a meeting or inform them of any issues or developments:

"On routine issues such as pension queries, childcare leave, it doesn't always have to be in face but we would be familiar with each other as we are in the same building" (C:LM4);

"Even when [HR professional] is absent, her voicemail gives instruction on how to contact her" (C:LM5);

"So I would just give them a call before hand and then just go around, that's how I would do it" (P:LM2).

The issue of distance between line managers and HR professionals, once again, is another factor raised by the line managers with respect to telephone interaction. The line managers who are physically remote from their corresponding HR professionals not surprisingly use the phone as a means of communicating. In a similar vein, e-mail was also identified as a means of interaction, particularly for transferring documentation and making requests. Some line managers found it beneficial to raise an issue in an email while it is fresh in their minds as issues might get side-tracked or forgotten about when other work pressures emerged. However, not all managers have access to a computer on a daily basis as they may be working from various sites on a daily to weekly basis and therefore do not tend to favour email interaction as highly. One particular line manager identified that they found e-mail interaction too formal and restrictive:

“Email would be last resort - as the written word, is impossible to retract”
(N:LM2).

The HR professionals identified that they interact with line managers through all three mediums as reflected in figure 6.3. They also identified that the interaction, at times, is dependent on the geographic distance between them and the line managers and also in relation to the HR issues being collaborated on:

“If it’s something small they usually email or phone. Others prefer to drop in as we are on-site but I would generally see most of the line managers I serve on a daily basis somewhere throughout the building” (I:HRP1);

“It would be a mixture. A lot over the phone, emails can get sidetracked and some managers would come to me face-to-face. It depends on the manager, their time and their personality” (I:HRP3);

“Probably in person, there would be phone and email but I don’t think you can really build a relationship over the phone or email. I think it works better if you have got a personal relationship with them and I suppose too, it comes down to that if you worked with someone before and they see you know what can be achieved out of that then it is easier next time round” (C:HRP4).

Mindful of the distance issues in particular, phone interaction is used between line managers and HR professionals for the purpose of collaborative HRM delivery, as some line managers are regularly on the road, managing multiple sites and furthermore, some line managers may be based hundreds of miles away from HR

professionals in head office. In an attempt to serve line managers in remote locations, the HR professionals identified that they do spend time travelling to accommodate these managers:

“...from a HR point of view, we try to be as flexible as you can in the sense that for the managers in Cork ‘say look I want to meet you’, I’ll come down to Cork, whether it suits you or likewise, I will go to Sligo. You are not going to say, ‘you have to come up here to Dublin’” (N:HRP1);

“Some of them may want to sit down with me and have a chat about something in particular and I can go anywhere for them, it is not usually a problem. It is whatever suits...it depends on the situation” (C:HRP1);

“I would be in each [site] at a minimum of twice a year and on those days, I’d be there for the entire day and then I would be there more than twice but definitely twice at a minimum and I’d meet the line managers, I’d meet the supervisors, shop stewards and staff” (P:HRP2).

It was also recognised, partly due to the perception that HR may be isolated and removed from the general management of the business, that HR professionals are making a concentrated effort to relate more to the line managers in the business-units:

“HR needs to come and help as opposed to sending a note ‘see attached new policy’. We need to put the human back in HR” (C:HRP3).

In an effort to forge more personable relationships, the HR professional respondents identified that they try to get to know the line managers in social settings to help them serve their professional needs more effectively:

“If I meet people in the canteen, they might pull me aside and want to query me about something” (N:HRP2);

“I’d actually maybe invite people for a cup of tea to see how things are going or maybe, as I get friendlier with people you might have a lunch not like every week, but every couple of months, have a cup of tea or a spot of lunch or something like that. So that is kind of informal contact where you talk about other things but you also kind of cover the workspace and see how things are going for them” (G:HRP1);

“...whether it is the cup of coffee or whether you meet them for lunch, it is not formal working arrangements. That does build up the relationship. A lot of banter, the Munster match, for example, there are lots of stuff and if you are only keeping it work related, it’s a very different relationship to getting to know the managers themselves. In fairness, they are a good bunch” (C:HRP1).

The line managers themselves indicated that they tend to have more productive relationships with HR professionals when they can have the personal interaction with them and find some common ground:

“You can’t beat the personal, sit down have a cup of tea. I often say you get a lot more done in the canteen over the cup of tea, always did in my case” (N:LM5).

6.3.4 The Distribution of Authority and Dependency Levels within Collaborative HRM Delivery

To understand the features of the line manager-HR professional social exchange process, the distribution and authorisation of responsibility in conjunction to dependence within line manager-HR professional collaboration were explored to further inform the collaborative relationship.

6.3.4.1 Day-to-Day HR-Related Responsibility Rests with Line Managers

In a broad sense, the line manager respondents concurred that they have been empowered into a position of authority and were expected to manage within the line and it is only when issues escalate, requiring specialist support or approval, that HR professionals intervene:

“HR will give you their professional advice and logistical support but it’s up to you as a line manager to run with whatever issue is on the table. HR appears to be very empowering in that sense” (I:LM1).

Reflecting on the competence of line managers, already discussed in previous sections, it was also recognised that line managers, with a wealth of management experience, are becoming more comfortable with assuming greater levels of authority when it comes to HRM practice:

“The longer you are in the position, the more confident you become and also more willing to take on responsibility and take charge” (C:LM4).

“...if it is a decision you are capable of making, then you make it” (N:LM4);

“Mostly rests with line managers unless an issue has escalated – then HR would take on a more hands on role” (P:LM1);

“...I am responsible, you know, because ultimately I am the manager of my staff and if there are issues I have to deal with, ... in my head there is no ambiguity that I am responsible” (C:LM7);

“As my team spends a lot of their time overseas South Africa and Asia – HR cant micro manage and therefore expect me and afford me the responsibility as a line manager to manage my team” (I:LM3).

Again, as already alluded to in earlier sections, the HR respondents generally tend not to interfere in operational issues; instead, they may offer advice and suggestions about how to manage or progress certain issues:

“It would be left mostly to me to implement any advice I would be given. Now obviously, implement that in accordance with the policies and procedures in place and HR give you advice on that or if there are sign offs required they do that or they will tell you that you need to go this route or whatever. But yeah, then ultimately is it’s up to you to get the ball rolling ...it is up the line manager to drive it through, yeah” (C:LM7);

“Most of the time they give you advice and direction and it is up to you as the line manager to follow that through. If I am unsure about something and they give me their advice I would nearly always take it because they know more than me” (I:LM2).

It was also noted by line manager respondents that some of the reasoning behind them assuming a stronger degree of power, authority and responsibility for HRM with their direct reports is to reinforce their credibility as managers. It was identified that their positions would potentially be undermined if their staff saw the HR agenda being imposed from a third party (as opposed to their line manager) and as such, they (the direct reports) may be less inclined to follow and adhere to HR policies and procedures.

The viewpoints of the HR professional respondents also supports that of the line managers in that they (line managers) should assume ultimate responsibility for the management and development of their staff and within that, exercise the appropriate authority. However, the HR professionals identified that line managers were not always given ‘free rein’ as there are explicit guidelines and procedures to be followed:

“... there is an approvals document there for things like education support or whether it is something to do with leave or whether it is something to do with

whatever, there are parameters there, there are policy documents there for everything so there are controls and approvals are there but the objective would be to give more and more autonomy to the line managers in the business... So it's very much what happens on the ground, that front line activity, the generation of information and making decisions on things is really predominantly driven by supervisors, front line managers, middle managers and the production support managers. A lot of the decisions are floating around there as they are the ones that do the business on the ground" (N:HRP2);

"At the end of the day, whatever intervention is delivered, it will require and does have a strong local stamp associated with it, this is most certainly the way we have moved in the last number of years" (P:HRP1);

"In general I would give advice, implications and direction on processes and procedures but the manager makes the final decision" (C:HRP3);

"I would sit in [on meetings between line managers and direct reports] as a HR specialist to ensure that fair procedure is followed and that we are correct and record events but I wouldn't get involved in any line role as such" (C:HRP2).

6.3.4.2 Escalated HR Issues Require Increased HR Professional Authority

As identified in previous sections, line managers, who do not possess a HRM specialism, vary in terms of their ability to handle HRM responsibility; however, irrespective of their HR-competence levels, when issues escalate and formal HRM policies are evoked, their degree of authority diminishes as HR professionals, as the experts, take more ownership of such issues. Even when HR professionals assume an increased involvement in the transactional elements of HRM delivery, the line manager will still be seen to be the driver of whatever course of action is being pursued:

".... [Authority] mostly rests with line managers unless an issue has escalated, then HR would take on a more hands on role" (P:LM1).

Mirroring this position, it was identified that in terms of escalating HR issues of specialist nature (recruitment, discipline, training and development), that HR professionals *"...as the guardian and minder of procedures and processes"* (P:HRP1), may take a more hands-on role (*"HR are the arbitrators"* (C:LM6)) in HRM delivery

if it is recognised that line managers are not exercising or avoiding their remit in accordance to what is expected of them:

“HR don’t tend to interfere on operational issues unless there could be possible breeches of policies or they could see harm being caused to staff, but they still have to mind their side of the house, so they would be pressing their agendas around the implementation of policies around recruitment, training, discipline and performance development etc” (I:LM2);

“... if it’s routine then the line manager takes on my advice and runs with what is applicable to them, if the issue is exacerbating with legal implications we would take a more hands on role” (I:HRP1);

“...if the manager wanted to do something that wasn’t in line with [HR] policy, I would then have to tell that him he is out of line and he cannot do it but in relation to ordinary stuff, where there are options, I would outline the options to the line manager. I would give them my opinion, as to my preference in relation to the option but primarily the decision is his. I would not try to overrule him but if it was things related to [organisational] policy, you would have strict instructions as to what you can or cannot do. I would be reading out the law, as it were, but it wouldn’t be me, it would be [HR] policy and I would say you can’t do XYZ and here is the reason why, but that is part of my job – I have to mind the shop” (P:HRP2).

6.3.4.3 Dependency Levels within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

Regarding the dependency levels between line managers and HR professionals with reference to the realisation of collaborative HRM delivery, the respondent responses ranged from a high degree of dependence to a moderate dependence. For the respondents (both line manager and HR professional) who reported a high degree of dependence, the reasons cited included the high degree of administration and the specialist nature of certain HR activities and the manifestation of this dependence is reflected in the requests for support and direction sought by line managers from the HR professionals:

“I am very much dependent, I couldn’t operate without them” (I:LM1);

“...high degree of dependence. I dread when she [HR professional] is on leave” (C:LM5);

“I would say there is a high degree of dependence...So a lot of the time I think they [line managers] come up and say ‘I have taken this so far, I need a steer on what I can do on X,Y,X’ and then they get a steer and go off and do it. So it is their responsibility to go and implement that advice, HR can’t go and

implement it for them but I would imagine the line managers would get a lot of steering as to where they can and cannot go from HR” (P:LM2);

“They would be very dependent on the administration side – everything goes through HR” (I:HRP3).

As highlighted in previous sections of the chapter, it was also noted by both line manager and HR professional respondents that the degree of interdependence may fluctuate depending on the issues at hand and the competency of the line managers to manage the specific HR-related issues:

“It wouldn’t be a day-to-day dependence, it would only be when issues arrive that you need their help on that you could say you are dependent on them in some shape or other” (I:LM4);

“Not a major dependence unless it is an issue you are not familiar with or could have lasting/legal repercussions” (C:LM4);

“In most cases they would be more dependent on HR professionals” (I:HRP1);

“Dependence... I am sure they could do without me, I don’t think they are that dependent on me, they are quite a resourceful bunch and I wouldn’t like to think there would be a dependence. We have tried to put the information in place for the most part so they can resource it...I don’t think there is dependence there but I suppose there is a supporting role more than dependence” (C:HRP2);

“I would say some more than others would be dependent. It is like every job I suppose you would have some people who would have a natural aptitude for this kind of stuff and we would have other managers who absolutely hate it and everything in between” (P:HRP2).

Remaining on the issue of dependency, the HR professionals reported that they too are dependent on line managers who possess a high degree of power in relation to HRM delivery:

“Well I suppose HR are very dependent on the line managers to deliver. We can only influence and I suppose you can brief, you can workshop and you can train but at the end of the day it is the line managers who have a huge role to play in getting things delivered on the ground. ... It is a dual role really, they depend on us to come up with realistic things that can be delivered and the timeframes associated with them and I suppose the more we work together the better we can plan stuff” (C:HRP1).

Having identified that there are varying degrees of interdependence amongst collaborating line managers and HR professionals, the following section explores the issue of trust within line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships.

6.4 The Role of Reciprocity within Line Manager-HR Professional collaborative Relationships

To explore the issue of reciprocity within collaborative line manager-HR professional exchanges, focus is placed on identifying the reciprocal features of their relationships. One line manager identified the prevalence of reciprocal interaction within the organisation as a whole, (“*Reciprocal interaction is the strength of this place*” (N:LM4)). However, within the specific context of line manager-HR professional collaboration, reciprocity was not seen as an explicit feature within relationships obligating or motivating individuals in a ‘*quid pro quo basis*’:

“Reciprocity wouldn’t exert a huge influence” (C:LM1);

“You wouldn’t quantify or try to balance what you would do in comparison to what they do” (P:HRM3);

“I don’t know whether there is that actually that much scope for a kind of a reciprocal arrangement there... I am scraping the bottom of the barrel at this stage trying to figure out whether there would be a reciprocal arrangement there” (C:LM3)

In turn, the respondents illustrated that ‘give and take’ activity is reflected within their relationships.

6.4.1 Reciprocal ‘Give and Take’ within the Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

Regarding the issue of reciprocity within collaborative HRM relationships, it is recognised that the broad area of reciprocity centres on the fact that line managers ‘give’ by taking on HRM delivery and, in turn, ‘take’ by utilising and seeking support from the HR professionals to assist them in exercising that role (table 6.6). As previously noted early on in this chapter, this may also work in reverse with HR professionals ‘giving’ their professional support and input to line managers and

similarly ‘taking’ by seeking information and feedback from line managers themselves.

Table 6.6 ‘Give and Take’ between Line Managers and HR Professionals

Line Manager Perspective	HR Professional Perspective
<p><i>“My role is to implement and follow through [HRM delivery]” (C:LM3);</i></p> <p><i>“The way it is supposed to work is that line managers handle issues and the HR guys devise policies and offer support to help us handle issues. By and large that is how it works” (P:LM3);</i></p> <p><i>“Like they [HR professionals] do have programmes and you would be involved in them. We would carry them out” (C:LM2).</i></p>	<p><i>“Years ago, line managers probably would have relied on HR specialists, but now the managers are much more autonomous ... they are not sitting there waiting for HR you know” (N:HRP1);</i></p> <p><i>“Line managers are there to deliver and implement, we could have hundreds of policies but if line managers don’t implement them they are useless” (C:HRP3);</i></p> <p><i>“Now I think what you will find if you take the broad people management dimension, that it is very much a line management function” (P:HRP1);</i></p> <p><i>“...line managers now are aware of the fact that minding people and managing people is part of what they do, as opposed to ‘I’ll give HR a ring, they will do it for me’” (P:HRP2).</i></p>

The line manager respondents identified that that there was a balance of effort and investment from themselves and the HR professionals in their collaborative relationships, with both sides working towards ensuring that individual staff members’ HR needs are being met. Specifically, where reciprocity manifests is with both line managers and HR professionals seeking advice and offering within their collaborative relationships.

“... it tends to be that they [HR professionals] need stuff from us rather than me needing stuff from them but I have to say on the few occasions that I have going looking for things, they have always been very forthcoming” (P:LM2);

“I suppose the communications lines are constantly open and with issues that arise, inevitably there is a huge amount of two-way communication and ‘toing and frowing’ and that is absolutely natural I suppose” (P:LM3);

“What could happen is we might be approached with requests to consider people coming into Group Internal Audit ...so that might be the other way round where Group HR comes to us” (C:LM8);

“They might enquire about how such and such a thing is going or whatever, but it is mainly around if they were looking for statistics around training. It would mainly be that they have a need to get something done or some

information they need back from us to complete some task. Otherwise, they might ring up with a query about somebody, say somebody on probation. So you could get a query asking 'is it ok for us to put them on a permanent contract' that kind of stuff. Mainly administrative queries” (I:LM4).

Furthermore, it was identified that level of ‘give and take’ may be issue dependent, in that certain issues, especially those that are routine and where line managers are experienced and competent, do not require them to reciprocate with HR professionals.

Further building on the notion that reciprocity is not an explicit feature of their relationships, not every line manager reported a true reciprocal interaction in that they ‘take’ more than they ‘give’ if viewed on a ‘*quid pro quo*’ basis:

“From my perspective, it is more one way and there is less the other way. But say from any of the initiatives that Group HR would sponsor, you know to the extent that we can we would fully support it. So in that sense, we do reciprocate by being as compliant as we can be, as supportive as we can be, to HR initiatives. So from our perspective, we probably look to HR more than they look to us on a one-to-one basis, I would say, that is my perspective from where I am sitting anyway” (C:LM8);

“I would probably take more than I would give. I would be complaint with their directives and initiatives. Would never go out of my way to obstruct their work but at times HR is not at the top of my agenda” (I:LM2).

The HR professional respondents point to their service delivery role as a prime example of the mutual interaction between themselves and line managers. The HR professional respondents identified that line managers are implementing the policies and procedures that they (the HR professionals) have developed e.g. PDPs, work-life balance and disciplinary policy and procedures. Furthermore, line managers are also participating on interview panels and management development programmes. As such, the HR professional respondents signalled that there is a significant degree of ‘give and take’:

“In general, there would be a lot of ‘give and take’. It’s not just a one-sided relationship” (P:HRP3);

“...there would be daily ‘give and take’ contact in terms of our interaction” (C:HRP2);

“There would be reciprocal effort. Say if a manager comes to me for a chat looking for advice a certain role or recruitment process, it’s up to me to go and find those answers” (I:HRP3);

“...I’d say at this stage, the longer you work with people, I suppose, it is a given and they know you are going to do certain things for them, you prove that is what you are capable of doing” (C:HRP4).

Additionally, in the course of their service provision, the HR professional respondents identified there is a degree of, (*“...toing and frowing and back and forth” (P:HRP1)*):

“...99% of the business I do, it’s all about ‘give’ and ‘take’ – offering an opinion, listening to where he is coming from on the basis of what he says, and it may necessitate you to adjust your opinion because you have no other facts” (P:HRP2).

As a result of collaborating, both the line manager and HR professional respondents identified that they find themselves, and observe their exchange partner (the line managers), to be more receptive in both HRM implementation and accepting HR support and guidance which, in turn, may contribute to forging closer collaborative relationships. In terms of positive assessments of receptivity, line manager respondents admitted that they do find themselves more inclined to accommodate HR professionals’ requests when they have received a supportive service from them in return in the past:

“I know you shouldn’t be, and you should remain impartial and compliant in all cases, but if I have a relationship with the person and they have always looked after me with anything I went to them, I’m sure it does influence how I accommodate them and I probably would be more receptive” (I:LM2);

“Look, inevitably you are always going to be more receptive you know like...if you answer the door some evening and it is someone you know you are going to open the door, if it is a stranger you keep the door half closed until you see what is going on. There is no doubt that my phone or my door is going to be more receptive to a call compared to somebody I haven’t done business with and that I have built up a certain amount of trust in their ability” (P:LM3).

6.4.2 The Impact of Reciprocity within Collaborative Line Manager and HR Professional Relationships

Regarding the impact of reciprocation within collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships, and as previously discussed within this chapter, line managers assume a delivery role, whereas, HR professionals assume a more advisory role. However, reciprocity, as a concept, is not calculated or seen as an obligating or motivating feature of the professional line manager-HR professional relationships. Reciprocity, however, still impacts on the exchanges between line managers and HR professionals in a variety of different ways. The major impact is that line managers and HR professionals have the potential to both actively contribute to HRM delivery and acknowledge each other's investment and contribution in fulfilling their collaborative remit:

"We would both seek information from each other and also we work in tandem to ensure the delivery of our policies and procedures" (C:HRP2).

Specifically, line manager respondents felt they were receiving the practical support which they require to fully exercise their HRM responsibilities:

"You go looking for advice and that's what you get" (C:LM4);

"The support from HR is very good and that encourages you to call upon them as and when needed" (C:LM6);

"We definitely support each other. At the end of the day we are working towards a common goal" (I:LM1).

From the HR professional perspective, they have observed, to varying degrees, an enhanced degree of cooperation from line managers. Namely, these HR professionals have found that line managers may be more receptive and motivated to accommodate HR requests and fulfilling HRM implementation, if they have received positive HR support:

"I found some line managers to be more receptive to fulfilling their PDP commitments after they had seen the amount of work I put into it and when I offered them help with completing them, as opposed to chasing them to complete it. It didn't happen overnight, however but the PDP rate has risen to 60% from the previous level of 5%." (C:HRP3);

“I find that certain line managers are more receptive, accommodating and willing to work alongside of you if you have providing beneficial service to them in the past” (I:HRP1).

An additional impact of the mutual interaction, embedded in the line manager-HR professional collaborative relationship, is that the credibility of HR professionals is being harnessed to make positive contributions and impacts on line managers’ workloads and team effectiveness:

“Obviously, if somebody is happy that you can deliver, they are going to come back... we are there to serve, to help them and to provide a service to them and to make their job as easy as possible without us being seen as doing everything for them” (C:HRP4);

“...you help somebody out and then when you go back looking for something, like even joking I’ll say ‘remember that favour I did for you? I’m going to call in one from you now like’ and he just organised one of the people for me for a workshop or a brainstorm or something or other like, so yeah, it is all about building relationships” (N:HRP1);

“They will come and ask for advice, asking us what the options are, looking for our input rather than just our output” (I:HRP2).

From the depiction of the findings thus far, it has been acknowledged that collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships are characterised by ‘give and take’ in terms of their interaction and exchange. As such, the following section explores the role of trust within collaborative relationships.

6.5 The Role of Trust within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

“Trust is a currency in a way” (N:LM4) within the collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships. As such, focus is placed on identifying how the respondents evaluate the importance of trust with their relationships, the degree of trust exhibited between them (line managers and HR professionals) and the development and impact of trust on their exchange relationships.

6.5.1 Evaluating the Importance of Trust

In terms of evaluating the importance of trust within their interactions with HR professionals, the line manager respondents cited trust as an integral element of the ‘exchanges’ within their collaborative relationships with HR professionals (table 6.7).

Trust was rated highly (“*important; crucial; absolutely important; huge*”) as line managers perceive themselves to be in a ‘vulnerable’ position when they interact with HR professionals, seeking guidance and support to meet their specific business needs. Having a trusting relationship may also facilitate line managers and HR professionals having frank discussions about their (the line managers) ability to manage HR issues and also facilitates collaboration on sensitive issues concerning specific staff members.

Table 6.7 Line Managers Rating of Trust

Supporting Sample of Interview Excerpts
<i>“I would see trust as very important because when I look for assistance from the HR people, I am in a vulnerable position or I am seeking advice to meet immediate business needs” (I:LM4)</i>
<i>“Trust is a factor” (C:LM3)</i>
<i>“If they [HR professionals] give advice, our trust would be on what they say” (C:LM4)</i>
<i>“Trust is crucial and the trust in the people is important, so you can have frank discussions” (I:LM2)</i>
<i>“Trust is very important” (C:LM5)</i>
<i>“Trust is absolutely important” (P:LM2)</i>
<i>“Trust is absolutely important. If I can’t trust somebody, I won’t call them or if I do I will only ask certain pieces... without trust, nothing will get done, absolutely nothing will get done and if you find yourself not trusting somebody, you are best off kind of extricating yourself from the position as quickly as you possibly can which isn’t always possible” (P:LM2)</i>
<i>“I think when we call upon them we are in a vulnerable position...I think vulnerable would be the appropriate word, absolutely, trust is huge” (P:LM3)</i>

In presenting the HR professionals viewpoints on evaluating the importance of trust in terms of their relationships with line managers, it was identified that trust was earned through delivering and supporting the line managers they serve:

“I think trust, yeah, trust is in there very much, but the other thing is delivery, making decisions, helping people make quicker decisions or move on and deliver their results and that you can support them in a timely way. I think if you do that for people you will automatically get the trust anyway” (N:HRP1).

The HR professionals also identified that trust is of paramount importance due to the sensitive nature of the area of HR because much of their activities are based on trust. Specifically, line managers place trust in them as HR professionals to help them manage their teams and furthermore, HR professionals need to trust that line managers are disclosing full information and embracing the guidance provided to them:

“Generally, I see we are trusted and I trust line managers who come to me that I am getting the whole story and I haven’t been given any reason to think otherwise” (I:HRP2);

“Huge, I would say trust would be huge and I think trust on both sides that like the managers trust you to do a good job and you trust the line manager to do his bit” (C:HRP4);

“It is important to be perfectly honest. Like in terms of trust, if somebody comes to me looking for advice, you give them the best of advice that you can possibly give based on your own knowledge” (P:HRP1).

In addition, another HR professional identified the need to act responsibly and accountably which, in turn, fosters trust and forges closer collaborative working relationships between HR professionals and line managers:

“...if you say you are going to do something, like if you are promising ridiculous stuff, then nobody is ever going to trust a word you say. If you say it as it is or as it should be, or as it will be, I think people do appreciate it, there will be hard conversations but I think if somebody comes to me with an issue and it is a confidential issue, you can certainly trust me 100% that it won’t go any further. If there is a need for it to go further, say to the Billing and Payments Manager or the HR Manager or whoever, I will say that at our meeting. I won’t go off on my own but I will be open with people and likewise, if I am coming back with feedback, I trust the managers as well” (C:HRP1).

6.5.2 Trust Exhibited within Collaborative Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

From the perspective of the line manager respondents, a significant amount of trust is placed in the quality of the advice of HR professionals and the services they deliver:

“I think you would accept that they are the experts in their field but yeah, when you work with somebody and they give good advice or whatever and they follow through on it, you build up a trust” (I:LM4);

“I think, without a shadow of a doubt, I would put a huge amount of trust in them in terms of their skill level and the whole ethos of HR is to help the business plot a charge through sometimes difficult issues, so I understand why they have to do certain things. But certainly from my point of view, if I have an issue that I need to go to Group HR, I go to them with a full knowledge that I am going to them as the experts in this area” (C:LM8).

As reflected in the previous discussion, the issue of geographic distance between line manager and HR professional respondents also arose with respect to trust between them. It was identified that if the line manager knows the HR professional and are in contact regularly, it improves trust, particularly when it comes to collaborating on sensitive issues:

“I would trust certain individuals more than others but that would partly be due to being more familiar with certain HR staff than others” (C:LM6).

In terms of the qualities that HR professionals possess, which encourages line managers to trust them, these include their manner; being sensible; their discretion, their guidance and finally, their advisory capabilities and professional credibility (Table 6.8).

Table 6.8 The Qualities of HR Professionals which Influence Line Managers Trust

Qualities	Supporting Sample of Interview Excerpts
Manner	<i>“Like I say, they are quite good to deal with, I find them no problem whatsoever, they are committed and they have the manner and the manner in which a person operates is huge you know” (N:LM5)</i>
Sensible	<i>“XXX is sensible and I have great respect in her abilities” (P:LM1)</i>
Guidance	<i>“I would trust their guidance. Even if I disagree with what they are saying, we would trash out both our perspectives” (C:LM4)</i>
Discretion	<i>“I’d like to think that the HR people are very discreet, I would expect that and have experience to date of that...If you know them it’s easier, they know you respect them” (C:LM3)</i>
Advice	<i>“...the difference between teasing through issues and just getting guidance and clarity on the interpretation and implementation of policy because you can ask that blank question to almost anybody because you are just looking for information. It is more kind of on the advice and support aspect that I think you absolutely have to have confidence and trust” (C:LM7).</i>
Credibility	<i>“...if you look at some of Dave Ulrich’s stuff he talks about the credible activist and the credibility of HR and a lot of that is built on the personalities and usually people make contact with someone they are comfortable with” (I:HRM).</i>

In presenting the HR professional respondents views on the trust they place in the line managers they interact and collaborate with, similarly this reflects the viewpoints offered by the line manager respondents. Some HR professionals identified that line managers are competent and compliant when it comes to their HR collaboration:

“I haven’t ever been disappointed or let down by [line managers] in here anyway. So yeah, I think the level of trust is very high, certainly from my own experience in my part of the HR team” (I:HRP2);

“I suppose it depends on the situation and at the end of the day, like the line managers have to manage the day-to-day business and if there is a need to go off on their own, provided that they are within the policies and procedures and all the legal aspects ...you have given them all the tools, all the information they need to make an informed decision” (C:HRP1).

It was also noted by one HR professional respondent that the line managers they serve are not unquestionably trusting of HR but instead it is through open and honest communication that trust is earned:

“They wouldn’t be inclined to trust me without me explaining why. They are not that trusting. (C:HRP2).

The issue of service delivery is another factor impacting on the extent to which HR professionals are trusted. This was reflected in the comments made by the HR professional respondent charged with the implementation of the HRIS system in the (P) business units. Through their own admission, they signalled that the system is not user-friendly as it might be, is being underutilised and in some cases, resisted. There was also a paucity of training support for the system and consequently, they felt the trust line managers place in their abilities may be eroding due to the challenging remit of their (the HR professional) role:

“I’m not delivering for them now but I would like to think they trust my ability from my previous role” (P:HRP3).

6.5.3 The Development of Trust within Collaborative Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

Both the line manager and HR professional respondents concurred that trust does build and develop and this may be a result of interacting for considerable amounts of

time or interacting positively over a number of interaction episodes (table 6.8). Some of the respondents (both line managers and HR professionals) identified years of interaction history as a factor, whereas others identified that a limited number of positive interaction episodes were sufficient to building trust in each other. Regarding the development of trust, it was reported by line manager and HR professional respondents alike that there is an initial expectation that each individual will be trustworthy, and through positive interactions, that base-line trust level may increase:

“...you start off with credit in the bank” (N:LM4);

“...if I meet you for the first time and I know I am going to work with you, I am working on the premise that unless something happens which makes me change my mind, I’m going to be working with you in a trusting capacity. That’s a foundation stone, a first principle and then as we get to know one another, 9 times out of 10 that level increases” (P:HRP2).

In table 6.9, it is identified that trust between line managers and HR professionals is built through the prior interaction history.

Table 6.9 Determining How Trust Builds

	Significant Interaction History	Limited Positive Interaction Episodes
Line Managers	<p><i>“Takes time to know how people operate” (N:LM2);</i> <i>“...trust is built over time. And creates mutual respect” (C:LM5);</i></p> <p><i>“...it is something that you build up over time” (P:LM3);</i></p> <p><i>“Over time you get to respect their ability and value their expertise” (I:LM1);</i> <i>“The longer you get to know them, the more trusting you become of their nature and ability” (I:LM3).</i></p>	<p><i>“Generally what happens is I find if you get a project and that project for a particular period of time and that project works well, then you have forged a relationship... But I don’t think necessarily the time piece makes a huge difference to the development of trust” (P:LM2);</i></p> <p><i>“I would have found out, after maybe 2 or 3 interactions with certain individuals within the group, fairly quickly as to how they operate and how much they could be trusted” (P:LM3);</i></p> <p><i>“...trust would develop once you have the chance to work with them on a number of issues. It wouldn’t take years to build up that trust level. You get a feel for a person pretty sharpish and you also factor in whether they have delivered what you were looking for in the past” (I:LM2);</i></p>

T 6.9 ctd.	Significant Interaction History	Limited Positive Interaction Episodes
HR Professionals	<p><i>"...it did take a while for me to build up that trust and for people to come to me directly with issues and for me to make the role my own which was a new experience for me and gaining trust definitely helps you doing that"</i> (I:HRP2);</p> <p><i>"Trust comes with time as you begin to learn their style and vice versa"</i> (I:HRP3);</p> <p><i>"...it would be over time, very much so because I would have worked with this team for 5/6 years at this stage"</i> (CS&GS);</p> <p><i>"...you build it up over time. People will get used to you, they know what you can do, what you are capable of and I your approachability as well"</i> (C:HRP4)</p>	<p><i>"...if someone is coming to you and you can help with a decision and give advice and stuff like that and they have gotten something out of it, they will come back to you again"</i> (N:HRP2);</p> <p><i>"I think being able to prove and being able to demonstrate a few wins is a strong enabler for how you work going forward"</i> (P:HRP1);</p> <p><i>"Trust develops when both parties interact productively – that's only natural"</i> (C:HRP3).</p>

In addition, it was also noted that a long interaction history was not a prerequisite to developing trust, as collaborating line manager and HR professionals may interpret each other's trustworthiness, even after a limited number of interaction episodes.

6.5.4 The Impact of Trust within Collaborative Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

Regarding the impact of trust on the interaction between line managers and HR professionals, the consensus, as already alluded to earlier in this chapter, from the line manager and HR professional respondents was that it is critical for creating close collaborative working relationships. In addition, it was also recognised from a business-unit HR Manager perspective that HR professionals need to demonstrate to line managers that they will be supported when issues escalate:

"...[HR professionals] need to get in and dirty with the line managers as well and give them every bit of support needed and if, for example, a case was going to council, going to central IR we would be with them every step of the way and we would have to take just as much responsibility as the line manager...to support line managers by saying you are not in this alone, you are not going to be the one that's looking like an idiot if this goes wrong. It is going to be at least as much a HR side because we are the ones that gave you the advice about it and that is appreciated in mounds once people see that you

don't desert them when the going gets tough, you are still there with them. By and large that cuts a lot of ice as well" (P:HRM).

A particular impact of trusting relationships between line managers and HR professionals is that a good working atmosphere is fostered:

"Here we are pretty good, it is a good place to work, it is a good atmosphere" (N:LM5);

"Well it is very difficult to work with somebody or live with somebody or what have you, if there is a low level of trust" (P:HRP2).

From the line manager perspective, once they trust HR professionals, they found it easier to accept their guidance and direction and that impacted on the speed and effectiveness of HRM delivery:

"... if a team leader is going to go out there and say to an individual 'yes you can or no you can't' based on something have said to them, then it is important that they can trust me and that I am providing the right information to them" (C:HRP2).

Moreover, it was also identified by the line manager respondents that once they are confident in the direction they receive from the HR professionals, they are able to take decisions more confidently which positively impacts on HRM delivery:

" If it is a significant issue, that if it is handled in the wrong way might result in a strike or a walkout or something like that...yeah, at that point trust is something that is quite important with the individual you are involved with, so yeah, I would say trust is a big enough piece"(P:LM3).

Furthermore, it was identified that when trusting relationships exist, it is easier for line managers to raise sensitive and confidential issues and, in turn, HR professionals may have more frank discussions with line managers:

"I think you have to have that confidence because you can then be open and frank and discuss whatever issue is at hand"(C:LM7).

Presenting the alternative, to indicate the importance of trust in collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships, an absence of trust is detrimental to the realisation of collaborative HRM delivery:

“They [line managers] will never come to you if you don’t have it [trust]”
(C:HRP3);

“I have worked with managers that I didn’t trust and that was very, very few and I didn’t enjoy the experience at all and I wouldn’t recommend it”(P:HRP2);

“...without trust nothing will get done, absolutely nothing will get done”
(P:LM2).

Having identified the prominent role of trust within the line manager-HR professional collaboration, the issue of reciprocity will now be discussed at length to explore its impact on these relationships.

6.6 The Degree of Social Penetration Exhibited within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

To identify the role of social penetration in the collaborative social exchanges between line managers and HR professionals, various issues were explored. Namely, the length of interaction history is addressed, in conjunction with tracing any significant developments which have occurred in the levels of disclosure and relationship depth between collaborating line managers and HR professionals.

6.6.1 Line Manager-HR Professional Interaction History

In an effort to explore the relationship progression between line managers and HR professionals in terms of their interaction, attention focused on tracing the interaction history and evolution between the exchanging parties. As noted in previous sections, the interaction history of line manager and HR professional respondents, often, but not always, stems over years of interactional episodes:

“In terms of establishing [line manager-HR professional] relationships, a lot of the relationships have been established over quite a lengthy period of time”
(P:HRP1).

The line manager respondents who participated in this research, range in tenure from under 1 year to over 35 years. With the exception of 1 line manager, 19 of these respondents grew into their managerial roles (“...*have come up through the ranks*” (C:HRP4)) from largely technical front-line positions and hence, have developed a range of relationships across the organisation. In a similar vein, the HR professional respondents ranged in tenure from 2 years to 37 years and furthermore, many of these professionals have grown from operational and line manager roles into HR roles:

“... we [HR professionals] are all lifers over here” (G:HRP2);

“...most people have rotated in because we don’t hire in HR people so they will be people from the line who are working now in HR, so they would have a strong understanding of what happens and needs to happen out in the business” (N:HRM);

“I was both soldiers. I was the Personnel Manager first, before we called it HR, in Limerick, and then I came to Cork and I was in the HR job here for a couple of years, and then I went back out to line management on the (N) side before I came back to HR. So I have seen both sides of it” (P:HRM).

Therefore, there is considerable scope for line managers and HR professionals to form an interaction history, as the respondents may have a degree of knowledge about individuals without having worked directly with them in the past:

“...to be honest, I would say that it is the type of organisations where you know more than just your local HR Manager. In the main [case organisation], people have kind of been around forever and you bump into them in a number of different guises and work contexts. I mean the people won’t have necessarily been in HR all their lives so you could have bumped into them in a totally different context as part of a different role” (C:LM7).

Recognising that the significant majority of line managers and HR professional respondents are well established in their roles and hence, collaborative relationships, a degree of general familiarity was found to exist between line managers and HR professionals within specific locations, prior to the establishment of their formal collaborative relationships:

“...as a result of helping them out in various guises over the years you know the relationship would be there already and then they can tap into me” (C:HRP4);

“...look if you build up relationships with individuals in the HR group, inevitably it just makes it that bit easier because you are picking up the phone to somebody that you have met and maybe even socialised with and that you know fairly well” (P:LM3).

Again reflecting the earlier findings, in addition to interaction history which may have stretched over years, the issue of delivering and receiving credible outcomes within the line manager-HR professional relationship was also identified as an additional feature which influences the level of social penetration within relationships. The consensus from the line manager and HR professional respondents is that their working relationships and knowledge of each other has evolved and hence, their exchanges have penetrated mere transactional exchange towards more collaborative and personal exchanges:

“In terms of evolving, you get to know who to go to, to get immediate/quick answers” (C:LM4);

“Continuity of working together does impact positively on the relationship. You become more comfortable, knowledgeable and respectful of each other’s ability, resources and time constraints” (C:LM3);

“...you get more in tune with what their teams requires and you build up a certain rapport and you can kind of anticipate their needs to a certain extent ... different people in the work environment have to be handled (and that’s a horrible term) in different ways and you get to know how people operate and obviously then it is a lot easier to work with them and for them” (I:HRP2);

“You can anticipate reactions and pitch your requests/advice accordingly” (P:HRP3).

6.6.2 Relational Breadth and Depth Penetration within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

Regarding the breadth of relationships between collaborating line manager and HR professional respondents, it was identified that these individuals formed relationships on a transactional level to mutually request and gain support towards collaborative HRM delivery (as previously mentioned). Within this, line manager respondents not only sought advice and direction on HRM issues affecting their direct reports, but also sought guidance from their HR professional colleagues about their own management style and capability:

“...when it is about yourself, first of all you are not outside, so you might not see it [ability] as easily and second of all, while at the one hand you are trying to deliver and improve and be seen to be in control, but on the other hand you have to face facts and kind of know this is where I need to get, this is where I am and ask [the HR professional] what do you think about it, what is your view on it, should I be going off on a completely different path?” (C:LM7);

“I suppose each manager is different but I think, when they see that they can trust you and that you can deliver for them, if there is something that they want to leave with you to follow up they will. If there is something where you need to go back to them that happens... it could be role-playing or [providing] feedback on interviews” (C:HRP2).

In addition to relationships based on requesting and providing support, it was identified that both these actors also form wider professional relationships through their membership of organisational-wide committees and workgroups, beyond the specifics of collaborative HRM delivery:

“Partnership groups came about from best practice station agreements and it is a forum specifically geared to staff and management and they are useful in sorting out issues locally before they flare up” (P:HRP3);

“My interaction with HR would be more in terms of my function, like, looking at where the business is going, what staff numbers do we need and we would examine the best practice station agreements and if we were to start negotiations or complete negotiations, we would be on all of those working groups” (P:LM2);

“...we have partnership groups and we have Local Implementation Groups (LIG) groups for when you are implementing local changes and stuff like that. So yeah there are other structures on the ground too that have forums for maintaining the business too” (N:HRP2).

As a consequence of the relationship history between line managers and HR professionals as previously discussed, a proportion of the respondents (both line managers and HR professionals) identified that their relationships had developed varying levels of social-orientation. Both line manager and HR professional respondents reported that they found it easier to relate to one another if they had some common bonds, even beyond the professional work context. One line manager respondent (N:LM2), identified that he purposefully tried to engage on a social level with his HR professional counterparts by finding commonalities in their families,

mutual hobbies and even down to following the same football teams. They found that reaching this level of familiarity allowed them to gauge the personal qualities of his HR colleagues and served to create a more relaxed and open working relationship. Moreover, other respondents similarly found that a social element to their relationship impacted positively on their working relationship:

“... I invite people for a cup of tea to see how things are going or maybe as I get friendlier with people you might have a lunch not like every week but every couple of months have a cup of tea or a spot of lunch or something like that. So that is kind of informal contact where you talk about other things but you also kind of cover the workspace and see how things are going for them” (G:HRP1);

“...if you build up relationships with individuals in the HR group inevitably, it just makes it that bit easier because you are picking up the phone to somebody that you have met and maybe even socialised with and that you know fairly well. Basically you are talking to somebody that you know and that you can have a fairly frank discussion with them as opposed to somebody that you are more formally discussing things with. There is definitely a benefit in that” (P:LM3);

“...whether it is the cup of coffee or whether you meet them for lunch and it is not formal working arrangements. That does build up the relationship. A lot of banter, the Munster match for example there are lots of stuff and if you are only keeping it work related it's a very different relationship to getting to know the managers themselves” (C:HRP1).

Even beyond the confines of the organisational environment, both line manager and HR professional respondents identified that there have been opportunities to engage socially. The consequence of this social interaction, in turn, had transferred back into the workplace in that when it came to collaborating, there was a more informal, familiar and relaxed atmosphere:

“I would be out for pints with some of them or you would be on working groups and that sort of thing with them. There have been lots of opportunities to create relationships and they are a nice bunch of people so it is not difficult” (P:LM2);

“There were times I was out having pints with them and things like that and I'd know them really well, I know their style and I have a very relaxed relationship with them” (P:HRP2).

Having identified the depth of line manager-HR professional relationships, the next section moves to exploring how both line managers and HR professionals frame and make sense of their relationships.

6.7 Exploring How Line Managers and HR Professionals Make Sense of their Expectancies Regarding their Collaborative Relationships

As an additional lens through which to view line manager-HR professional collaboration, exploring how the respondents make sense of their collaboration serves to further enhance the primary research findings. Specifically, findings are presented on how individuals view their own role and the role of their exchange partner. Additionally, the respondents' views on how conflict may arise in collaboration and also how they evaluate the quality of their collaborative relationships are also addressed.

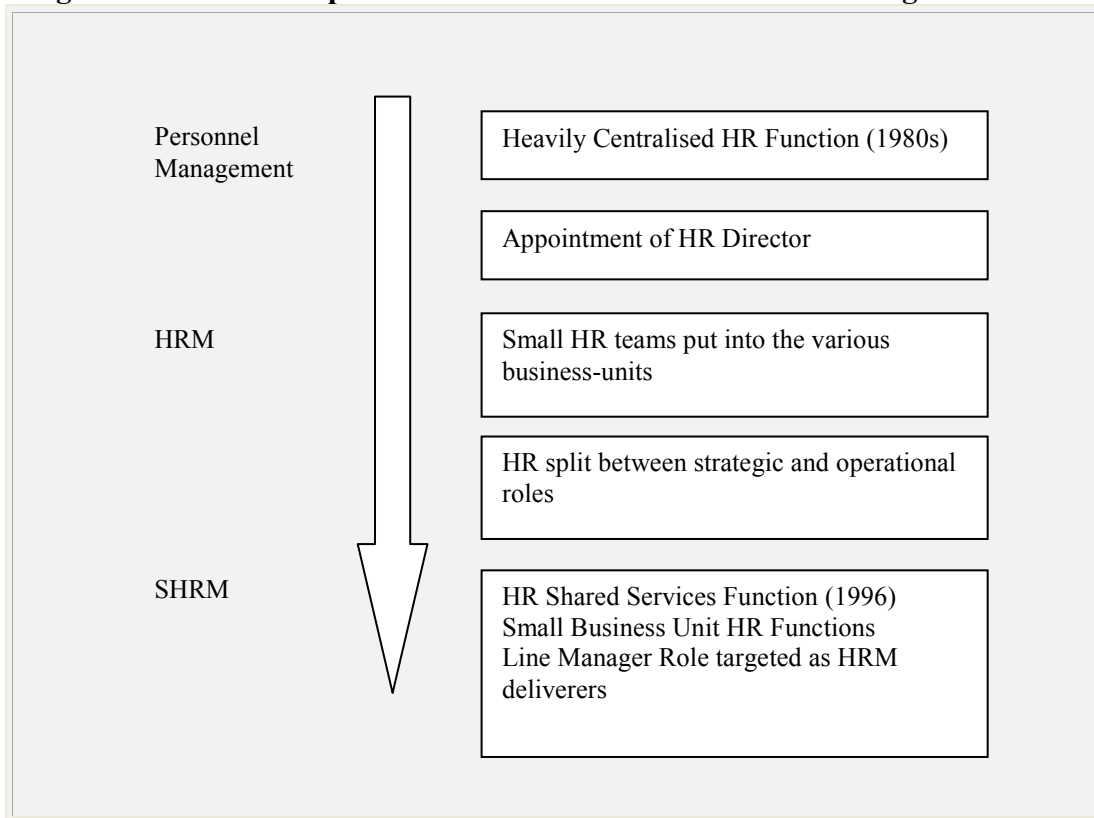
6.7.1 Exploring the Sense Making Perspectives of the Roles of Line Managers and HR Professionals in Collaborative HRM Delivery

Prior to exploring the perceptions of the line manager and HR professional respondents views on their roles with reference to collaborative HRM provision, a brief background on the development of the HR structure (figure 6.4) at the case organisation is presented to add further context to how these individuals make sense of their roles and HR delivery.

As reflected in figure 6.4, within the last two decades, a corporate decision, guided by a HRM philosophy, was made to centralise the HR functions in each business unit and within the last decade, an additional decision was made to provide a significant portion of operational HR through a Shared Services function. 18 years ago a HR Director role was created who sits as part of the Executive Director Team. As a result of the HR agenda becoming more formalised, small HR teams became established in each of the business units, staffed by HR specialists and a number of HR generalists. Line managers, in turn, assumed a more direct role in HRM delivery as HR professionals pursued a more concentrated involvement in strategic HRM and policy and procedure development:

“... a corporate decision that was taken that we would centralise here in [head office], that the operational stuff would go to Shared Services and that HR in the business units would be more strategic and we would push more out onto the line. So that was a strategic decision and some of them [line managers] don't like it, some people would prefer HR to do some jobs that they now have to do and the more you are pushing people to have conversations with people to tell them when the performance isn't good, to be very strict around abuses of sick leave and things like that. Some managers were more comfortable when HR was doing it, so there is a combination of 'Ah Jesus I don't like doing it, I'd prefer HR to be doing it' and there is no doubt that HR has become more distant because we have pulled things back... Some of our managers got caught in a situation whereby they had local people to provide a lot of the support and then we are moving on a different journey and trying to push stuff into the line and have a strategic HR function and that is difficult for them. There is absolutely no doubt it is difficult for them and it is difficult for us but it is a journey and it will be a while yet...a lot of it won't happen until you replace people, that is the reality” (N:HRM).

Figure 6.4 The Development of the HR Structure at the Case Organisation



It was identified that in the past (within the last two decades), that in contrast to the present day, there was a significant amount of local HR (personnel) presence and support across the 26 counties of Ireland:

“That same level of organisation is completely sucked out now and is at a central level only and that has not helped so there is a huge distance that has developed there... it is grand for us to be up in our ivory towers in head office but the reality is that we don't know one twenty-fifth of what's happening out there” (P:HRM).

As a result and already discussed at length, line managers are now expected and empowered to handle a significant degree of direct responsibility for HRM delivery for their direct reporting staff. In terms of how line managers and HR professionals perceive their own and each other's roles, table 6.10 illustrates that line managers view themselves and are expected by HR professionals to be the drivers of HRM delivery which concurs with the aforementioned findings presented in previous sections of this chapter. The HR professionals perceive themselves and, in turn, are expected by line managers, to support them in the implementation of HRM delivery by devising HRM policies, procedures and practice and by empowering line managers, by giving them the tools and support to execute HRM delivery.

Table 6.10 The Perceptions of Line Managers and HR Professionals of their Roles

	Line Manager Role	HR Professional Role
Views of Line Manager Respondents	<p><i>“My role is to implement and follow through” (C:LM3).</i></p> <p><i>“My role is to look after my staff and be the face/ the implementer of HR practice” (C:LM4).</i></p> <p><i>“Manage the range of needs of reporting staff – personal, developmental and work” (P:LM1).</i></p> <p><i>“In my case I would be involved in various aspects of people management” (N:LM1).</i></p> <p><i>“I am their boss so I can’t really pass the buck onto HR unless it is something heavy, where I would be out of my depth” (I:LM2).</i></p> <p><i>“My role is to manage my team - If it impacts my team, it is my problem” (I:LM3).</i></p>	<p><i>“HR are the experts on when to say things and more importantly, how to say things” (N:LM2).</i></p> <p><i>“HR put the policies in place, yeah, they set up all the agreements and all that” (N:LM5).</i></p> <p><i>“HR offer guidance and support on policy implementation and assistance with completing various HR related tasks” (C:LM3).</i></p> <p><i>“HR are a service provider” (P:LM1).</i></p> <p><i>“They give that overview and they would have an appreciation of the issues in other stations” (P:LM3).</i></p> <p><i>“I would have expected and experienced HR to be the go-to guys when you have problems involving your staff as they are the minders of that space” (I:LM4).</i></p> <p><i>“HR are an assistance and logistical support” (I:LM1).</i></p>
Views of HR Professional Respondents	<p><i>“I would expect them to take on responsibility for their direct reports and when they need HR support, that they would involve me in a timely fashion” (I:HRP1).</i></p> <p><i>“Line managers are responsible for managing their staff, their needs, issues and development, that’s generally how it works” (I:HRP2).</i></p> <p><i>“Line managers are there to deliver and implement, we could have hundreds of policies but if line managers don’t implement them they are useless” (C:HRP3).</i></p> <p><i>“...like the day-to-day stuff is handled by the line and within the line, that would be my observation and experience to date” (P:HRP1).</i></p>	<p><i>“It is influencing a lot of the time” (C:HRP1).</i></p> <p><i>“I see it as a mixed role – strategic and very operational and administratively based” (I:HRP1).</i></p> <p><i>“...HR in (P) will act as the minders of that system and offer advice and direction in terms of what has to happen, when it should happen and that it does happen” (P:HRP1).</i></p>

In terms of the sense-making processes of the line manager and HR professional respondents, numerous frames of reference were cited. For line managers, their wealth of experience was identified as one such factor which has influenced how they

perceive their role and the role of the HR professionals. 19 out of the 20 line manager respondents had worked in a variety of technical roles within the case organisation before they were promoted to line managers. Consequently, these managers perception of their role relies heavily on their personal experiences as they evolved into line manager positions:

“I would say the management end of things has been learned very much on the job and as a result, I would say my management style is probably a reflection of the management style I was subjected to and there has been an attempt to open it up in terms of management courses dealing with things like delegation and motivation and innovation all of those kind of issues” (I:LM4);

“My own experience is certainly on the job, a bit of common sense I suppose, and then going to my peers and my colleagues if I have an issue with something and I don’t know how to deal with it, I go to talk to one of the guys to see if they had it before or what they can suggest. A lot of it is trial and error I suppose” (C:LM1).

The line managers also reported, as already noted in earlier sections of this chapter, that they have received a wealth of training and development over the years and this has impacted on how they view and exercise their involvement in collaborative HRM delivery:

“We would, we have over the years, done extensive training. I would have done, I am in the company a long, long time now and I would have done a lot of training on interaction and dealing with people” (N:LM5);

“Over the past ten or more years, right throughout the organisation, there has been a realisation that there is a people piece in there and if you haven’t got that piece, no matter how good you are technically, if you can’t get on well with people, you are putting yourself into pure disaster” (P:HRM).

The line managers also identified that the procedures and policies developed by the HR professionals have also influenced how they make sense of their collaboration as there are explicitly defined parameters, expectations and instructions to follow within the various HRM policies. For example, as a result of policy direction, line managers are now charged with sitting down with their staff at the start of the year to devise an individual training and development plan and in terms of recruitment, many line managers actively participate on interview panels. Custom and practice within the organisation also influences how line managers perceive and assume HRM

responsibility, as more senior line managers would have experienced HR professionals handling many of the issues that they are now responsible for themselves:

“In some cases, to be fair to the guys, they have come from an older school and it’s not just their strength and they were put into jobs because they had technical strengths and they didn’t possess great people skills” (P:HRM);

“Some managers were more comfortable when HR was doing it” (N:HRM).

With reference to the HR professional respondents, they indicated a number of factors which inform how they make sense of their relationship with line managers. As a number (9) of respondents (HR professionals, HR Managers and Group HR Managers) had worked in technical roles within the organisation, before transferring into a HR professional role, this has meant that these individuals have also amassed a wealth of observations, experience (both in line management and HR) and history to base their judgements on:

“I was both soldiers. I was the personnel manager first, before we called it HR in Limerick and then I came to Cork and I was in the HR job there for a couple of years and then I went back out to line management before I came back to HR. So I have seen both sides of it and certainly as a line manager, having practiced as a line manager, I would be very much of the view of saying ‘it is the line managers’ responsibility to call the issue to being with’. Number one, to be aware of it and to be mindful of the issues and call it as you see it and then know the basics of the sort of ER procedures and all that, and know how to process that through the system and if you don’t know that at, the very least, you know enough to go and talk to your manager. I would be very strongly of the view that it is the line managers responsibility, at the end of the day, they are the people reporting to us, they should be dealing with all of that kind of stuff and the more expert the line become in that, the less need to call on the HR people” (P:HRM).

As previously noted, HR professionals are directly responsible for devising HR policies and furthermore, for up-skilling, through management development programmes, line managers’ ‘soft’ skills and this has impacted on how they expect line managers to handle HRM implementation and the degree of HR support they (the HR professionals) need to provide:

“Years ago, line managers probably would have relied on HR specialists, but now the managers ... know what they have to do and their responsibilities and they dip into HR as they need and we obviously get them involved in things to

get the buy-in from them but they are quite autonomous, they are not sitting there waiting for HR, you know” (N:HRP1);

“I would expect them to take on responsibility for their direct reports and when they need HR support that they would involve me in a timely fashion” (I:HRP1).

6.7.2 Making Sense of the Quality of Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

When it came to exploring the quality of the collaboration between line managers and HR professionals, issues such as receiving HR support which impacted positively for their team and staff members, were significant factors for line manager respondents in their assessment of the quality of their interactions which supports the findings already presented. Regarding the HR professional respondents, HR compliance and consistent implementation by line managers were indicators used to gauge the quality of collaboration, again as already noted within previous sections of the chapter.

Viewpoints offered by line manager respondents indicated that their existing working relationships were effectively meeting their HR needs and the needs of their direct reports:

“At the level we operate here, all the managers have good relationships with HR” (P:LM1);

“...would have a very good relationship with most of the HR group and I get on with them reasonably well” (P:LM3);

“I see the importance of having a close relationship with HR and I suppose it could be stronger but it is working well in terms of what I need from them at the moment” (I:LM2).

From the HR professional respondents’ perspective, there were a range of responses in terms of their assessment of the quality of their collaborative relationships with line managers. Reflective of the earlier findings, the competence of line managers to handle HR-related issues was seen to impact on how well they assumed HRM responsibility in contributing to the collaborative relationship. Namely, some line managers excel in the routine HR management of their direct reports and, in turn, collaborate with the HR professionals on specialist issues. Conversely, less competent

line managers were more reluctant to assume a HR delivery role which presented additional challenges for the HR professionals:

“Some people are natural at it and they need very little training, other people no matter how much training you give them, they still find it a challenge” (C:HRP2);

“Some of them wouldn’t know an awful lot about the issue and others would know as much about it as I would do, so really they only want to bounce something off you and I don’t mind that” (P:HRP2).

Recognising and identifying areas where a positive contribution was made is another factor used to gauge the quality of HR professionals’ relationships with line managers:

“...if you feel like you are collaborating with the business and you feel like you are making an impact, then that is motivating” (I:HRP2);

“...some of our best partnership groups work because they have asked us to work with them and asked us for help in what they should be doing and how they should be doing XYZ and that has worked particularly well” (N:HRM);

“I will provide a service to a line manager in any way I can...As you can probably detect, I really like what I do” (P:HRP2).

In illuminating the viewpoints of line managers and HR professionals assessment of the quality of their collaborative relationships, the issue of conflict arose as a factor. As such, the following discussion of the findings address the issue of conflict between the collaborating line manager and HR professional respondents and the impact of this conflict on their relationship ties and the outcomes of their collaboration.

6.7.2.1 Making Sense of Conflict within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

Representing the cross-functional nature of line managers and HR professionals, the majority of conflict arising within collaborative HRM relationships lies with the different perspectives, background and operating reality of each group. Again, as alluded to in previous findings, some line manager respondents perceived the HR function as administrative and also as an overhead within the organisation, divorced from the practical reality of the business:

“HR can be seen as an overhead and an administrative function, it can possibly get peoples backs up if they see HR getting involved in things if it differs from the general management agenda. I haven’t had any major conflicts or I haven’t been involved in any major conflicts but it does happen” (I:HRP2);

“A number of HR activities don’t appear to add value to the business; I sometimes wonder would we be doing the same things in a pure commercial environment” (C:LM6);

“Line managers would have the perception that HR is a cushy number involving going around having chats” (P:HRP3).

Within this research, conflict between line manager and HR professional respondents varied considerably and usually manifested in differences of opinions, tensions and lack of appreciation between each group of respondents:

“Big time conflict. You will hear line managers say ‘it will never work’, ‘I haven’t time for that’, ‘that’s not how it works’, they are not interested in being developed. The operational and HR agenda are not always aligned. There is some truth behind the ivory tower perception of HR. The PHR system needs more training. HR needs to come and help as opposed to sending a note ‘see attached new policy’, we need to put the human back in HR” (C:HRP3).

A number of frustrations were also identified by both the line manager and HR professionals respondents which may cause conflict in terms of working together (Table 6.11). These include the time it takes for HR professionals to follow their own procedures, a lack of mutual understanding and cooperation, the difficulty with HR systems, the hierarchical nature of gaining access to certain managers, inflexibility between line and HR and the issue of uncoordinated training around some HR initiatives.

Table 6.11 Potential Sources of Line Manager- HR Professional Conflict

Issue	Supporting Sample of Interview Excerpts
Timeframes	<i>“The wheels turn fairly slowly within the recruitment”</i> (P:LM1);
Lack of appreciation	<i>“Some of the HR people are relatively young compared to their counterparts in [the organisation] in general and some of them haven’t grown up in [the organisation] so they don’t know the business – they have a long way to go in terms of learning what we do”</i> (I:LM2) <i>“Sometimes what is proposed can be a little bit short-sighted on either side and sometimes it can be a little bit longsighted”</i> (P:LM3); <i>“...a line managers solution to fix a problem might not be aligned with the wider HR view of where things need to go”</i> (C:LM7);
Lack of cooperation	<i>“Managers on occasion would like, maybe sometimes, I wouldn’t say ignore, but park, certain procedures to bring situations about. So HR becomes sort of a guardian and minder of procedures and processes in those situations and that could be over things like recruitment issues, it could be over the need for induction to take place, whereas the local management team might say listen, that is something that you guys in HR can look after rather than us here”</i> (P:HRP1);
Difficulty of systems	<i>“The [HRIS] system is poor and very user-unfriendly”</i> (C:LM6);
Hierarchical organisation may get in the way	<i>“The organisation can get in the way, like if you need to get something done you generally have to talk to I.T., shared services, the station manager, the guys in [X department], it’s pure crazy”</i> (P:HRP3)
Inflexibility	<i>“HR do not support local flexibility but a significant amount of local flexibility needs to take place in order for the work to be done...HR are making black and white decisions in a grey scenario”</i> (N:LM1)
Organisational structure	<i>“In general the terms and conditions of the parent company are imposed and limit the managerial flexibility within this very different business (‘I’ business unit). I do accept that that the HR people are only the messengers of corporate policy”</i> (I:LM1).
Training issues	<i>“...anything I am saying is around the IT area where I work, more so than in [the general organisation], but even in regard to awareness of HR practices there is nothing, there is no awareness courses or programmes here that I have come across...In my view we wouldn’t be very strong in that area...the only HR training I have had would be in the area of discrimination awareness, bullying and harassment and that is it”</i> (C:LM5).

Conflict was also recognised as having a positive effect on collaborative line manager- HR professional working relationships as it forces both parties to recognise each other’s needs and demands and to actually work through solutions in a collaborative manner:

“I think the system needs conflict to an extent” (P:LM2);

“Conflict is inevitable and important for debate” (N:LM2);

“I suppose you would argue and it can be positive” (P:LM3).

In attempting to manage conflict and to find workable solutions, a variety of tactics were used by both line manager and HR professional respondents. In the majority of

cases, each party raised their issues in an effort to reach a mutually beneficial compromise. In other instances, attempts to persuade and influence were pursued:

“It usually ends up that you end up thrashing it out and going around...and it goes around for a while” (P:HRP1);

“...you can persuade, you can influence, you can do a bit of negotiation but at the end of the day, a call isn't yours” (G:HRP1);

“...talk to people to get them to try and influence what they are doing” (I:HRM);

“...what we had to do over quite a long period of time was to win them over because what they were looking for wasn't achievable and wouldn't be approved but it took some time and it is quite contentious because line managers regard people up in Head Office as sitting up in their ivory tower whereas they have to be down there on the line, fighting the enemy as it were, now they are not the enemy but do you know what I mean” (P:HRP2);

“Frank discussions geared towards obtaining flexibility within the limits of the law” (I:LM1).

Acknowledging the conflicts and tension within the line manager and HR professional respondents relationships, it was identified that there was scope to improve the quality of their relationships both in terms of their relationship ties and relationship outcomes. Therefore, the following section takes cognisance of this.

6.7.2.2 Scope to Improve the Quality of Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

Although the majority of line managers and HR professionals reported that they had satisfactory collaborative working relationships, it was still identified that there was room for improvement on both sides.

In terms of addressing the geographic distance that exists between some line managers and their HR professional colleagues (reiterated in numerous sections of this chapter), calls were made for HR professionals to strive to have more face-to-face contact with the line managers in the business-units:

“Absolutely, there is a need to be more visible and also a need to be more visible on the proactive side is important. I think there is also a need for HR in the businesses to dedicate time to Group HR activities as well. It was very

strong, I think, some years ago where each business line was on what was called the HRC-the HR committee. I don't know how effective that is compared to what it was; I think the businesses need to get more involved in Group policies and working together as a group and the HR Managers in particular” (I:HRM);

“...there could be some sort of pan-organisational conferences to bring people together to get a common view of things” (C:LM1);

“I have no doubt it can be improved and certainly being out there, being visible and being available to them if they need you” (C:HRP1);

“Getting them [line managers and HR professionals] together more often, talk about issues, just shoot the breeze, good open discussions to challenge and exchange views” (G:HRM2).

In terms of HR geographical distance and visibility, the HR Manager for the (N) business unit identified that it is an aspiration, however, not practical, to meet with every manager on a consistent and regular basis and hence, HR professionals are dispersed across wide regions, as opposed to individual locations:

“We could and should be more visible out in the line, the problem that I have in a business unit this size is, if you look from our front line managers up, there is about 500 people. Even if I said I was going to meet each of them once in the year, that is 500 days plus they are spread over the 26 counties which makes it difficult as well, so there is a logistical issue and I'm not making excuses, there is a logistical issue to it and we could be doing more there is no doubt, but when you are up here you get called on everything” (N:HRM).

To enhance the quality of their interactions and quality of their collaborative relationship with HR professionals, many line managers suggested that HR professionals might get closer to the business operations by participating in local general management meetings in a proactive, as opposed to reactive, manner:

“We have weekly meetings on a Monday morning where we go through our various issues and maybe somebody from HR could meet with us once a month and attend one of those meetings. Sit in for an hour and go through the HR space.” (I:LM4).

In addition it was also recognised that there could be merit in exposing line managers to HRM, through rotating them into the HR function itself and, in turn, these

individuals when they return to line management may have more of an appreciation for HRM policy and practice:

“Well I think the best thing we can do is rotate as many people in and out as possible within the function, I mean there will be a place for specialists [but]... you shouldn't be here for years and years because you become institutionalised. You should be moving people in and out so that they can understand the business and have the credibility and if somebody comes to them to talk to them about issues related to pay or whatever they can say 'well I know, I have been there' and therefore they can help. So that would be one thing and also roles should be reviewed every now and then, they shouldn't be left to evolve” (G:HRP2).

A business partner model was favoured by one business-unit HR professional as a means for improving the collaborative relationship between line managers and HR professionals. Furthermore, it was noted that certain HR professionals need a deeper general business understanding to relate to line managers in an attempt to deliver credible and practical service delivery. In addition, it was identified that there was scope for HR professionals, “...to sell their wares” (C:HRP3) and communicate what they can offer to line manager respondents as a means of improving the utilisation and impact of HR professionals to their relationships with line managers.

Having identified how the respondents make sense of their collaborative HRM relationships, the final section now moves to concentrate on the impact of line manager-HR professional collaboration.

6.8 Impact of Line Manager-HR Professional Collaboration

Participating in collaborative HRM was found to have impacted both positively and negatively on line manager and HR professional respondents alike. In addition, the impact on the individual business-units and the overall organisation is also noted.

6.8.1 Individual Impact of Collaborative Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

In terms of the individual impact on line managers of collaborating with HR professionals, the positives were identified as improving relationships with direct reports through managing their issues competently within the line:

“There is a personal relationship built up with your reports ... keeping things locally, solving things locally, getting agreement locally improves my relationship with them and improves performance within the group as a whole. What I value around talking to people, for me is it is certainly positive and I believe that unless we come to an impasse on something it always is positive” (C:LM1).

In delivering on their HRM remit, the line manager respondents also identified that the support made available from the HR professionals makes it easier for them to implement HRM practice and frequent interaction may foster closer relationship ties which has already been discussed at length in previous sections:

“Positive impact is that they are there to support you” (C:LM3);

“I use them [HR professionals] as a sounding board and they give advice and support” (I:LM2);

“My interaction with HR is positive, I find them very professional and good on confidentiality” (I:LM3).

Additionally, when line managers demonstrated their ability to handle HR issues, they found that their direct reports were more inclined to approach them with various issues. Finally, being empowered to directly impact on their team, and their direct reports within it, was identified as a further positive impact accruing to line managers from having assumed an involvement in the delivery of HRM policy and practice.

In presenting the negative impacts of participating in HRM delivery, the time consuming nature associated with HRM was identified as a negative impact:

“...If it is a disciplinary issue, or if it is a troubled employee, or if it is somebody having issues at home or whatever, they are obviously the issues that can be difficult to deal with because they take time” (P:LM3);

“...Well it certainly takes time. I think the performance review process that we have does throw up issues say in relation to performance, in relation to

training requirements, in relation to development and developmental opportunities and all of those things can lead to interactions with Group HR or HR professionals in the business” (C:LM8);

“A lot of my time would be spent in some guise or another on people management issues especially as my group has grown to 190 staff” (I:LM1).

In a similar vein, line managers reported that they had an existing heavy workload and HRM delivery adds to that burden:

“I don’t always have time to put on the HR hat as I have calls to answer” (C:LM5).

The delicate nature of some sensitive HRM issues may be heightened when the competence levels of line managers is not particularly high which may cause a negative impact to line managers:

“...perhaps if somebody does something and they have to be disciplined, that is a delicate thing to handle. Not alone do you have to handle that person but you have to also watch how the team is taking it as well” (N:LM5).

In turning to the HR professionals, the positive impacts of their involvement in collaborative HRM delivery are that they are getting the chance to demonstrate valuable contribution to the working lives of their key customers i.e. line managers and their employees. Additionally, through their interaction episodes and collaborative working relationships, HR professionals are forging stronger relationship ties with line managers. Furthermore, by interacting with line managers, the HR professional respondents identified that it brings them closer to the operations of the business which, in turn, serves to increase the value of service and support they can provide:

“It’s easier to do your job if you know why you are doing it” (I:HRP1);

“...the better relationship I have with line managers because the majority of people here are engineers and I have no engineering background and I have never had any exposure to engineering before I came here” (I:HRP2);

“I have an ongoing relationship with them and I have enormous respect for them, so keeping in touch and providing a service they need from me is very easy and pleasurable. I enjoy it immensely” (P:HRP2).

In presenting the negative impacts, the HR professional respondents identified that they found it challenging, at times, to collaborate with line managers who are geographically dispersed:

“The negative, the worst thing, is actually trying to get them as they are so busy, say that if I tried to get 3 managers together and sent out a meeting invitation in outlook, it could be 3-4 weeks before the three of them would have a free slot together” (N:HRP1).

The HR professionals also identified that they are stretched in terms of their workloads and providing HRM support and delivery is time consuming:

“...we are 4 people trying to look after training for 1200 people and we have a CPD accreditation with Engineers Ireland which means that everyone in the company has to get on average five training days per year” (I:HRP2).

It was also identified by some HR professionals that that it can be frustrating having to ‘chase’ line managers to exercise certain HRM responsibilities and the job of being a HR professional can be stressful in itself:

“It can be quite frustrating at times and I suppose a lot of people see HR issues as HR’s job to do even though you need the managers to implement them... I didn’t think there was going to be as much of having to chase managers” (C:HRP1).

6.8.2 Business-Unit and Organisational Impact

The collaborative working relationships between line managers and HR professionals also impacts at business-unit and organisational levels. Firstly, taking the business unit, evidence was found in the observations of the line manager and HR professional respondents whereby they have seen HR-related issues being resolved at a local level:

“I have seen issues being resolved very quickly on the ground by a line manager with one of his staff members where when it involved someone in HR it becomes a bigger issue but again it is down to the manager themselves and it is down to the issue sometimes and it is inevitable that it is going to go down that route but I definitely think there is benefit in keeping as much of that at that level as possible” (P:LM3).

At a broader level, it was unanimously recognised that that line manager-HR professional collaboration needs to occur as line managers are seen as the vehicle for

HRM implementation in the business-unit: *“For HR delivery, we have to collaborate, acting individually we are not going to get our jobs done”* (I:HRP1). Furthermore, it was identified that collaboration serves to create a greater degree of appreciation and consistency between the line manager and HR professional exchange counterparts: *“We’re all singing from same hymn sheet”* (N:LM2).

In addition, through their collaborative relationships, HR professionals are gaining greater insights about the operational issues, demands, concerns and pressures of line managers and, in turn, may harness this appreciation and pitch their HR service delivery to accordingly:

“So the more relationships I have with the managers, the closer I get to the business and what the business actually does which can be removed from HR ... so yeah, that’s positive...I would be getting closer to what people are actually doing and that’s good for me because it makes me better at my job if I am aware of what the company is doing” (I:HRP2).

The line manager respondents indicated that they are also benefiting as they are learning on-the-job while delivering for the business-unit through exposure to managing a range of routine HR issues which is important for their personal development in their existing role:

“...exposure and experience to add to your belt and it gives you an insight into the skill sets required to influence people” (C:LM7).

From organisational perspective, the dominant positive organisational impact of collaborative HRM relationships is that through working together, line managers and HR professionals are engaged in knowledge sharing, are combining their respective resources and are learning as a result:

“Interaction has got to be in the business’s favour. It helps to draw efficiencies, create learning opportunities and foster professionalism and cooperation” (C:HRP3).

As a consequence of this collaboration, HRM delivery is gaining both a HR professional and line manager operational dynamic which may result in flexible, workable and practical HRM implementation across the organisation:

“I think you are getting more complete solutions to problems or issues if you are getting people to work together on a particular problem or particular issues. (P:HRP1).

For the organisation to deliver on the Group HRM strategy, *“It is critical to have line manager-HR relationships, HR cannot be effective if they don’t have this relationship”* (I:LM3), as the line manager has to be seen to be driving the HR agenda within the business units across the organisation in order to elicit support and compliance from their direct reports:

“It is really the line manager who should be delivering HR across the businesses and so I suppose the positive things coming out of that is that if we equip the line managers to do that I think the [the organisation] will be a better organisation culturally. I think it will be easier to implement things like change agreements and stuff like that because I think the line manager has a key role, he influences both the upwards and downwards so it’s kind of piggy in the middle, so if they are positively disposed to HR and good people practice, then that will infiltrate across the organisation. So I think for the line managers point of view, there is a huge win for them in that they get more motivated and more productive teams, therefore their job is easier and for the HR person, is that they get more business savvy and they can see where they can add value to the business rather than being just seen as a cost and there is a two-way learning which can happen definitely which can benefit both communities in the transfer of skills” (G:HRP1).

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the descriptively orientated primary research investigation on line manager-HR professional collaborative HRM relationships, structured around the research framework, addressing the themes of human resource management, social exchange, social penetration and sense-making. The role of the research respondents (line manager: delivery; HR professional: strategic and operational) are identified and furthermore the interaction and exchanges within these respective relationships have been highlighted. It was found that these relationships are characterised by varying levels social exchanges and the relational norms of trust and reciprocity and on the close, varied or distant interaction and exchange activity. Moreover, it was demonstrated that varying levels of collaborative relationship breadth, depth and ties exist between line managers and HR professional respondents.

Finally, the impacts of collaborative relationships varied in both a positive and negative sense at the individual and organisation levels. Chapter 7 turns to explore the interpretation of these findings with reference to the literature review chapters.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

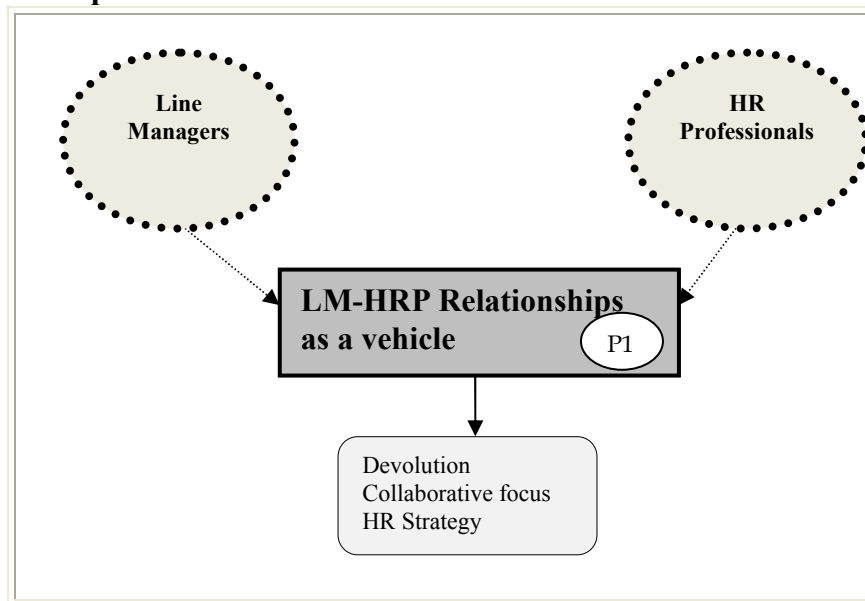
7.0 Introduction

Having presented the research findings from this descriptive research on collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships in Chapter 6, this chapter turns to interpret these findings with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. Linking the findings with the themes identified in the human resource management, social exchange, social penetration and sense-making literatures, the previously illustrated research framework serves to specifically direct this discussion in terms of the 10 research propositions presented in Chapter 4.

7.1 Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships as a Vehicle for HRM Delivery

As an illustrative aid, figure 7.1, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, anchors and illustrates the discussion of proposition 1.

Figure 7.1 Proposition 1 Extracted from Research Framework



Reflecting the literature that HRM devolution is a strategy that purposefully includes line managers as a key stakeholder in the implementation of HRM policy and practice, the case organisation's HR strategic direction supports this position. Moreover, the findings reflect that the decision to involve line managers in HRM delivery and the resultant relationship they assume with HR professionals, may be traced back to the case organisation's decision to centralise their HR function and placing small specialised HR functions and professionals in each of the business units. As such, with

fewer HR professionals to assume transactional HRM delivery, line managers, as a group, embraced much of this responsibility with the collaborative support of their HR colleagues. Specifically in the research findings, the line manager respondents identified that they were the first port of call for their direct reports with reference to HRM delivery and, as such, they were involved in, and responsible for, a host of HRM activities including employee relations; resourcing; training and development; work scheduling; staff development; absence management and performance management; briefings; communications and health and safety management, echoing the categorisation of line manager involvement in HRM activities within the literature reviewed.

Turning to the HR professional respondents, who form line managers' collaborating counterparts, the literature signals that their role within HRM centres on strategic activity (HR policy and strategy development) in conjunction to an operational involvement. However, in terms of this study's findings, mixed evidence was found in relation to the emerging strategic HRM activity and responsibility assumed by the HR professionals themselves. The HR professional respondents working in specialist roles, such as learning and development in particular, identified that they were heavily involved in strategic issues whereas, more generalist HR professionals identified that performing transactional tasks and administration featured heavily in their respective remits.

In addition, the HR professional respondents also assumed an involvement in the HRM activities of recruitment; training and development; employee relations; contracts; communication; administration and safety management, which signals that HR professionals still maintain an involvement in HRM delivery alongside their line manager counterparts and hence, adds further evidence to support their collaborative relationships. Turning to the emerging collaboration between line managers and HR professionals, the business-unit HR Managers and the Group HR Managers expected and, in turn, observed collaboration between line managers and HR professionals. In

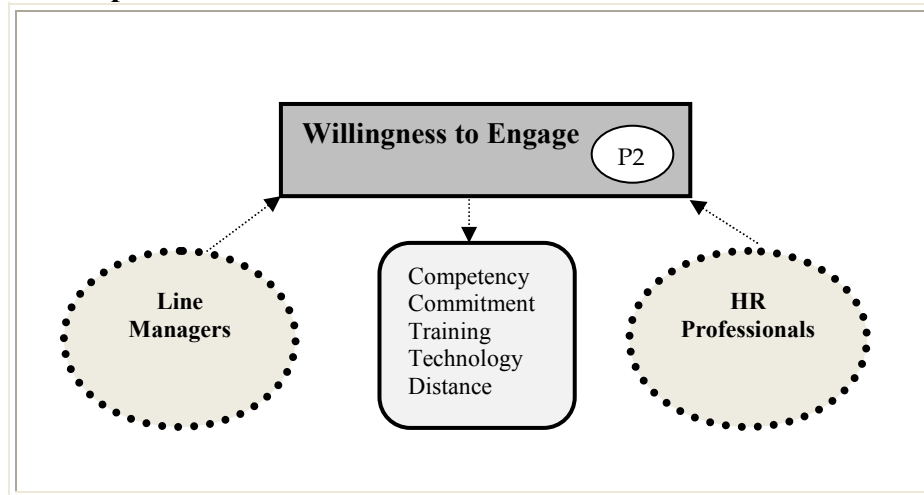
this vein, they identified that line managers are best positioned to deliver and evoke HRM policy and practice.

The amalgamation of line manager, HR professional, business-unit HR Manager and Group HR Manager respondent viewpoints on collaborative HRM delivery, therefore significantly supports the first proposition (*P1: The involvement of line managers in HRM delivery and, in turn, the collaborative relationships formed between them and HR professionals, are key vehicles for HRM delivery*), in that the collaborative relationships formed by line managers and HR professionals are a key vehicle for HRM delivery. As such, this indicates that the case organisation supports the contention in the literature that HRM is not treated as a tertiary activity or sidelined exclusively into the hands of HR professionals. Instead, the collaboration of line managers and HR professionals at the case organisation enabled HRM practice to become aligned, integrated and supportive of the wider organisational strategy and simultaneously, business-unit operations. Although line manager-HR professional relationships were recognised as central in the delivery of HRM, it was acknowledged that such relationships vary considerably and the following discussion provides some insight into the reasoning behind this.

7.2 The Willingness of Line Managers and HR Professionals to Engage in and Support Collaborative HRM Delivery

From the findings, support for the second proposition (*P2: A variety of individual and organisational-level factors influence the willingness of line managers and HR professionals to engage in and support collaborative HRM delivery*) was found at the case organisation whereby collaborative HRM delivery was premised on an array of factors both unique to the individuals concerned and furthermore, the organisation itself. Figure 7.2, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, serves to illustrate the discussion of proposition 2.

Figure 7.2 Proposition 2 Extracted from Research Framework



While accepting that line manager-HR professional collaboration is a key vehicle for HRM delivery, the findings from the primary research, echoing the existing research, indicates that a range of issues impact on the willingness of these individuals to engage in and discharge collaborative HRM. In terms of the individual issues influencing the realisation and emergence of collaborative HRM delivery, the competency of line managers, according to the line manager respondents themselves and HR professional respondents, was a significant issue at the case organisation, centering around a wide variance of skills and knowledge, commitment to people management, in addition to technically related line management priorities and work overload. Specifically, all of the line manager respondents grew into line manager positions, having excelled technically in their previous organisational roles. In turn, some found the transition to managing and dealing with a HR remit a challenge.

Of interest, of the 20 line manager respondents, their tenure within the case organisation ranged from 1 year to 35 years and as such, their breadth of experience of HRM varied accordingly. Moreover, the longer established line managers reported a less than enthusiastic commitment to HRM responsibility as they had previously been able to 'dump' HR-related issues on their local HR professional colleagues. The issue of competing priorities and heavy workloads was also revealed in the findings themselves and, as such, HR issues such as PDP's (with the exception of pressing ER

related issues) would often fall in the line managers list of priorities in the face of competing operational issues.

In addition, variance was found in relation to the HR training and development received by line managers. Particularly, some line managers perceived that their training and development was sporadic and uncoordinated, however, in recent years the respective business-units had begun to establish targeted and coordinated development programmes to address this issue. For HR professionals, a finding within the literature reviewed indicates that some HR professionals may not be equipped to assume an increased strategic involvement having become entrenched and specialised in transactional HRM delivery. This was reflected, to a limited degree, in the findings whereby HR professionals, less experienced in their roles, were identified as requiring up-skilling to accommodate a more strategic HRM remit.

Moving beyond the individual issues which impacted on and influenced collaborative HRM delivery, the literature identifies that the introduction of self-service HR information systems and organisational intranets has also influenced line managers in taking ownership of HRM issues and for HR professionals to communicate and brief on HR issues. In relation to this point, mixed findings emerged at the case organisation. The HR intranet which contains a wealth of HRM documentation and procedures was identified as a positive resource by both line manager and HR professional respondents. Conversely, the most recent incarnation of the human resource management information system featured less favourably, in that the line managers found the software cumbersome and complicated and the training offered on the system was found to be lacking.

The literature in Chapter 2 indicates that in certain situations, line managers perceive themselves to be 'the piggy in the middle' between their direct reports, senior management and HR colleagues, with ambiguous scope and authority to make and take HRM decisions. However, at the case organisation, the consensus with the respondent groups was that line managers were expected and actually responsible for

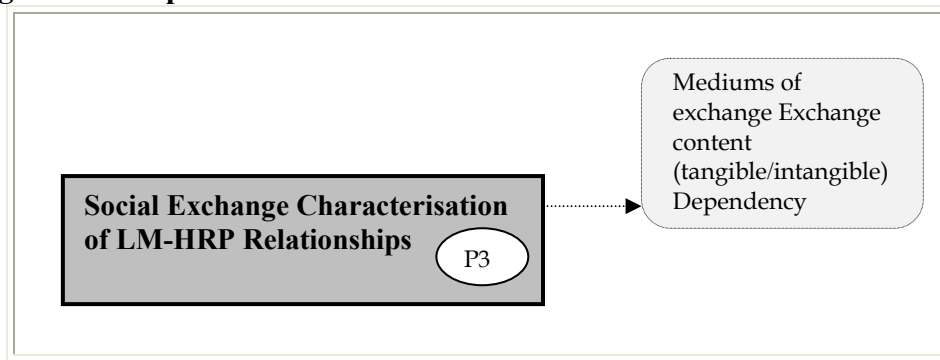
the HR issues of their direct reports up until issues escalate which, in turn, then required professional assistance and direction from their HR professional colleagues. In addition, the organisational decision to centralise HR professionals and introduce a shared services HR function, at the expense of having a localised HR presence and support in each and every location, resulted in some line manager respondents identifying that there was significant distance issues between themselves and their HR professional colleagues. Despite its absence in the HRM literature, this issue of distance impacted on the relationships formed between line managers and HR professionals and also the frequency of their interactions and exchanges.

The distance issue resonated in the findings, where the centralisation of small HR professional teams, as previously mentioned, have become established in the business units, predominantly at Head Office, coupled with the shared services HR function which has also accelerated distance issues for line managers and HR professionals. Echoing this finding, some line managers, particularly those that have experienced the previous 'personnel management approach', identified that HR, as a function, has become 'out of touch' and 'removed' from the day-to-day operations. Furthermore, the perceived credibility of some HR professionals in the eyes of some line managers was not as strong as in the past, in certain instances, as they no longer have the same degree of interaction with their HR colleagues, who are now located away from them at Head Office. In presenting the alternative view, line managers who had experienced difficult HR issues with their direct reports reported a high level of regard for the credibility of their HR professional colleagues and acknowledged that the majority of HR professionals had a good understanding of the operational end of the business, reflecting that the overwhelming majority of HR professionals came from an operational background originally within the case organisation.

7.3 The Social Exchange Characterisation of Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

As an illustrative aid, figure 7.3, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, serves to illustrate the discussion of proposition 3.

Figure 7.3 Proposition 3 Extracted from Research Framework



The central tenet of the social exchange literature is that exchanging actors reciprocate positive behaviour towards one another in order to satisfy their mutual interests and to maintain their relationship. From this study's findings, as already alluded to, the line manager respondents identified that they interpret HRM policy and practice in conjunction with the operational realities within the business units and, in turn, HR professionals offer informed specialist support and guidance and intervene in escalating HRM issues.

Reflecting the cross-functional emerging nature of such collaboration, for some line managers in particular, the two functions were seen to be completely different and, as such, they did not relate particularly well to HR procedures, whereas, others were more supportive of HR policy and practice and identified the potential for cross-fertilisation of ideas and approaches between the two functions. As such, some line manager respondents within the case organisation identified that they, in practice, forge collaborative relationships with HR professionals as they simply do not possess HR specialist skills or an in-depth and technical knowledge of HRM policies to discharge their HRM responsibility by acting in isolation. Relatedly, the HR professional respondents also identified that they too established working relationships with line managers, as these were the individuals who were implementing HR policies within the business-units and hence, may require specialist support which would be more easily facilitated if a relationship existed.

As depicted in Chapter 3, the influence of repeated interaction over long time periods, the contribution and investment exhibited between individuals and the establishment of common goals all impact on the formation of collaborative exchange relationships. Interestingly, the findings contrasted from this position within social exchange theory by indicating that long time periods of interaction were not automatically necessary for collaborative relationship formation.

Adopting a social exchange lens surfaced the emerging relationship features present within collaborative HRM relationships and therefore, regarding the third proposition (*P3: Line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships are characterised by social exchanges in terms of the mediums of interaction and the exchange content*), considerable support was found for the social exchange characterisation of collaborative HRM delivery. Within this, varying degrees of interaction were identified by the case research respondents ranging from close (which relied heavily on social exchange) to distant (in which there was significantly less scope for social exchange and interaction). In addition, the content exchanged between line managers and HR professionals, mirroring social exchange theory, embodied both tangible and intangible exchanges. Turning to the primary research findings, various mutually beneficial exchanges and interactions (both tangible and intangible) took place between the line manager and HR professional respondents, mirroring the literature in the area and as summarised in figure 6.2. With reference to the assignment of the various tangible and formal HRM activities in the line manager and HR professional literature, line managers were assuming an involvement in HRM implementation and delivery. Likewise, HR professionals were supporting them in this remit through offering support, assistance and guidance of an intangible nature and, at times, intervening in escalating issues, ensuring HRM standards compliance while also contributing at the strategic level to HRM policy and practice.

The favoured medium of exchange was face-to-face interaction. The reasoning behind this was that it enabled both line manager and HR professional respondents to develop more personable working relationships and it also enabled them to pick up on body

language and non-verbal communication displays. In addition, it was also identified by the line manager respondents that they found it easier to interact face-to-face with their HR colleagues on issues of a sensitive nature. Corresponding with the literature that indicates the importance of forging relationships, as individuals who are socially, as well as formally, connected may gain and share information in a more fluid manner, both line manager and HR professional respondents identified that, at times, they would meet with each other over lunch or for a cup of tea to discuss issues in an informal manner, away from the confines of the office environment. However, this was not the case for the entire respondent population, as some line managers, who did not have geographically close relationship with their HR professionals, specifically identified the HR function as a hierarchical system which proved difficult to navigate in terms of seeking specific individuals or support on certain HR policies and procedures. This, in turn, was identified as a factor for them not turning immediately to their HR professional colleagues and instead seeking advice further up within the line management function, most frequently from their own line manager.

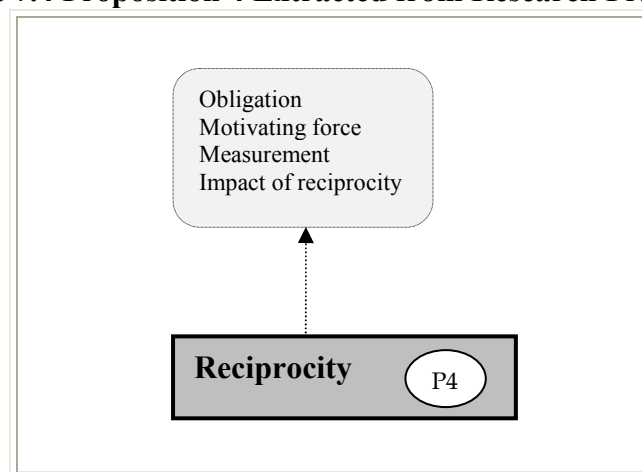
The telephone, as a medium of exchange, was utilised on pragmatic grounds due to the fact that a significant proportion of line managers and HR professionals do not work in close proximity to each other which would facilitate face-to-face collaboration. Despite this, the nature of the organisation meant that most line managers would be familiar with the HR professionals within their business-units and that communicating over the phone, in between face-to-face meetings, was a pragmatic way of 'tick-tacking' and seeking clarification, as opposed to facilitating in-depth collaboration. Of interest, email communication was the least preferred and adopted means of communicating between line managers and HR professionals with the exception of scheduling meetings in person. Moreover, many of line manager respondents identified that they divided their time visiting different work locations to supervise their staff and, as such, would not have constant access to computer facilities, except for when they are situated in their core office locations. In addition, it was also identified that the sensitive nature of HRM issues do not particularly lend themselves to the written word due to concerns about data privacy and protection.

Finally, there were varying degrees of mutual dependency and authority within line manager-HR professional relationships which required social exchange and interaction. In summary, where close communication was facilitated between line manager and HR professional respondents, their collaborative relationships were characterised by high levels of social exchange. Contrastingly, when their relationships became more distant, the degree of social exchange diminished. However, the respondents still relied on their past interaction history and familiarity as a basis for establishing and re-establishing collaborative relationships as and when needed.

7.4 The Role of Reciprocity within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

The fourth proposition (*P4: Reciprocity is a key feature in achieving and sustaining collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships*), was not explicitly supported in an interaction and exchange context in the findings drawn from the primary research. As an illustrative aid, figure 7.4, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, anchors and illustrates the discussion of proposition 4.

Figure 7.4 Proposition 4 Extracted from Research Framework



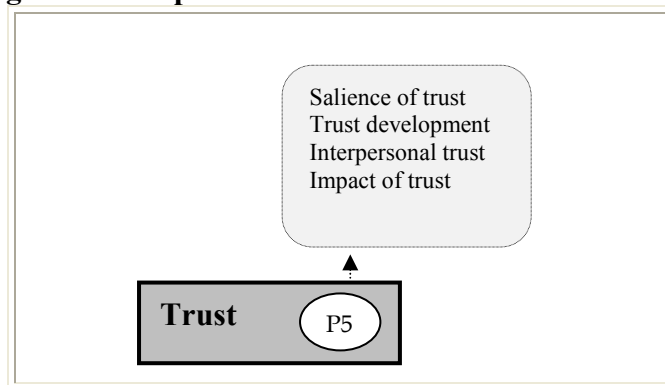
By collaborating, some line manager and HR professional respondents observed the contribution they both invest and contribute to HRM delivery itself and this, in turn

resulted in higher degrees of receptivity in terms of requesting assistance, providing guidance and accepting advice. However, reciprocity specifically did not emerge to motivate or encourage line managers and HR professionals to collaborative and hence, was not calculated, documented or leveraged. Instead, reflecting the professional nature of line manager-HR professional relationships, the tenets of reciprocal ‘give and take’ surfaced in the actual exchanges within collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships. The research findings illustrated that the line manager respondents ‘give’ to HR professionals by taking on HRM responsibility which was traditionally the province of HR professionals and HR professionals ‘take’ from line managers in that they had more scope to decrease their transactional involvement in HRM delivery and concentrate on strategic-level HRM activity. In turn, these line managers ‘take’ by seeking advice and intervention and policies ‘given’ from the HR professionals..

7.5 The Role of Trust within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

With reference to the fifth proposition (*P5: Trust is a key feature in the emergence of collaborative relationships between line managers and HR professionals, influencing their interaction and exchange*), favourable support was found in the research findings in terms of the need, importance and the impact of trust in line manager-HR professional collaboration. Figure 7.5, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, serves to illustrate the discussion of proposition 5.

Figure 7.5 Proposition 5 Extracted from Research Framework



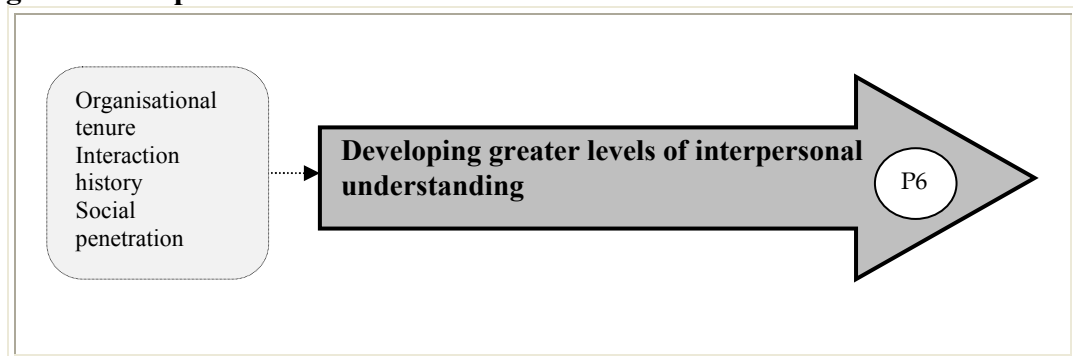
In terms of the research findings, the line manager and HR professional respondents identified that trust was earned through lengthy interaction histories. In addition, these respondents contrasted somewhat with the existing literature in the field by identifying that trust did not exclusively require longevity of interaction history. Particularly where a limited number of collaborative episodes resulted in positive impacts and outcomes, this was also deemed to facilitate the emergence of trust. In addition, the HR professional respondents identified that, at times, line managers were not unquestionably trusting of them; instead, trust was earned through positive interaction and exchange history. The consensus from the line manager respondent population was that as they placed a general expectation of trust in their HR professional colleagues and through their subsequent collaborative activity, that the level of trust grew.

Although the existing research highlights the salience of trust due to the fact that collaborating individuals may find themselves in vulnerable positions with respect to their exchange counterpart, the primary research findings, however, did not point to any situations of opportunistic power imbalance or mistrust around the procedures, operations or interpersonal treatment within their relationships. The consensus from the research respondents, as reflected in the discussion on dependency, was that there were times when each party relied upon the other but at no time did line manager nor HR professional respondents act opportunistically in a manner which negatively impacted on their levels of trust. Regarding collaborative HRM activities, the respondents acknowledged that there were standard procedures and parameters of responsibility established around each HRM activity. As such, each individual in collaboration had a general expectation of what was expected of them and what may be expected of their exchange counterpart. Specifically the cross-functional nature of line manager-HR professional relationships highlighted the salience of trust, as both of these exchange actors due to their functionally distinct roles, found themselves reliant upon each other with reference to discharging collaborative HRM delivery. Consequently, faced with their emerging HRM responsibility (line managers: delivery and HR professionals: less transactional and more supportive), trust was found to positively influence their collaborative exchanges.

7.6 The Degree of Social Penetration Exhibited within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

Some degree of support for the sixth proposition (*P6: Through collaboration, line managers and HR professionals develop greater levels of understanding of each other*) is provided in the research findings. As an illustrative aid, figure 7.6, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, anchors and illustrates the discussion of proposition 6.

Figure 7.6 Proposition 6 Extracted from Research Framework



With reference to relationship development within line manager-HR professional collaboration, the interaction history of line manager and HR professional respondents, often, but not always, stemmed over years of interactional and exchange episodes. Therefore, it was identified that there was considerable scope for line managers and HR professionals to form a degree of familiarity and an interaction history as the respondents (both line manager and HR professional) ‘grew up’ in the organisation, starting off their respective careers in technical roles and developing into line manager and HR professional roles respectively. Consequently, the line manager respondents identified that their understanding of HRM practice and moreover, the HR professionals within the organisation, had been amassed and emerged throughout their experience as practising line managers. As such, they identified that they felt sympathetic towards newly appointed line managers who have not had the opportunity to build up formal and informal relationships and contacts which were of salience to the day-to-day handling of HRM delivery.

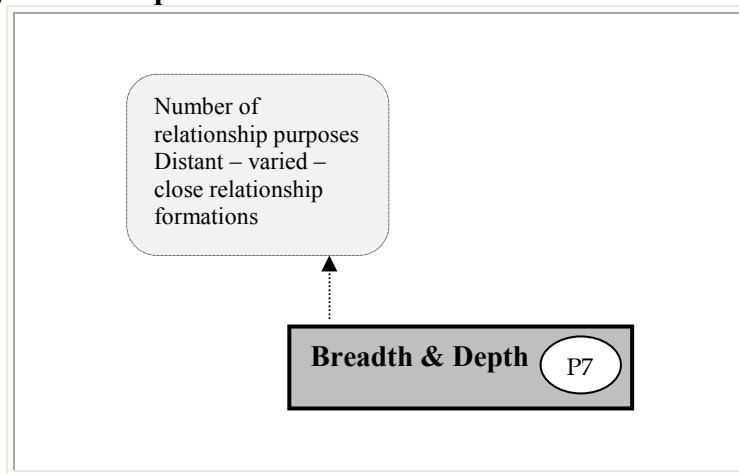
Specifically as result of adopting social penetration theory, the relationships between line managers and HR professionals were traced from mere superficial (distant) exchange towards more closer-personable exchange, whereby each party to the exchange reached greater level of understanding of each other. Therefore, as a result of their collaborative interaction and exchange and reflective of the ‘onion’ analogy of social penetration, the HR professional respondents identified that some of their interactions with line managers were akin to ‘short and sharp’ interactions, reflecting superficial exchange or ‘yes or no’ answers around policy clarification. Moreover, both the line manager and HR professional respondents identified that as their collaborative activity increased (both in terms of time and interaction episodes) more personal relationships emerged. Building this type of close relationship, therefore, enabled both line manager and HR professional respondents to foster a more open culture when it came to the exchange of tasks and responsibilities associated with HRM delivery. Specifically, the line manager respondents identified that as a result of their interaction history and simultaneously their interaction episodes, in a similar vein to the previous discussion on trust, they became more comfortable and knowledgeable and also respectful of the HR professionals’ ability and credibility.

Relatedly, the HR professional respondents identified that by moving from superficial exchange to actually interacting more frequently and closely with line managers and, in turn, learning about their exchange counterpart, they became more in tune with what was required from them and moreover, their [line managers] teams of direct reports. However, for those line managers and HR professionals who were geographically distant from one another, there was less practical scope to actually build and develop relationships towards a close-personal dimension. Moreover, and as previously highlighted in this discussion, some line manager respondents viewed the HR function and their HR professional colleagues as being divorced from line management and this impacted on their willingness and motivation to strive to develop and progress their existing distant relationships.

7.6.1 Relational Breadth and Depth Penetration within Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative Relationships

Regarding the seventh proposition (*P7: Line manager-HR professional relationships vary in terms of breadth and depth as a reflection of the scope of their collaborative activity*) the research findings concurred that there is variance in the breadth and depth within line manager-HR professional relationships. Figure 7.7, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, serves to illustrate the discussion of proposition 7.

Figure 7.7 Proposition 7 Extracted from Research Framework



The present study indicated that the breadth of relationships between line managers and HR professionals embodied numerous topical areas. Specifically, relationships occurred for the specific purpose of HRM delivery whereby the line manager and HR respondents interacted and exchanged to support this objective and to a lesser extent, were also formed and facilitated by their mutual membership of various organisational committees and workgroups. Within this finding on relationship breadth, however, not all line manager and HR professional respondents identified that they participated in such workgroups and committees and, in turn, did not have the means or accessibility to develop their relationships.

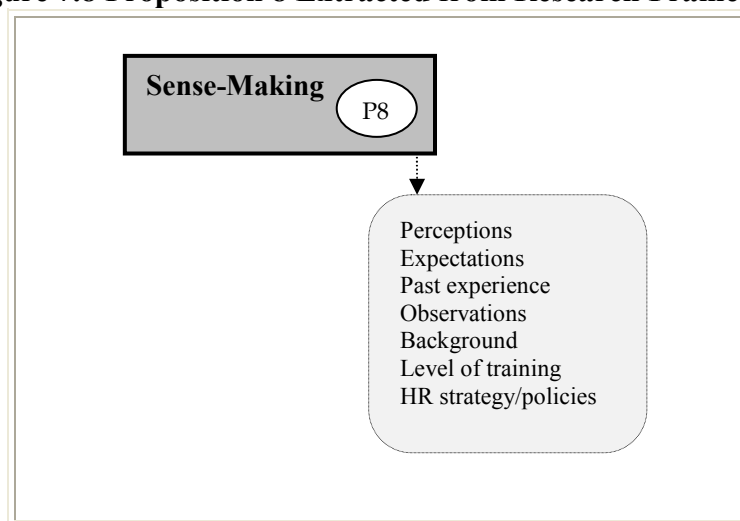
For those respondents (both line manager and HR professional) who worked in close proximity to one another, more social and personable exchanges were reported and the impact of this was that the line managers identified receiving timely, personal,

relevant and credible support from their HR professional colleagues. In turn, the HR professional respondents in this category, identified that they had considerable opportunities to collaborate with their line manager colleagues both formally and informally and, as such, gained deeper insights into the operational-end of the business. Supportive of the variance within the proposition itself, not all line manager and HR professional respondents had the opportunity to develop increasingly deep social relational ties due to geographical distance issues. Moreover, at times, line managers perceptions of HR professionals being ‘out-of-touch’ and separated from the operational issues discouraged them from establishing or developing relationships with them (HR professionals).

7.7 Exploring the Sense-Making Perspectives of the Roles of Line Managers and HR Professionals in Collaborative HRM Delivery

Regarding the sense-making processes of the research respondents, providing positive support to the seventh proposition (*P8: Multiple issues influence and enable line managers and HR professionals to make sense of their collaborative relationships*), the findings illustrated that a range of issues influenced their perceptions of their respective roles. As an illustrative aid, figure 7.8, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, anchors and illustrates the discussion of proposition 8.

Figure 7.8 Proposition 8 Extracted from Research Framework



In turn, these perceptions impacted on how they made sense of and enacted their collaborative HRM delivery remit. In particular, emerging HRM strategy and policy direction, past experience, observations and exposure to training and development interventions influenced and enabled the line manager respondents to identify that they themselves were responsible for managing and utilising all the resources within the line function, including human resources. For line managers, their perception of their role relied heavily on their personal experiences as they evolved into line manager positions. The line managers also reported that custom and practice within the organisation also influenced how line managers perceived and assumed HRM responsibility, as the shift of HRM responsibility to line managers had become apparent. Therefore, in terms of the line manager and HR professional respondents, these individuals drew upon their past experiences observations to form their interpretations, in accordance with the sense-making literature, with reference to implementing HRM policy and practice to make sense of their collaborative relationships.

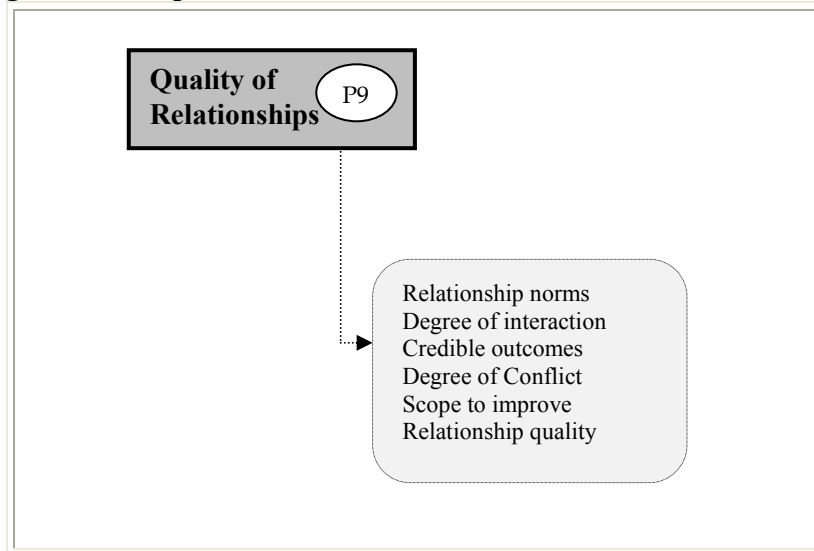
Moreover, the HR professional respondents, by having contributed to the development of HRM policies, having facilitated the centralisation of HR and by establishing a shared services HR function, influenced the formation of their perception as the providers of specialist HRM delivery and contributors to strategic HRM activity. As the majority of HR professional respondents had worked in technical roles within the organisation, before transferring into a HR professional role, this meant that these individuals had also amassed a wealth of observations and experience (both in line management and HR) to base their perceptions on both their own role and that of their line manager colleagues, with regards to HRM delivery. The impact of this, therefore, resulted in the HR professional respondents identifying line managers as responsible for transactional HRM implementation, further mirroring the literature in the area. Through these various lenses, it emerged that both line manager and HR professional respondents form perceptions of their identity and moreover, the identity of their exchange counterpart in terms of the roles they assume within collaborative HRM delivery. This supports the overarching sense-making position which purports that the process of sense-making may permit individuals in exchange to construct a level of

understanding and perception of both their own role and that of their exchange counterpart with reference to their collaborative remit in this instance.

7.7.1 Making Sense of the Quality of Line Manager-HR Professional Collaborative HRM Delivery Relationships

The confluence of relational norms, individual competency, conflict, receiving and offering credible HRM impacts and organisational issues such as HR distance from the core organisational operations, provided support for the ninth proposition (*P9: Both the relationships arising between line managers and HR professionals and the outcomes from collaboration influence the perceptions of the quality of collaborative HRM delivery*). Figure 7.9, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, serves to illustrate the discussion of proposition 9.

Figure 7.9 Proposition 9 Extracted from Research Framework



Firstly, in terms of the relationship formed by line managers and HR professionals at the case organisation, the level of trust, commitment and receptivity within the line manager-HR professional respondent relationships informed their assessment of the quality of their relationships. As previously alluded to, those respondents who worked in close proximity to one another experienced closer levels of social interaction and exchange and, as such, more concentrated levels of trust and reciprocity of investment to their relationship emerged. Within these specific relationships, the utilisation of the resources embedded within line manager-HR professional relationships was

accelerated. In addition, the HR agenda became more integrated in the line function more fluidly and the HR professionals had scope to demonstrate the credibility of their contribution to the management of teams and direct reports within the business-units.

Regarding the individual factors impacting on the respondents views of their relationship quality, the degree interaction and exchange was a factor. As such, there was a degree of divergence between the respondents in that where close social exchanges were evident the quality of their collaborative relationships were viewed as 'strong' and 'professional'. Presenting the alternative, the line manager and HR professional respondents who did not engage in close or personable collaborative activity reported that the quality of their relationship was more distant.

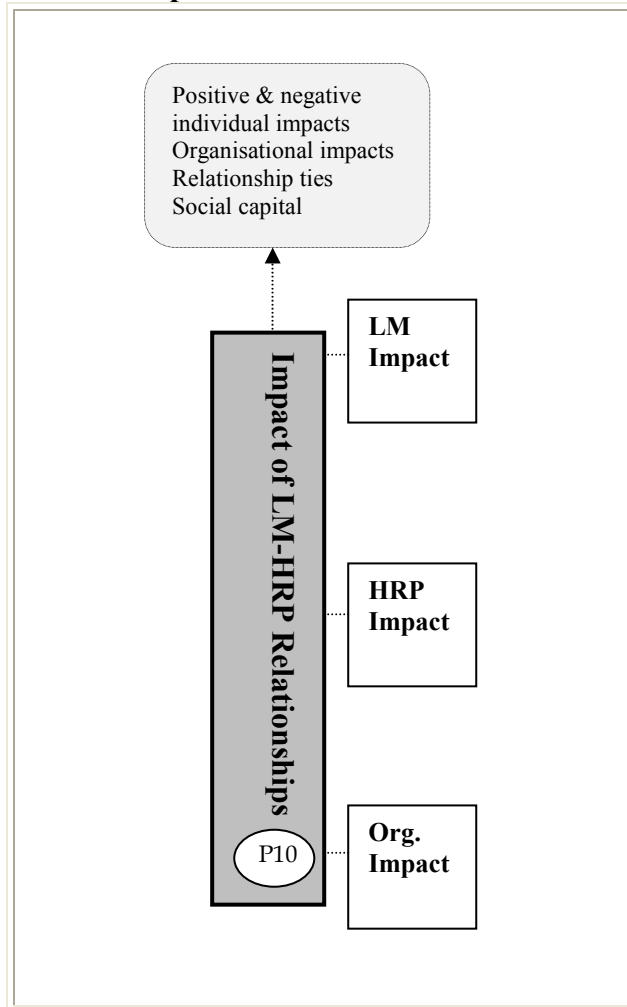
In addition, conflict emerged within line manager-HR professional relationships in terms of the different opinions of each exchange actor, and consequently tensions arose in the realisation of their collaborative HRM remit due to variations in appreciation between the functionally distinct line and HR functions. Nonetheless, conflict also proved to be beneficial to the line manager-HR professional relationship as in certain instances, as it provided a starting point to attempt to re-achieve social and relational congruency by forcing both parties to recognise each other's needs and demands and to actually work through solutions in a collaborative manner.

Moreover, the sense-making and also social penetration literature suggests that evaluating quality, in this instance in terms of relationships, is not limited to reflecting upon previous interaction and exchange history; it also extends beyond this into forecasts for maintaining interaction, increasing interaction activity and even terminating collaboration. Related to this forward looking perspective, scope emerged for reducing the degree of distance and enhancing the interaction and exchange activity between the HR and line management functions, as means of building upon and realising the quality of their relationships and the impacts to be achieved from their collaboration.

7.8 The Impact of Collaborative Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

With reference to the final proposition (*P10: Impacts arise at the individual and organisational levels from line manager-HR professional collaboration*), the findings themselves reflect that both positive and negative impacts arise for collaborating individuals. As an illustrative aid, figure 7.10, extracted from the research framework presented in chapter 4, anchors and illustrates the discussion of proposition 10.

Figure 7.10 Proposition 10 Extracted from Research Framework



These positive impacts centred around the enhanced utilisation and effectiveness of HRM practice and improved relationships with direct reports. In a positive sense, and as already alluded to, line managers as the vehicle for HRM delivery, became directly involved in HRM activities relating to their own direct reports, which, in turn, enhanced the speed of decision making on HR issues. On the issue of training and

development, the line manager and HR professional respondents concurred that the emerging coordinated and targeted approach taken to developing the 'soft skills' of practising line managers contrasts with the positions taken in the literature where such training may be inadequate. Collaborative HRM relationships emerging from line managers and HR professionals working together on joint tasks, sharing responsibility and combining resources and eliciting each other's respective strengths to achieve these goals, introduced the positive impact of social capital. On this issue, line manager respondents identified that they forged close relationships and developed rapport with HR professionals. As a result, they received helpful resources and support in terms of HR direction, guidance and support, which positively impacted on how they managed and implemented HRM delivery within the line function.

In turning to the HR professionals, the positive impacts, similarly reflected the existing literature in that they received the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the working lives of their key customers i.e. line managers and their employees through providing service delivery. Regarding the liberation of HR professionals to concentrate on strategic HRM concerns, a mixed picture emerged in the findings as the HR professional respondents stressed that pressing operational HRM issues could not be abdicated completely. However, the HR professionals were achieving a greater understanding of line manager roles; they gained exposure to the operational reality of the organisation and this, in turn, enhanced their appreciation of the line manager role. This created an informed understanding and a closer relationship for the HR professional respondents with their line manager colleagues which, in turn, enabled them to better serve their line manager colleagues and to pitch their guidance and assistance on more practical levels.

In presenting the more negative impacts of participating in HRM delivery, in a similar vein to the existing studies in the field, the line managers reported that they had an existing heavy workload and that taxing HR issues had the potential to divert significant amounts of their time and resources. However, it was noted that such troublesome issues were of a rare occurrence. Although not made explicit in the

literature, in a practical sense, the number of the line manager's direct reports also impacted on how much time it took the line manager respondents to manage HRM delivery. The respondents that had relatively small teams identified the impact as minimal, whereas, when their teams grew, HRM delivery became more time consuming. Utilising and navigating HR policies, practices and systems also proved problematic for the line manager respondents and evidence to this finding was reflected when these respondents reported on their handling of sensitive ER issues. Moreover and as already noted, the consensus from the line manager respondents on the newly established HR information system was that the software was difficult to utilise and that the training behind the system was inadequate. Additionally the HR professional respondents found it challenging, at times, to collaborate with line managers who are geographically dispersed which was a unique finding with reference to the existing literature base. The HR professionals also identified that they were stretched in terms of their workloads (for example, there were 4 HR professionals in training and development function in business-unit (C) serving the needs of 1200 staff). Moreover, for some of the HR professional respondents their scope to concentrate on strategic HRM activities was reduced as a result of having to support less competent line managers in the execution of their transactional HRM responsibilities.

The organisational impact of line manager-HR professional collaboration manifested in a variety of ways including the desired strategic integration of HRM with firstly, line managers and secondly, HRM, with the core operations of the organisation. Also, the aforementioned individual-level impacts for line managers and HR professionals also contributed to the organisation level impacts as this collaboration was both a means achieving and implementing HRM strategy. The particular challenge, for the case organisation, was to facilitate this collaborative line manager-HR professional relationship in order to capitalise on the positive impacts and manage the negative impacts as previously discussed, to gain consistency in the realisation and utilisation of line manager-HR professional relationships. Overall, the dominant positive organisational impact of collaborative HRM relationships is that through working together, line managers and HR professionals were engaged in knowledge sharing,

combining their respective resources and were learning as a result. In turn, this helped to generate efficiencies, create learning opportunities and foster professionalism and cooperation. However, this impact was not universally observed in the research findings, as there were variances in the degree of interaction and collaborative activity between line managers and HR professionals.

7.9 Interpretation of Research Findings to the Existing Research in the Field

Having distilled the discussion on the aforementioned research propositions, it is timely and appropriate to illuminate the implications of this research study with reference to the existing understanding of line manager-HR professional relationships. As such, table 7.1 illustrates the key implications of this research, having discussed the research findings with reference to the relevant literature in each respective field. These implications will have particular relevance to the conclusions and recommendations drawn in the final chapter.

Table 7.1 Interpretations and Implications of Current Research

Proposition	Findings from Previous Research	Findings from Current Research	Implications of Current Research
<p>P1: The involvement of line managers in HRM delivery and, in turn, the collaborative relationships formed between them and HR professionals, are key vehicles for HRM delivery.</p>	<p>Line Manager-HR Professional Collaboration is the dominant approach to HRM delivery (Budhwar, 2000; Harris et al., 2002; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 200; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Mesner Andolsek & Stebe, 2005; Cascon-Pereira et al., 2006; Watson et al., 2007; Dany et al., 2008; Zhu et al., 2008; Perry & Kulik, 2008).</p>	<p>The HR strategy, Group HR Managers and business-unit HR Managers advocate and empower line managers to assume HRM responsibility. Collaboration between line managers and HR professionals occurs to varying degrees.</p>	<p>Proposition supported Indicates that line manager-HR professional relationships may not be consistent across organisations.</p>
<p>P2: A variety of individual and organisational-level factors influence the willingness of line managers and HR professionals to engage in and support collaborative HRM delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Individual Issues</i> Resistance to change, competency and commitment issues and competing priorities and work overload (Harris et al., 2002; Nehles et al., 2006; IRS, 2006b; Hutchinson & Purcell 2007; Brandl et al., 2009). • <i>Organisational Issues</i> HR systems (Renwick & MacNeil, 2002; Papalexandris & Panaayatopolou, 2006; Alleyne et al., 2007). Authority levels amongst both groups (McConville & Holden, 1999; Renwick, 2000; Cascon Pereira et al., 2006; McConville, 2006). Absentee HR specialist scenario (Thornhill & Saunders, 1998). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Individual Issues</i> Line managers and HR professionals competence and capacity emerged as factors influencing their willingness to engage in and support collaborative HRM delivery. • <i>Organisational Issues</i> Ease of access and navigation of HRIS and intranet influenced the respondents engagement in HRM responsibility. Authority issues did not feature. Distance issues influenced the willingness of line managers and HR professionals to engage in and support collaborative HRM delivery. 	<p>Proposition supported Signalled the individual level issues which support and impede line manager-HR professional collaboration. Illustrates that distance can be a factor compounding the distinction and reluctance of line managers and HR professionals to engage and cooperate.</p>
<p>P3: Line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships are characterised by social exchanges in terms of the mediums of interaction and the exchange content.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Social Exchange Literature</i> Relationships are formed to satisfy mutual interests (Blau, 1964; Huston & Burgess, 1979; Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). The exchange process between individuals may be categorised as material, informational, and symbolic (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992; Druckman, 1998; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For Blau (1964) and Homans (1979), social interaction is the foundation of collaboration. 	<p>Line Managers collaborate with HR professionals as they are not specialists in HRM. Equally, HR professionals collaborate with line managers as these are the individuals who deliver HRM practice. Tangible transactional HRM activities are collaboratively delivered in conjunction to intangible guidance and support provision. Face-to-face communication is preferred in the realisation of collaborative HRM delivery.</p>	<p>Proposition supported Not all line managers and HR professionals are in a position to interact in a social manner which may negate the social exchange process. Addressed the under-researched area of cross-functional social exchange.</p>

	<p>The social exchange literature (Huston & Burgess, 1979; MacNeil, 1980; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Lynch, 2006; Bhal & Ansari, 2007) pronounces a degree of mutual dependency between collaborating individuals.</p>	<p>Dependency amongst line managers and HR professionals varies in terms of the competence of the respective individuals and the issues at hand.</p>	
<p>P4: Reciprocity is a key feature in achieving and sustaining collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships.</p>	<p>Reciprocal positive individual treatment may serve as a starting and furthermore, as a stabilising mechanism, for interpersonal relationships (Blau, 1964; Aselage & Eisenburger, 2003). Reciprocity may be measured and calculated (Sahlins, 1972; Sparrow & Liden, 1997).</p>	<p>‘Give and take’ nature of relationships surfaced. Reciprocity specifically was not viewed as motivating or encouraging line managers and HR professionals to collaborative and hence, was not calculated, documented or leveraged.</p>	<p>Proposition not explicitly supported Professional nature of HRM provision reduced the scope for reciprocity as a motivating or stabilising factor. Calculative aspect of reciprocity rejected</p>
<p>P5: Trust is a key feature in the emergence of collaborative relationships between line managers and HR professionals, influencing their interaction and exchange.</p>	<p>Collaborating individuals are vulnerable (Rousseau, 1998; Bloise, 1999). Trust is earned throughout an interaction history spanning significant time periods (Whitener, 2001). Trusting relationships promote positive collaboration (Settoon et al., 1996; Bhal & Ansari, 2007).</p>	<p>Vulnerability heightened due to cross-functional nature of collaborative HRM delivery. Trust was also evolved from limited but productive interaction episodes.</p>	<p>Proposition supported Contrastingly, trust may not require significant interaction history to evolve No instances of untrustworthy behaviour found.</p>
<p>P6: Through collaboration, line managers and HR professionals develop greater levels of understanding of each other.</p>	<p>The theory of social penetration acknowledges the stages in which social relationships may develop in terms of deepening social interaction (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Onion analogy – peel back layers (Taylor & Altman, 1987).</p>	<p>Relationships developed from distant to close both formally and informally over significant history of interaction. Interacting more frequently and, in turn, learning about one another, the respondents became more in tune with what is required from them.</p>	<p>Some degree of support for proposition. Not all respondents had the opportunity to develop more informed working relationships.</p>
<p>P7: Line manager-HR professional relationships vary in terms of breadth and depth as a reflection of the scope of their collaborative activity.</p>	<p>Breadth of relationships varies for collaborating individuals. Depth of relationships varies for collaborating individuals (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Baack et al., 2000).</p>	<p>Relational breadth was limited for the research participants due to their position and role within the organisation. Depth varied more considerably ranging from distant to very close personable friendship-like relationships.</p>	<p>Proposition supported Variation in relationship depth was more pronounced than relational breadth. Relationship depth ranged from distant to close friendship-like relationships.</p>

<p>P8: Multiple issues influence and enable line managers and HR professionals to make sense of their collaborative relationships.</p>	<p>Sense-making -retrospective process of drawing on past experiences to make sense of current situations (Weick, 1995).</p>	<p>Line managers and HR professionals formed perceptions of their roles based on a range of factors including; emerging HRM strategy and policy direction, past experience, observations and exposure to training.</p>	<p>Proposition supported Perceptions influenced the manner in which the respondents engaged in and supported their collaborative remit.</p>
<p>P9: Both the relationships arising between line managers and HR professionals and the outcomes from collaboration influence the quality of collaborative HRM delivery.</p>	<p>Sense-making is ongoing (Weick, 1995). Conflict is likely in collaboration (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). Rewards/outputs received from collaborating are regularly evaluated (Altman & Taylor, 1973). The quality of relational ties may also be an important feature to the perceived quality of the relationships themselves (Granovetter, 1973; Gubbins & Garavan, 2005).</p>	<p>The confluence of relational norms, individual competency, the degree of conflict, receiving and offering credible HRM impacts and organisational issues such as HR distance from the core organisational operations, all featured in the quality evaluations of the respondents relationships.</p>	<p>Proposition supported The relational connection, the emergence of conflict and the rewards/impacts received from collaborating emerged as significant features in evaluating the quality of line manager-HR professional relationships.</p>
<p>P10: Impacts arise at the individual and organisational levels from line manager-HR professional collaboration.</p>	<p>Individual Impacts <i>Positive</i> – enhanced utilisation and effectiveness of HRM practice and improved relationships. <i>Negative</i> – time and resources constrained. Organisational Impacts Strategic integration of HRM with wider organisational strategy. Embedding HRM practice within the line manager function.</p>	<p>Individual Impacts <i>Positive</i> – receiving and demonstrating HR support and expertise. <i>Negative</i> – time and resources. Social capital was forged between collaborating line managers and HR professionals. Organisational Impacts Desired strategic integration of HRM and embedded HR practice in the line manager function.</p>	<p>Proposition supported Social capital outcome illustrates that knowledge sharing, combining respective resources helped to draw efficiencies, create learning opportunities and foster professionalism and cooperation. This was not universally observed in the research findings, as there were variances in the degree of interaction and collaboration.</p>

7.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion of the main research findings with reference to the literature reviewed and the research propositions. In terms of collaborative HRM delivery, the viewpoints of case study respondents reflected that line managers and HR professionals were engaged exchange within this collaborative remit. Within the findings, a dichotomy occurs across the respondent population with close and distant relationships reported. In spite of, and moreover, as a result of this, the supporting findings have contributed to illuminating a diverse range of relationships features and furthermore, has illustrated the varied impacts arising both at an individual and organisational level. Chapter 8, now turns to the conclusions, implications and recommendations derived from this research exercise.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions, Recommendations and Contributions

8.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conclusions, recommendations and contributions from the data gathered and the literature reviewed in relation to the under-researched area of collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships. As such, the chapter addresses the conclusions drawn on the features and impacts of these relationships with reference to social exchange, social penetration and sense-making literatures which were utilised to explore these relationships. Moving from this, recommendations for further research and practice are presented. In addition, the contribution of this study is illustrated with reference to the particular gaps identified in Chapter 1 and the key findings of the study itself, as previously alluded to in Chapter 7 and table 7.1 and the limitations of the study itself are recognised.

8.1 Conclusion of the Research Study

The purpose of this descriptive research study, as a timely response to address the paucity of research in the area, was to explore the features and also the impacts of line manager-HR professional relationships that emerge in the realisation of collaborative HRM. As such, this is explicitly identified in the overarching research question:

What are the features and associated impacts of the line manager-HR professional relationship that emerge in the realisation of collaborative HRM?

The conclusions drawn from this study therefore seek to address the question itself.

8.1.1 Conclusions: Features of Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

Arriving at this conclusion stage of the study provides a timely opportunity to illustrate the key features of line manager-HR professional relationships. Drawing on human resource management and social exchange theory surfaced the features of line manager-HR professional relationships. In addition, social penetration theory and sense-making provided a framework to trace the emergence and development of collaborative relationships. As such, the features of line manager-HR professional relationships are as follows:

- Line manager-HR professional relationships are *not homogenous* in their nature as the degree of interaction and exchange varied as a number of features impacted upon the relationships themselves;
- Regarding the line managers, their working history within the organisation and hence their experience and competence (although not specifically related to one another) surfaced as one factor which influenced their willingness to assume HRM responsibility and moreover, engage with their HR professional colleagues;
- Illustrating the *cross-functional nature* of the line management and HR functions, the research findings pointed to varying degrees of appreciation between each function. As such, a perceived distance and disconnection emerged for some of the respondents (both line manager and HR professionals);
- In terms of *distance*, for line managers and HR professionals who had significant scope for face-to-face interaction and exchange, their collaborations were characterised by high degrees of social exchange. Contrastingly, when their relationships emerged as distant, embodying little collaborative engagement, the degree of social exchange diminished;
- Turning to *social exchange characterisation* of line manager-HR professional relationships and reflecting the personable nature of social exchange, the preferred mediums of interaction and exchange for the research respondents were face-to-face interactions. However, this was not always a practical approach and hence, telephone communication was used in a pragmatic sense to facilitate the collaborative relationship between line managers and HR professionals;
- The *exchange content* embodied both tangible HRM delivery and more intangible exchanges positioned around requesting and providing guidance and direction including the empowerment of line managers to assume HRM responsibility;

- There was a general mutual reliance and for some respondents, *dependence* occurred between line managers and HR professionals in the realisation of collaborative HRM delivery. In addition the power-dependence characterisation of line-manager-HR professional relationships implicitly emerged with HR professionals, as the experts, retaining control and responsibility for effective implementation of HRM policies and procedures;
- Regarding *reciprocity*, due to the professional nature of line manager-HR professional relationships and the legal imperatives of HRM compliance, reciprocity was not viewed as a motivating or obligating feature encouraging line managers and HR professionals to collaborative and hence, was not explicitly calculated, documented or leveraged;
- *Trust*, on the other hand, was an integral feature to the relationships that emerged in the realisation of collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships. However, regarding the timescales in relation to establishing and building trust, the findings diverged from the established literature indicating that trust could simultaneously emerge from engaging in limited positive interaction episodes;
- This research, from a *social penetration perspective*, has shown that collaborative relationships have the potential to develop from mere distant interactions and exchanges to more closely related and personable collaboration;
- Adopting a *sense-making* lens illustrated that line managers and HR professionals collaboratively engaged with each other based on their perceptions and expectations of their respective identities and roles.

8.1.2 Conclusions: Impacts of Line Manager-HR Professional Relationships

The emerging impacts associated with line manager-HR professional collaboration within this research, have been addressed at the individual and organisational levels:

- Regarding the *positive individual level impacts* on line managers, firstly, assuming an involvement in the HRM of their direct reports enhanced the speed of decision-making associated with HRM delivery. Moreover, their collaboration with HR professionals and the guidance and support they received from them, positively impacted on how line managers discharge their HRM responsibilities. The positive impacts for the HR professional respondents from collaborating with their line manager colleagues, was that they received opportunities to enhance their understanding and appreciation of wider business and operational issues which enabled them to contribute valuable and workable solutions to line managers;
- A mutual positive impact for both line manager and HR professional respondents was that by working together, forging close relationship ties on joint issues and tasks, sharing responsibility for HRM delivery and uniting resources and eliciting each other's respective skills and abilities, produced social capital impacts;
- With reference to the more *negative individual level impacts* associated with line manager-HR professional relationships, for the line managers, the time consuming nature associated with HRM implementation emerged, in addition to their perceived HR competence concerns. In a similar vein, the HR professionals identified that line managers varying HRM competence sometimes made it difficult to collaborate with them. Moreover, having to take a more 'hands on' role in HRM implementation diverted their time and resources from their emerging strategic HRM responsibilities. Related to the line manager respondents, the HR professionals reported that their roles were already stretched and that having to 'chase' line managers to fulfil certain HRM obligations and administration was an additional negative impact of collaborating with them;
- At an *organisation level*, through line managers and HR professionals collaborating, it was identified that the strategic integration of HRM practice with the line management function was being achieved. Firstly, HRM issues were being managed and resolved within the line function. Secondly, as a

result of this role for line managers, some HR professionals in the various business-units were afforded more scope to become more strategic in their focus and contribution. Thirdly, line managers were utilised as ‘champions’ in delivering and securing buy-in for certain HRM initiatives. Finally, social capital impacts, as previously identified at the individual level, positively impacted at the organisational level where cross-functional relationships were forged and close ties facilitated knowledge sharing, drawing efficiencies and created learning opportunities by utilising the resources embedded within line manager-HR professional relationships.

8.2 Recommendations

Emerging from the conclusions drawn from this study on line manager-HR professional relationships and by utilising a research framework incorporating social exchange and social penetration theories and sense-making, a number of recommendations for further research and practice have also emerged.

8.2.1 Recommendations for Further Research

Emerging from the conclusions drawn from this study on line manager-HR professional relationships, there are a number of recommendations for further research. While this research takes place in a single case study context, it has highlighted potential opportunities for further related research in similar and other organisational settings:

- A logical course of action for future academic research would be to continue to focus on line manager-HR professional relationships but to include direct reports as additional research respondents, as these are the individuals who also experience the outcomes of this process;
- Given the prevalence of social dynamics and moreover, relationship evolution patterns, longitudinal research potentially executed through an ethnographic research design, may generate detailed insight into relational dynamics and evolution;

- A positivistic approach addressing collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships may enable measurement of the features and associated impacts of these relationships and add another dimension to this interpretive and descriptive research;
- As this research has focused on a single-site, there is significant scope to position this research in other organisational settings and to benchmark the findings in both similar and different organisational contexts. Comparative analysis of different organisational settings and moreover, different research methods may add to the existing knowledge base in the field;
- Within this study, a mixed picture was presented in relation to the human resource information system and organisational intranet. Research focusing specifically on ICT to support collaborative HRM delivery may have particular merit. This may be facilitated by adopting a particular methodological orientation (quantitative – mass and generalisation; qualitative – depth) or may also be facilitated by taking a pluralist methodological approach;
- As identified in this research, there may be scope and necessity for HR professionals to expand their wider business skills and competencies beyond their core HRM specialism. As such, focusing on HR professionals' skills set may prove an interesting avenue of further research as their roles evolve and adapt. Research of this nature could incorporate a 360 degree respondent approach to fully capture the HR professional competencies by incorporating the HR professionals themselves, their HR Managers and the employees and line managers they serve;
- Despite the fact that this research has surfaced the features and impacts of collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships, there has been little scope to formally evaluate the effectiveness of these relationships. Therefore, further research embodying HR metrics and potentially an objectivist orientation and quantitative methodological approach, for

example, could explore the practical efficacy and fiscal measurement of the outcomes of collaborative HRM delivery.

8.2.2 Recommendations for Practice

From conducting this study on line manager and HR professional collaboration, a number of a number of general recommendations for practice have also emerged:

- Infrastructure, both physical and relational are integral to the facilitation of cross-functional collaboration. To support the emergence of close and personable levels of collaboration, there may be merit for other organisations pursuing collaborative HRM delivery to ensure that the line management and HR functional infrastructure and communication channels are conducive to facilitating line manager-HR professional relationships;
- Defining and articulating line manager and HR professional roles and responsibilities and potentially embedding these roles and responsibilities within performance management and reward frameworks, may assist in establishing and cementing these role expectations;
- To realise the rationale of collaborate HRM delivery, there may be a need to ensure that HR professionals are equipped to make the transition to strategic HRM responsibility while simultaneously ensuring consistent transactional HRM implementation.

Turning to the practice-based recommendations, specifically in the case organisation include:

- Consider addressing the geographic distance issues that exist between some line managers and their HR professionals. Video conferencing may be an appropriate course of action to establish ‘face-to-face’ and more personal degrees of interaction;

- Tackling the HR visibility issue. This may be achieved by HR professionals participating in regular operational meetings, both for themselves to gain a more informed insight into the practical operations of the business-unit and moreover, to demonstrate to line managers that they [HR professionals] can be proactive and relied upon to partner the line management function;
- Providing opportunities for line managers and HR professionals to establish and build upon their existing relationships. Team building courses and off-site away-days could be pursued in a semi-formal context. More formal measures, such as business-unit line-HR clinics, workshops and conferences may also create opportunities to align both line management and HR functions;
- A HR Business Partner model, which is already embedded within one business-unit of the case organisation, could be implemented across the other business-units, as a means to improve the relationship engagement, familiarity and consistency between line managers and HR professionals;
- Developing and expanding the range of HR professionals' general business acumen and competencies, beyond their core HR specialist skills to enhance their appreciation of the wider-business issues and also to improve their credibility in the eyes of line managers;
- Rotating more line managers into HR positions with the aim of enhancing their appreciation of HRM policy, practice and procedure for when they return to line manager positions within the business-units;
- While still retaining key HR specialist roles, rotate more HR professionals into line manager positions with the aim of broadening their existing skill sets and to populate the line function with HR advocates;
- HR professionals could 'sell their wares' and communicate what types of assistance and intervention they can provide, particularly to line managers who are not collaboratively engaging with them;
- Introducing some degree of HR metrics to assess the efficacy of line manager-HR professional collaborative delivery as this is currently not

measured or evaluated in a formal manner. The annual staff survey could potentially be adapted to facilitate this;

- Adapting the recruitment criteria and processes for line manager positions. A competency based selection process and/or psychometric testing, as just two examples, may provide means of identifying potential line managers' range of competencies (both technical and people related), their leadership style and personal traits;
- Refreshing practising line manager's competencies through HRM related programmes and by updating previous training received may ensure that managers within the line function are kept abreast and are utilising their HR managerial skills and abilities.

8.3 Contribution of the Research

With reference to the existing literature in the field of line manager involvement in HRM, the research output predominantly focuses on HRM responsibility assumed by both line managers and HR professionals and the impact of this for line managers and HR practitioners alike (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Poole & Jenkins, 1997; McConville & Holden, 1999; Budhwar, 2000; Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003; Brewster et al. 2004; Mesner-Andolsek & Stebe, 2005; Cranet, 2006; IRS, 2006a; Papalexandris & Panayotopoulou, 2006; Cascon-Pereira et al., 2006). As such, and as illustrated in table 7.1, this research has responded to Cascon-Pereira's et al. (2006) vociferous call for research to advance upon the studies that frame the roles and impacts of line managers and HR professionals. In doing so, this research has contributed at theoretical, methodological and practical levels.

8.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

- With reference to theoretical contributions, this research has in a novel manner, utilised social exchange theory as a lens to describe the salient features present in collaborative relationships (and also the features that are absent in non-collaborative relationships);

- The study uses social exchange theory as the main theoretical underpinning but importantly, goes beyond merely anchoring the research in social exchange theory by revising the main tenets within this approach;
- This research has informed the emerging social exchange area of team-based/cross-functional exchange within the context of HRM delivery, as line management and HRM have been established as differing but interrelated organisational functions;
- The approach taken in this research may also have particular relevance to other forms of intra-organisational relationships beyond line management and HRM functions. Secondly, incorporating a social penetration focus and in doing so, acknowledging that relationships in the workplace are not static and may evolve or digress, has complimented the primary social exchange relationship focus;
- Accounting for the individual respondents unique sense-making perspectives has focused the level of research enquiry at the individual level and thereby addresses the collective criticisms and the scope of choice within restricted exchange for collaborating individuals;
- Adopting this multi-theoretical approach, as illustrated in figure 3.1, serves in developing a coherent and robust theoretical underpinning to research on organisational relationships. Moreover, these individual theories have also been revised in terms of their main content both with reference to the classic authors and the more recent proponents resulting in the development of the research framework;
- As this research surfaced distance as an important feature to HRM delivery relationships, the findings may have relevance for a variety of HRM theories such as international HRM and strategic HRM concerning outsourcing and HR centres of excellence to name a few examples;
- Finally, the research framework associated with this study, encompassing the aforementioned focus and theoretical lenses, has depicted the key features associated with collaborative line manager-HR professional relationships. As

a result, this framework may allow future researchers in the field to adopt a similar focus as a basis for exploring these types of relationships.

8.3.2 Methodological Contributions

- At a methodological level, Valverde et al. (2006) note that traditional studies in the field have focused, at times, exclusively on line managers and HR professional actors and, as such, neglected the role of other stakeholders impacting on line manager-HR professional relationships. Reflecting this position, the incorporation of multiple responding actors assisted in fully capturing the research phenomenon, as championed by Harris et al. (2002) and more recently by Dorensbosch et al. (2006). Therefore, this research, by representing business-unit HR Managers and Group HR Managers, facilitates and accommodates for the specific role that these relevant HR stakeholders have on the actual collaborative relationships of line managers and HR professionals;
- The descriptive single case study approach, as opposed to quantitatively framing the line manager-HR professional relationship, has provided an information rich ‘cavass’ in terms of a semi-state organisations and moreover, has facilitated and illustrated the integration of the organisational and strategic issues supporting collaborative HRM relationships;
- Furthermore, the research design has facilitated the capture of a more rounded and in-depth research investigation by accommodating business-unit HR Manager and Group HR Manager stakeholders who impact on line manager-HR professional relationships, in addition to line managers and HR professionals.

8.3.3 Practical Contributions

- In terms of the line manager-HR professional relationship, it has been noted in the literature that little is known about their formation (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2007), the shapes they have taken (Harris et al., 2002), their anatomy (Morley et al, 2006) and the factors that facilitate and inhibit their realisation

(Renwick, 2000; 2003; Harris et al., 2002; Watson et al., 2007). In a practical sense, this research has surfaced a variety of relationship features and dynamics and in doing so, has illustrated the need to appreciate the range of relationships which exist between line managers and HR professionals;

- Remaining on the specific issue of line manager-HR professional relationships, Maxwell & Watson (2006) explicitly identified the need for subsequent research to address and capture the social dynamics and divergent views embedded in their relationships. In this vein, the characterisation of the social exchange nature of line manager-HR professional relationships and moreover, the sense-making processes adopted by the respondents has addressed this need in a practical setting;
- Finally, this research contributes to the existing paucity of practical research in the field in general but also in an Irish organisational setting where there is a distinct paucity of understanding of the relationships formed by line managers and HR professionals.

8.4 Research Limitations

As alluded to in the research design in Chapter 5, a number of limitations are inherent within this research study which have particular relevance for the conclusions and recommendations drawn. As such, at this conclusion stage, it is pertinent to revisit them in detail:

- Throughout this study, from conceptualising the research proposal to the write up of the thesis proper, the researcher has been solely responsible for undertaking each element of the research exercise itself. Consequently, this journey has been subject to time constraints applied by the funding body and the Institute itself and furthermore, subject to personal resources;
- Remaining on researcher limitations, despite concentrated efforts to prepare and manage the primary research in a consistent, semi-structured and unbiased manner, there remains the possibility that personal values, bias and reactivity may have arisen to a degree impacting on the validity and reliability of the data gathered;

- Moving to the methodological issues associated with adopting single case study research design, cognisance is taken of the potentially limited generalisability of the findings to other organisational contexts;
- Turning to the sampling frame, despite the fact that the respondent sample was developed to reflect the case organisation's business-units including line manager, HR professional and HR Manager units of analysis and Group HR Managers and Group HR Professionals, the sample itself was provided internally by the gatekeepers. As such, the impartiality and the lack of statistical underpinning to the sample and moreover, the internal documentary sources of evidence may have impacted on the validity of the findings gathered from the respondents;
- Regarding the research respondents, the very nature of pursuing qualitative methods introduces potential concerns about the validity and reliability of the findings gathered. Moreover, in terms of the semi-structured interviews, the threat that respondent bias may provide inaccurate reflections of respondent experiences of their relationships and collaboration with each other cannot be excluded.

8.5 Final Conclusion

In presenting the concluding remarks drawn from this study, cognisance is taken of the influence and impact of the single case study in terms of providing a truly information rich 'canvass' to conduct this interpretivist-based research. The semi-state nature of the case organisation, the multiple business-unit structure, the range of respondents and the hybrid HR infrastructure provided detailed and multifaceted insights into the range of line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships.

This study illustrated that collaborative HRM delivery occurred at various levels ranging from non-collaborative relationships to highly collaborative relationships. For line managers and HR professionals, their respective experience, competence, perceptions, training and relationship ties contributed to the outcomes of their

collaboration and the impacts experienced at an individual and organisational level. Likewise, organisational issues including HRM strategy; HRM infrastructure and centralisation; geographic distance; technology and structured training interventions also impacted on the level of relationship breadth and depth and also the impacts experienced at an individual and organisational level. Moreover, the cross-functional nature of collaborative HRM delivery surfaced, as illustrated by the importance of trust and the existence of power and dependency issues. However, the issue of reciprocity did not emerge as a calculative or obligating relationship feature. To address the cross-functional nature of such relationships, scope exists to create and foster appreciation and collaboration amongst line managers and HR professionals.

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Appendix A: Case Organisational Profile

A1.0 Introduction

This background description has been developed with the aim of illuminating the case organisation and the organisational context in which the research study is located, in addition to offering an understanding of the role of line manager-HR professional collaboration within the case organisation itself.

A1.1 The Research Site

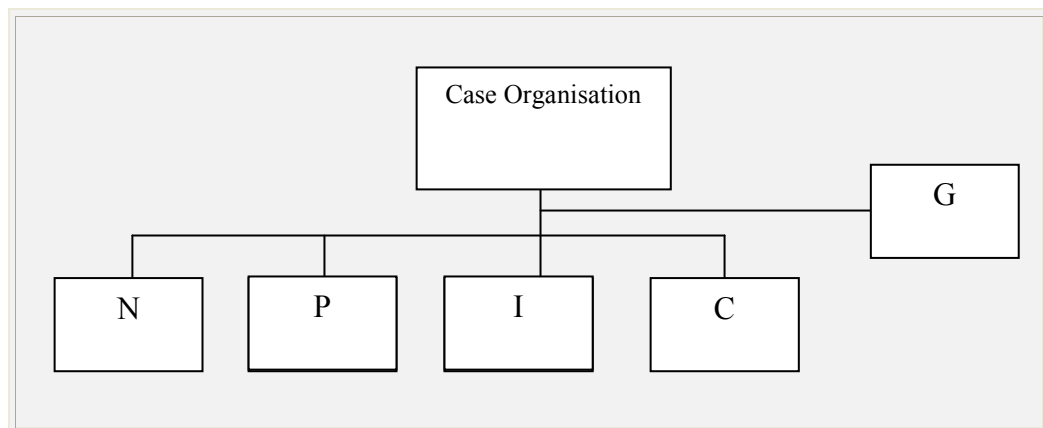
The research site is a large semi-state organisation within the Republic of Ireland operating within the utility sector. It is a statutory organisation that is 95% owned by the Irish Government, with the remaining 5% held by employee share options. As a consequence of its semi-state ownership status, the organisation embodies the context and characteristics of a public break-even mandate, in the form of equitable, efficient and effective service provision goals, in conjunction with an emerging competitive and commercial ethos. Currently the case organisation it is the dominant service provider nationally, in addition to having a presence in over 25 countries worldwide.

The organisation, employing c. 8,000 people, has a vertically integrated organisational structure operating across a number of strategic business units (see figure A.1). There are four distinct business lines to the case organisation:

- Business-unit (P) is concerned with generating the services offered by the case organisation and the buying and selling of these services in the national and global marketplace. This section of the case organisation is regulated by an independent regulatory body that benchmarks prices and sets industry-wide operating standards. Furthermore, this regulatory body has overseen the liberalisation of the operating market in Ireland.
- Business-unit (N) is a ringfenced business line in the case organisation, charged with building, operating, maintaining and developing the distribution system for the organisation's service offerings. All customers of utility services in the Republic of Ireland remain customers of Business Line (N), irrespective of their service provider.

- Business Line (C) is concerned with both service provision to external customers and to group services internally (providing in-house ICT and shared services facilities – human resources, payroll, accounting, legal and procurement services across each of the business lines). With the ongoing liberalisation of case organisation’s operating sector and with the introduction of a single market in 2007, the case organisation is now actively competing with rival organisations to attract and maintain customers.
- Business Line (I) is an international subsidiary of the case organisation, which provides a range of competitive utility solutions both in domestic and international markets.

Figure A.1 Case Organisational Structure



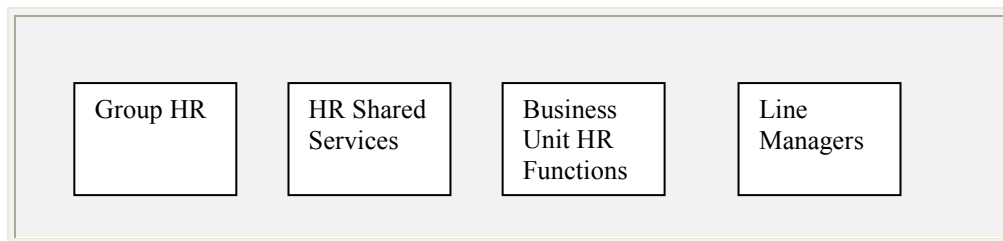
Dynamic changes in the external operating environment are providing the impetus for the organisation to adapt its internal operations. The on-going opening of the case organisation’s operating market to competition has been driven by the introduction of an industry regulator and new industry performance standards, working within national and EU policy frameworks charged with promoting competition, transparency and consumer needs in the marketplace. Furthermore, a liberalisation of the industry occurred in 2003, impacting on the monopolistic position of the case organisation, manifesting in the requirement to separate certain business units from the core operations of the organisation. This, in turn, facilitated the introduction of

new organisations to the market with the introduction of a single operating market in 2007, whereby it became possible for both domestic and commercial customers to switch from the case organisation to other competing organisations within the sector, creating an increasingly dynamic market.

A1.2 HRM Structure

For the context of this research study, the HR function takes a central focus. As presented in figure A.2, there are four key components to the human resource management infrastructure.

Figure A.2: HRM Structure

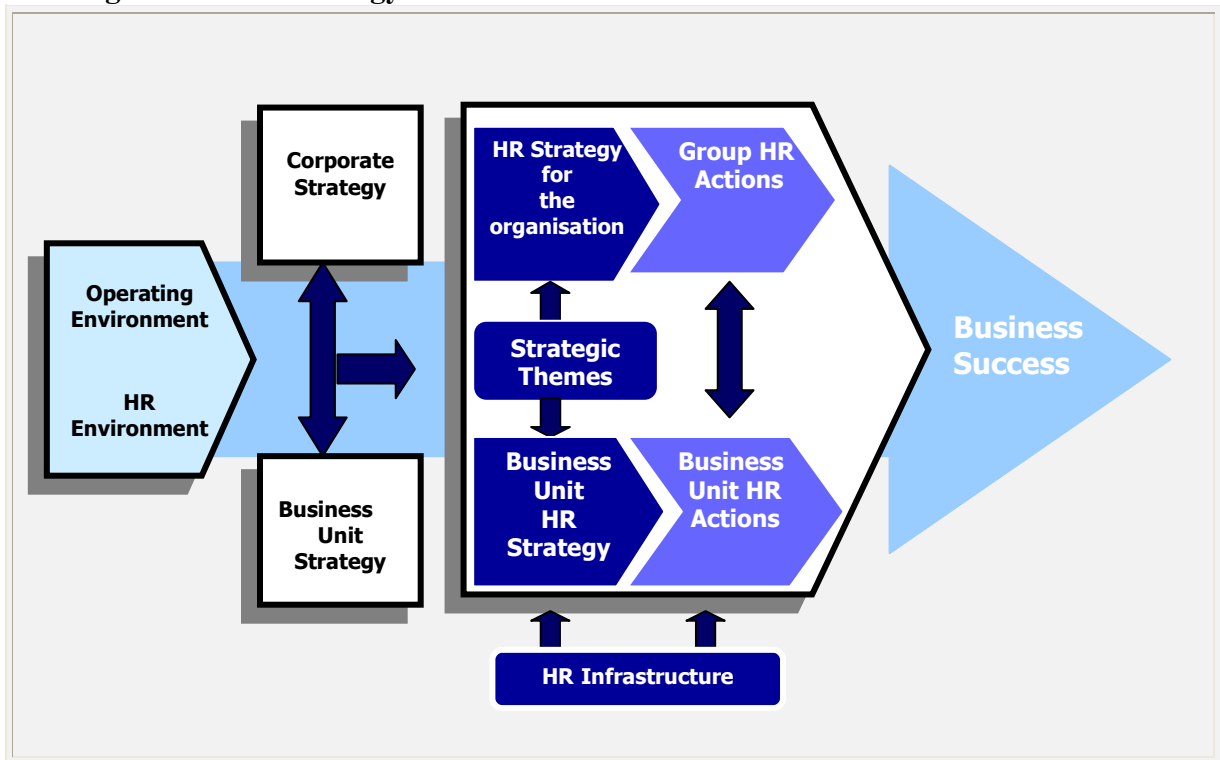


Group HR, at the most strategic level, develop organisational HR strategy and standards. The Shared Services unit is charged with providing a vast array of organisational-wide HR services to the various business units. Each autonomous business unit, in turn, has its own individual HR function, responsible for directing the HR strategy for their own business unit. The final element of the HR structure are line managers who are responsible for enacting HRM policies and practices. The primary delivery role of line managers and the importance of their collaboration with HR professionals is made explicit in the HR strategy documentation:

“While leadership and people management is primarily the responsibility of line management, the contribution and support of professional HR expertise in the business lines, HR Shared Services and Group HR will be a fundamental building block in developing the organisational capability which will be critical for the future” (HR Strategy Documentation).

The framework outlined below (figure A.3) sets out how the various elements of the case organisation’s approach to HRM integrates with other key business processes across the organisation.

Figure A.3 HR Strategy Framework



Source: Organisational HR Strategy

The HR strategy is derived directly from the corporate strategy which, in turn, has been developed to address both the challenges facing, and opportunities available, to the organisation. The HR infrastructure, which is of relevance to this research, consists of Group HR Managers, HR Managers within the individual business unit HR functions, HR professionals within these business line HR functions and line managers within each business unit. In addition, the HR Shared Services unit is charged with providing a vast array of organisational-wide HR services to the various business-units on a service level agreement basis.

Through their collaboration, the strategic themes of the HR strategy are delivered and implemented in the individual business lines of the case organisation. The HR strategy comprises of eight main strategic themes (figure A.4).

Figure A4 Strategic Themes in the Context of this Research

Strategic Themes	In Relation to Line Managers and HR Professionals
<p>Management Capability: <i>“Management’s ability to lead the organisation to achieve its goals and implement its strategy through its employees”</i></p> <p>High Performance Culture: <i>“The focus of everyone’s efforts being targeted on delivering business success”</i></p> <p>Effective Partnership: <i>“A shared understanding of the business goals and how these can best be achieved”</i></p> <p>Enhancing Change Effectiveness: <i>“Effective and speedy change taking into account the impact on employee”</i></p> <p>Resourcing the Future: <i>“The right number of people with the right skills, in the right place, at the right cost to do the work”</i></p> <p>An Employee Supportive Organisation: <i>“Having in place a series of suitable supports which provide for employees well-being”</i></p> <p>Progressive Policies & Standards: <i>“Policies and standards in place reflecting business-driven HR practice”</i></p> <p>Measuring HRM Impact: <i>“Measurement of the effect of HRM on employee skills, behaviours, attitudes and business performance”</i></p>	<p>Management Capability: <i>“Develop the people management capability of line and HR managers to optimise employee contribution and enhance business performance”</i></p> <p>High Performance Culture: <i>“Develop and implement initiatives which will ensure that the key HR capabilities identified are reflected in the behaviours of line and HR management and are integrated where appropriate into HR processes”</i></p> <p>Effective Partnership: <i>“Establish a culture where all of us are committed to and comfortable with ongoing interaction, both formal and informal, regarding our performance and our individual development”</i></p> <p>Enhanced Change Effectiveness: <i>“Promote a customer centred ‘can do’ approach by employees which enables the ownership of issues and the speedy implementation of decisions”</i></p> <p>Resourcing the Future: <i>“Develop initiatives to assist HR and line staff throughout the organisation build relationships”</i></p> <p>An Employee Supportive Organisation: <i>“Have a robust communications framework in place that ensures the effective transfer of information in both directions”</i></p> <p>Progressive Policies and Standards: <i>“Have an organisation in place at Corporate and Business Line level that can be re-configured or flexed in a timely manner to address emerging business challenges”</i></p> <p>Measuring HRM Impact: <i>“Assess the impact of HRM, delivered by both HR and the Line, on business performance”</i></p>

In relation to this research, the following excerpts from the HR strategy documentation relate to line managers role in HRM and moreover, their relationship with HR professionals with regards to collaboratively delivering HRM practice: From figure A4, the key role for line manager-HR professional collaboration is illustrated as a means to realise and utilise management capability and behaviours, to

foster a partnership culture, to enhance change effectiveness, to build relationships and facilitate knowledge transfer which can foster in creating adaptable workforce.

**Appendix B: Executive Summary of Preliminary (pilot research)
Case Findings**

B.0 Executive Summary of the Preliminary (Pilot Research) Case Findings

Externally, the (case organisation's) market has and continues to change and internally the organisation of the HR function across the organisation is developing as a response to this. This is reflected in the HR strategy, which is centred on coping with change. From the end of the 1990s, due to considerable restructuring and the need to align business needs with competitive realities, efforts were placed on enhancing and professionalising the HR function. As part of this, line managers were recognised as an increasingly important element of the HR infrastructure, (*"leadership and people management is primarily the responsibility of line management"*) (case organisation HR Strategy) and were targeted as a key group to be developed in HR terms.

Consequently, a "HRM for Line Managers" training intervention was implemented by (the case organisation's) Group HR function specifically for practising line managers, supervisors and team leaders who are *"seeking to enhance their HR management competencies and to effectively utilise HRM strategies and techniques"*. The goal of the programme is to equip line managers with expertise in HR management, in conjunction with developing underpinning knowledge and understanding. Currently the programme is on its eighth iteration and had produced forty-five graduates with a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Certificate in Personnel Practice (CPP).

This research investigation focuses on line managers who have successfully participated in and completed the "HRM for Line Managers" programme. The research explores a range of issues including the participation reasons indicated by the respondents, the understanding gained from their participation, to the resulting impact on HR involvement and responsibilities. Arising from the population of forty-five participants (100% of line managers that have been through the "HRM for Line Managers" programme, twenty-four took part in this research, resulting in a response rate of 53.3%).

As per the objectives of the “HRM for Line Managers” programme, it is made explicit both by the Manager of the programme and from the course materials, that the programme is focused on underpinning knowledge and understanding to facilitate the implementation of HRM competencies and strategies, with the development of accompanying skills. With regard to the knowledge and understanding gained from participation in the programme, 95.8% the respondents positively indicated (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) that their understanding of HRM has been developed. Parallel to this, 87.5% positively indicated (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) they are more conscious of the value of HRM.

The specific areas where respondents indicated increased involvement in HRM are in the transactional delivery of HRM. 54.1% of respondents positively indicated (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) a greater involvement in communicating HR policy and practice. While in terms of recruitment and selection, 50 % positively reported (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) that they have assumed an increased involvement. Similarly, 66.7% positively signalled (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) that they have assumed an increased involvement in the area of training and development. Related increased involvement was also recorded for performance appraisal/management with 45.8% (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) positively indicating that they are assuming a greater involvement in this area. In a similar trend, 50% positively indicated (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) that they have assumed an increased involvement in handling grievance and disciplinary issues. The arising relationship that has emerged between line manager participants of the “HRM for Line Managers” programme and the HR function, of which 62.5 % positively indicated (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) is that of a collaborative relationship.

From this detailed investigation it has been found that 86.4% of those surveyed would recommend the programme to their colleagues. This recommendation is

reflected in positive comments such as “*The ‘HRM for Line Managers’ course gives an excellent view on all aspects of HR*”, “*I feel any manager with staff reporting to them needs an overview at least of how to deal with staff issues*”. Another area cited in the respondent’s recommendation comments included the facilitation of networking between programme participants in the different business units. With respect to the CIPD accreditation of the programme, 54.5 % positively indicated (combination of strongly agree and agree responses) that the accreditation was an attraction to participate. 50 % of the respondents identified that they have maintained their CIPD membership and 17.4% indicated that they have or are considering advancing their membership. The advantages cited in terms of CIPD membership included professional accreditation and access to literature and theory on contemporary developments in HRM.

Appendix C: Interview Documentation

C:0 Introduction

Various forms of interview documentation were utilised in the primary research stage of this research. These documents included: requests for respondent participation, support email distributed internally within the case organisation, interview protocol document, interview guides and post interview 'thank you' correspondence.

C:1 Request for Respondent Participation

<Date>

Dear <name>,

Apologies for disturbing you.

In response to [REDACTED], Group HR, recent email regarding the on-going research programme exploring the working relationship between line managers and HR practitioners across the [REDACTED], I, Jamie Power of Waterford Institute of Technology, am writing to seek participants from [REDACTED] to contribute to this exercise.

I hope you will look favourably upon my request for your participation as this research is dependent upon gaining an understanding of [REDACTED]'s line managers/supervisors and HR practitioners working relationship and moreover, your views and experiences are important to Group HR for informing future policy and practice.

Your involvement in this research would involve:

- Participating in a **maximum one-hour discussion** to share your views and insights into line manager/supervisor-HR professional relationships within [REDACTED];
- Your participation in this research would be **treated in the strictest of confidence** and under no circumstances would your name or any identifying characteristics be made identifiable;
- Respect of your time constraints and work demands and, to minimise any disruption to you, **the interview would be conducted at your work location.**

It is anticipated that this research will be conducted during the months of October and November, depending on your availability. I will be in contact next week to reiterate this request and hopefully to attempt to schedule an interview, if possible, at a time and place convenient for you.

If you require further information about the scope of the research or any implications your involvement may cause, please do not hesitate to contact myself or [REDACTED], Group HR.

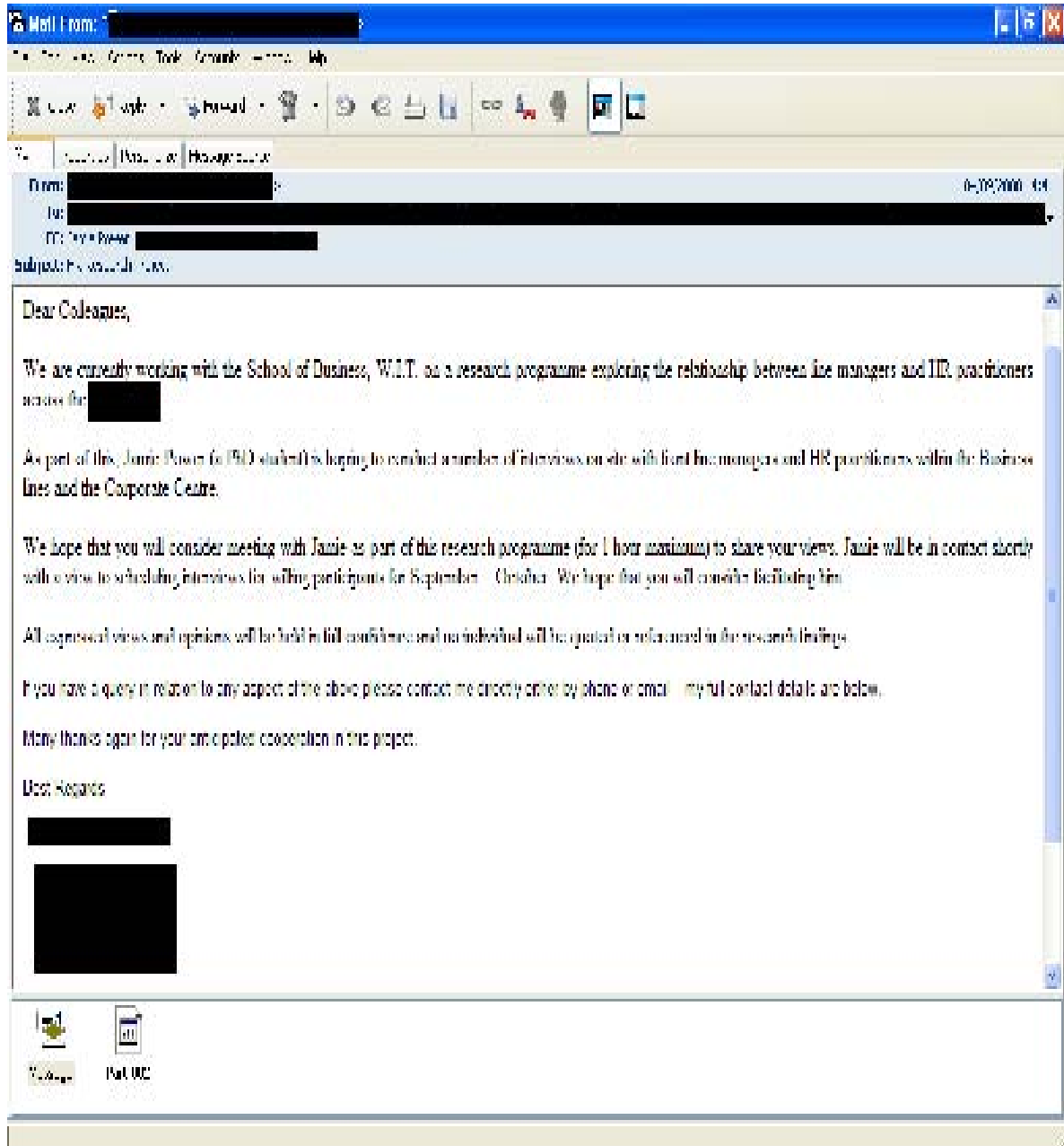
Your Sincerely,

Jamie Power

Jamie Power,
PhD Researcher
School of Business
Waterford Institute of Technology
Waterford
Tel: [REDACTED]
Email: jrpower@wit.ie

[REDACTED] (Data anonymised)

C:2 Case Company Support Email



C:3 Interview Protocol

<date>

Re: Research Ethics Protocol –

Dear <Interviewee>,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project exploring the professional relationship between line managers and HR professionals with regards collaborative HRM provision.

Before we start the interview, I would like to reassure you that as a participant in this project:

- Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary;
- You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time;
- You are free to withdraw from the interview at any stage.

The contents of the interview will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Extracts from this interview may be aggregated and included as part of the final research report but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included.

With your permission I would like to request to record this interview. The purpose of recording this discussion is to ensure that I represent your views accurately and honestly. Any references to your name or any other identifying characteristics will be deleted from the interview transcript. If required, I can furnish you with a transcript of the interview to alleviate any concerns you may have arising from participating in the research process. Any tape recording of this interview will be destroyed on transcription.

If you understand and accept the conditions under which your valuable input will be incorporated into this project, I would be grateful if you would sign this form to indicate that I have read you its contents.

(Signed) _____

(Printed) _____

(Date) _____

Should you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or [REDACTED].

Jamie Power
PhD Student
School of Business,
Waterford Institute of Technology,
Cork Road,
Waterford.
Tel: [REDACTED]
Email: jpower@wit.ie

[REDACTED] (Data anonymised)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Tel: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

C:4 Interview Guides

Business-Line HR Manager Interview Schedule

I am going to pose a range of questions that will require you to reflect on the issue of line manager and HR professional relationships with regards to collaborative HR provision in your business line (and with a particular emphasis on front line managers). As part of this, I'm hoping to gain an understanding of the practical issues surrounding HR provision in your business line; to explore your perspectives on the line manager and HR professional working relationship and to identify the impact of such a collaborative arrangement for HR provision within your particular business line. Finally, I would also like to give you the opportunity to highlight any further aspects of the line manager – HR professional relationship that you would like addressed in this research study.

Context and Strategy

1. In terms of your role as HR manager for the business line, what would you consider is your function and main responsibilities?
Purpose: to identify the HR managers' role within the business line.
2. To facilitate this function, in general terms, how is the business line staffed with regards to (i) the range of differentiated managerial levels and HR professionals and (ii) the quantity of each of these employment categories?
Purpose: to determine the size of the business line and quantity of research stakeholders.
3. Would you consider your business line different from others in the organisation in terms of (i) HR strategy and (ii) specific HR issues? Why/on what basis?
Purpose: to explore differentiation issue across the business lines.
4. What do you consider to be the main focus of the business line HR strategy?
Purpose: to identify the main strategic concerns of the business line.
5. How, in turn, does your particular business line HR strategy integrate with the Group HR strategy?
Purpose: to explore how the business line strategy integrates with the organisational-wide HR strategy

Line Manager-HR Professional Relationship

6. In the overarching Group HR strategy, it states that line managers are primarily responsible for managing the people management needs of their direct reports. In general, how is this practice reflected in this business line?
Purpose: to identify the role of line managers in comparison to the organisational-wide stance.
7. From discussing the rationale for line manager involvement in people management with your Group HR colleagues, it emerged that restructuring and increasing competitive pressures have provided the impetus to (i) involve line managers in HR provision and (ii) enhancing their understanding and competence in the area of HR practice and delivery. To what extent would you agree with these positions? Please can you explain?
Purpose: to elicit their views on the rationale of line manager involvement in HRM.
8. From your own experience, to what extent, would you consider front line managers in this business line to be equipped to handle a more formal involvement in HR provision? Why do you take this position?
Purpose: to explore the degree of competence placed in line managers with regards to HRM involvement.
9. What measures would you consider appropriate and effective in developing front line managers' competence in HRM practice?
Purpose: to explore what interventions could be applied to line managers with respect to their HR remit.
10. I am aware of the "Human Resource Management for Line Managers" programme as one such vehicle for enhancing front line managers and front line managers understanding and competence in HRM practice. Are there other formal and informal methods used in your particular business line to achieve this?
Purpose: to identify potential interventions adopted within the specific business line.
11. Previous research I conducted within the organisation on the "Human Resource Management for Line Managers" programme indicated that line manager's day-to-day involvement in HR related activities varies from individual to individual. Would this scenario be reflected within this business line? Could you provide examples?
Purpose: to gain an appreciation of the nuances of line managers role.
12. In terms of front line managers involvement in HR delivery, how are HR professionals prepared to deliver a collaborative approach with them in terms of this HR provision?

Purpose: to explore how HR professionals are prepared for their collaborative relationship.

13. In terms of front line managers involvement in HR provision, what involvement do front line managers generally assume in the course of HR delivery? E.g. recruitment & selection....

Purpose: to identify what line managers do in their HR remit.

14. From the previous “Human Resource Management for Line Managers” research, it also emerged that line managers often rely and moreover, collaborate with their HR colleagues in terms of providing HR delivery. Are line managers and HR professionals in your business line collaborating for the purposes of HRM provision? Can you provide examples reflecting this collaboration? What range of HR professionals would line managers interact with?

Purpose: to explore the occurrences of collaboration.

15. Are there specific communication systems/channels in place in this business line, which facilitate front line manager and HR professional collaborative interaction?

Purpose: to explore the structural arrangement for LM-HR collaboration.

16. In terms of this collaborative HR provision structure, what would you consider are the primary areas and issues in which front line managers and HR professionals collaborate on?

Purpose: to capture the purpose/content of collaboration

17. As you mentioned earlier, there are many categories of managers and HR professionals in this business line, therefore, would you consider there to be different types of relationships between front line managers and HR professionals? To what extent does this relate to their respective positions within the organisation?

Purpose: to determine the levels of LM-HR relationships.

18. Within the business line, what was and is involved in getting both front line managers and HR professionals to commit to working together for the purposes of HR delivery? Can you elaborate on this?

Purpose: to identify the relationship construction process.

Making Sense of the Collaborative LM-HR Relationship

19. What is your assessment, with reference to your particular business line, of the collaboration between front line managers and HR professionals? What factors would you consider have influenced your assessment?

Purpose: to determine the business line assessment of the collaboration.

20. Thinking of your business line HR strategy, to what extent do you feel that collaborative HR provision supports this?

Purpose: to explore if collaboration is supportive of the Business line strategy.

21. Is the quality of front line manager-HR professional collaboration evaluated in any way, say for example through service level agreements? If so, how is this done?

Purpose: To determine if and how the collaborative relationship is monitored.

22. Concentrating on collaborative HR practice in general across the business line and focusing on relationships, what aspects of front line manager-HR professional interaction do you consider to be effective? Can you provide examples to illustrate this?

Purpose: to identify positive aspects of the relationship.

23. In presenting the alternative, would you consider any aspects of front line manager-HR professional collaboration which could be improved upon? Can you provide any general examples to illustrate this?

Purpose: to identify the challenges impacting on the collaboration.

24. To what extent do you think that there is scope within your business line to enhance the effectiveness of front line manager-HR professional collaboration? Why have you formed such an opinion?

Purpose: to explore the measures the business lines could put in place to improve the relationship between line managers and HR professionals.

25. In your opinion, what way could this collaborative relationship between front line managers and HR professionals be enhanced?

Purpose: to identify specific actions which could be introduced to enhance the LM-HR relationship.

26. Is the collaborative HR delivery model consistent with other functions within your business line (e.g. finance)? Based on your understanding, do similar issues arise for these other functions with regards to collaboration?

Purpose: to explore the extent of collaboration across other functions.

27. Any there any other comments you would like to make with regards to the focus of this research?

Purpose: to enable the HR managers to have an input into the questions being asked to HR professionals and front line managers in the business line

28. Are there any particular areas of the front line manager-HR professional relationship that you would like to be addressed in this research?

Reiterate thanks for their participation and valuable contribution and also restate confidentiality agreement

Group HR Interview Schedule

I am going to pose a range of questions that will require you to reflect on the issue of line manager and HR professional collaboration across the organisation with regards to HR delivery and with a particular focus on front line managers. As part of this, I'm hoping to gain an understanding of the strategy upon which HR collaboration exists; your understanding of the rationale and the mechanics of front line managers and HR professionals working relationship and importantly, to identify any additional aspects of this relationship you would like addressed in this research study.

HR Strategy

1. It is implied in the overarching Group HR strategy that its focus is centred on coping with change. Can you please elaborate on what changes have and continue to impact on the organisation? Have these changed since the initial start of this research 2 years ago?

Purpose: to determine what has and continues to influence the HR strategy.

2. How would you explain the role of Group HR in the context of the Group HR strategy?

Purpose: to elucidate the function of Group HR.

3. What roles do the community of HR professionals provide across the business lines? Are these changing?

Purpose: to determine the roles of the various HR professionals.

4. What role would you consider line managers to play in the execution of (i) the Group HR strategy and (ii) the business line HR strategies? Has this changed since the initial stages of this research 2 years ago?

Purpose: to identify the role of line management in the context of HR strategy.

The Line Manager- HR Professional Relationship

5. What do you believe to be the rationale for line managers and HR professionals collaborating in HR provision? Has this changed since 2 years ago?

Purpose: to identify what Group HR sees as the rationale for the LM-HR relationship.

6. Given the different functional roles and levels within the organisation, to what extent do you believe there is variation in the range of relationships between front line managers and HR professionals?

Purpose: to explore the extent of different types of relationships between line managers and HR professionals.

7. In your opinion, what influences these variations of line manager-HR professional relationships? Can you provide examples to illustrate this?
Purpose: to explore what distinguishes the different types of relationships.
8. From your personal experience and observations, how well would you consider front line managers to be equipped to handle formal involvement in HR provision? What factors have informed this position?
Purpose: to explore the degree of competence placed in line managers with regards to HRM involvement.
9. Other than the “Human Resource Management for Line Managers” programme (which not all line managers participate in), are front line managers exposed to developmental opportunities to enhance their competence in HR delivery? Can you elaborate?
Purpose: to explore the processes in which line managers undergo to prepare for their involvement in collaborative HR provision.
10. Likewise, are HR professionals given any preparation with regards to collaborating in conjunction with front line managers for the purposes of HR delivery? If so, in what way?
Purpose: to explore how HR professionals are prepared for their collaborative relationship.
11. In what areas, and for what purposes, have you observed front line managers and HR professionals collaborating? Can you provide specific examples? Is this a general reflection of practice across the business lines?
Purpose: to capture the purpose/content of collaboration.
12. What is your understanding of how such a collaborative model for HR provision is being implemented in the business lines? What role, if any, does Group HR have in establishing and forging such relationships between front line managers and HR professionals? Do you, as a function, actively promote line manager- HR professional collaboration?
Purpose: to explore the how the relationship is established.
13. Thinking of cross-functional relationships and specifically in terms of line manager and HR professional interaction, what would you identify as the key gains for this collaborative relationship for (i) front line managers, (ii) HR professionals, (iii) the business lines and (iv) the organisation?
Purpose: to identify Group HR’s expectancies.

14. In terms of the dynamics of front line manager-HR professional collaborative relationships, where would you consider the balance of power to lie with regards to (i) decision-making and (ii) authority for HR delivery? Can you give examples to illustrate this?

Purpose: to explore the degrees of power between both exchange actors.

Group HR Role

15. To support and emphasise the rationale and moreover, the need for collaborative line manager – HR professional HR delivery what measures have Group HR put in place or implemented for (i) front line managers and (ii) HR professionals, What did this involve in terms of intervention, resources, timing etc?

Purpose: to explore how the Group HR function are supporting the collaboration.

16. Based on your understanding, how are front line managers and HR professionals encouraged to collaborate? Can you provide any practical examples

Purpose: to explore how 'buy in' is achieved.

17. To what extent, are the different business lines coordinated and consistent in their approach to line manager involvement in HR delivery? If so, how has this occurred?

Purpose: to identify the coordination processes at Group HR level.

18. Are there other stakeholders who contribute to and influence the development of line manager – HR professional collaboration? If so, how do they achieve this?

Purpose: to identify other potential influencers on the relationship.

19. To what extent, if any, would you say Group HR is involved in the evaluation or monitoring of this LM-HR collaboration? If yes, how is this achieved?

Purpose: to determine if and how the collaboration is monitored.

20. To what extent do you think there is scope to enhance the effectiveness of front line manager- HR professional collaboration? How can this be achieved?

Purpose: to explore the measures Group HR have/could have in place to improve the interaction between line managers and HR professionals.

Making Sense of LM-HR Collaboration

21. From a strategic and practical standpoint, what do you expect front line manager – HR professional collaboration can bring to (i) the overall HR function, (ii) HR professionals and (iii) line managers?

Purpose: to elicit personal expectations of Group HR and line manager personnel.

22. Based on your observations, how have these expectations about front line manager – HR professional collaboration been met?

Purpose: to explore the reality of the situation.

23. Again, based on your personal observations, what would you consider is working well in the collaboration between front line managers and HR professionals? Examples?

Purpose: to identify positive aspects of the relationship.

24. Looking at the alternative, are you aware of any aspects of front line manager – HR professional collaboration which presents challenges to the overall effectiveness of their relationship?

Purpose: to identify the challenges impacting on the collaboration.

25. Do you consider there to be scope to enhance the effectiveness of the relationship between collaborating front line managers and HR professionals? If yes, in what ways could this be achieved?

Purpose: to explore what, if any, measures Group HR could implement to enhance collaborative HR provision.

26. Any there any other comments you would like to make with regards to any aspects of the front line manager- HR professional collaborative relationship?

Purpose: to facilitate the input of Group HR to the study.

27. Are there any particular areas of front line manager – HR professional collaboration that you would like explored further in this research?

Purpose: to identify what Group HR may want explored in this study.

Reiterate thanks for their participation and valuable contribution and also restate confidentiality agreement.

HR Professionals Interview Schedule

[Business Line]

I am going to pose a range of questions, grouped under various themes that will require you to reflect on your experiences in terms of your relationships with the front line managers you interact with within the business line and any impacts arising from your involvement. Beyond these questions, please feel free to contribute any additional insights you might have in terms to your relationship with your front line manager colleagues and also how this relates to both your business line and the Group HR strategy.

Context

1. Could you please tell me what your role, as a HR professional, involves in the business line?

Purpose: to gain an understanding of their role.

2. What specific areas and or functions are you responsible for providing HR expertise to? E.g. crews, particular locations, team leaders etc?

Purpose: to identify the areas they are involved in.

3. Please describe your specific areas of HR delivery (e.g. selection etc.)?

Purpose: to identify the areas they are involved in.

LM-HR Collaboration

4. Previous research I conducted with various managers across the organisation who had participated in the “Human Resource Management for Line Managers” programme indicated that they are involved in the areas of selection, training and development, performance management and appraisal. Is this an accurate reflection of front line manager responsibilities within your business line?

Purpose: to elicit the type of involvement HR professionals perceive line managers to adopt in relation to HRM.

5. Findings from this prior research on the “Human Resource Management for Line Managers” programme also indicated that line managers are increasingly collaborating with their HR colleagues in HR delivery. From your experience, is this an accurate reflection in your business line?

Purpose: to introduce the notion of collaborating with line managers.

6. In general, can you please tell me about the interactions you have with the various front line managers within your business line?

Purpose: to get a general overview of the HR professionals perspective of the collaboration.

7. Have you received any preparation, briefing or training and development opportunities in to support collaboration with your front line manager colleagues? What exactly was involved in this?

Purpose: to determine if any preparation was given to facilitate the collaborative relationship

8. What do you identify as the potential benefit to HR professionals from collaborating with line managers in HR delivery? Do these benefits occur in practice?

Purpose: to identify what the HR professional expects to obtain from the relationship.

9. What do you perceive as the role of HR professionals in the context of a collaborative relationship with front line managers? What informs your particular perception on this issue?

Purpose: to elicit HR professionals understanding of their role in the relationship.

Social Exchange

10. In the course of your interaction with front line managers, can you please identify the mediums adopted to support collaborative HR delivery (Face-to-face, phone, email etc)? Of these, what is the most common medium involved? Why (is geography a factor)?

Purpose: to determine the medium of their interaction.

11. In terms of this interaction with your front line manager colleagues, what is exchanged between you (e.g. is information sharing, HR responsibilities etc. involved)? (on what areas or issues do you work together on)?

Purpose: to explore the exchange content.

12. In the course of your interactions with your front line manager colleagues, how are decisions made between yourself and the front line managers you interact? Can you provide practical examples to illustrate this?

Purpose: to identify the processes involved within the relationship.

13. Thinking about the process of collaborative HR provision, what is your assessment of (i) the balance of power and (ii) the division of responsibility

between yourself and your front line manager colleagues with reference to delivering HR?

Purpose: to explore the scope for imbalances of power

14. How would you rate the level of dependence between yourself and your front line manager colleagues with respect to delivering collaborative HR? Please explain this rating?

Purpose: to determine the social dependency between HR and the line.

Social Penetration

15. In terms of your relationship with the various front line managers with whom you interact with in the business line, typically, how long have you been interacting and working together with them for the purpose of collaborative HR delivery?

Purpose: to determine the longevity of the relationships.

16. Would you consider your various relationships with these front line managers to have evolved over time? Could you elaborate on what sort of changes have taken place, if any?

Purpose: to explore the extent of social penetration.

17. To what extent do you believe your history of interaction and collaboration with front line managers in your business line may influence how you interact with them in the future? Has this manifested in practice? (Does your past history of working together influence how you work with them now)

Purpose: to address the issue of assessment making and forecast prediction in relation to interaction activity.

18. To what extent, if any, has the relationship you have built with these front line managers made you feel more confident and open in your interactions with them? If so, how has this occurred in practice? (Does being more familiar with line managers make for a more productive working relationship)

Purpose: to explore if a deeper understanding of each other improves the relationship.

19. As your relationships with your front line manager colleagues have developed over time, would you consider yourself to become more deeply motivated and committed to the relationship? If yes, in what ways has this occurred?

Purpose: to explore the willingness to disclose more as familiarity increases.

20. To what extent do you feel that your working relationship with your front line manager colleagues in terms of collaborative HR delivery relies on mutual investment and contributions? Can you provide practical examples of this? (Do both sides put in the same degree of commitment and effort)

Purpose: to determine if the relationship is reliant upon mutual contribution.

21. To what extent do you feel that the front line managers with whom you interact value your HR expertise? If yes, how does this manifest?

Purpose: to determine the perceived value of HR professionals.

Trust

22. How important is the issue of trust when collaborating with your front line manager colleagues? Why is this so? Is this trust reciprocated?

Purpose: to expose their assessment of trust of their exchange actor.

23. If we focus on the issue of equity (fairness) in the process of your collaborative interactions with front line managers with respect to (i) information sharing and (ii) decision making processes, how would you describe and evaluate these in the context of your interactions with your front line manager colleagues?

Purpose to explore trust in the interaction fairness.

24. Thinking about the level of trust in the context of collaboratively delivering HR in conjunction with your front line manager colleagues, how would you rate this? Please can you describe what factors have influenced this assessment?

Purpose: to identify if they perceive the relationship as trusting.

25. Would you consider that trust in your interactions with front line managers builds the longer and more frequently you interact with one another? Why would this be the case?

Purpose: to explore if trust is related to frequency of interaction.

Reciprocity

26. Would you consider your collaborative HR involvement with the front line managers to involve 'give-and-take'/fulfilling obligations in relation to your interaction? Can you elaborate with some practical examples?

Purpose: to explore the relevance of reciprocity to their social exchange.

27. In the course of your collaborative interactions with front line managers in HR delivery, would the issue of reciprocity (fulfilling obligations/give and take) exert an influence in terms of (i) information sharing and (ii) assuming certain roles and responsibilities? Can you provide any practical scenarios to illustrate this?

Purpose: To identify exchange in relation to reciprocity.

28. If reciprocity (give and take) exerts an influence on your relationship, typically how long does it take to receive a reciprocal response? Would it depend on the situation at hand?

Purpose: to explore the timing of reciprocal behaviour.

29. Would you find yourself more motivated and committed in your interactions with your front line manager colleagues in the course of collaborative HR delivery, if they have been previously cooperative and supportive with you? If yes, how would this manifest?

Purpose: to determine whether past interaction has an influence on reciprocity.

Sense-Making

30. Upon commencing a working relationship with your line manager colleagues, what would your initial expectations be in terms of (i) your role, (ii) front line manager role and (iii) outcomes of the relationship? What are reasons behind these assessments? Furthermore, would these expectations be articulated/documentated?

Purpose: to identify HR professionals initial expectations about collaboration.

31. Within your working relationship with your various front line manager colleagues, (I don't want to delve into any confidentiality issues but) have situations arisen where conflict arose? What/who has caused this? How do you deal with conflict in your interactions with front line managers?

Purpose: to explore how HR professionals make sense of conflict.

32. How have you attempted to resolve any conflict within your collaborative relationship with front line managers?

Purpose: to identify steps taken to address conflict.

33. At this moment, what is your general assessment of your relationships with the various front line managers whom you collaborate and interact with for the purpose of HR delivery? What has informed this assessment?

Purpose: to identify HR professionals' perception of their relationship with line management.

34. Has this assessment of your relationships with front line managers evolved over time? If so, how?

Purpose: to illuminate how the history of the relationship impacts on the interaction.

Relationship Tie Strength

35. How would you regard, in general terms, the strength of your professional relationship with your front line manager colleagues? Please explain your assessment?

Purpose: to explore the perceived strength of the relationship.

36. What type of supports would you like to see put in place to both maintain and enhance your relationships with front line managers in collaborative HR delivery?

Purpose: to elicit what HR professionals would like to see/receive to help them go forward in their collaborative remit.

Impact

37. What would you consider to be the main impacts, both positive and negative to you, in terms of your collaborative involvement with line managers in the context of HR delivery?

Purpose: to identify the main impacts on HR professionals.

38. How have you responded to managing these impacts? Please explain?

Purpose: to explore how HR professionals handle their role.

39. What would you consider to be the key impacts, both positive and negative, for (i) the business line and (ii) the organisation of having front line managers and HR professionals collaborating in terms of HR delivery?

Purpose: to identify the organisational impact arising from the collaboration.

40. Is there anything else you would like to add with regards to your relationship with your front line manager colleagues or even the HR function itself, both within your business line and also across the organisation?

Purpose: to give the respondent an opportunity to raise any issues that have not already been accommodated for.

41. Any other comments?

Reiterate thanks for their participation and valuable contribution and also restate confidentiality agreement.

Line Managers Interview Schedule

I am going to pose a range of questions, grouped under various themes that will require you to reflect on your experiences in terms of your role as a line manager and with reference to your relationships and interactions with your HR colleagues and any impacts that may arise from your involvement with them. Beyond these questions, please feel free to contribute any additional insights you might have in relation to your relationship with your colleagues who provide HR assistance or the entire HR function itself.

Context

1. Could you please tell me what your role, as a front line manager, in the business line involves?
Purpose: to explore the role played by line managers.
2. What type and how many direct reports are you responsible for?
Purpose: to illuminate understanding on the employees line managers manage.
3. What is your understanding of what is expected of front line managers in terms of delivering (people management) HR?
Purpose: to explore line managers understanding of their role as per the HR strategy.

LM-HR Collaboration

4. Previous research I conducted focusing on line managers who participated in the “Human Resource Management for Line Managers” programme indicated that line managers are involved in the areas of selection, training and development, performance management and appraisal. Is this an accurate reflection of your involvement in HR (people management)?
Purpose: to elicit the type of involvement line managers adopt in relation to HRM.
5. Could you please describe the (people management) HR responsibilities associated with your role within the business line? Can you provide practical examples?
Purpose: to identify what HR areas line managers are involved in.
6. Findings from this prior research on the “Human Resource Management for Line Managers” programme also indicated that line managers increasingly collaborate with their HR colleagues. Again, is this an accurate reflection of line manager practice your business line? Examples?

Purpose: to introduce the notion of collaborating with HR professionals.

7. In general, can you tell me about the range (types and levels) of HR professionals you interact with in terms of managing the HR needs of your direct reports?

Purpose: to explore who front line managers interact with from the general HR community.

8. In terms of your involvement in collaborative HR delivery with these HR professionals, could you describe how (i) you were **prepared for** managing the HR needs of your direct reports and (ii) how you were **prepared for** your working relationship with your HR colleagues?

Purpose: to determine if any preparation was given to facilitate the collaborative relationship.

9. What do you identify as the potential benefit to front line managers from working with these HR professionals? Do these occur in practice?

Purpose: to identify what the line manager expects to obtain from the relationship.

10. How do you perceive your role in the context of collaboration with HR professionals with regards to HR delivery? What do you feel you can bring as a manager to the collaboration?

Purpose: to elicit line managers understanding of their role in the relationship and introduce potential exchange currencies.

Social Exchange

11. Thinking of your interactions with HR professionals, what would you identify as the mediums used to support your collaboration? Examples? Of these, what is the most common medium used? Is geography an issue?

Purpose: to determine the mediums used to support the relationship.

12. In terms of your working relationship with your various HR colleagues, typically, what (i) happens in the course of your interaction and (ii) what is exchanged between you both i.e. information sharing, are activities performed, responsibilities shared, is support given etc?

Purpose: to explore the social aspects of their relationship.

13. In terms of your interactions in terms of delivering HR to your direct reports, how are decisions made between you and your HR professional colleagues in the process of collaborative HR delivery? Can you provide examples to illustrate this?

Purpose: to identify the processes involved within the relationship.

14. Thinking again about your interactions with HR professionals, what is your assessment of (i) the balance of power and (ii) the division of responsibility between you and your HR colleagues with reference to delivering collaborative HR practice?

Purpose: to explore the scope for imbalances of power.

15. How would you rate the level of dependence between yourself and your HR colleagues with respect to delivering collaborative HR? What factors have influenced your rating of dependence?

Purpose: to determine the social dependency between LM and HR professionals.

Social Penetration

16. In terms of your relationship with the various range of HR professionals in the business line, in general terms, how long have you been interacting and working together for collaborative HR delivery? Can you provide any examples?

Purpose: to determine the longevity of the relationships

17. To what extent have these various relationships with your HR colleagues evolved over time? Could you elaborate on what changes have taken place?

Purpose: to explore the extent of social penetration.

18. Does the length of time you have been working and collaborating together in HR delivery influence how you currently work with them? How so?

Purpose: to address the issue of assessment making and forecast prediction in relation to interaction activity.

19. To what extent do you believe that the length of time and frequency of interactions between you and your various HR colleagues has made you feel more confident and open in your interactions with them? Can you elaborate?

Purpose: to explore if a deeper understanding improves the relationship.

20. To what extent do you feel that your working relationship with your HR colleagues in collaborative HR delivery relies on both sides investing and contributing to HR delivery? Can you please elaborate on (i) what you feel you contribute and (ii) what HR professionals contribute to the delivery of HR?

Purpose: to determine if the relationship is reliant upon mutual contribution.

21. In terms of your involvement in HR delivery, to what extent do you feel that the HR professionals you interact with, value your input as a line manager in relation to collaborative HR delivery? Can you provide examples to this effect?

Purpose: to identify what line management brings to the interaction.

Trust

22. How important is the issue of trust when working together with your HR colleagues in terms of HR delivery? Can you elaborate on the reasoning behind this?

Purpose: to expose their assessment of trust of their exchange actor.

23. Thinking about trust in relation to your relationships with the HR people you interact with, how would you rate this? Can you describe what factors have influenced this assessment? Is trust reciprocal?

Purpose to explore trust in the interaction fairness.

24. If we focus on the issue of equity (fairness and balance) in the course of your interactions with HR professionals with respect to (i) information sharing and (ii) decision making processes, how would you describe and evaluate these in the context of your interactions with your front line manager colleagues?

Purpose to explore trust in the interaction fairness.

25. Would you consider that the trust you place in your interactions with the HR colleagues in the business line builds the longer and more frequently you interact with one another? Can you provide any examples to illustrate this?

Purpose: to explore if trust is related to frequency of interaction.

Reciprocity

26. Would you consider your working relationship with your HR professional colleagues involves 'give-and-take'/fulfilling obligations) in relation to HR delivery.

Purpose: to explore the relevance of reciprocity to their social exchange.

27. In the course of your interactions with your HR colleagues, would the issue of reciprocity (give and take/obligations) exert an influence in terms of (i) information sharing and (ii) assuming certain roles and responsibilities? Can you provide any practical scenarios to illustrate this?

Purpose: to identify exchange in relation to reciprocity.

28. If reciprocity (give and take) exerts an influence on your relationship, typically how long does it take to receive such reciprocal behaviours? Would it depend on the situation at hand?

Purpose: to illuminate the role of time with regards to reciprocity.

29. Would you find yourself more motivated and committed in your interactions with your various HR colleagues in HR delivery, if they have been previously cooperative and supportive with and to you? If, yes, can you please explain why this is so?

Purpose: to determine whether past interaction has an influence on reciprocity.

Sense-Making

30. Upon commencing a working relationship with your various HR colleagues, what would your initial expectations be in terms of (i) your role, (ii) the HR professional's role and (iii) outcomes of the relationship? What influences these perceptions? Furthermore, would these expectations be articulated/documentated?

Purpose: to identify line managers initial expectations about collaboration.

31. Within your working relationships with your various HR colleagues, (I don't want to delve into any confidentiality issues) but have situations arisen where conflict has arisen? What/who has caused this? How do you deal with conflict in your interactions with HR professionals?

Purpose: to explore how line managers make sense of conflict.

32. How have you attempted to resolve such conflict in your interactions with these HR professionals? What was involved in this?

Purpose: to explore how line managers make sense of conflict.

33. At this moment, what is your general/overall assessment of your relationships with the various HR professionals with whom you collaborate in HR delivery? What has informed this assessment?

Purpose: to identify LM perception of their relationship with line management.

34. Has this assessment of your HR professional colleagues evolved over time? If so, how?

Purpose: to explore if there is a shared sense of understanding.

Relationship Tie Strength

35. How would you regard, in general terms, the strength of your working relationship with your HR colleagues? Please explain your assessment?

Purpose: to explore the perceived strength of the relationship.

36. What type of supports would you like to see put in place both to maintain and enhance your how you work and interact with the HR professionals in the business line??

Purpose: to elicit what LM would like to see/receive to help them go forward in their collaborative remit.

Impact

37. What would you consider to be the main impacts, both positive and negative to you, in terms of your interaction with HR colleagues?

Purpose: to identify the main impacts on LM.

38. How have you adapted to managing these impacts? Can you provide details on this?

Purpose: to explore how LM handle their role.

37. What would you consider to be the key impacts, both good and bad, for (i) the business line and (ii) the organisation in general, of having front line managers and HR professionals working together?

Purpose: to identify the organisational impact arising from the collaboration

38. Is there anything else you would like to add with regards to your relationship with your HR colleagues or the collaborative relationship you find yourself in with them?

Purpose: to give the respondent an opportunity to raise any issues that have not already been accommodated for.

39. How do you perceive HR as a function and the specialists charged with providing HR service to you? Are you getting value etc.?

40. Any other comments?

Reiterate thanks for their participation and valuable contribution and also restate confidentiality agreement.

C:5 Post Interview ‘Thank You’ Correspondence

Tel: [REDACTED]
Email: jpower@wit.ie

<date>

Re: Confidential Interview –Line Manager- HR Professional Research

Dear <name>,

I am writing to thank you for your participation in the above interview process. I appreciate your willingness to share so freely your time in what I know is a busy working day and also your views on the issue of line manager involvement in Human Resource delivery and, in turn, the interactions and relationships between front line managers and HR professionals in [REDACTED]. Your input will help to create a greater understanding of the issues surrounding line manager and HR professional interaction for future policy and practice across the [REDACTED].

With sincere thanks,

Jamie Power

Jamie Power
PhD Researcher
Department of Management & Organisation
School of Business
Waterford Institute of Technology

C:6 NVIVO Nodes

	Name	In Folder
1	Business Line HR Manager	Tree Nodes
2	Business Line HR Manager\Context and Strategy	Tree Nodes
3	Business Line HR Manager\Context and Strategy\How is the Business Line Different from Others	Tree Nodes
5	Business Line HR Manager\Context and Strategy\Integration of Business Line Strategy with Group HR Strategy	Tree Nodes
6	Business Line HR Manager\Context and Strategy\Main Focus of the Business Line HR Strategy	Tree Nodes
7	Business Line HR Manager\Context and Strategy\Staffing of the Business Line	Tree Nodes
8	Business Line HR Manager\Context and Strategy\Your Function & Responsibilities	Tree Nodes
9	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship	Tree Nodes
10	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Buy-in from LM and HR	Tree Nodes
11	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Communication Channels	Tree Nodes
12	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Competence of Line Manager	Tree Nodes
13	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Issues Collaborated Upon	Tree Nodes
14	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Measures for Developing HR Professionals Competence	Tree Nodes
15	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Measures for Developing LM Competence in HR Arena	Tree Nodes
16	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Rationale for LM-HR Collaboration	Tree Nodes
17	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Reality of LM-HR Collaboration	Tree Nodes
18	Business Line HR Manager\LM-HR Relationship\Variations in LM-HR Collaboration	Tree Nodes
19	Business Line HR Manager\Sense Making	Tree Nodes
20	Business Line HR Manager\Sense Making\Aspects which need improving	Tree Nodes
21	Business Line HR Manager\Sense Making\Aspects Working Well	Tree Nodes
22	Business Line HR Manager\Sense Making\Assessment of LM-HR Collaboration	Tree Nodes
23	Business Line HR Manager\Sense Making\Evaluation of LM-HR Collaboration	Tree Nodes
24	Business Line HR Manager\Sense Making\Is Collaboration Supporting HR Strategy	Tree Nodes
25	Business Line HR Manager\Sense Making\Scope to Improve Collaboration	Tree Nodes
26	Credibility	Free Nodes

27	Business Line HR Manager\Other General Comments	Tree Nodes
28	Group HR Managers	Tree Nodes
29	Group HR Managers\Group HR Role	Tree Nodes
30	Group HR Managers\Group HR Role\Coordination of the Various Business Lines	Tree Nodes
31	Group HR Managers\Group HR Role\Measures Implemented to Support LM-HR	Tree Nodes
32	Group HR Managers\Group HR Role\Methods of Encouraging LM & HR	Tree Nodes
33	Group HR Managers\Group HR Role\Monitoring or Evaluation Role	Tree Nodes
34	Group HR Managers\Group HR Role\Scope to Improve LM-HR Collaboration	Tree Nodes
35	Group HR Managers\HR Strategy	Tree Nodes
36	Group HR Managers\HR Strategy\Focus	Tree Nodes
37	Group HR Managers\HR Strategy\Role of Group HR	Tree Nodes
38	Group HR Managers\HR Strategy\Role of HR in HR Delivery	Tree Nodes
39	Group HR Managers\HR Strategy\Role of Line Managers in HR Delivery	Tree Nodes
40	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship	Tree Nodes
41	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Competence of Line Managers	Tree Nodes
42	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Developmental Opportunities for HR Professionals	Tree Nodes
43	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Encouragement of collaboration	Tree Nodes
44	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Evaluated - Monitored	Tree Nodes
45	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\How is LM-HR Collaboration Promoted	Tree Nodes
46	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\HR Developmental Opportunities for Line Managers	Tree Nodes
47	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Other stakeholders in LM-HR collaboration	Tree Nodes
48	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Potential Gains from Collaborative HR Delivery	Tree Nodes
49	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Rationale	Tree Nodes
50	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Types of Relationships	Tree Nodes
51	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\What Issues are Collaborated on	Tree Nodes
52	Group HR Managers\LM-HR Relationship\Where does Decision Making Authority Lie	Tree Nodes
53	Group HR Managers\Sense Making	Tree Nodes

54	Group HR Managers\Sense Making\Expectations of the HR Function	Tree Nodes
55	Group HR Managers\Sense Making\Expectations of HR Professionals	Tree Nodes
56	Group HR Managers\Sense Making\Expectations of Line Managers	Tree Nodes
57	Group HR Managers\Sense Making\Scope for Improvement	Tree Nodes
58	Group HR Managers\Sense Making\What Aspects are not Working Well	Tree Nodes
59	Group HR Managers\Sense Making\What Aspects are Working Well	Tree Nodes
60	HR Professionals	Tree Nodes
61	HR Professionals\Context	Tree Nodes
62	HR Professionals\Context\Areas of HR Delivery	Tree Nodes
63	HR Professionals\Context\Responsible for	Tree Nodes
64	HR Professionals\Context\Role	Tree Nodes
65	HR Professionals\LM-HR Collaboration	Tree Nodes
66	HR Professionals\Social Exchange	Tree Nodes
67	HR Professionals\Social Exchange\Balance of Power	Tree Nodes
68	HR Professionals\Social Exchange\Decisions	Tree Nodes
69	HR Professionals\Social Exchange\Dependence	Tree Nodes
70	HR Professionals\Social Exchange\Medium	Tree Nodes
71	HR Professionals\Social Exchange\What is Exchanged	Tree Nodes
72	HR Professionals\Trust	Tree Nodes
73	HR Professionals\Trust\Impact of Trust on collaboration	Tree Nodes
74	HR Professionals\Trust\Rate Trust	Tree Nodes
75	HR Professionals\Trust\Trust Build over Frequency of Interaction	Tree Nodes
76	HR Professionals\Trust\Trust your Exchange Partners	Tree Nodes
77	HR Professionals\Reciprocity	Tree Nodes
78	HR Professionals\Reciprocity\Give and Take	Tree Nodes
79	HR Professionals\Reciprocity\Impact on Collaboration	Tree Nodes
80	HR Professionals\Reciprocity\Receptive to return obligations	Tree Nodes

81	HR Professionals\Social Penetration	Tree Nodes
82	HR Professionals\Social Penetration\Breadth of Relationships	Tree Nodes
83	HR Professionals\Social Penetration\Depth of Relationships	Tree Nodes
84	HR Professionals\Social Penetration\Does Motivation Grow over Time	Tree Nodes
85	HR Professionals\Social Penetration\Familiarity leads to confidence and comfort of interaction	Tree Nodes
86	HR Professionals\Social Penetration\Is your Expertise Valued	Tree Nodes
87	HR Professionals\Social Penetration\Length of Time	Tree Nodes
88	HR Professionals\Social Penetration\Mutual Investment in the Interactions	Tree Nodes
89	HR Professionals\Social Penetration\Relationships Evolve over Time	Tree Nodes
90	HR Professionals\Sense Making	Tree Nodes
91	HR Professionals\Sense Making\Conflict	Tree Nodes
92	HR Professionals\Sense Making\expectations of your role	Tree Nodes
93	HR Professionals\Sense Making\Expectation of Partner	Tree Nodes
94	HR Professionals\Sense Making\Managing Conflict	Tree Nodes
95	HR Professionals\Tie Strength	Tree Nodes
96	HR Professionals\Tie Strength\Assessment	Tree Nodes
97	HR Professionals\Tie Strength\Reasons for Tie Strength	Tree Nodes
98	HR Professionals\Tie Strength\Scope for Improvement	Tree Nodes
99	HR Professionals\Impact	Tree Nodes
100	HR Professionals\Impact\Business Line Impact	Tree Nodes
101	HR Professionals\Impact\Organisational Impact	Tree Nodes
102	HR Professionals\Impact\Personal Negative Impacts	Tree Nodes
103	HR Professionals\Impact\Personal Positive Impacts	Tree Nodes
104	HR Professionals\General Other Comments	Tree Nodes
105	Line Managers	Tree Nodes
106	Line Managers\Context	Tree Nodes
107	Line Managers\Context\Areas of HR Delivery	Tree Nodes

108	Line Managers\Context\Responsible for	Tree Nodes
109	Line Managers\Context\Role	Tree Nodes
110	Line Managers\LM-HR Collaboration	Tree Nodes
111	Line Managers\LM-HR Collaboration\HR Preparation and Training	Tree Nodes
112	Line Managers\LM-HR Collaboration\Personal Benefit of Collaboration	Tree Nodes
113	Line Managers\LM-HR Collaboration\Personal Role within Collaborative HR Delivery	Tree Nodes
114	Line Managers\LM-HR Collaboration\Rating your own competence in HR delivery	Tree Nodes
115	Line Managers\LM-HR Collaboration\Reality of Collaboration	Tree Nodes
116	Line Managers\LM-HR Collaboration\Reasons for Interacting	Tree Nodes
117	Line Managers\LM-HR Collaboration\Who LM collaborate with	Tree Nodes
118	Line Managers\Social Exchange	Tree Nodes
119	Line Managers\Social Exchange\Authority	Tree Nodes
120	Line Managers\Social Exchange\Balance of Power	Tree Nodes
121	Line Managers\Social Exchange\Decisions	Tree Nodes
122	Line Managers\Social Exchange\Dependence	Tree Nodes
123	Line Managers\Social Exchange\Medium	Tree Nodes
124	Line Managers\Social Exchange\What is Exchanged	Tree Nodes
125	Line Managers\Trust	Tree Nodes
126	Line Managers\Trust\Impact of Trust on collaboration	Tree Nodes
127	Line Managers\Trust\Rate Trust	Tree Nodes
128	Line Managers\Trust\Trust Build over Frequency of Interaction	Tree Nodes
129	Line Managers\Trust\Trust your Exchange Partners	Tree Nodes
130	Line Managers\Reciprocity	Tree Nodes
131	Line Managers\Reciprocity\Give and Take	Tree Nodes
132	Line Managers\Reciprocity\Impact on Collaboration	Tree Nodes
133	Line Managers\Reciprocity\Receptive to return obligations	Tree Nodes
134	Line Managers\Social Penetration	Tree Nodes

135	Line Managers\Social Penetration\Breadth of Relationships	Tree Nodes
136	Line Managers\Social Penetration\Depth of Relationships	Tree Nodes
137	Line Managers\Social Penetration\Does Motivation Grow over Time	Tree Nodes
138	Line Managers\Social Penetration\Familiarity leads to confidence and comfort of interaction	Tree Nodes
139	Line Managers\Social Penetration\Is your Expertise Valued	Tree Nodes
140	Line Managers\Social Penetration\Length of Time	Tree Nodes
141	Line Managers\Social Penetration\Mutual Investment in the Interactions	Tree Nodes
142	Line Managers\Social Penetration\Relationships Evolve over Time	Tree Nodes
143	Line Managers\Sense Making	Tree Nodes
144	Line Managers\Sense Making\Conflict	Tree Nodes
145	Line Managers\Sense Making\expectations of your role	Tree Nodes
146	Line Managers\Sense Making\Expectation of Partner	Tree Nodes
147	Line Managers\Sense Making\Managing Conflict	Tree Nodes
148	Line Managers\Tie Strength	Tree Nodes
149	Line Managers\Tie Strength\Assessment	Tree Nodes
150	Line Managers\Tie Strength\Reasons for Tie Strength	Tree Nodes
151	Line Managers\Tie Strength\Scope for Improvement	Tree Nodes
152	Line Managers\Impact	Tree Nodes
153	Line Managers\Impact\Business Line Impact	Tree Nodes
154	Line Managers\Impact\Organisational Impact	Tree Nodes
155	Line Managers\Impact\Personal Negative Impacts	Tree Nodes
156	Line Managers\Impact\Personal Positive Impacts	Tree Nodes
157	View of HR	Free Nodes
158	Line Managers\General Other Comments	Tree Nodes