



Explorative study of HRM integration within DAX30 German Automotive Manufacturer

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‘Explorative study of HRM integration within DAX30

German Automotive Manufacturer’

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requirements of Sheffield Hallam University
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Abstract

This thesis presents a constructivist grounded theory study of Human Resources Management (HRM) integration within a DAX30 German Automotive Manufacturer. HRM integration is “the full integration of HRM with organisational strategy; HRM policies that cohere; and the integration of HRM within line management activities” (Sheenan, 2005: 193). This thesis explores via a blank canvas approach, and the possible disbandment of HR, the status quo and future orientation of HRM integration within a case study - A DAX30 German Automotive Manufacturer. This thesis identifies non-management employees, line-managers and members of the Human resources department concern at the disbandment of the HR function, providing emerging theory defending the current functional structure used within the organization. The status quo of HRM within the organization highlights the lack of strategy transparency and the requirement to adapt the business partner model being followed. The discussion surrounding HRM integration recognizes aspects of HRM integration to be paradoxical. The theory has been developed following the constructivist grounded theory approach, recommended by Charmaz (2006; 2014) and is based on semi-structured interviews with 36 company members of staff - 12 non-management employees, 12 line-managers and 12 members of the Human Resources department. Additional literature supports the theory. The theory adds to the current HRM integration literature, HRM in Germany and paradoxes, by considering HRM integration within a new context. The emergent theory highlights important considerations for the future, moreover the inclusion of strategic recommendations for the case study to enhance HRM integration. Furthermore, the study may be considered of relevance to Constructivist Grounded Theory research, considering methodology and reflections presented within this thesis. The emergent theory includes two models. The ‘HR justification model’ and the ‘HR integration review model’, which through further research and contextual analysis, can be developed for a wider audience.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Human Resources Management

Human Resources Management (HRM) has become the significant force behind people management in much of the world, with academics and practitioners attempting to explain and direct human behaviour (Price, 2007). The phrase 'has become' is important because HRM has developed, adapted and grown over the last 120 years, starting as a welfare department, supporting women and children and evolving into the modern-day strategic management function (Beer et al 1985; Storey, 1989; CIPD, 2015, Jamrog and Overholt, 2004, DeNisi and Biteman, 2014).

The development of the function over the last 120 years has evolved through a variety of stages, adopting and evolving with an increasing interest in the function (DeNisi and Biteman, 2014). At the beginning of the 20th century, with the rise of Taylorism and Fordism (DeNisi and Biteman, J, 2014), the function took a shift towards scientific management. The Hawthorne studies (Mayo, 1933) drew new light to the department, which in turn started a paradoxical view of personnel, contrasting both numbers and emotions. In the middle of the 20th century, the focus of the department moved towards industrial relations and legal policies (DeNisi and Biteman, 2014). The term HRM first appeared in the USA, before being adopted within the UK and it was not until the 1990's that Germany witnessed a development away from Personnel- (Personnel) and Lohnsteuer- (Payroll) departments towards HRM, albeit often still termed 'Personalwesen' (Personal) (Breisig, 2005).

During the 1990's and early 2000's, Boxall and Purcell (2003) were leading the charge for

Strategic Human Resources Management. The accumulation of these different developments over the last 120 years has created a function with mixed responsibilities, which are often paradoxical in nature and therefore makes defining HRM extremely difficult (Storey, 1989; Beer et al. 1985; Price, 2011).

However William R. Tracey, albeit vague, in The Human Resources Glossary (2003:4) defines Human Resources as "The people that staff and operate an organization". Similarly, but more substantially, Armstrong (2009:4) defines "Human resource management (HRM) is a strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and well-being of the people working in organizations".

Both of these definitions are generic and whilst others have attempted to define HRM with more finite statements, others have utilized models. Storey (1989:4) attempts to clarify the role of Human Resources Management (HRM), by claiming HRM has four key aspects which include "a particular constellation of beliefs and assumptions; strategic direction; central involvement of line managers; and reliance upon a set of 'levers ' to shape the environment."

Further attempts to define HRM have seen the development of two main schools of thought. Firstly, the Harvard Model, developed by Beer et al. (1984) and termed by Boxall (1992). Secondly, the Michigan Model (Fombrun et al, 1984). Storey (1992, as cited in Truss et al. 1997:54) refers to these two significant differences as 'Hard' and 'Soft' Human Resources (HR) - the difference between the Human Relations Movement or on the Strategic Management and Business Policy Approach. The key difference between the two being on whether an organization focuses on the Human or the Resources. Individual

development, lifetime training and development as well as individual freedom being the focus of the 'Human' and 'Soft' HR, in contrast to the 'Resources' and 'Hard' HR which focuses on workers being regarded as a commodity. Although, many organizations state that their HRM is soft, the reality is often hard (Truss et al., 1997:50) as the interests of the organization typically prevail the individual. Ulrich (1997:175-179) attempts to provide clarity to the functions purpose identifying four key roles, which structures the various responsibilities of the HR function. Two strategic - both the Strategic Partner and the Change agent and two operational - Employee Advocate and Administrative Expert.

The role of the strategic partner focuses on strategic HR planning, being a business partner with the business and being responsible for the culture and image of the business. The Change Agent is responsible for the Staffing, Organizational Design, Performance Management and Enablement of its workforce. The Employee Advocate is responsible for Employee Relations, Labour relations, Safety, and Diversity Management. The final role is the Administrative Expert, which is responsible for benefits, HR Information Systems and Compliance (Ulrich, 1997:175-179).

The significance of Ulrich's HR roles is prevalent within German organizations and is recognized as being the underpinning structure of the modern German Human Resources department (Festling, 2012; Thill et al. 2014). Although, many authors have written about the role and structure of HRM, many circles hold reservations of HRM as there are clear misgivings in the field, which will now be discussed.

Firstly, despite Ulrich's attempt at providing a unitarian perspective of the HR function, many still believe there is confusion and a requirement for clarity of differing roles being undertaken by the HR function (Beer 1997; Legge 1998; Rizzer and Trice 1969; Rynes et

al. 2004). More specifically, the balance of workload between the HR department and line manager is a common concern in the literature (Brewster and Soderstrom, 1994, McGovern et al., 1997, Boxall and Purcell, 2011). Secondly, the ambiguous nature and lack of a clear definition of HRM (Guest 1991). Thirdly, the large body of research produced in the field, is based primarily in the positivism research paradigm (Anderson, 2013).

Noon (1992: 28) claims that HRM “is built with concepts and propositions, but the associated variables and hypotheses are not made explicit. It is too comprehensive... If HRM is labelled a ‘theory’ it raises expectations about its ability to describe and predict.” Guest (1991) and Mabey et al. (1998) agree with Noon claiming that HRM is too optimistic and it is based on overhyped expectations. Gratton et al. (1999:12), take this one step further and are convinced that there is “a disjunction between rhetoric and reality in the area of human resource management between HRM theory and HRM practice, between what the HR function says it is doing and that practice as perceived by employers, and between what senior management believes to be the role of the HR function, and the role it actually plays.”

In addition to the ambiguity of HR, the morality of HRM is questioned. Keenoy (1990a: 9) calls HRM “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” because although HRM preaches mutuality, it often exploits workers. A position supported by many who claim that there are double standards in the practice (Beer 1997, Legge 1995; 1998, Rynes et al. 2004; Willmott 1993). On the one hand, there is a requirement for commitment and management rhetoric for employee concern. However, the reality is harsher with control and compliance being utilized (Legge, 1995, 1998) on the other. Price (2007) deems this position inevitable as someone is bound to lose out, however Mabey et al. (1998) claim that this occurs in HRM due to ineffectual

and pernicious practice. Ulrich (1997) contradicts this position claiming that these roles can be undertaken simultaneously, albeit the challenge of recruiting the right people into HR proves challenging (Hammonds 2005: 40). All in all, whether differing roles are able to align, Fisher, Dowling and Garnham (1999) state that strategy and business efforts are more likely to be prioritized than employee-centric activities, as the HR department is under pressure to justify themselves and show added value (Becker et al. 1997; Sheehan et al. 2006). Lansbury and Baird (2004:50) argue that there is a crisis within HR, as aligning with management and being 'paid to take care of' negativity, trust issues have arisen, epitomized by Kellaway (2001).

Kellaway (2001) refers to the profession of HRM with scepticism, sarcasm and rudeness, portraying the view of many that HRM should not exist. In fact, many HR practitioners believe that significant HR practices need to be made by senior management (Price, 2007). Even amongst the criticisms, the HRM bandwagon continues, with an agenda and constant debate on whether HR should become a strategic partner (Armstrong 2014). Hammonds (2005:40) is critical of this notion as "... let's face it: After close to 20 years of hopeful rhetoric about becoming 'strategic partners' with a 'seat at the table' where the business decisions that matter are made, most human resources professionals aren't nearly there."

These challenges arise with little surprise due to the paradoxical nature of the function. Smith and Lewis (2012) highlight several paradoxes within the organization. These include the challenges between balancing the need of Individual vs. Collective; generating Future vs. Present Success; Adaption vs. Retention of self purpose; Employee vs. Customer demands; Control and flexibility.

Gerpott (2015) builds on the work from Smith and Lewis (2012) focusing paradoxical theory on HRM of which Gerpott (2015) highlights four key paradoxes. Interestingly, his paradoxical views provide an interesting summary to the previous discussion. Firstly, Gerpott (2015) highlights the difference between the strategic and operational role of the department and to a lesser extent the difference between change and stability, also identified by Ulrich (1997). Boxall and Purcell (2003) highlights that the organization only notices operational and stability factors which are not done well and only notices the strategic and change factors when both the operational and strategic factors are both done well.

Gerpott (2015) secondly highlights the paradoxical nature of the employee or management focused departments role, which has been referred to above. Interestingly, a majority of research in the field of HRM has been undertaken by people working within HR (Armstrong, 2014).

Thirdly, Gerpott (2015) highlights the challenge between the retention and delegation of control to line management. Interestingly a line of discussion centred on being the 'HR devolution' (Brewster and Soderstrom, 1994, McGovern et al., 1997). Truss (2001: 1145) acknowledges the importance of the line manager as "the role of each individual manager as agent, choosing to focus his or her attention in varying ways.", with Purcell et al. (2003) stipulating that it is the line-managers role to 'bring policies to life'.

Although, through the mist of critique and paradoxical confusion, there seems to be a unifying and unanimous voice for the requirement of HRM Integration (Guest, 1987; Brewster and Larsen, 1992; Schuler, 1992; Sheehan, 2005; Vosburgh, 2007; Dany et al.

2008; Ulrich 2015; Belizon et al. 2016). The integrated approach provides a unique HRM system, which cannot be copied (Barney, 1991; Huselid et al. 1997) and can improve organizational performance (Holbeche, 1999; Schuler and Jackson, 1999) and is seen as the next phase of HRM (Sheenan, 2005).

As cited in Sheehan (2005: 193), HRM Integration is ‘the full integration of HRM with organisational strategy; HRM policies that cohere; and the integration of HRM within line management activities’. Jackson and Schuler, (2000: 25) recognize that integration is created in partnership as an “HR triad” between HR, line and employees to manage HR issues.

Moreover, the two core concepts of HRM integration are vertical and horizontal (Leopold and Harris, 2009). Vertical integration is concerned with the integration of HRM into the business strategy and the devolvment of HRM practices to line management, whilst horizontal integration is concerned with the coherence and alignment of policies. Strategic integration can increase organisational performance (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Purcell, 1989; Schuler, 1992; Storey 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Truss et al. 1997; Budhwar, 2000a; 2000b; Huselid et al. 2005; Boxall and Purcell 2006; Chanda and Shen, 2009; Armstrong, 2017), similarly the alignment of policies and the devolvment to line management can increase competitive advantage (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; 2002; Hope-Bailey et al- 1997; Truss et al. 1997; Sisson and Storey, 2000; Sheenan 2003; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007:5 ; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010; López-Cotarelo, 2011; Sikora and Ferris, 2014; Link and Müller, 2015; Evans, 2016).

HRM Integration has been an on-going and advocated topic in the field of HRM since the end of the 1980’s (Guest, 1987; Brewster and Larsen, 1992; Schuler, 1992; Sheehan,

2005; Vosburgh, 2007; Dany et al. 2008; Ulrich 2015; Belizon et al. 2016). Although, there is resounding support for HRM integration, one significant tension is apparent as integration often requires delegation to line management (Link and Müller, 2015). The arguments for HRM integration have typically been published in UK and USA journals and there is limited research that has conducted outside these countries, more specifically Germany, where research has created contradictory views (Wächter and Muller-Camen, 2006). Where there has been research conducted, it has often focused on either process or strategy (Dowling et al. 2013, Harzing and Pennington 2014).

Outside of Germany, the critical perspective of HR has resulted in some organizations saying “No” to Human Resources. As reported by Weber and Feintzeig (2014), LRN Corp. chose to close its Human Resources department in order to force people issues into the business. Further examples indicate that this is not a one-time occurrence as highlighted by Semler (2003) and Welbourne (2012), who demonstrate the possibility of closing the HR function, forcing the integrating of Human Resources into the organization. Further investigation, unearthed Fischer (2016) who believes in killing HR, supported by John (1998, as cited in Whittaker and Marchington, 2003), who believes that ‘HR should be torn apart, outsourced and downsized’.

These arguments, in conjunction with the discussion held within this introduction, evoked curiosity within the researcher whether the approach of disbanding the HR department within a German Automotive Manufacturer would support the furthering of HRM integration. With no previous studies or supporting literature materialising from the literature review specific to satisfying this curiosity and thus highlighting a knowledge gap, the researcher discussed the potential topic with his university cohort and research supervisors. After productive discussions regarding the topic, the researcher felt motivated

and encouraged to undertake the study. In summary, the critical literature supporting the killing of HR to force HR integration, personal curiosity and encouragement from peers and research supervisors led to this research being undertaken. The undertaken study within this thesis explores whether the case study organization could disband the HR department to integrate HR into the business.

1.2 Purpose of exploration

Although Grounded Theory should limit predetermined outcomes prior to exploration, Hunter et al. (2011) and Charmaz (2014) recognize some previous awareness of the subject is necessary with every researcher bringing something to the table. Hunter et al. (2011) also recognizes that university research procedures often require research aims, which was the case during the proposal of this study. Charmaz (2014:166) recommends reflexivity throughout the research process, encouraging knowledge to 'lay fallow' throughout the study.

The research presented within this thesis explored HRM integration, within the context of a DAX30 German Automotive Manufacturer. The case study was selected due to the researchers interests in the industry, current and future career direction and unique access available via the significant network held by the researcher in this industry. Due to confidentiality reasons, the name of the company is not disclosed within this report.

The core aims identified during the research proposal provide three key contributions to knowledge.

Firstly, the author aims to **establish a status quo reflection of HRM integration within the case study**, in it self, providing new knowledge for the company and possibly the

industry. To date, there is no literature or research on this specific topic. Although the research outcomes are intended for the German Automotive Industry, the point that this research is being conducted in English allows for international parties interested in German HRM to gain an additional perspective on the topic of HRM Integration in a German context.

Secondly, **a comparative analysis of the future role of HRM Integration within the case study, according to a comparison of non-management employees (furthermore, known as employees), line-management and HR's perspectives.** Where other studies have targeted HR managers (Sheenan et al. 2013), this study will utilize a 'triad' comparative of opinions between employees, line-managers and Human Resources participants, potentially providing a significant expansion to knowledge of the perceptions of HR within the company.

Thirdly, this research intends to use the emergent constructivist grounded theory **to make strategic recommendations for the future development of HRM integration within the case study** and industry, through consideration of the data collected within the study and the supporting literature.

The research objectives were established to meet the research proposal outcomes, although were written in a vague and generalized manner, in keeping with a grounded theory approach. The vague direction supported the development of the research methodology, summarized in the following sub-chapter.

1.3 Summary of the Methodology

Kuhn (1970), as cited in Slith and Williams (1995: 178), encourages the term paradigm as it “leads scientists to think about their science in the way they do, even though they usually do not recognize their view as a worldview.” And, Guba and Lincoln (1994:105), as cited in Saunders et al. (2009:106) see questions of research methodology as secondary to the questions of paradigm. The key is for the researcher is to embrace reflexivity (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2010) and question their own philosophy.

The ontological question, which needs to be answered first, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979:1) is that of “whether the reality to be investigated is external to the individual or the product of the individual consciousness”. This research follows a nominalist position, which “revolves around the assumption that the social world external to the individual cognition is made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality. The nominalist does not admit to there being any ‘real’ structure to the world, which these concepts are used to describe. The ‘names’ used are regarded as artificial creations as utility whose utility is based upon the convenience as tools that describing, making sense of and negotiating the external world” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 4).

In addition to the ontological question, there is the question of epistemology. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979:1) “These are assumptions about the grounds of knowledge - about how one might begin to understand the world and communicate this knowledge to fellow human beings.” and “how one can sort out what is to be regarded as ‘true’ from what is to be regarded as ‘false’.”

The assumption of the researcher is paramount as the methodical issues of a researcher are then directly implicated (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2010; Gill and Johnson, 2010). Prior to this research study being undertaken, the researcher assumed the epistemological position of a subjectivist.

Research conducted from a nominalist ontology and subjective epistemology within Human Resources, is being increasingly accepted (Anderson, 2013; Stahl and Bjorkman and Morris, 2013; Armstrong, 2014), although is typically conducted via the channels of positivism (Anderson, 2013; Armstrong, 2014).

Through an exploration of research methodologies within this paradigm, the researcher found comfort in 'grounded theory' research, more specifically a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2014), which acknowledges the role of the researcher, maintains a relativist ontology and presumes that any grounded theory is subjective and contextually dependent.

Grounded Theory is a methodology which aims to understand the social environment (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and is focused on inductive, theory building enquiry grounded in data (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2013), which is appropriate when little is understood (Creswell, 2013; Polit and Beck, 2012).

Classical Grounded Theory (CGT), first coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is a research methodology that focuses on arriving at theories 'grounded' in a researchers data via concerning themselves with "the discovery of theory from data - systematically obtained and analysed in social research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:1). Similarities between CGT and conGT do exist, including theoretical sampling, constant comparison, coding and

memo writing (Charmaz, 2014), although most significantly, the ontological positioning of CGT and conGT differ. The ontological difference between the theories of Glaser and Barney (1967), which is realist and objective in nature and with Charmaz (2000a, 2002a, 2006a), Bryant (2002) and Clarke (2003) who have moved Grounded Theory away from positivism and towards an interpretive or constructivist ontological position. A view which aligns with the researcher's own philosophical assumptions.

According to Charmaz (2014:2), "grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves. Thus researchers construct a theory 'grounded' in their data." The process begins with "inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis." (Charmaz, 2014).

Although Constructivist Grounded Theory allows the researcher flexibility, the method provides a "set of general principles, guidelines, strategies, and heuristic devices". The key components and guidelines recommended by Charmaz (2014) were diligently followed and are the framework to this conGT study.

General aims were agreed as part of the research proposal process and included:

- establishing a status quo reflection of HRM integration within the case study
- comparatively analysing the future role of HRM Integration within the case study, according to a comparison of employees, management and HR's perspectives
- developing a strategic recommendation for the future development of HRM integration within the case study

Fundamentally, due to the reflexive nature of the research approach being utilized, Constructivist Grounded Theory, it would have been unwise to consider the following outcomes as all-inclusive and set in stone, as Charmaz (2014) indicates that the research outcomes will appear from the data.

As Jackson and Schuler, (2000: 25) recognize that integration is created in partnership as an “HR triad” between HR, line and employees to manage HR issues, this research explored the differing perspectives of these three groups within the study. 36 respondents were involved in the explorative study, with 12 respondents from each group. Respondents were sourced via snowball and convenience sampling.

All respondents were employed by the case study organization, a DAX30 German Automotive Manufacturer. To gain access, confidentiality had to be ensured, and therefore, the manufacturer and individuals cannot be named. One organization, rather than multiple organizations within the German Automotive business was used for three key reasons:

1. The scope of the research project was narrowed by focusing on one organization, rather than aiming to focus on multiple organizations, being challenging within the timescales of the DBA.
2. Access to the company’s employees was realizable.
3. Most importantly, Barney (1991) and Huselid et al. (1997) stipulate that HRM integration provides competitive advantage via creating unique environments, which cannot be copied. Thus, the researcher agreed with the supervisors to study HRM integration within one unique environment.

Data was collected via semi-structured intensive interviewing, which has “become the most common source of qualitative data” (Anderson, 2013:73) and supported by Charmaz (2014). In accordance with the methodology detailed by Charmaz, 2014, the researcher simultaneously involved himself in “data collection and analysis” of the data. The researcher planned to conduct all interviews in English, with the support of the German language when participants had difficulties expressing their opinions in English. Due to the nature of the topic, a number of respondents requested to speak German, which was granted. It is worth noting that this research was of a cross-cultural nature and reflected upon by the researcher.

Cross-cultural research can be identified via three characteristics. Firstly, cross language research, which is defined as studies in which a language barrier is present between researchers and their respondents (Larson, 1988; Temple, 2002). Secondly, the role of cross-cultural interviews, which “are those in which the interviewer and interviewee have different cultural memberships” (Sands et al. 2007:354) and finally the role of translation within the research process.

Within interpretive studies, a multilingual researcher may be better placed to gain context from the situation than a professional translator (Fenna et al. 2010, Smith et al. 2008, Chen and Boore, 2009, Nurjannah et al. 2014), although having a multi-lingual researcher is rare (Temple and Young 2004). The sole researcher on this project is bi-lingual holding the highest language certificate available in Germany for non-native speakers. This certificate entitles the researcher to study and undertake research at a German university and thus feels adequately competent to use these skills within this study.

Nevertheless, in order to follow the methodology put forward by Charmaz (2006; 2015), formal coding of data was completed, once the interviews had been translated into English. Bi-lingual emergence in the data could not be avoided and the utilization of German and English provided access to data, unavailable for a monolingual researcher.

Coding - “categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data.”, was undertaken which helped “define what is happening in the data” (Charmaz, 2014:43) and allows the researcher to “begin to grapple with what it means.” (Charmaz, 2014:46). Three coding strategies were utilized; Line Coding, Axial Coding and NVivo coding.

Memo-writing, which “is the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers” (Charmaz, 2014:72) were simultaneously written, in English and German. Memo-writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyse your data and codes early in the research process (Holton 2007; Charmaz, 2014).

Additionally, the researcher utilized a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to structure coding and emerging themes, strongly recommend by Miles et al. (2014), more specifically NVivo Pro. Further analysis features of NVivo were not pursued due to the fear that by doing so would be more akin to quantitative or positivistic research, a critique the researcher holds in accordance with many qualitative researchers (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013:7).

Finally, constructivist building of theory was completed, prior to the drafting of the doctoral thesis. The emergent theory is the result of an ethical research study, which meets the conGT criteria advocated by Charmaz (2006), for trustworthiness and credibility.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This paper is structured into six key chapters, each providing discussion supporting the grounded theory created within this explorative research project. This chapter has:

- introduced the theoretical background, which led to the research project being realized,
- outlined the key purpose of this study, in particular to explore the status quo of HRM integration within a German Automotive Manufacturer.
- provided background information about my methodology;
- indicated how the results are planned to be presented.

The remaining chapters are organized as follows:

Chapter 2 is a literature review of the core research encompassing Human resources integration. The chapter discusses in greater depth HRM integration, with specific attention to strategy, policy coherences and the role of the Line Manager in HRM Integration.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the philosophical positioning of the researcher, the research methodology and CGT approach, which the researcher utilized.

Chapter 4 delivers an overview of the findings and comparative analysis of the three core themes emerging from the study - 'Can we disband HR?', 'A Company without an HR department, still needs HR, but how?' and 'HRM Integration – Now and Future'. Each sub chapter presents the perspectives of the employees, line managers and Human

Resources participants, before putting the views together. The chapter is concluded with a summary of the findings.

Chapter 5 provides strategic recommendations for the organisation based on the emergent themes presented in chapter 4.

Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary of the emergent grounded theory, the contributions to theory and evaluates the credibility of the theory. General reflections are presented for a wider audience, including future areas of research.

1.5 Summary

In summary, this chapter started with a presentation of the background reading and thoughts leading to the research inspiration - HRM Integration within a DAX30 German Automotive Manufacturer. Although, critics of HR exist, in addition to varying models, HRM integration is unanimously supported. Nevertheless, limited literature on HRM Integration in a German organisation could not be found and no literature on HRM Integration within a German Automotive Manufacturer was available. This gap in literature is explored via this study **establishing a status quo reflection of HRM integration within the case study**, thus providing new knowledge for the company and possibly the industry.

Secondly, studies into HRM integration have targeted HR managers (Sheenan et al. 2013), with no literature being found on HRM integration based on the perspectives of employees. This study will utilize a 'triad' of opinions allowing an additional comparison of perspectives **between employees, line-managers and Human Resources**

respondents, potentially providing further useful data and knowledge of various perception of the company's HR function.

Finally, this research intends via the emergent data **to make strategic recommendations for the future development of HRM integration within the case study**, which to date has not been explored.

The research objectives were established to meet the research proposal outcomes, although were written in a vague and generalized manner, in keeping with a grounded theory approach. The vague direction supported the development of the research methodology, introduced within this chapter and presented in depth in within the chapter – Methodology.

Prior to presenting the methodological aspects of this research study, a complete literature review is presented in chapter 2.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Within this chapter, the researcher will present the main body of literature on the topic of HRM integration. It must be noted that the literature accumulated within this study materialised simultaneously within the research study, in accordance with a grounded theory approach. For this report and ease of reading, the main body of literature has been amassed within this chapter and will be referred to in the subsequent chapters.

Firstly, this chapter will present a status quo picture of HRM integration, positioning the topic within the realm of strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM). Importantly, within this study the definition of HRM integration is “the full integration of HRM with organizational strategy; HRM policies that cohere; and the integration of HRM within line management activities” (Sheenan, 2005: 193). Although, other definitions are presented within this chapter, the researcher will present his case for adhering to this definition.

Secondly, attention will be drawn to HRM Integration within a German organization, with a foundation discussion of HRM within Germany. The arguments for HRM integration have typically been published in UK and USA journals and there has been limited research conducted outside these countries, more specifically Germany, where research has created contradictory views (Wächter and Muller-Camen, 2006). Despite contradictions, evidence suggests that the German business model is based on Ulrich’s 1997, Business Partner Model (Wächter and Muller-Camen, 2006).

Thirdly, specific attention is provided to the three key areas within the definition of HRM integration, cited by Sheehan (2015) - strategy, policies and procedures and devolution of activities to line management. The literature expands to discuss both horizontal and

vertical integration (Leopold and Harris, 2009) of HRM, uncommon in integration research where researchers typically focus on either process or strategy (Dowling et al., 2013; Harzing and Pennington, 2014).

Finally, a literature review of organizational governance, with specific attention to trust and transparency is presented within the chapter, supporting the grounded theory presented in subsequent chapters, which emerged through the exploration of HRM Integration within the case study.

The chapter will conclude with a summary of the presented literature setting the tone for the research methodology presented in chapter 3.

2.1 HRM Integration

Human Resources Management (HRM) has turned into the noteworthy power behind people management in much of the world, with scholastics and specialists endeavouring to clarify and coordinate human conduct (Price, 2007), with the function evolving into a modern-day strategic management function (CIPD, 2015, Jamrog and Overholt, 2004, DeNisi and Biteman, 2014).

Despite many HR topics dividing opinions, there is an unifying and unanimous voice for the requirement of HRM Integration (Guest, 1987; Brewster and Larsen, 1992; Schuler, 1992; Sheehan, 2005; Vosburgh, 2007; Dany et al. 2008; Ulrich 2015; Belizon et al. 2016), as the integrated approach provides a unique HRM system, involves everyone in the company (Brewster and Larsen, 1992), cannot be copied (Barney, 1991; Huselid et al. 1997) and can improve organizational performance (Budhwar, 1998; Huselid, 1995; Pfeffer, 1995; Holbeche 1999; Schuler and Jackson, 1999).

The literature review uncovered two significant discussion areas of integration, including vertical and horizontal integration (Leopold and Harris, 2009). Vertical integration takes centre stage and focuses on strategic integration (Schuler and Jackson 1987; Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Purcell, 1989; Schuler, 1992; Storey 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Truss et al. 1997; Budhwar, 2000a; 2000b) and the devolvment of HR activities to line management (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; 2002; Hope-Bailey et al- 1997; Truss et al. 1997; Sisson and Storey, 2000). With these two lines of enquiry, Brewster and Larsen (1992: 411-12) defines vertical integration as both “ the degree to which HRM issues are considered as part of the formulation of the business strategy” and “ and the degree to which HRM practices involving give responsibility to line managers rather than personnel specialists”.

Strategic integration, is specifically acknowledged as fundamental (Truss and Gratton 1994; Boswell 2006, Lepak et al. 2006; Ulrich and Dulebohn 2015) as all “definitions of human resources management agree on one point: that there must be a link between a firm’s strategy and... human resource” (Purcell, 1995: 63).

Budhwar and Ayree (2008) expand on the concept of vertical integration, by highlighting the need for horizontal integration, which can provide competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994; McDuffie 1995). The focus on horizontal integration requires firstly an identification of synergies and congruencies between HRM practices within an organization (Baird and Meshoulam 1988). Wright and Snell (1998) discuss the fit of employee skills and Kerr (1982) discuss CEO and general managers fit, which could be assumed to be horizontally integrated via the differing company policies e.g. recruitment and leadership. Although, horizontal integration predominately focuses on ‘fit’, Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) argue an

outside-in and in-side out view, in keeping with being aware of 'best practice', ensuring 'best fit' and Resource Based View (RBV) is necessary. According to Wei (2006), there are three determinants of horizontal fit, which are HR policy, options of HR practices, and the investment or budget of HRM.

Snell, Youndt and Wright (1996) argue HR supports in proving the landscape for vertical and horizontal integration through coercing the landscape of social complexities and causal ambiguity. Husiled, Jackson and Schuler (1997) argue strategic activities, which are integrated with the company strategy, can ensure inimitability, which in turn could create competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Boxall 1998).

Recognition of both the requirement for vertical and horizontal integration is taken in this fuller definition of HRM integration, which defines HRM Integration as 'the full integration of HRM with organizational strategy; HRM policies that cohere; and the integration of HRM within line management activities (Schuler, 1992; Beer et al., 1984; Tichy et al., 1982; Devanna et al., 1984; Dyer and Holder 1988; Guest, 1987, 1989), as cited in, Sheehan (2015).

Sheenan (2003) recognizes that full integration of HRM with business strategy; Integrated policy design and integration of HRM with line management responsibilities is influenced by commitment from both top management and corporate culture, in addition to the business acumen, and commitment of HR managers to the business values and strategic HR. Similarly, Sikora and Ferris (2014) argue that integration requires a culture supportive of effective human resources practices; HR accountability with goals and rewards is associated with line manager documentation; social interactions between HR and line managers improving relationships can positivity improve the implementation of HR;

employed and HR practice can increase productivity and employee satisfaction and the perception of the employee that fairness is being maintained about productivity can increase with HR implementation.

Although, there is resounding support for vertical and horizontal HRM integration, one cannot undermine the relevance of tension created by integrating HRM (Link and Müller, 2015), specifically surrounding the tension of delegating to line management (Gerpott, 2015).

Gerpott (2015) builds on the work from Smith and Lewis (2012) focusing tension on HRM paradoxical theory. Gerpott (2015) highlights four key paradoxes. Firstly, Gerpott (2015) highlights the disparity between the strategic and operational role of the department and secondly, the contrast between change and stability, also identified by Ulrich (1997). Boxall and Purcell (2003) highlights that the organization only notices operational and stability factors which are not done well and only notices the strategic and change factors when both the operational and strategic factors are both done rightfully.

Thirdly, Gerpott (2015) highlights the paradoxical nature of the employee or management focused departments role, which is normally discussed by comparing the two main models of HR - The Harvard Model, developed by Beer et al. (1984) and termed by Boxall (1992) and the Michigan Model (Fombrun et al, 1984). Guest (1989) refers to these two significant differences as 'Hard' and 'Soft' Human Resources (HR). The key difference between the two being on whether an organization focuses on the Human or the Resources. Individual development, lifetime training and development as well as individual freedom being the focus of the 'Human' and 'Soft' HR, in contrast to the 'Resources' and 'Hard' HR which focuses on workers being regarded as a commodity. Although, many organizations

communicate that their HRM is soft, the reality is often 'hard' (Truss, 1999) as the interests of the organization typically prevail over the individual. Interestingly, a majority of research in the field of HRM has been undertaken by focusing on HR people and/or line management (Armstrong, 2014), neglecting the opinions of employees.

Fourthly, Gerpott (2015) highlights the challenge between the retention and delegation of control to line management. Interestingly, a line of discussion centred on the 'HR devolution' (Brewster and Soderstrom, 1994, McGovern et al., 1997). Truss (2001: 1145) acknowledges the importance of the line manager as "the role of each individual manager as agent, choosing to focus his or her attention in varying ways.", with Purcell et al. (2003) stipulating that it is the line-managers role to 'bring policies to life'.

In order to understand the status quo of HRM integration, Budhwar (1998) suggests a number of questions being asked. Firstly, Budhwar (1998) highlights four key questions in order to understand the level of strategy integration within a business. Firstly, whether there is HR representation on the board. Secondly, whether there is a written personnel strategy. Thirdly, whether HR is consulted in the development of corporate strategy. And finally, whether HR has been translated into a clear set of work programmes.

Additionally, Budhwar (1998) highlights the level of devolvement can be understood via the exploration of responsible HRM decision-making lying with managers, in specific relation to paying benefits, recruitment and selection, training and development, industrial relations, health and safety, and workforce expansion and reduction. Furthermore, highlighting evidence of line management changes and understanding levels of training in areas of performance appraisal, communication, delegation, motivation, team building and foreign-language can provide insight into the devolvement of HR within an organisation.

Finally, understanding the consultation and realization of line management that they are responsible, will provide a greater understanding of the devolvment of HR practices within the organisation.

In order to consider the status quo of HRM integration within the case study, Budhwar's (1998) questions and exploration points were utilised to support the semi-structured interview presented in chapter 3 – Methodology.

In summary, there is a unifying and unanimous voice for the requirement of HRM Integration (Guest, 1987; Brewster and Larsen, 1992; Schuler, 1992; Sheehan, 2005; Vosburgh, 2007; Dany et al. 2008; Ulrich 2015; Belizon et al. 2016). HRM paradoxical theory needs to be considered in HRM Integration, which is primarily focused on strategy, policies and procedures and devolving responsibility to line management (Sheenan, 2003; Sikora and Ferris, 2014). A literature review for these areas follows.

2.2 HRM Strategy Integration

There is no consensus or an explicit definition of Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) (Wei, 2006), although various models do exist (Guest, 1989; Huselid, 1995; Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Barney, 1991; Boxall and Purcell 2006). Interestingly, the literature review on integration discussed strategy, whereas literature on SHRM discusses integration. The two topics are interrelated with some writers focusing on strategy and then integration (Guest, 1987; Brewster and Larsen, 1992; Schuler, 1992). contrastingly some writers focus on HRM integration, with strategy a sub domain (Sheehan, 2005; Vosburgh, 2007; Dany et al. 2008; Ulrich 2015; Belizon et al. 2016). Armstrong (2017) clarifies the difference, as SHRM is more concerned with philosophical thinking and ideology, whereas strategy is related more closely to policies and procedures.

Reflecting on these differences, the researcher assumes the position that this thesis sits within the domain of HRM integration, with strategy being considered a sub-domain of this topic.

Schüler (1999) believes that SHRM is principally focused on integration and adaption, supported by Holbreche (2004) who argues that SHRM's importance is in strategic change and developing the knowledge base of the organization to ensure future competitiveness. Katou and Budhwar (2006; 2007) highlight three strategic perspectives - universalistic; contingency and configurational. The universalistic implies that business strategies and HRM policies are mutually independent in determining performance; the contingency perspective emphasizes a fit between strategy and thus, policies and strategies influence business performance; and the configurational perspective focuses on internal and external fit between the firms environment strategy and policies. Katou and Budhwar (2006; 2007) perspectives are in keeping with a 'best fit' approach to strategy.

The best fit strategy is based on the premise that HR strategy flows from organizational strategy and the success of this model is dependent on the level of fit, both via horizontal and vertical integration (Leopold and Harris, 2009). Bueller (1988) highlights three levels of 'best fit'. The first is a top-down strategy where the organization informs HR strategy; the second, is a two way response, but interdependence remains; and finally, a fully reciprocal integrated strategy formation, via both bottom-up and top down strategy formation. Guest (1987) proposes three levels of 'fit'. HR policy 'fit' with business strategy; complementary policies and practices; and the role of line managers.

Alternatively, the best practice model (Huselid, 1995; Becker and Gerhart, 1996) or RBV model (Barney, 1991; Boxall and Purcell, 2006) can be considered. The best practice

model, which as the name suggests implies there are best practice activities that will ensure increased performance via human resources practice. Although, the best practice model comes under critique because of cost of implementation; tensions between the flexibility and cost minimization; and doubtful financial measurement supporting the system exist (Armstrong, 2017).

RBV aims to exploit available resources, via internal learning or competencies held within the organization (Prahalad and Hammond, 1990). Barney (1991) and Boxall and Purcell (2006), arguing the utilization of RBV can create competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Storey, 1995; Snell, Youndt and Wright 1996). The four main areas of competitive advantage can be gained via being valuable - the resources within the organization need to add value; rare - the resources or competencies within the organization are limited; Inimitable - the resources within the organization are not easily imitated; non—substitutable - the resources within the company cannot be simply substituted by IT, for example.

The best 'fit' model is rather rational and externally orientated, whereas the resource based view starts from an internal position (Leopold and Harris, 2009). The combination of an outside-in and inside-out perspective combines both the 'best fit' and RBV models and is advocated by Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015).

Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall (1988) argues that closer ties between business strategy and HRM can provide a broader range of business solutions; ensure that human resources is given the due consideration it requires; and avoids the neglect of HR. Although, this does require a "proactive, descriptive and executive" (Boxall, 1994; Legge, 1995) HR department, to implement consistent policies and practices, which support the

organization meet its overall objectives (Schuler and Macmillan 1984, Baird and Meshoulam 1988, Jackson and Schuler 1995). In doing so, the differentiation in HRM practices from competitors through combining different policies is the source of competitive advantage (Purcell, 1999; Barney, 1991; McDuffie, 1995). As cited in Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015:200) “integrated HR work leads to higher results because different HR practices focus on similar results” (Becker, Heselid and Beatty, 2009). Therefore, SHRM is primarily focused with integrating HRM into business strategy (Guest, 1987; Budhwar and Aryee, 2008) with Schuler (1992: 19) stating “SHRM is about systematically linking people with the organization; more specifically, it is about the integration of HRM strategies into corporate strategies” in addition of deploying a clearly broken down actionable goals (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007).

Effectively, strategic human resources management is focused on meeting the organisational goals and objectives through planning, positioning and activities of human resources (Noe et al. 2007), with strategic integration referring to the alignment of strategic objectives, HR practices and devolvment of these activities to line management known as vertical integration. Additionally, the alignment of HR practices with each other in context of the strategic objectives is known as horizontal integration (Anthony et al., 1993, Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Fombrun et al. 1984; Guest 1989; Wright and McMahan, 1992). In order for a company to instil SHRM, HRM integration is fundamental.

Strategy is concerned with providing an organization direction, in which it can gain competitive advantage (Kay 1993). Noe et al (2007) refer to SHRM as practices and policies that influence behaviours and attitudes and performance of employees. In essence, HR is “the productive use of people for achieving the organisation’s strategic objectives and satisfaction of individual employee needs” (Stone, 2005:4). Armstrong

(2017) defines a difference between SHRM and HR strategy, although often interchanged. Armstrong (2017:237) identifies SHRM as an underpinning philosophy and HR strategies “focus on the intentions of the organization on what needs to be done and what needs to be changed”. Whereas HRM Integration is considered SHRM, HRM strategies are required to make integration a possibility. Armstrong (2017) suggests strategies can include focusing on recruiting talent; focusing on continuous improvement; Knowledge Management; Learning and Development; Reward; and Employee Relations. Boxall and Purcell (2003:54) emphasize: “HR planning should aim to meet the needs of the key stakeholder groups involved in people management in the firm.”

Providing, strategic architecture (1996) orientating multiple HR systems towards strategic objectives (Lepak et al. 2006:228) and focusing HR on performance, allows the HR department to be accepted by senior management (Guest and Conway 2011; Guthries et al. 2011). This performance orientated and hard approach to HR. Fombrun et al. (1984) - ‘matching model’ which highlights a tight or hard fit between strategy structure and systems (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001). Critics of this model, in contrast to the ‘soft’ model of HR, which is concerned with employer-employee relationship (Beer et al. 1989), include Legge’s (1995) ‘morality issues’ and for not explaining complex relationships within strategic HRM (Guest, 1991).

Budhwar and Sparrow (2002) highlight the importance of knowing the ‘life cycle stage’ - initiating, growing, maturing, declining or turning around of an organization, suggesting generic strategies and aligning strategy with each stage. The challenge encompassed with undertaking this approach is that German Automotive Manufacturers have multiple markets and products at various stages of the model, limiting the benefit of adopting one significant strategy, thus multi-faceted HR strategies are required.

The benefits of integrating HRM into corporate strategy can include increasing the number of solution options for business problems; implementation of corporate strategy; avoiding neglect and providing equal consideration of human resources, to that of other resources within the business e.g. Financial; avoid inimitable and non-substitutable resources; supporting the firm achieve competitive advantage; improve the responsiveness and innovation potential; and may improve company performance (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Purcell, 1989; Barney, 1991; Storey, 1992; Pfeffer, 1994; Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997; Huselid, Jackson and Schuler, 1997; Budhwar, 2000a; 2000b; Brewster et al. 2000; Bossoidy et al. 2002; Huselid et al. 2005; Boxall and Purcell 2006; Chanda and Shen, 2009; Armstrong, 2017). Performance outcomes may be HR-related (e.g. turnover, absenteeism, job satisfaction, commitment); organizational outcomes (e.g. productivity, quality, service, efficiencies, customer satisfaction); financial outcomes (e.g. profits, sales, return on assets, return on investment); and Capital market outcomes (e.g. market share, stock price, growth) (Dyer and Reeves, 1995; Boxall, Purcell and Wright, 2007).

Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015:188-204) highlight four evolution waves of HR. The first wave is the transformation of HR from being a traditional maintenance administration, 'dark horse' (Chanda and Shen; 2009), or 'administrative linkage' (Greer, 1995), function into a department which is pushing and devolving activities and responsibilities to line management in an effort to increase the efficiency of the department.

The second wave sees the department starting to design innovative policies and practices around the hiring, training, career management, conversational issues, rewards communication and how considering how they integrate with one another, with Boswell

(2006) deeming HR requirements are dependent on a firm's business strategy. Focus is closely aligned to implementation, rather than formulation and are known by Chanda and Shen (2009:287) as a “drum beater” function.

The third wave regards the HR strategy and integration of HR strategy into the business strategy or alignment of business strategy and “thus strategy becomes a mirror which sets the criteria of HR practice” (Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015:190) and creates strategy linkage (Greer, 1995), known by Chanda and Shen (2009) as a “Plotter”. Lawler and Mohrman (2003) highlight three categories of HR involvement and business strategy. The first being implementation only and correlates with Whittington (1993) classical approach and Greer’s (1995) one-way linkage, which suggests top-down strategy. The second involves HR providing input to strategy through providing data from the labour market and indirectly influencing strategy. Thirdly, HR is fully participating as part of the executive team and is structuring development. Chanda and Shen (2009) argue that both formulation and implementation are key to successful integration, presented via the HRM strategic integration and organisational performance matrix. Formulation being created via bottom-up strategy development and implementation via top-down strategy implementation. HR functions delivering both are known by Chanda and Shen (2009) as Big-Wigs.

This correlates to the ‘fourth wave’ identified by Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015: 191) which is “connecting HR to the broader business context in which business operate” and advocates integrative linkage (Greer, 1995), similar to that of the RBV.

Schuler (1992) highlights the importance of questioning the integration of HRM in a business. More specifically, Budhwar (1998) highlights four key areas in order to understand the level of strategy integration within a business:

Board level representation, which is perceived as critical for HRM integration (Poole and Jenkins, 1997; Shipton and McAuley, 1993) with studies suggesting direct access to the CEO (Budhwar, 2000) or informal networks between HR manager and senior executives may support integration (Sparrow and Marchington, 1998). Moreover, the “ability and support from senior managers is also critical for a firm to acquire both horizontal fit and vertical fit” Wei (2006:53).

Written personnel strategy - Dyer (1999) advocates that employees must understand the organizational mission, strategy and have basic understanding of processes for integration to be apparent.

HR strategy translated into a clear set of work programmes - “HR activities are embodied through all employees, their knowledge and skills directly affect the quality and performance of the HR system” (Wright and Snell, 1998, as cited in Wei, 2006:53). Only when employees are involved in this process persecution strategy can be promoted (Kaplan and Norton, 2006), only when the firms strategy is understood, can an HR system be well accomplished (Huselid et al. 1997), “ therefore it will be easier for a firm to achieve the strategy matching HR arrangements if the goals defined by a certain strategy of less uncertain and clearer” (Wei 2006:59). Wei (2006) argues that transparency of the fit between a firm's strategy and HR strategy will enhance the horizontal and vertical fit of human resources management.

This sub-chapter has continued the literature review of HR strategy integration, highlighting transparency of strategy as significantly important for HRM Integration. The next chapter continues the literature review with focus on ‘Policies and Procedures’.

2.3 Policies and Procedures Integration

Policies and procedures are “the features of an HRM system that sends signals to employees that allow them to understand the desired and appropriate responses and form a collective sense of what is expected” (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004: 204). ‘Strong’ HRM processes are characterized by consistency and consensus (Godard and Delaney 2000), which the German co-determinism system does ensure through strict company agreements (Wächter and Müller, 2002).

The importance of a congruent fit between HR practice and business strategy (Miles and Snow 1984, Baird and Meshoulam 1988, Wright and McMahan 1992, Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall 1988; Greer, 1995; Armstrong 2017) was highlighted within the study. This highlights the importance of compatible HR system with the HR strategy is imperative for the implementation of business strategies.

Gilbert et al. (2015) emphasizes the importance of HR ability for managers in ensuring signals are communicated to employees. Gilbert et al. (2015) argue HR policies should be established by line managers, that line managers need to understand policy that line managers need to understand their role within policy implementation, and line managers need to know where they can gain support.

Katou and Budhwar (2006; 2007) highlight the importance of HRM policies and practices being mutually reinforcing. Miles and Snow (1984) suggested links between HRM policies and product strategies. Whilst, Fombrum et al. (1984), Schüler and Jackson (1987) and Miles and Snow (1984) indicate that is important to find the right match of practices with

the organisational strategy. Horizontal fit between policies being emphasized to improve organizations performance (Baird and Meshoulam 1988; Pfeffer, 1994; McDuffie; Budhwar and Ayree, 2008).

Katou and Budwhar (2006; 2007) distinguish between internal and external fit, where internal fit “is the case when the organisation is developing a range of interconnected and mutually reinforcing HRM policies and practices” (Katou and Budwhar 2006; 2007) and external fit “is the case when the organisation is developing a range of HRM policies and practices that fit the businesses strategy” (Katou and Budwhar 2006; 2007). HRM integration requires both internal and external fit.

The contingency or HRM as strategic integration model argues that an organisation's set of HRM policies and practices will be effective if it is consistent with other organisational strategies therefore encouraging external fit. For example, HR strategies should correlate with marketing, production and other business strategies. The configuration or HRM ‘bundles model’ implies existence of organizational contextual combinations or configurations of HR practices, which will support company performance. This model is focused on internal fit of HR practices (Katou and Budwhar, 2006; 2007). The final model is the reconfiguration model, which considers both internal and external fit. The reconfiguration model is closely aligned to the resource-based view, which depends on the organizational needs and adapts both an internal and extensible fit approach.

According to Wei (2006), there are three determinants of horizontal fit. Firstly, Wei (2006:53) highlights the importance of HR policies being given equal attention and harmonizing with one another, stating “horizontal fit will be enhanced if the HR policy of

the firm places more emphasis on the balance of a variety of HR practices” rather than focusing on one policy, which could create incongruences or imbalance of policies.

Secondly, Wei (2006) supports the notion that via the policies, it is important to maintain options of HR practices, thus providing the organization, HR department and line managers more flexibility in finding the correct solutions for the direction of the organization, which rigid policies may restrict.

Thirdly, Wei (2006) proposes investing in HRM activities for enhanced horizontal fit.

The topic on international integration is prevailing, with specific attention to international integration and local adaption of policy (Porter 1986; Pugh et al. 1969; Pudelko and Harzing, 2007, Ferner et al. 2011, Smale et al. 2013). Smale et al., (2013:232) argues integration requires “control the HRM policies and practices of their subsidiaries and to ensure coordination of the policies and practices across their subsidiaries” with control and coordination being the two primary undertakings of global integration (Cray 1984, Kim et al. 2003). Edwards et al. (2013) indicate that consistent practice versus adaptation of policies can create tension.

Kim et al. (2003) highlights four methods to integrate internationally. Firstly, to centralize decision-making authority. Secondly, through creating international teams and committees. Thirdly, via formalization of processes and procedures across the organization and finally, via information based integration through databases and electronic information.

2.4 Line Management Integration

Whilst, strategy formation and policy development can be done by HR, “HRM integration requires the support from areas elsewhere in the organization” (Sheenan 2003) and devolvment to the line management (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; 2002; Hope-Bailey et al. 1997; Truss et al. 1997; Sisson and Storey, 2000; Link and Müller, 2015). Purcell and Hutchinson (2007:5) highlight that the implementation of policies relies on line manager action or support, with further researchers believing line management have a critical role (Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010; López-Cotarelo, 2011; Evans, 2016), with arguments for line management to be in the best position to undertake HR (Cunningham and Hyman, 1999; Sisson and Storey, 2000; Cooper, 2001; Whittaker and Marchington, 2003). Wilton, 2013 highlights a trend of HR devolution, with line managers playing an increasingly important role in the implementation of HR practice (Currie and Procter 2001; Bos-Nehles, van Riemsdijk, and Looise, 2013; Brewster, Gollan and Wright, 2013; Sikora and Ferris, 2014; Link and Müller, 2014), although competences of line management, cost and time issues can restrict devolvment (McGovern et al. 1997).

Evidence suggests, "line managers are taken on duties that once belonged to human resources" (Cappelli, 2013: 25) with cost-cutting (Budhwar, 1998; Storey, 2001); reduction in headcount (Cappelli, 2013); recognition that activities are best handled by day-to-day line managers and increased decision-making by line management (Currie and Procter, 2001:57); reduction in implementation time and reflecting local conditions (Budhwar, 1998; Whittaker and Marchington, 2003); noted employee engagement and performance increases when line managers undertake recruitment and performance management (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Cappelli, 2013). Despite Gibbs (2001) questioning whether

devolution of HR practice increases organizational performance, Cunningham and Hyman, 1999 highlight that high-quality management involvement in HR can free HR specialists from the operational work allowing them to be more strategic. A further rationale for devolution includes the perspective from Budhwar (1998) that certain issues are too complex from top management to comprehend and devolution can prepare future managers. Lang and Rego, 2015, also suggest devolving and outsourcing HR can reduce tension, created through the strategic requirements of HR professionals (Guest and Woodrow, 2012) and co-operative relations forged between HR and line managers can improve the effectiveness of the function (Chen et al. 2011; Kim and Ryu 2011).

Renwick (2003) highlights the positives of devolving HR activities to line managers, amongst others, as increases responsibility and accountability of line management, increases flexibility and the needs and wishes of the employees are heard.

Despite, the rationale for devolution to line management, Terpstra and Rozell (1997) highlights that some organizations do not apply performance enhancing practices primarily because of a lack of familiarity or awareness; believes that the practices are not useful; legal concerns or resource constraints.

This notion is supported by Renwick (2003), who lists the negatives of devolving to line management, which includes a lack of time to undertake HR activities, lack of HR knowledge and inconsistencies, and differing commitments to the work.

Although, there is evidence to suggest increased line management involvement, line management are considered the contributing factor in the gap between intended and implemented HR (Snape and Redman, 2010; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010; Woodrow and

Guest, 2014; Truss and Gratton 1994; Nishii and Wright, 2008, Purcell and Kinnie, 2007). Some researchers highlight this is due to a reluctance in taking on these activities (Cunningham and Hyman, 1995, 1999; Currie and Proctor, 2001; McGovern, 1999; Poole and Jenkins, 1997; Renwick, 2000). According to Nehles et al. (2006:258-259) numerous reasons for the disregard of HR duties by line managers include lack of training, interest, work overload, conflicting priorities and self-serving behaviour. Harris (2001) suggest that managers do not like the bureaucracy of performance management systems, with Redman, (2001) suggesting it is line managers most unliked activity, and subsequently are unwilling to accept responsibility for the decisions made within them. Evans (2016) highlights that stress can be a factor in the gap between rhetorical and practice. In addition, Cunningham and Hyman (1999:18) highlight inadequate training from line managers as paramount to the intended and implemented HR gap, supported by Earnshaw et al. (2000) who believe procedures and legislation may not be followed without specialist HR support.

Rollinson et al. (1996) highlight that HR are often involved in grievance and disciplinary cases to police or govern line managers within the process.

Torrington and Hall (1996) suggests that managers don't have the skills to undertake HR, a position reconfirmed by Cappelli (2013) who highlights a skill gap and Gennard and Kelly (1997:34-5) highlights that line managers need continual support in order to undertake HR. Mistrust in HR hiding an hidden agenda including changing the culture, removing complacency; making managers manage; save salary costs; reduce staffing levels; increased workloads; gain more control; and focus on underperformance can limit the success of devolution (Harris, 2001).

In addition to a lack of training, Link and Müller (2015) highlight a general lack of organizational support including mentoring programmes from HR; leadership expertise; limited learning and feedback; and an increase in tension (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Similarly, line management may not have the position to focus on employees' interests (Renwick, 2003), specifically when HRM is urged to focus on strategic and cost efficiency topics (Winstanley and Woodall, 2000, Link and Müller, 2015). Line manager involvement is an area requiring considerable improvement (McGovern et al., 1997; Flood, 1998; Renwick, 2000, 2003; Francis and Keegan, 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

Francis and Keegan (2006) suggest greater consideration of the responsibility of line managers for absence management, grievance handling, management of discipline, coaching and counselling employees. In the case of absent management, line managers often undertake the practice in an adhoc manner (Dunn and Wilkonson, 2002).

Currie and Proctor (2001) argue that there is not a clear devolution of activity to line management and that it is in fact done as a business partnership, with the recognition of a HR business partner (Ulrich, 1997; 2016; Sheenan 2003).

According to Marchington (1999), the reasoning for HR to be achieved in partnership is that if all HR were devolved to line management, it would result in inattention and inconsistencies. Gennard and Kelly (1997) argue that devolution is a balance and contrary to governing HR, the benefits of mutual benefit of finding business solutions and the business focus required from too much attention losing the business focus required with line management input.

The balance suggested by Marchington (1999) can be considered through the concept of discretion, where “managerial discretion refers to the choice of actions available to managers in the pursuit of organisational goals: high discretion means managers have low environmental and organisational constraints on their choice of actions” (Hambrick and Finkelstein, 1987). Shen and Cho (2005) utilize both ‘latitude of objectives’ and ‘latitude of actions’ when discussing management discretion. Latitude of objectives focusing on the individual objectives of the manager and the latitude of actions showing the range of available possibilities for managers to pursue organisational objectives. Devolved HR practice sits within the latitude of actions and the discretion of how these actions are undertaken influence the implementation of HR practice (McGovern et al. 1997; Shen and Cho, 2005). Although McGovern et al. (1997) suggest line managers will focus on employees’ interests over that of top management, in fact these actions come under the scope of ‘latitude of actions’ and “the role of each individual manager as agent, choosing to focus his or her attention in varying ways” (Truss, 2001: 1145) with Truss (2001) highlighting the rhetorical of human resources management is often different to the reality experienced by the employees.

Management discretion and implementation of ‘latitude of actions’ can influence the employee’s perspective of human resources (Nishii and Wright, 2008). Secondly, leadership style of line management (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Vermeervan, 2014) and the adjustment of HR policy for personal gain (Boxall and Purcell, 2011) are additional reasons to consider restricting management ‘latitude of actions’.

Often line management discretion leads to HR policy not being followed (Truss, 2001; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007) or policies being distorted by line management and not implemented as planned creating variability in practice (Nishii and Wright, 2008), defined

as “slippage” by Boxall and Purcell (2003: 220). Re-centralising HR activities can reduce ‘slippage’. López-Cotarelo, (2011) highlights three variables companies need to consider when applying line management discretion on HR activities. Firstly, activities which have a direct impact on cost may be centralized; Secondly, where information is required from line management e.g. job appraisal, managers will be given discretion; and finally, discretion will be given where employee and management exchanges are productive. Shen and Cho (2005) adds that line managers latitude of objectives can be limited due to performance pressure. (López-Cotarelo, 2011) highlights that discretion on policies can differ. Firstly, policies may dictate line management discretion; secondly, misalignment of policies may provide line managers gap in which they exploit; thirdly, line managers may be able to negotiate different procedures with HR; and finally line managers may be able to dodge policies.

Therefore, to ensure consistent practise, HR may wish to reconsider devolving HR to line management. Especially as devolution may erode the expert knowledge, credibility of the department and integrity (Caldwell, 2003; Reddington, Williams and Withers 2005; Keegan et al. 2012) Although, when no or little scope for management flexibility is present, line managers will often utilize unofficial practices to meet their needs (Purcell et al. 2009:63, Nadisic, 2008a, 2008b). This has led to concept of partnership (Ulrich, 1997; Keegan et al. 2012). Keegan et al. (2012) highlights HR needs to be done in partnership between line manager and human resources Department to encourage integration. Renwick (2003) highlights that line managers do have the desire to do HR work with both the capacity and the ability but only if they are adequately trained and assisted by HR, but not if they try to do it without significant help from the HR Department. Additionally, continuous and systematic involvement from HR specialists is required to avoid mistakes and future costs and legal implications (Renwick, 2000; Marchington and Wilkonson, 2002).

Ulrich (1998:129; 2016) sees this differently and recommends “business partner role” “to be truly tied to the business outcomes, HR needs to join forces with operating managers to systematically assess the impact importance of initiatives”. Line management “should lead the way in fully integrating HR into the company’s real work” (Ulrich, 1998:129).

Devolving HRM to line management is clearly beneficial (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; 2002; Hope-Bailey et al., 1997; Truss et al., 1997; Sisson and Storey, 2000). Despite ambiguity in the devolution of HR practice (Op de Beeck, Wynen and Hondeghem 2016), concepts of recognizing devolvment can be seen through Budhwar (1998) questions.

In summary, HRM integration is a significant topic within SHRM and strategy is a significant component of HRM integration (Armstrong, 2017). HRM integration can be discussed via horizontal and vertical integration. Horizontal integration is concerned with the synergies and congruencies between HRM practices within an organization (Baird and Meshoulam 1988). Vertical Integration is concerned with the alignment of HR strategy with organizational strategy and secondly, the involvement of HR practice to line management (Schuler and Jackson, 1987).

The vertical dimension, which includes strategy and devolvment to line management has subsequently been divided by Sheenan (2014) in her definition of HRM Integration, thus creating three significant areas of interest for the reader - Strategy (Vertical and Horizontal), Policies and Procedures (Horizontal) and Line Management involvement (Vertical), with policies and procedures seen as the glue between Strategy and Line Management. Although significant research in the area of HRM integration has been undertaken, limited research has been completed in the field, within Germany.

2.5 HRM in Germany

The national business system is often the starting point for the nature of the personnel function (Whitley, 1992). Significant differences include the framework of labour and employment law; collective bargaining approaches; to what extent employees are involved in personnel topics; education systems; organisational structure; internal vs. external focus; and the establishment of differing recruitment, retention and principles of pay (Wächter and Muller-Camen, 2006).

Brewster and Larsen (1992) outline two variables for differentiating personnel models, which include the grade of “integration” of HR policy in the wider context of business strategy and “devolvment” as discussed earlier in this chapter. Brewster and Larsen (1992) identified that Germany had low development and integration, which they labelled the “professional mechanic”, with practitioners being limited in their cross-national knowledge of variations and country specific (Brewster and Larsen, 1992) thus as HR activities are increasingly integrated, concerns and tensions can arise (Gerpott, 2015).

Lawrence (1993: 35) suggests German personnel management to be “more reactive, more legalistic, less autonomously professional and more concerned with training than is the case with the personnel function in Britain” with less attention to job evaluation, succession planning or management development, with research suggesting that German organisations are less strategic (Begin, 1997:192-3; Sparrow and Hiltrop, 1997), with Wächter and Muller-Camen (2006) reasoning this may be due to the legal frameworks and codetermination within Germany. This is contradictory to the position held by Scholz (1996) who argues that an increased strategic approach is being taken.

Wächter and Stengelhofen (1992) stipulate the importance of governance within German personnel, due to frameworks of national legislation, labour courts and the requirement of personnel to interpret decisions implications on local agreements. For instance, the rights of employees and employers in Germany are not regulated by uniform law, rather as a result of individual laws, agreements and employment contracts.

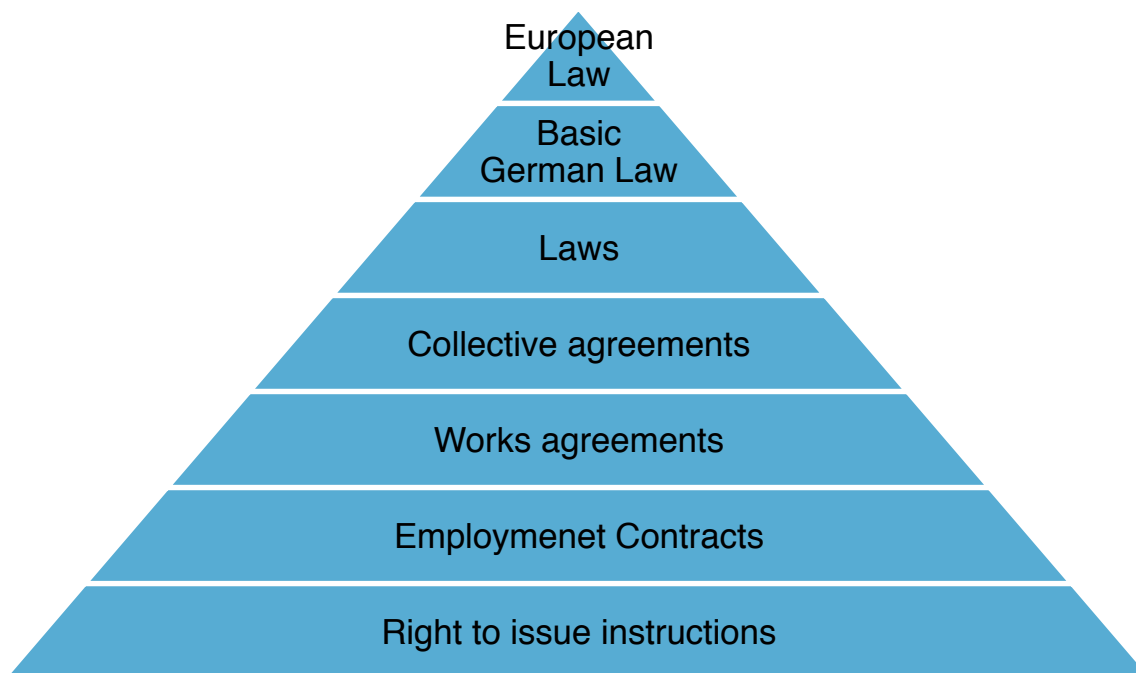


FIGURE 1: HR Law in Germany, adapted from Basics of German Labour Law (GesamtMetall, 2011)

The basic laws (*grundgesetz*) are established at a constitutional level and make up the general principles for the law. At the next level, personnel law can be found in different laws for example the civil code (BGB), Protection against Dismissal Act (KSchG), Working Hours Act (ArbZG). Collective agreement acts can be found in the TVG, which is the Collective Agreements Act. Works agreements (*Betriebsvereinbarung*) are typical written down agreements between the employer and company council (*Betriebsrat*) and applies to all employees within the establishment, with flexible working regulations being an expanse of an agreed policy. Employment contracts regulate the details of the employment contract

(GesamtMetall, 2011). The precedence of higher ranking regulations take precedence over lower ranking activities, although typically more favourable regulations lower in the hierarchy will take precedence over higher levels legal source (GesamtMetall, 2011).

Whitley (1994) argues that functional equivalences within national business systems are apparent. (Albert, 1991; Buhner et al, 1998; Muller, 1999a; Wächter and Stengelhufen, 1992, as cited in, Wächter and Müller, 2002:76) state Germany “has a long tradition in participative management, as a unique corporate governance structure - only to be compared with that of Japan - and the role of government and intermediate agencies, such as employees’ associations and unions, is strikingly different” .

Pedulko 2006 suggests HR in Germany is an “inbetweenener” between Japan and USA model of HR , although Pedulko, 2006 recognizes that the discussion surrounding German HR has been more focused on employee relations, rather than strategic HRM and that there is a lack of knowledge known about the German HR model.

USA	Germany	Japan
Recruitment and release of personnel Finding the best qualified person for a specific job (job-oriented), high labour turnover	In between	Finding the person who fits best for the company (people-oriented), lifelong employment
Training and development Training focused on specific, limited knowledge for individuals for narrowly defined tasks (specialist training)	In between	Widespread, extensive and group-oriented training for broadly defined tasks (generalist training)
Employee assessment and promotion criteria Individual achievements and quantifiable criteria of importance (results oriented), specialist career path	In between	Seniority and contribution to collective achievements of importance (behaviour – oriented), generalist career path
Employee incentives Primarily material incentives, pay based on individual achievements, significant pay differences	In between	Material and immaterial incentives, pay based on seniority, small pay differences
Communication within the company Primarily vertical, structured and efficient	In between	Primarily horizontal, unstructured and extensive
Decision making within the company Top-down, authoritative, individual, confrontational and based on hard facts	In between	Bottom-up, participative, collective, consensus-oriented and based on soft facts
Superior-subordinate-relationship Specific, task-oriented, based on regulations	In between	Holistic, person-oriented, based on common values
↓	↓	↓
Overall HRM model Short-term performance efficiency based on flexible market structures and profit orientation	In between	Long-term behavioural effectiveness based on cooperative clan structures and growth orientation

FIGURE 2: ‘Inbetweenener’ position between Japan and USA (Pedulko, 2006)

Three key characteristics of the German business system that matter for SHRM, according to Festling (2012) are **long-terminism** focusing on organic growth, **management-employee cooperation** based on regulation and legislation, more specifically utilizing the codetermination system and a company council. Thirdly, the **developmental orientation**, with German companies providing vocational training to two thirds of the school pupils (Gericke, Uhly, and Ulrich, 2011).

The three pillars are often quoted as the reasons for HR strategy within German organisations not to be as evident as in Anglo Saxon organisations (Wever, 1995, Wächter and Stengelhofen, 1992). The predominance of long term career plans with state sponsored vocational systems put significant emphasis on specialized and technical skills (Lane, 1999) and the Betriebsrat framework considerably restarting personnel management being able to freely act (Jacobi et al, 1998).

The codetermination model, which Muller (1997) states is a cornerstone of the German system "stipulates that the works council can veto management decisions on HR and social matters e.g. dismissals, wage structure and working time" (Wächter and Müller, 2002). Small firms often do not have a works council and many exist in larger organizations (Hassel, 1999, Wächter and Müller, 2002).

Work councils are mandatory, if requested by employees in Germany, for organizations with more than 5 employees, who have been employed for more than 6 months and are above 18 years old. It is not automatic that a large organization will have a trade union, because there may never have been a request by the organization's employees. (Addison et al. 2001).

When a Company Council is in place, representatives are elected by the workforce. The distinguishing factor of the German Company Council is the codetermination rights that this body has on social matters, including working hours; regulation of overtime and reduced working hours; leave arrangements; the introduction and use of technical devices to monitor employee performance; and remuneration arrangements, including the fixing of job and bonus rates and other forms of performance related pay. (Addison et al. 2001). The company council also has a consultation right - structural changes to plant, changes in equipment that could affect people's jobs, decisions related to manpower planning, and individual dismissals. Interestingly, failure to consult the trade union on dismissal, and in some cases gaining consent, renders the dismissal void (Addison et al. 2001). In plants with more than 1000 employees, documented criteria may be requested for grading and re-grading jobs (Addison et al. 2001) and the company council may also be involved in processing grievances and disciplinary matters. (Addison et al. 2001).

Nevertheless, in this role, the HR manager, using the typology of Tyson and Fell (1986), is seen as a 'contracts manager', with no high discretion (Wächter and Müller, 2002). "Employee representatives work full-time in this position rather than a job" for example, and at the carmaker Volkswagen, the head of the works council leads a 50 strong department which employs full-time works councillors, professional staff with university degrees and secretaries (Handelsblatt, 1999a) - there is an interplay and the codetermination of setting the strategy although once agreement has been made, it is set in stone through an agreed Betriebsvereinbarung (Company Council Agreement). Therefore, significant time is spent by personnel interplaying between management and the company council, with Wever (1995) recognising HR as a "hinge" between both parties.

The Betriebsrat then can constrain the freedom of action, especially on 'social' matters such as pay, performance management and overtime (Jacobi et al. 1998). Contrary, Wächter and Muller (1999) argue that codetermination through employee representation on the supervisory board encourages companies to consider the wider implications of social and HR topics, thus taking into account strategic requirements.

German organisations are unlikely to have a formal written down HR strategy, which Wächter and Müller (2002) noted confusion in undertaking research surrounding the HR strategy. Wächter and Müller (2002) argue by having employee representatives, the employment policies of the German company have an increased strategic importance and German companies can utilise the codetermination as a strategic resource. More importantly, a clearly communicated HR strategy can decrease tension of HR actors (Lang and Rego, 2015).

Some writers have suggested that creating strategic HRM may not be as important for German companies (Brewster, Larsen and Mayrhofer, 1997, as cited in Festing, 2012), although current research recognizes that there is an increasing trend to devolve activities to line management; a greater expectation of service; and a trend towards HR taking a strategic partner role (DGFP, 2011; Kroll 2010; Dick 2010; Kabst, Giardini and Wener, 2009, as cited in, Lang and Rego, 2015).

Lawrence (1999), found that managerial discretion was restricted, specifically regarding pay practices, similarly "the degree of autonomy of German HR managers is substantially curtailed because of the high number of labour laws, regulations, contractual agreements with the unions, and participation rights of works councils" (Wächter and Muller-Carmen

2002:78). In particular, employee dismissals are difficult, due to the codetermination regulations (Muller, 1999b).

Due to demographic changes and low unemployment, there has been a shortage of qualified personnel (Festing, 2001; Kabst et al. 2009), therefore employee branding is often utilized (Kabst et al. 2009). In recruitment, personality tests and formal recruitment methods, other than structured interviews are not utilized (Giardini et al. 2005). Giardini et al. (2005) suggests two reasons - the first being that company councils are reluctant of these methods being utilized and secondly, many recruits come via the apprenticeship system, where the personality is already known.

Gerpott (2015) illustrated that 28 of the German DAX30 companies have implemented an Ulrich-style structure, with many small and medium-sized companies mimicking their larger counterparts (DGFP, 2011; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012; Festling, 2012; Giardini, Kabst and Müller-Carmen, 2005; Thill et al. 2014; Shrank, 2015). Shrank critiques this development, as there is lacking of theoretical foundation, apparent tensions (Gerpott, 2015), nor do the functions take into consideration the updates presented by Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) and most importantly, that there is lacking evidence to support that this model increases organisational success (Caldwell; 2003 2008; Hailey, Farndale and Truss, 2006). Strang and Macy (1999) believe the faddish positiveness surrounding this model led to an increased adoption.

2.6 Business Partner

The role of the 'business partner' is to increase the orientation of HRM through the establishment of strategic consultants for other business units (Marchington, 2015). Ulrich, Young, Brockbank and Ulrich (2012) have revisited their model numerous times, which has provoked critique (Caldwell 2008; Shrank, 2015). Despite this, Ulrich and Duplebohn (2015) argue that because of an ever-changing market, HRM needs to continuously develop. The latest model (Ulrich, M. et al. 2015) highlights the differences between these roles. Ulrich et al. (2016) competence HR competence model, which has evolved since 1997, with significant updates in 2007 and 2012 and the latest in 2016. The model presented below, advocates 8 competencies:

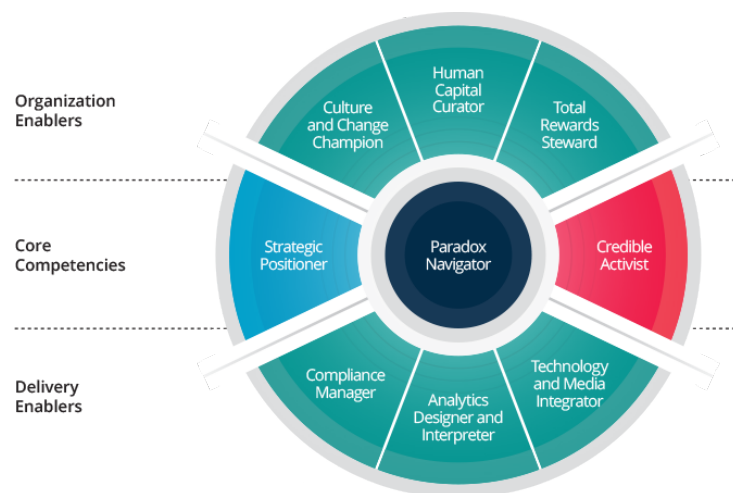


FIGURE 3: Competence HR competence model (Ulrich et al. 2016)

The two core competencies, highlighted by Ulrich et al. (2016), are the strategic positioned and credible activist. The domain 'strategic positioner' is the evaluation of how an HR professional can analyse both the internal and external organizational landscape and realize this picture into practical actions, which can support the organization and is similar to the strategic partner presented in Ulrich's 1997 model. The 'credible activist' is how an HR professional gains trust and partners within the business to gain support for

recommended actions, which is discussed within the 1997 work, although not explicitly presented.

At the centre of the new model, Ulrich et al. (2015) recognizes the paradoxical nature of the function and the expectation of HR professionals to manage tensions and paradoxes, taking into consideration the increasing voice surrounding paradoxes in Human Resources (Smith and Lewis, 2011; Gerpott, 2015).

Ulrich et al. (2015) highlights the organizational enablers as activities, which enable the HR professionals to add value to the organization. This includes being active in change and culture initiatives; finding innovative solutions to ensure human capital; and being competent in total reward systems

Similarly, Ulrich et al. (2015) identifies three core delivery competencies, which include the ability to leverage technology; being able to interpret analytical data to support business decisions; and ensure compliance through following guidelines.

Although, the model has been regularly updated, the structure of departments typically, focuses on sub departments - strategic partners; specialist skills departments; and service centres (Hird, Sparrow and Marsh 2010; Reily, Tamkin, and Broughton, 2007), as evidence emerging from the case study supported. This is closer to Ulrich's original (1997) model, which advocated four roles - strategic partner, change agent, administrative partner and employee champion.

Although Ulrich (1997) highlighted that these roles could be apparent across different functions, Lambert (2009) highlights that this is being ignored with specialized functions

often taking precedence, and the employee advocate losing attention. Brewster and Larsen (2000) highlight that within Europe HR work often is shared between HR in the line with the main reasons being to reduce cost, to provide a more comprehensive approach, to place responsibility for HR with managers and to speed up decision-making. In Germany, the Ulrich style structure (Festling, 2012; Giardini, Kabst, and Müller-Carmen, 2005) has been implemented, typically dividing the business partner role with service/competence centres.

2.7 Service Centres

Typically, the HR structure has a small team at strategic level with the majority of operational HR being conducted at national level (Cooke, 2006), although there has been a trend for organizations to establish shared service centres (Davis 2005, Cooke, 2006, Redman et al. 2007) or 'Professional Services' (Ulrich, 2015). "Shared services is an organisational concept that: consolidate processes within the group in order to reduce redundancies; delivers support processes; is a separate organisational unit within the group; is aligned with external competitors; as cost-cutting as a major driver for implementation; is focused on internal customers; and is operated like a business" Schultz and Brenner (2010:210). Miles (2011:1) defines shared service centres as "an organizational arrangement for providing services to a group of public or private sector clients via service provider which replaces the previous in-house or contracted-out function". Reilly, (2001:5) highlights the purpose of the "shared services centre is to supply information and advice on HR policy and practice to operational managers and employees via a call centre and/or intranet".

There are two types of HR shared service. The first being set up to serve the other organisations and the second, being set up by large multinational organisations who aim

to re-centralise the HR service provision (Cooke, 2006). Shared service centre is effectively a call centre, typically with e-HR support (Keep, 2001). HR needs to be proactive and entrepreneurial in order to be a driver strategy (Brockbank, 1999) and by “centralising the delivery of the administrator of aspects of the HR function, senior HR professionals can concentrate on providing strategic input to the organization” (Cooke, 2006:270).

The reasons for setting up an HR shared services include being seen as a business providing function delivering "professional" or functional services, with the support of service level agreements (Reilly, 2001; Cooke, 2006; Paagman et al. 2013); IT sourced for international partners (Cooke, 2006); to increase flexibility and provide the business speed of service (Reilly, 2001; Cooke, 2006; Paagman et al. 2013); to reduce costs via economies of scale and increase transparency of costs and budgeting (Cooke, 2006; Paagman et al. 2013); to improve organizational learning across previously divided organizational units, finding synergies in data analysis and problem solving (Reilly, 2001; Cooke, 2006; Paagman et al. 2013); reduce administration and focus on strategic agenda (Reilly, 2001; Cooke, 2006; Paagman et al. 2013); and improve compliance and mitigate risk (Paagman et al. 2013).

The disadvantages, highlighted by Cooke (2006) can include a reduction in customer satisfaction; less interesting work for HR personnel; unexpected cost increases; initial confusion in the establishment of the shared service centre; reduce the perceived quality of service; loss of face-to-face contact can impact trust; reduction in the ownership of HR problems; other problems can include IT issues; can increase the workload on line managers; reduction in skilled HR employees required; and distancing relationships.

Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) assertion these disadvantages can be overcome with the HR function shifting the focus from shared services to 'professional services'. Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) define professional services as "organized knowledge centres staffed with individuals who have deep expertise in a technical area", for example in areas of staffing, learning, compensation and organizational development. The purpose of professional services is therefore to ensure a more professional approach to diagnosing client wants, needs and delivering expectations.

Reilly (2001) highlights that despite the creation of shared services at corporate level, smaller teams are often kept to focus on the priority topics of HRM - strategy, governance and policy.

2.8 Governance

Human Resources emphasis has moved away from welfare and administration towards motivation and job satisfaction (Shen, 2011), with strategic HRM taking centre stage (Lengnick-Hall et al. 2009). HR shifted to becoming more socially responsible (Shen and Zhu, 2011), despite concerns raised that key stakeholders may be neglected, other than management (Van Burren et al. 2011).

HRM can contribute to good governance via relevant HRM practice (Arulrajah, 2016), which in turn can be an imprint for organizational stability (Arulrajah, 2016). Arulrajah, (2016:14) recommends "promoting participation, consensus orientation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness and following rule of laws" to ensure good governance.

Firstly, the HR function has direct influence in ensuring policies and practices are legally compliant and **following the rules** (Kleiman, 1997; Beatty et al., 2003; Arulrajah, 2016). In combination, these policies and practices need to ensure **equality and inclusiveness**, therefore a nucleus role of HR is to develop systems, which remove specialist treatment (Kleiman, 1997; Arulrajah, 2016), polarizing viewpoints and encourage common goals (Kleiman, 1997; Hammer et al. 2003). Thompson (2011:356) expresses concerns as HR “lacks effectiveness or moral authority” and (Thompson, 2011) and Wright and McMahan (2011) argue that the employee champion advocated by Ulrich (1997) has been played down. Moreover, recruitment drives, which focus on equality, diversity and fairness, neglecting traditional groups, can undermine **trust** (Harris and Foster, 2010; Boxall and Purcell 2011). Evidence from the case study saw the role of the HR department taking a significant role in governance, highlighted by all respondent groups.

Secondly, policy development needs to be seen to be **promoting participation** of organizational members, which can include for example team working; family-friendly practices and diversity management (Sennett, 1998; Kleiman, 1997; Bagraim and Rashida, 2007). Diversity management for example can undermine trust, if recruitment drives are specifically geared towards specific people (Harris and Foster, 2010; Boxall and Purcell, 2011).

Thirdly, policies and procedures need to be contextually developed and **consensus orientated** (Brewster and Mayrhofer, 2012), especially within an international environment when local conditions and cultural differences need to be considered in the designing and implementation of HR practice and policies (Arulrajah, 2016). Although Arulrajah (2016:16) argue that the majority of HR is conducted contextually, “If HR policies and practices of an organization do not effectively reflect workplace equality, then employees will create a bad

image and perception about the entire processes of the organization” (Richard and Kirby, 1999, as cited in Arulrajah, 2016). Conversely, “Employee-orientated HRM practices contribute to good governance, for example mentoring, coaching, career development and workplace democracy, employee participation and empowerment, involvement and sharing powers” (Warning and Lewer, 2004:101), albeit short-term orientated and lacking an employee perspective (Caldwell, 2008; Reilly, 2001; Van Burren et al. 2011; Marchington, 2015). Once developed, organizational stakeholders, in particular HR, need to be **accountable** (Shen 2011).

Fourthly, the HR department needs to be perceived as **effective and efficient**, by ensuring timely **responsiveness**. The timely aspects of information are supported by e-HRM (Lepak and Snell, 1998; Ruel et al. 2006; Parry 2011; Bondarouk and Ruel, 2013), which can simplify administrative actions and reduce transaction time (Lepak and Snell, 1998; Buckley et al. 2004), improve HR image, show professionalism and encourage greater transparency and information sharing (Bondarouk and Ruel, 2013), as long as the uses of technology are clearly communicated (Renwick et al. 2013; Ryan and Wessel 2015). HR Efficiency has created a new discussion towards ‘Green HRM’ or ‘Environmental HRM’ which encourages a sustainable use of resources to protect the natural environment.

The final piece of ‘good governance’, according to Arulrajah (2015) is **transparency**, which is defined as “for disclosure, opposed to secretism” (Bag and Pepito, 2011:532), or more comprehensively “the interaction is characterized by sharing relevant information, being open to provide information and receiving feedback, being communicative about the motives and reasons for the decisions and displaying consistency between words and actions” (Vogelgesang, 2008:6).

According to Greenwood (2002), socially appropriate human resources management has to be transparent, with van Riel, (1997) arguing transparency is a basic requirement. Likewise, Beatty et al. 2003 and Arulrajah (2015) argues transparency is a necessity. Although, HR is often ambiguous and following the notion that “strategic thinking is the art of outdoing an adversary, knowing that the adversary is trying to do the same to you” (Dixit and Nalebuff, 2008:14). Cooper and Madigan (2002), as cited in Beatty et al. (2003:258), state that “HR professionals must remind themselves that customer and investor interests come before the interests of top management” and Beatty et al. (2003) believe the primary role of HR executives is to create a culture which encourages candor and openness needed to gain the trust of customers and investors.

Arguments for transparency include increased accountability, with individual contributions to performance becoming more evident (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007); alignment of organisational and individual goals can improve performance (Sirota et al. 2005); increased participative leadership, employee involvement and motivation (Gomez-Mejia et al. 2003; Sirota et al. 2005); increases employee empowerment (Gomez-Mejia et al. 2003); clearer understanding of ones own goals and relationship to other employees’ and organization’ objectives (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007); reduce risk (Marschall and Weetman, 2007); transparency can improve reputation (Geraats 2004); promote collaboration between employees (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007); transparency can lower the cost of capital (Barth et al. 2013) ; can positively influence market position (Eldomiaty and Choi; 2006; Ke et al. 2013); and increased organizational effectiveness (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007; Christensen and Cheney, 2015); and create higher trust and credibility (Norman et al. 2010; Sandoff and Widell 2015).

According to Berggren and Bernshtyen (2007), the primary factor required in order to enhance company performance from transparency is by having individual actionable goals cascaded through the organisation from a clearly defined strategy. Berggren and Bernshtyen (2007) identify four levels of strategy transparency.

The strategy is not revealed to its own employees.

The strategy is ambiguous and is interpreted by executives, with a focus on their own line of business. This is often the case in multinational organisations, with the danger that “no clear strategy, individual managers might continue to optimize the single business model they understood, and upon which accountability had been passed until that point, instead of focusing on the greater potential of the combined organisation” (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007:413).

The organization has a clear strategy but it is not communicated to lower levels of the business. The problem here is often that external stakeholders are more educated than the employees who are making and selling the products. (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007).

The organization has a “clearly defined strategy that is broken down into individual actionable goals through the organization” which provides the organization with a source of competitive advantage (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007:413).

According to Berggren and Bernshtyen (2007) in multinational organizations, the company strategy is ambiguous.

Trust has been identified as most considered aspects within organisational literature (Bunker et al. 2004) and is built through openness and transparency (Kochan 2004). Trust can be defined as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based not on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the truster, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party (Mayer et al. 1995:729). McKnight et al. (1998) believes trust can support ones liked of success and own perspective of security. Whitener (1997) recognizes that a trusted relationships will see parties acting benevolently; be open to vulnerability; and interdependent. Trust can be at team level, leadership level, organizational level and inter-organizational level (Burke et al. 2007).

Trust is an integral part linking top practice policies and performance (Guest 1998) and is a critical factor leading to enhanced organisational performance (Zand, 1972; Culbert and McDonough, 1986; Gould-Williams, 2003). Trust can improve social interaction between the colleagues (Gibbs 1964) and has been described as the “lubrication that makes it possible for organisations to work” (Bennis and Nanus, 1985:41). Environments lacking trust lead to individuals focusing on outputs, which can be objectively tabulated and defended (Culbert and McDonough, 1986: 179) and reduce employee motivation (Carnevale and Wechsler, 1992). Trust can be encouraged through developing cultures focused on learning (Senge 1990, Legge, 1995, Kochan 2004; Pink; 2011).

Trust in the HR department requires ability, benevolence and integrity (Burke et al. 2007). Firstly, the department must have the competencies required to deliver required services. Secondly, the function needs to be seen as employee advocates. And finally, to what extent do the employees follow the rules and policies of the organization (Burke et al. 2007).

Trust and transparency together can enhance perceptions of justice in the workplace (Greenberg, 2009), encourage fair HR systems within the organization (Linna et al. 2012) and encourage procedures to mitigate unfairness (Davey et al. 1992). The paradoxical nature of fairness is the requirement for consistency accompanied with inconsistency (Linna et al. 2012).

Bordia et al. (2010:1578) highlights the "fairness chain" where fairness at the top of the organisation trickles down the organisation and out to the market, with trust and transparency sitting closely together.

2.9 Summary and Conclusion

The chapter has presented a status quo picture of HRM integration, positioning the topic within the realm of strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM). A comprehensive literature review has been undertaken providing the researcher with a framework for discussing the data collected within this study.

The chapter has considered the status quo of horizontal and vertical integration (Leopold and Harris, 2009), in the context of a German organization, where limited research has been undertaken. Vertical integration, significantly relies on a "clearly defined strategy that is broken down into individual actionable goals through the organization" can enhance organizational performance (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007), with strategy transparency a significant requirement of HRM integration (Budhwar, 1998; Sheenan, 2005). However, the contrary position is often the case in German organizations (Wächter and Müller, 2002), who typically work by the German model of co-determination, vocational training

and long-term consultation. Additionally, the recommendation for the vertical integration of strategy is supported with the devolvment of HR activities to line management.

Horizontal integration was presented, supported with importance of HRM as a governance partner. Furthermore, the business partner role was discussed in the context of HRM in Germany.

In summary, the researcher appreciates the topic of HRM integration covers a range of current topics within the field of HRM, including history of HRM, paradoxes, governance and the role of HR. The scope of HRM and the significant literature on the various topics within this study was extensively undertaken, whilst maintaining a balance of breadth and depth of appropriate literature being considered in accordance with the themes emerging from the study.

In conclusion, the literature review exhausted the readings available to the researcher, with the core literature presented within this report, supporting the explorative study presented in the Methodology.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher will present the methodology.

Firstly, the philosophical positioning of the researcher will be presented highlighting the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher, which Guba and Lincoln (1994:105), as cited in Saunders et al. (2009:106), see as a primary concern before questions of methodology can be addressed.

Secondly, the methodology will justify why the researcher selected Grounded Theory. In addition, the methodology section offers evidence underpinned in context of the researchers philosophical position, to why Constructivist Grounded Theory (conGT) has been selected, rather than Classical Grounded Theory (CGT).

Thirdly, prior to presenting the sampling and data collection approach, the researcher will highlight the aims of the research. Typically Grounded Theory (GT) avoids establishing aims (Glaser and Straus, 1967; Charmaz, 2014), although university research requirements typically mean goals are established prior to GT (Nagel et al. 2015), with Charmaz (2014) acknowledging goals are part of the package, which the researcher brings to the table.

Subsequently, this chapter will provide details about how the data was analysed, both manually and via NVivo, with a supporting summary of the codes, memos and themes evolving from this conGT research study.

Trustworthiness, Ethics and criteria for ensuring the quality of this research are discussed and provide direction for the researcher to evaluate this research, more specifically to address validity and reliability issues, which is a common challenge within qualitative and conGT research (Neuman, 2006; Charmaz, 2006). Various writers have developed criteria for reviewing qualitative research, including Guba (1985), Johnson (1997), Halcomb (2009), Tracey (2010). Moreover, Charmaz (2014: 337-338) stipulates four key criteria in order to evaluate the grounded theory, which includes credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness, presented within this chapter.

The intention of this chapter is to provide the reader with three key messages. Firstly, to provide the reader with knowledge of what the researcher brings to the table in terms of experience and philosophical thinking. Secondly, to provide the reader with knowledge of how this study of research was undertaken. Finally, to provide quality criteria as an underpinning for the emergent conGT within the following chapters.

Finally, this chapter will conclude with a reflexive summary of the key learnings from developing and undertaking the selected methodology. In addition, the conclusions made from this chapter will provide foundations for the conGT discussed in the following chapters.

3.1 Philosophical Positioning

Kuhn (1970), as cited in Slith and Williams (1995: 178), encourages the term paradigm as it “leads scientists to think about their science in the way they do, even though they usually do not recognise their view as a worldview”. Guba and Lincoln (1994:105), as cited in Saunders et al. (2009:106), see questions of research methodology as secondary to the questions of paradigm. These questions and paradigms allow Kuhn (1970) to challenge

positivism as “If scientists cannot escape their own paradigms, culture, and history, then they cannot claim to be about the business of discovering anything universal.” Similarly, Burrell and Morgan (1979: 255) advocate that “science is based on” taken for granted “assumptions, and thus, like any other social practice, must be understood within a specific context.”

Burrell and Morgan (1979) investigated the concept of paradigms further and proposed that social theory can be understood via four key paradigms upon varying sets of meta-theoretical assumptions about the nature of social science and the nature of society. Although, Burrell and Morgan (1979:ix) identify “a vast proportion of theory and research is located within the bounds of just one of the four paradigms”, “all social scientists approach the subject via explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it may be investigated.” An assumption by the researcher establishes an allegiance to one paradigm, which Burrell and Morgan (1979), admit can change, is unlikely. According to Keat and Urry (1975: 55) changing from one research paradigm to another is akin to Gestalt switches or changes of religious faith. Contrary, Hassard (1991) illustrates in *Multiple Paradigms and Organizational Analysis: A Case Study*, it can be possible, amongst the many concerns, for a diligent researcher to attempt paradigm heterodoxy research. Whether one views the world from one paradigm or appreciates paradigm heterodoxy research, the key is for the researcher is to embrace reflexivity (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2010) and question their own philosophy, covered in the following two sub-chapters.

3.1.1 Ontological Position of the Researcher

The ontological question, which needs to be answered first, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979:1) is that of “whether the reality to be investigated is external to the individual or the product of the individual consciousness”. The two contrasting positions are the nominalist and realism position.

The nominalist position, which Burrell and Morgan (1979:4), do not distinguish differently to conventionalism, “revolves around the assumption that the social world external to the individual cognition is made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality. The nominalist does not admit to there being any ‘real’ structure to the world, which these concepts are used to describe. The ‘names’ used are regarded as artificial creations as utility whose utility is based upon the convenience as tools that describing, making sense of and negotiating the external world” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 4). In contrast researchers, holding the position of realism claim that ‘ The social world external to individual cognition is a real world made up of hard, tangible and relatively immutable structures” and ‘ “or the realistic, the social world exists independently of an individual’s appreciation of it. The individual is seen as being born into and living with a social world which is a reality of its own. It is not something which the individual creates- it exists ‘out there”” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 4)

Via the metaphor “the map is not the territory” and thinking presented by Korzybski (1941:8), in conjunction with the knowledge that we can never know to any certainty, as we can never know if what we experience is reality (Kant, 1781), the researcher maintains, in order to manoeuvre around our territory, we create a map to aid us. Each and every one of us creates our own map, which is personal to us, and thus our understanding of the

territory is an interpretation of the territory. This interpretive map differs to a physical map, in the sense that it is organic and can adapt via external stimuli or via our own internal creativity and personal paintbrush. When we interact with others or create social systems, we are in fact sharing our maps via our language, like a language game (Wittgenstein, 1953; Habermas, 1990). Although no map will ever be the same, through sharing our maps, we are creating a shared map – our believed constructed reality.

The ontological position of the researcher is nominalist constructionism.

3.1.2 Epistemological Position of the Researcher

In addition to the ontological question, there is the question of epistemology. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979:1) “These are assumptions about the grounds of knowledge - about how one might begin to understand the world and communicate this knowledge to fellow human beings.” and “how one can sort out what is to be regarded as ‘true’ from what is to be regarded as ‘false’.”

Again, using the metaphor by Korzybski (1941) and linking back to the researcher’s view of ontology, presented here is the researchers epistemological position. Researchers are either attempting to research the shared map (primarily via positivism), interpreting individual maps (anti-positivism) or attempting both (pragmatism). The research of the common map is ethnocentric in nature and, in my eyes, only possible through ‘common consensus’ (Habermas, 1990) or by the destruction of theory, for example, via the hypothetico-deductive process (Popper, 1959). By doing this, researchers are attempting to create common clarity (erklaren) (Outhwaite, 1975)

In contrast, the nominalist position is ethno-relative, where in order to enhance our own knowledge and individual maps, we need to research the maps of other individuals and inductively create theory. In essence, we are attempting to understand (verstehen) (Outhwaite, 1975) the world rather than clarify.

The researcher believes, via both attempting to clarify the shared map and understanding our individual maps, we continue to develop our understanding of the world, similar to a circular development of knowledge (Kolb et al., 1979; Nonaka, 1995) Through both critical clarification and critical understanding, we develop our view of 'truth'. However, as both our individual maps and shared map are neither the territory, the researcher asserts that there is always an aspect of interpretation in all knowledge, specifically within the social sciences, where Human Resources Research is positioned.

Anderson (2013) and Armstrong (2014) claim that research in Human Resources, along with the majority of social science research, has typically been conducted via the channels of positivism. Valentin (2006:17) builds on this domination and illustrates that Human Resource research is typically conducted to understand control and efficiency "as a purely instrumental process, objective, neutral, simply concerned with methods to ensure control and efficiency in organizations."

However, Anderson (2013) and Armstrong (2014) state that there is acceptance of pragmatic and interpretive research within the field of HR, more often within Europe than the UK and US (Valentin, 2006), with the latter philosophical position being increasingly recognized (Stahl and Bjorkman and Morris, 2013).

Nevertheless, the assumption of the researcher is paramount as the methodical issues of a researcher are then directly implicated (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2010; Gill and Johnson, 2010). This perspective is expressed, by Burrell and Morgan (1979), with the example of a researcher, who either searches for universal laws or “subscribes to an alternative view of social reality, which stresses the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world.” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 2).

Prior to this research study being undertaken, the researcher assumed the epistemological position of a subjectivist. Therefore, a combination of an interpretivist ontology and subjective epistemology, a paradigm in which the researcher finds homage, is reason for the following discourse on Grounded Theory (GT) and Constructivist Grounded Theory (conGT).

3.2 Constructivist Grounded Theory and Credibility

The Discovery of Grounded Theory (GT): Strategies for Qualitative Research by Glaser and Strauss (1967) “focuses on the discovery of theory, on *grounded* theory, and on *qualitative* research.” (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2013:56), with the “main emphasis on the discovery, rather than the verification of theory” (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2013:56). As cited in (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2013:57), “Glaser and Strauss launched the rather liberating thesis that anyone can create their own theory, so long as they start from reality.” and although they believe that “theory should be tested, but this leads only to its modification, not its destruction, since a theory can only be replaced by another theory” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:28). GT is a methodology which aims to understand the social environment (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and is

focused on inductive, theory building enquiry grounded in data (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2013), which is appropriate when little is understood (Creswell, 2013; Polit and Beck, 2012).

Grounded Theory, first coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is a research methodology that focuses on arriving at theories 'grounded' in a researchers data via concerning themselves with "the discovery of theory from data - systematically obtained and analysed in social research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:1).

Since 1967, a number of second-generation grounded theorists (Morse et al., 2009) have emerged, including Bowers and Schatzman (2009), Charmaz (2006) and Clarke (2005) to which Glaser (2012:3) suggests "are just different, not better or worse. So to competitively compare them violates the Glaser purpose here to no advantage."

Similarities between GT and conGT do exist, including theoretical sampling, constant comparison, coding and memo writing (Charmaz, 2014), there are differences in the philosophical positioning of the two approaches. And it is the ontological position of grounded theory, where the author of this paper has concerns.

The ontological difference between the theories of Glaser and Barney (1967), which is realist and objective in nature and with Charmaz (2000a, 2002a, 2006a), Bryant (2002) and Clarke (2003) who have moved Grounded Theory away from positivism and towards an interpretive or constructivist ontological position. A view which, according to Charmaz (2014:14), "aligns well with [the] social constructivists whose influences". The position held by Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 22) that "All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood

and studied. Some beliefs may be taken for granted, invisible, only assumed, whereas others are highly problematic and controversial.” resonates strongly with the researcher.

Although, Glaser (2012:4) believes that “Constructivist Grounded Theory is a misnomer” as “Grounded Theory (GT) can use any data.”, it is the ontological position held by Charmaz (2014), which distinguishes Constructivist Grounded Theory from Traditional Grounded Theory for the researcher. Charmaz (2000, 2006) advocates an approach which embraces a constructivist stance, where researchers believe that reality differs between individuals and that no one truth can be fully understood or measured, in particular within the social sciences, where this research is positioned, due to the complexity of interpreting meaning from the situation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Similarly, Charmaz (2014) highlights that meanings are formed through social interaction, are contextual and evolve over time, all positions in line with an interpretivist ontology. A fundamental difference between GT and conGT is that, Charmaz (2000, 2006) recognizes what the researcher brings to the table, that the researcher is involved in the co-construction of the theory and most importantly, recognizes within the analysis process, the researchers interpretation.

In spite of the criticisms of validity and reliability from Traditional Grounded Theorists of the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach, Charmaz (2014) argues the inseparability of subjectivity in the research process. A view held by many and ensures research reflexivity (Alversson and Sköldberg, 2010).

Despite the “different standpoints and conceptual agendas... we all begin with inductive logic, subject data to rigorous comparative analysis, being to develop theoretical analysis, and value grounded theory studies for informing policy and practice.” (Charmaz, 2014:67)

According to Charmaz (2014:2), “grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves. Thus researchers construct a theory ‘grounded’ in their data.” The process begins with “inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis.” (Charmaz, 2014).

Although Constructivist Grounded Theory allows the researcher flexibility, the method provides a “set of general principles, guidelines, strategies, and heuristic devices.” Charmaz (2014:18) highlights these stages in the adapted visual representation from Tweed and Charmaz (2011: 133) below:

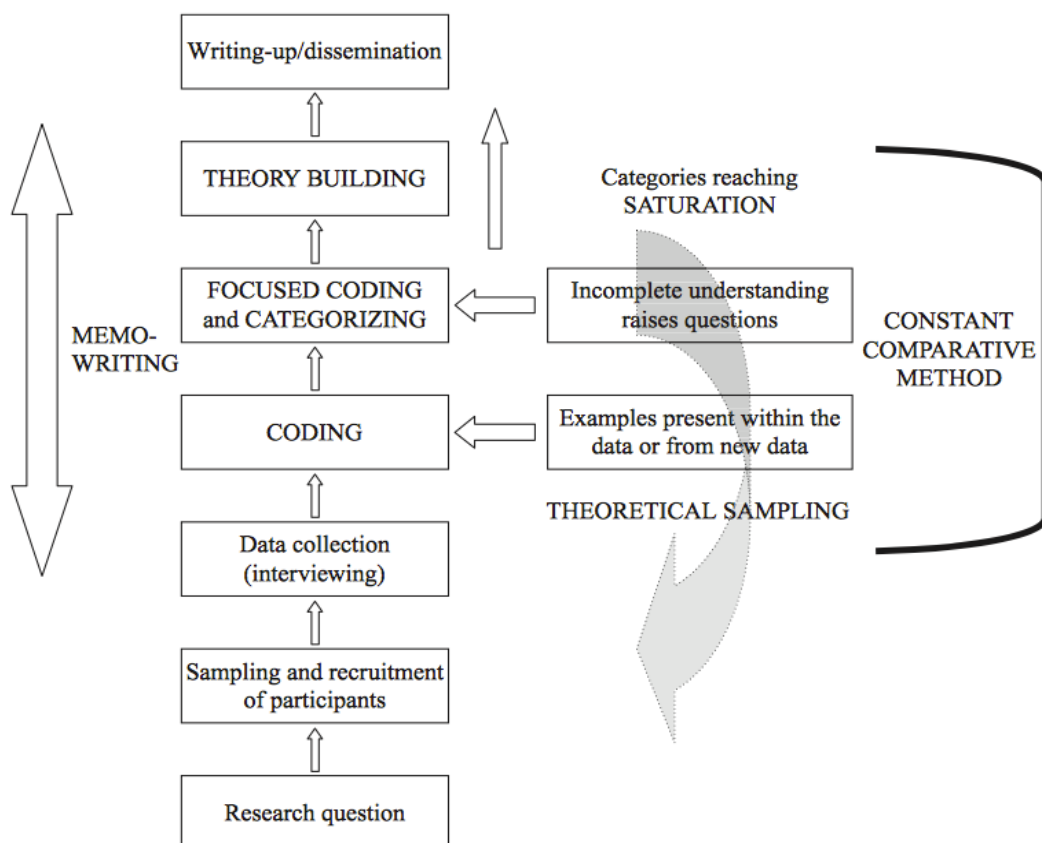


FIGURE 4: The Constructivist Grounded Theory Research Process

Moreover, Charmaz (2014) states the key components of the theory as a methodology where the researcher is continuously involved in data collection and analysis, with codes and categories constructively emerging from the data. The researcher utilizes the constant comparison method, comparing data throughout each stage of the analysis and thus advancing theory development. The researcher records this development through the use of memo writing to elaborate on properties and relationships. Typically, the literature review is completed following an independent analysis, which is typically completed via semi-structured interviewing of a theoretical sample, rather than a population for representativeness.

The researcher aims to follow these key components and process, encouraged by Charmaz (2014) within the research methodology, highlighted within the sampling and data collection sub-chapters of this chapter. Although, before these sections can be presented, the researcher feels that it is necessary to present what he brings to the table, in line with Charmaz (2000, 2006) recognition of the researchers role in the theory development process.

3.3 Deployment of self

Despite GT advocating a blank canvas approach and limited exposure, thus limiting bias within the research process (Hunter et al., 2011), Charmaz (2014) advocates reflexivity, as she acknowledges a researchers previous experiences and philosophical positioning as inescapable. Nevertheless, Charmaz (2014: 307) does suggest letting “this material lie fallow”, it is necessary to note what the researcher brings to the table.

The researcher holds two degrees, a BSc (Hons) Engineering (Business and Technology) and MSc Human Resources Management and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of

Personnel and Development. In addition, the researcher has worked in the field of Human Resources Management as an employee and consultant since 2004. Since 2009, the researcher has worked as a HRM lecturer.

The DBA programme has ensured that the researcher has become more reflexive and thus recognizes that their own position will have an impact on the overall research process. Both the researchers academic studies within HRM and business background , despite best interests to allow “material to lie fallow” Charmaz (2014:307), could have influenced the research and the development of subsequent theory on this research project.

The researcher, as indicated above started with the assumption that our social realities are multi-faceted, processual and constructed. Therefore, as cited in Charmaz (2014:9), Clarke (2005, 2006, 2007, 2012) “stresses, the research reality arises within a situation and includes what researchers and participants bring to it and do within it.” The researcher remained reflexive about their own actions and decisions during this project recognizing their own position, privileges, perspective, as advocated by Charmaz (2014).

3.4 Research expectations

Fundamentally, due to the reflexive nature of the research approach being utilized, Constructivist Grounded Theory, it would have been unwise to consider the following outcomes all-inclusive and set in stone, as Charmaz (2014) indicates that the research outcomes will appear from the data. Some circles (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) would consider pre-empting results unwise, although as part of the submission process and the prerequisite literature, rather generalist outcomes were considered. Although suggesting

research aims (Hunter et al., 2011) is counterintuitive within GT, (Glaser, 2012) and Charmaz (2014) recognize the pressure of university proposal systems. During the proposal process, the following anticipations were highlighted:

Firstly, the researcher anticipates employees, managers and HR personnel highlighting different expectations. Therefore, offering a clearer perspective on how the HR function is viewed and can possibly become more integrated in the future.

Secondly, the researcher anticipates that the HR function has a role to play in the future, despite the focus on full integration, albeit with a different construction to the one utilized today. The researcher expects the results of this study to generate a discussion surrounding the core services and structures that today's HR departments utilize and provide a foundation for HRM Integration.

Thirdly, the researcher expects a lack of management know-how and external professional services, impeding a fully embraced integration approach. The researcher expects the results to generate discussion on future training and identify HR service gaps.

Finally, the researcher anticipates the results of the research to provide a strategic recommendation for the future of HRM in the case study organization, and a spring board for further research to be undertaken in the field.

These anticipations will be discussed in chapter 6, in relation to the emergent grounded theory within this research project, which was constructed following the methodology guidelines of Charmaz (2006; 2014), already presented in figure 4.

According to Charmaz (2014:2), “grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves. Thus researchers construct a theory ‘grounded’ in their data.” The process begins with “inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis.” (Charmaz, 2014:2). More specific details of this process can be found in the following chapters.

3.5 Sampling

The researcher recruited participants as an ‘outsider’, informally due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. For this research, the researcher utilized their own network to gain access to a German Automotive Manufacturer’s employees, managers and HR personnel. For confidentiality reasons, the manufacturer cannot be named although can be identified as one of the ‘big 5’ car manufacturers in Germany.

There are three core reasons for the researcher identifying a German Automotive Manufacturer:

1. The researcher has knowledge of the industry gained via studying a BSc. Engineering (Business and Technology) at Coventry University, in combination to a close working proximity to the automotive industry, since 1999.
2. Extensive network within the industry, the researcher has developed over the last 15 years.
3. A traditional and established sector, with the full range of Human Resources activities being undertaken, the researcher feels the automotive manufacturers will provide a suitable research field for not only gaining access, but also sound data.

In addition, a decision to focus on one organization, rather than multiple organizations within the German Automotive business was made for three key reasons:

1. The scope of the research project was narrowed by focusing on one organization, rather than aiming to focus on multiple organizations challenging within the timescales of the DBA.
2. Access to the company's employees was already realizable.
3. Most importantly, Barney (1991) and Huselid et al. (1997) stipulate that HRM integration provides competitive advantage via creating unique environments, which cannot be copied. Thus, the homogenous and generalizability of the data gathered from multiple organizations could be questioned, unless a full research study of each organization was undertaken.

Van Maanen and Kolb (1985:11) suggest that gaining access “involves some combination of strategic planning, hard work, and dumb luck” and Gummesson (2000) suggests gaining access is often neglected by the researcher. These ideas were at the forefront of the researcher's mind when developing the research plan.

The researcher agreed with his supervisors, as part of the proposal process to utilize a mixture of convenience/purposive sampling (Miles et al. 2014). Following on from these first interviews, snowball sampling (Miles et al. 2014) was utilized to collect the data. A necessity of grounded theory research is to ensure adequate data is collected in order for phenomena to emerge (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), differing from quantitative approaches, which typically involves probability sampling and statistical analysis (Marshall, 1996). Marshall, 1996, believes misconceptions are often raised about

the representativeness of qualitative research, with questions about the number of interviews being a regularly asked question by qualitative researchers (Guest et al. 2006, Baker 2012, Charmaz 2014).

The number of participants accepted within constructivist grounded theory is that “12 interviews suffice for most researchers when they aim to discern themes concerning common views and experiences among relatively homogeneous people.” (Charmaz, 2014:107). Although, 12 interviews can generate themes, this number is not set in stone and can be controversial (Mason, 2010), thus a saturation strategy is often recommended (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Mason, 2010). Charmaz (2014:107), on the other hand advocates increasing “your number of interviews when you: pursue a controversial topic; anticipate or discover surprising or provocative findings; construct complex conceptual analyses; use interviewing as your only source of data; and seek professional credibility.”

Corbin (1998, 212) highlights the importance within grounded theory of recognising when no new or relevant data is emerging regarding a category or in other terms “when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation” (Mason, 2010:2), known as a saturation strategy which is advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Corbin and Strauss (2008). Albeit, it was agreed as part of the research proposal that the minimum number of interviews would include at least 12 employees, 12 line managers and 12 HRM Personnel from the German Automotive Manufacturer.

Retrospectively, agreeing a certain number of interviews prior to the study gave the researcher clarity and a goal to work towards, although data saturation was achieved prior

to the interviews being completed. In future research projects, the researcher would advocate the saturation strategy, without predefined numbers of respondents.

Although the researcher recognizes the disadvantages of purposive/convenience sampling, the significant benefits include reduction in cost and time; identifying individuals that can provide practical knowledge; random cross-section of the organization. (Marshall, 1996).

Three interview groups were utilised within the study included, all numbered to ensure confidentiality.

3.6 Data Collection

Data from these individuals was collected via semi-structured intensive interviewing, which has become the most common source of qualitative data (Anderson, 2013) and supported by Charmaz (2014). “Qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of human processes.” (Miles et al. 2014:4) and can “ lead to serendipitous findings and to new integrations” (Miles et al. 2014:4). Furthermore, as cited in Sheenan (2003:194), Dyer (1984) “has argued that within the area of strategic human resource management, a qualitative approach and more specifically the use of case analysis, provides an important, intense understanding of key issues.”

Face-to-face interviewing is typical utilised when a researcher is aiming to gain insight or understanding (Gillham, 2000:11) and where the researcher recognizes context as important, which in the case of constructivist grounded theory is paramount (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher considered alternative approaches although the benefits of utilising face-to-face semi-structured interviews over non-personal forms include the ability to

generate rich data (Bryman, 2004), adapt the language to the participants (Bryman, 2004) and explore topics, which emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2014). Structured approaches or surveys would not have supported this approach. Overall, the researcher selected semi-structured interviews because of the close alignment to the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach advocated by Charmaz (2014) and the researchers confidence in undertaking face-to-face semi-structured interviews, via experience gained during the researchers MSc studies and work experience. In hindsight, taking the approach allowed the researcher to switch between German and English and adapt the language to the participants, supporting the generation of data within this study, which would not have been possible with alternative approaches.

In accordance with the methodology detailed by Charmaz (2014:43), the researcher simultaneously involved himself in data collection and analysis of the data. To aid this process, coding - “categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data.”, was undertaken which helped “define what is happening in the data” (Charmaz, 2014:43) and allows the researcher to “begin to grapple with what it means.” (Charmaz, 2014:46). Three coding strategies were utilized; Line Coding, Axial Coding and NVivo coding. Memo-writing is deemed the crucial step between collecting data and writing draft papers because it provides an opportunity to reflect and analyse the data (Holton, 2007).

Secondly, Focused and Axial Coding, was completed by taking some line by line codes and lifting them to a higher level to understand the larger story with the intention of gaining sense out of the codes identified in the initial coding (Miles et al., 2014). At this point, the coding allowed interpretation of the assumptions and meanings of phrases, thus putting the meaning on the descriptive.

In combination with the two coding strategies above, the researcher utilized a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), strongly recommend by Miles et al. (2014), more specifically NVivo Pro. Further analysis features of NVivo were not pursued due to the fear that by doing so would be more akin to quantitative or positivist research, a critique the researcher holds in accordance with many qualitative researchers (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013:7).

Rather, the researcher utilised NVivo as an opportunity to restart the process of coding, whilst having the opportunity to structure the codes and themes within the software, allowing the researcher a “rapid way of capturing thoughts that occur throughout the data collection” (Miles et al. 2014:96). More importantly, the researcher also considered the recommended review points by Saldaña (2013), as cited in Miles et al. (2014:96). This includes a selection of questions to reflect on the data and the process. The questions can be seen in the interview review document, found in appendix 1. Moreover, the practical process, can be read in more detail below:

The investigator utilizing an established network within the case study company, built up over the last 15 years, employed a mixture of convenience/purposive sampling (Miles et al. 2014). Following on from these first interviews, snowball sampling (Miles et al. 2014) was utilized.

To ensure confidentiality, all participants were met outside of work, independent of their roles and are referred to as numbers within the research report. The organisation is referred to as a German Automotive Manufacturer. Only the research supervisor and investigator have knowledge of the participants.

Verbal agreement with individuals was used for gaining consent. A consent form and rights to withdraw form was sent to the participant, by email prior to the research semi-structured interview. This was communicated and confirmed prior to the research interview starting. Example forms can be seen in appendix 2.

The investigator utilized a Sony ICD-UX560 Digital Voice Recorder and subsequently took notes. Interviews were both undertaken in English and German.

Prior to each semi-structured interview, (an interview structure can be seen in appendix 3) the researcher explained that the areas of research is HRM integration and briefly explained the purpose of the first dialogue, utilizing the definition of HRM Integration by Sheenan (2015: 193) - "Integration is 'the full integration of HRM with organisational strategy; HRM policies that cohere; and the integration of HRM within line management activities.'" The interview started by exploring the status quo of HRM integration within the respondent's organization. Example questions Budwhar (1998) and included:

Q) How are people strategies implemented into the organizational strategy?

Q) Do any HR policies contradict each other?

Q) What role does line management have in HRM?

Secondly, the interview took a greenfield approach to the topic of HRM Integration. In that, the researcher wanted to explore how HRM would be integrated into the business, if no HR department existed or was closed - forcing participants to consider the topic with a blank canvas or through the lenses of the world they currently hold. The critical view that we should "kill HR" (Fisher, 2016), provided the researcher with this grounded theory idea. Two core questions were asked:

Q) Could your company close the HR department? Justification for answer?

Q) If your company choose to close the HR department, how would HR get done?

A transcript of the recording was produced, by a transcriber and translated into English prior to analysis (discussed in more detail within the following sub-chapter - Cross Cultural Research). Each recording and notes were allocated a number, referring to the individual. This information is only available for the investigator and supervisor.

Transcripts of the interview and the researchers core findings were sent by email to the participants to review, with the participants having the opportunity to change their view or to clarify the investigators understanding. In all cases, this was conducted by phone.

Line , Axial and NVivo coding, simultaneously with memo-writing were undertaken. The key themes developed from the data, discussed in more detail in the manual and NVivo data analysis chapters, in line with the Charmaz (2014) constructivist grounded theory approach.

Finally, constructivist building of theory was completed, prior to the drafting of the doctoral thesis. The theory is presented in chapters 4-5 and summarized in chapter 6.

Those reading this chapter should gain a clearer picture of the process undertaken, although three key topics are presented in the following chapters to provide more detail about cross cultural research, the manual approach taken to analyse data and the role of NVivo in the research analysis stage.

3.7 Cross Cultural Research

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, focusing on HR practice within Germany. The author planned to conduct all interviews in English, with the support of the German language when participants had difficulties expressing their opinions in English. Due to the nature of the topic, a number of respondents requested to speak German, which was granted. In both cases, it is worth recognizing that this research was of a cross-cultural nature.

Cross-cultural research can be identified via three characteristics. Firstly, cross language research, which is defined as studies in which a language barrier is present between researchers and their respondents (Larson, 1988; Temple, 2002). Secondly, the role of cross-cultural interviews, which “are those in which the interviewer and interviewee have different cultural memberships” (Shah, 2004:549) and finally the role of translation within the research process. Specific attention to the researchers own current research project will be given, linking the theoretical background, which often comes with complexities (Ryen, 2001), along with the intentions of the researcher.

Practically, there are two questions, which need to be addressed. Firstly, what impact does the role of multiple languages have within the research process? Secondly, if there are multiple languages utilized with the research process, as the final thesis needs to be submitted in English, at which time does translation need to take place?

As highlighted by Temple et al. (2006), in the majority of qualitative approaches, the social context is deemed an integrate component of data analysis and data is a product of interaction between the researcher and respondents. Meaning is constructed through a discourse (Foucault 1989; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Charmaz 2014) and if that

discourse is broken due to language concerns, than meaning could be lost (Simon, 1996). Phillips (1960) argues that any utterance in any language carries with it a set of assumptions feelings and values, supported by Temple et al. (2006), who state that whether multiple or monolingual researchers are being utilised in the process, the researcher needs to be involved in interpretation and analysis of meaning.

In fact, within interpretive studies, a multilingual researcher may be better placed to gain context from the situation than a professional translator (Fenna et al. 2010, Smith et al. 2008, Chen and Boore, 2009, Nurjannah et al. 2014), although having a multi-lingual researcher is rare (Temple and Young, 2004). In this study, the researcher is bi-lingual and holds the highest language certificate available in Germany for non-native speakers, entitling himself to study and undertake research at a German state university.

The researcher also needs to reflect on the challenges and assumptions of the interviewer/interviewee relationship. Insecurity and fear of both the researcher and the interviewee can occur, along with power relations existing between the two cultures, even institutional agendas of promoting social inequalities exist. (Ryen 2001; Shah, 2004). The implications are the creation of an insider - outsider status (Shah, 2004). Although, this can happen with monolingual studies, where education, affiliation, race and power relations can cause complexities (Merriam et al. 2001). Alternatively, cross-cultural understanding can aid the knowledge transfer and limit the implications of an insider-outsider view (Shah, 2004; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The researcher has held residency within Germany for 10 years, has insider experience of the automotive industry, and utilized his personal network to undertake the research project, thus utilizing collaborative relationships, which is advocated by Rubin and Rubin (1995) to overcome the difficulties highlighted by Merriam et al. (2001).

Although Polkinghorne (2005), express concerns about misinterpretations and impact on the research credibility, Smith et al. (2008) argues that by having multilingual people in the research process limits the risk of misinterpretation and can provide additional context to the true message played by the research participant, albeit at the expense of the solidity of the data, as the translation can lose the original meaning in the words. The researcher utilized both languages as a means of understanding, recommended by Young and Ackerman (2001), who believe multilingual researchers add value to the research process.

Worryingly, conducting Grounded Theory research in another language other than English does cause concerns (Charmaz, 2015), (Glaser, 2009). More specifically, translation can become an area of concern, especially if participants or researchers speak different languages (Charmaz, 2015). The standard technique of coding in grounded theory is through the use of the gerund (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser 1978) and thus, Charmaz (2006) who argues that in order to strictly undertake grounded theory, the analysis must be conducted in English because of the link to the gerund. This could be due to her lack of understanding of alternative languages and how the challenge can be overcome within those different languages. For example, within German although there is no specific Gerund, the gerund alternative can clearly be recognized and coded. These grammatical terms are “zu + verb”, “verb + gern” and “am verb”. These indicators would provide clear coding potential not considered in Charmaz's original view. In order to overcome the complications of meaning transfer, Temple et al. (2006) recommended the use of debriefing sessions in order to clarify the transfer of meaning. This was completed with each respondent post-translation discussed below.

The importance in translation is to ensure an equivalence of meaning (Brislin, 1970; Sechrest et al. 1972), which can be difficult with the added power and responsibility cross language interviews creates (Svetlana 2007). Often, a literal equivalent cannot be found and therefore, essential meaning can be lost (Su and Parham, 2002). Therefore, it is important for cross language researchers to ensure the conceptual equivalents (Chen and Boore, 2009) and reflect upon their role within the process (Svetlana 2007). More importantly, it is worth noting, as an interpretive researcher, the author recognizes that the researcher becomes part of the process of shaping and potentially identifying the experience (Temple, 2002) and thus correct translation is required to avoid negatively influencing the adequacy of the findings (Frederickson et al. 2005; Schultz, 2004).

Although there are recommendations on how to deal with translation research, there are no fixed rules (Nurjannah et al. 2014). There are three distinct points when translation can take place within the research process - before analysing the data, during analysing the data or after analysing the data (Suh et al. 2009). Suh et al. (2009) recommends that the data be translated during the analysis, whilst Fenna et al. (2010) recommend keeping the original language as long as possible within the process because important findings may be lost thinking about translation, rather than focusing on context and key points of the message. This notion is also recommended by Larkin and Temple (Temple, 2002, Larkin et al. 2007), who suggest only printing the final publication in English.

Nevertheless, in order to follow the methodology put forward by Charmaz (2006), which the researcher followed, the translation was completed prior to analysis and coding, as advocated by Charmaz (2015). This way, the bilingual skills of the researcher will benefit and support the research project, although the Charmaz (2006) methodology, which is being followed, will not be hampered.

The key method of ensuring the verification and adequacy of the translation is to utilize back translation (Maneesriwongul and Dixon, 2004), which can be deemed to be beneficial as it can minimize cultural and linguistic biases (Su and Parham, 2002). This is similar to the process of debriefing sessions, although more time intensive. Due to the scope of the project already being larger than the researcher originally anticipated and the time intensive process of back translating, the researcher utilized debriefing sessions on the telephone.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data analysis was undertaken following the guidelines from Charmaz (2014) and specific detail about each undertaken step was recorded and presented below:

Following each interview, the researcher reviewed the interview utilizing the questions highlighted by Saldaña (2013), identifying initial code and memos. This was recorded in both a post-interview notes document for each interview, with memos being added to a memos folder, albeit all by text in documents and notes being written by hand. An example of the post-interview notes can be found in appendix 4, with examples of memos appearing in following chapters. Through this data analysis questions started to appear and subsequent questions were asked in interviews to fill the gaps, as highlighted by Charmaz (2014). It was at this early stage that the researcher can “begin to separate, sort, and synthesize these data through qualitative coding” (Charmaz, 2014:3). This coding was then compared against all other interviews and “grasp of the data begins take form” (Charmaz, 2014:3) and points the researcher in the direction for the next interviews.

Following the transcribing process, the notes from analysis were added to the interview analysis chart for each interview, again utilising pen and paper. This chart was created to aid the analysis of the data. The headings were chosen based on key themes emerging from the post-interview analysis. An example can be found in appendix 5. The researcher initially read each transcript and started focused analysis “through studying data, comparing them, and writing memos” (Charmaz, 2014:3) through undertaking line coding. This was recorded in the interview analysis chart.

Following the line coding, each transcript was re-read and axial coding was undertaken starting to build “levels of abstraction directly from the data and, subsequently, gathered data to check and refine our emerging analytic categories” Charmaz (2014:4). Structured categories following this process had started to emerge from the data, nevertheless the analogue pen and paper process made sorting the data challenging. This was recorded in the interview analysis chart and memos were starting to be drafted, recorded in a separate file.

Each transcript was listened to identifying meaning from the recordings that may have been missed within the transcript reading process. Additional code and memos were added to the interview analysis chart and/or memo file, again utilising pen.

Code identified relating to key areas, such as integration strategy policies and line management were added to the interview analysis chart.

The researcher also considered specific questioning area, with specific attention provided to the questions regarding closing the Human Resources Department, the respondents justification for their opinion and also how in theory a HR-less organization would look.

This information was also added to the interview analysis chart, with memos being added to the memo file.

The data from the Interview Analysis Charts were collected into three documents. One for each interview sub-group - Employees, Line Management and Human Resources Personnel. The collected data provided memos, which were added to the memo folder.

The data was compared across the three groups, with memos being added to the memo folder.

Each recording was again listened to, although no new code or memos were emerging from the data and the researcher was aware that he reached saturation point, which is achieved when “gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of core theoretical categories” Glaser (2001: 191).

At this point, the researcher allowed the thoughts to “lie fallow” Charmaz (2014: 307), encouraging a reset before the researcher utilised NVivo to structure codes and themes. The researcher hoped by taking this approach new code and themes would emerge from the data.

3.9 NVivo Data Analysis

The utilization of NVivo, in addition to a manual analysis, is recommended by Charmaz (2014) as by structuring thoughts within another format, further code and themes may emerge from the data.

Prior to the analysis starting, the researcher purchased a license for NVivo Pro, as the educational version at Sheffield Hallam University could only be accessed on-site. The cost of traveling to The University for a student living in Germany would have been too excessive to gain any benefits from the additional features offered by this program. Thus, the researcher proceeded with the Pro version for Windows, as the Mac version has fewer applications.

The researcher became accustomed with the programme utilizing You Tube and NVivo online guides. It must be noted that the researcher has never received formal training in this tool. Subsequently, there may be applications of the programme, which were overlooked. Primarily, the researcher learnt about the core applications, which include auto coding, queries, tree maps tag clouds, charts and word frequency queries and reporting methods. The researcher felt significantly uncomfortable with the quantitative nature of these applications and considered whether they were appropriate within a constructivist grounded theory approach. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) highlight this is a significant issue amongst qualitative researchers, with the fear that the mechanisms are more attuned to quantitative or positivist approaches. Although, nodes that had many codes did offer an indication of study direction and findings, it was only through emergence of the researcher in the data, which supported the creation, the categories, in line with Charmaz (2014) views. For these reasons, the researcher chose to avoid the quantitative analyses and utilised NVivo as tool for structuring code, themes and the removal of cutting and filing all the ideas, which the researcher had accumulated on paper. As the analysis was primarily undertaken outside NVivo, the critical question about closeness and distance to the data became irrelevant. Albeit, reflectively, the researcher found abstract thinking in front of the computer more difficult than with paper and felt more focused on specific text whilst utilising NVivo, which gave a greater closeness with the

data. The most significant benefit of utilising NVivo was the accumulation of codes into a clear structure, without the cutting and gluing of significant documents. For future studies where time was a significant issue, the researcher could recognise the benefit of starting the process with NVivo, although for a reflective combination of closeness and abstract thinking, required within the process (Bazeley and Jackson; 2013, Charmaz 2014), the researcher found the combination of starting the process with paper and than utilising a computer, a significant benefit in fully emerging with the data.

With these key thoughts in mind, the specific process undertaken was:

- A. The data was imported and case notes were established for the employee data, line management data, and the human resources data.
- B. The researcher attempted to use auto coding although because of the various question types and formatting of the transcripts, this application provided no coherent coding structure. This application would be far more beneficial for structured interviews.
- C. Each transcript was read and line coding was identified and assigned to nodes.
- D. Each transcript was read and axial coding was identified and assigned to nodes.
- E. Each interview was again heard, in order to support any ideas appearing from the data, although no new categories were appearing from the data.

F. Manual data and in NVivo data were compared, consolidating the emerged codes and nodes from the data into categories, presented within the following chapter. Vivo provided sound structure and organization of nodes and code, which would not have been easily completed manually. For the researcher, the main benefit of utilizing NVivo, was the ease of collating codes, nodes and categorizing the data. During this process, the researcher continued to write memos, supporting the conGT approach.

G. The first draft contents page for the thesis was created utilizing the categories emerging from structured data in NVivo, with the main themes emerging from the data.

H. With the emerged categories and contents page, the researcher re-read and re-listened to the data, in order to identify any gaps that the researcher may have missed. It was at this point, that the researcher believed the analysis of the data had been concluded and nothing new was appearing from the data. Saturation point had definitely been reached.

In summary, NVivo was utilised to support the structuring of codes and themes arising within the manual analysis. The significant benefit in undertaking this process was the clarity gained of the data collected and analysed within the study. The cutting and pasting and merging codes into greater themes became easier utilising the programme. Although, no new code or categories emerged by utilising the software, the ability to gain an overview of all the data was beneficial to the researcher.

The findings were summarized in a post analysis presentation, presented to the researchers three research supervisors. Unanimous support was given to proceed with the emerged conGT, and write the thesis, enhancing the emerged theory with potentially supporting literature, presented in the subsequent chapters.

3.10 Trustworthiness of conGT Research

The common challenge of undertaking qualitative research is gaining credibility of your work, through addressing validity and reliability (Neuman, 2006), especially within conGT, as it is “born from reasoned reflections and principled convictions, a grounded theory that conceptualizes and conveys what is meaningful about a substantive area can make a valuable contribution” Charmaz (2006:185). Continuous questions within the DBA proposal process by quantitative minded cohort members made the researcher aware that these questions would need to be addressed. Prior to the research project starting and as part of the DBA programme, the researcher considered the criteria needed to gain trustworthiness throughout the study. During the study, the researcher did not consider the criteria. Once writing the report, the researcher began to revisited the criteria and utilised the criteria to reflectively consider the research project, which had concluded. A reflection, utilising the criteria below can be found in the conclusion chapter.

A number of writers have developed criteria for reviewing qualitative research, including Guba (1985), Johnson (1997), Halcomb (2009), Tracey (2010). In addition, both Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (2006; 2014) have both provided criteria for reviewing the quality of GT and conGT, retrospectively.

Johnson (1997) has developed three key criteria for considering the validity of the qualitative study, focusing on **descriptive**, **interpretive** and **theoretical validity**. Johnson

(1997) supports this with 13 strategies to promote research validity. Although, Andrews and Halcomb (2009) suggest qualitative researchers prefer trustworthiness, defined as “the degree of confidence that the research has that their qualitative data and findings are credible, transferable and dependable”.

Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage a “goodness of fit” with Guba (1985) also highlighting criteria to determine trustworthiness as **credibility**, **transferability**, **dependability** and **confirmability**. Credibility being how congruent the findings are with reality. Transferability focuses on how the findings can be transferred to other situations in context. Dependability focusing on the clarity of methodology of study so that it can be critiqued and potentially replicated. Confirmability is about ensuring the results of our experiences of the informants rather than the preferences of the researcher.

Tracey’s (2010) “Big-Tent” model processes eight key criteria for assessing quality. Firstly to identify whether a topic is **worthy**, relevant, timely and offers significant interest. Secondly, to ask whether there is a richness of data collection and analysis providing **rigour**. Thirdly, does the research show **sincerity**, via south reflexivity and transparency? Fourthly, is the research supported with description and concrete detail providing **credibility**? Fifthly, does the research find **resonance** allowing generalizations and transferable findings? Sixthly, does the research provide a **significant contribution**? Seventhly, has the research followed **ethical** subscription? And finally, does the research provide **meaningful coherence**?

Similarities between each of these models of assessing qualitative trustworthiness can be identified and compared with Glaser’s (1978:4-5) criteria of **fit**, **work**, **relevance** and

modifiability. However, these Glaser's criteria emphasizes the alignment of GT with a positivist perspective that will hold the test of time.

Contrastingly, the focus of Charmaz's criteria is on a relativist ontology and with the presumption that any grounded theory is subjective and contextually dependent. This differs to Johnson (1997) idea of validity and Guba's (1985) credibility criteria reality reference. Nevertheless, similarities can be drawn regarding credibility, relevance and transferability.

Charmaz (2006; 2014) indicates that clear positioning originality and credibility can increase resonance in a research contribution. Moreover, Charmaz (2014: 337-338) stipulates four key criteria in order to evaluate the grounded theory, which includes **credibility**, **originality**, **resonance** and **usefulness**. The criteria and subsequent questions to ask are in the table below:

Criteria	Questions
Credibility	<p>How your research achieved intimate familiarity with the topic?</p> <p>Are the data sufficient to merit your claims? range, number, and depth of observations.</p> <p>Have you made systematic comparisons between observations and between categories?</p> <p>Do the categories cover a wide range of empirical observations?</p> <p>Are there strong logical links between the gathered data and your argument and analysis?</p> <p>Has your research provided enough evidence for your claims to allow the reader to form an independent assessment- and agree with your claims?</p>
Originality	<p>are your categories fresh? do they offer new insights?</p> <p>does your analysis provide a new conceptual rendering of the data?</p> <p>what is the social theoretical significance of this work?</p> <p>how does your grounded theory challenge, extend, or refine current ideas, concepts, and practices?</p>

Criteria	Questions
Resonance	Do the categories portrayed fullness of the studied experience? have you revealed both liminal and unstable taken for granted meanings? have you drawn links between larger collectives or institutions and individual lives, when the data so indicate? that you're grounded theory makes sense to your participants or people who share their circumstances? Does your analysis offered them deeper insights about their lives and worlds?
Usefulness	Does your analysis of interpretations that people can use in the everyday world's? do your analytic categories suggest any generic processes? if so, have you examine these generic processes for tacit implications? can the analysis but further research and other substantive areas? how does your work contribute to knowledge? How does it contribute to making a better world?

TABLE 1 – conGT Criteria and Questions (Adapted from Charmaz (2006:186))

Without clear criteria from Charmaz (2006) to evaluate conGT, the researcher would need to rely on varying qualitative criteria, which may not be aligned with the researchers philosophical positioning. Despite, a number of criteria contradicting the philosophical positioning of conGT, the varying models presented within this chapter do support the importance of quality in qualitative research.

The questions of trustworthiness, presented above, were utilised within the report writing process by the researcher to reflectively self-critique this qualitative study, recommended by Alversson and Sköldberg (2010). In addition, the questions were visited to justify the trustworthiness of this research study, as a valid concluding thesis as part of the DBA programme. The discussion and critique can be found in the summary and conclusions chapter.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

There is a strong consensus within academic circles that research should be undertaken within the framework of research ethics (Steneck, 2006). This is achieved firstly through the integrity of the researchers. More specifically, “the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles and professional standards, as outlined by professional organizations, research institutions and, when relevant, the government and public.” (Office of Research Integrity (2005). Research on Research Integrity. Available at: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-NR-06-001.html>., as cited in Steneck, 2006)

This research was conducted legally (German and UK law) in accordance with the Ethics Policy of ‘The Sheffield Hallam University’ (http://www.shu.ac.uk/_assets/pdf/research-ethics-policy.pdf). More specifically, all law related to the research including data protection legislation was followed. Ethics being ‘a branch of philosophy which addresses issues of human conduct related to a sense of what is right and what is wrong’. The fundamental principles highlighted with the policy include:

- Beneficence - 'doing positive good'
- Non-Maleficence - 'doing no harm'
- Integrity
- Informed Consent
- Confidentiality/Anonymity

Impartiality

In recognizing these principles, the researcher developed relationships based on trust and confidence and thus not putting anyone in inherent risk at the expense of the overall

research. As the research could be deemed a delicate topic with greater implications for the larger HRM community, confidentiality and anonymity was strongly encouraged and followed for individuals and organizations involved within the research process.

The conclusions in this report are solely the opinion of the researcher, who maintains independence (Anderson, 2014) and confirm that he was not influenced by any third party.

As encouraged by Anderson (2014), all participants were made aware of all audiences and subsequent intentions of the research.

Each participant was contacted personally or by telephone prior to his or her involvement in the study, with any questions being addressed personally. Verbal agreement was received in these meetings and no individual rejected participating. Following agreement to participate, a FAQ document, a consent form and rights to withdraw form were sent to each participant by email prior to the research interview. This was collected and again discussed prior to each research interview starting. An example of the documents can be found in appendix 2.

At no point was the researcher aiming to undertake covert research. In addition, the researcher utilized consent forms, making it clear that participation in the research process is voluntary and participants have a right to withdraw up to three months post interview. No one in this period asked to withdraw.

Interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed, with consent. All data collected was verified with research participants, via playback or email response. Transcripts of the interview and the researchers core findings were sent by email to the participant to review,

with each participant having the opportunity to change their view or to clarify the researchers understanding. No challenges or changes were raised by a participant.

To ensure confidentiality, all participants were met outside of work, independent of their roles and are referred to as numbers within the research report. Only the research supervisor and researcher have knowledge of the participants. Findings within the research process were made available to the research supervisor in accordance with the policy of the university. Data Collection will be conducted within the framework of the Data Protection Act 1988.

Finally, as encouraged by Schurink (2005), the researcher was reflexive during the research process, maintaining ethical practice. Moreover, at no point during the full undertaking of the research was the researcher knowingly or purposefully unethical, unmoral or breached the code of ethics of Sheffield Hallam University.

3.12 Reflective Learning

Within this study of research the researcher has learnt significantly about undertaking research, with the list of learnings surpassing this document. With specific reference to the research philosophy, methodology and research process, the key learnings were:

Without a clear understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of research, one cannot appreciate the full extent of the research... although, Hassard (1991) suggests paradigm heterogeneity, many do not have the time or the ideology to undertake this research. The process of reflecting on ones philosophical position has provided me a backbone for not only how I see research, but also how business in general is undertaken.

Research from conceptualizing and idea, research design and completion of analysis is far more time-consuming than expected.

The key benefit of manual coding for the researcher is the deeper emergence in the data, which the researcher experienced, in contrast to the benefit of NVivo coding, which provided the researcher a platform for structuring the data.

The university processes are not aligned to the process from Charmaz (2014) and gaining agreement via the proposal stage from some quarters for conGT can be a philosophical battle.

The subjective nature of conGT, requires the researcher to diligently document everything throughout the research journey, with the journey itself being immensely rewarding.

3.13 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has firstly presented, the philosophical positioning of the researcher. Ontologically, the researcher is positioned within the paradigm of nominalist and epistemologically relative, in keeping with a social constructivist positioning.

Secondly, this chapter has provided discussion for the differences between GT and conGT and justified through the philosophical debate the reasoning for the researchers preference to follow Charmaz's conGT.

Thirdly, closely aligned with Charmaz (2006) methodology, the research process of sampling, data collection and analysis have been presented, reflexively taken into consideration what the researcher brings to the table (Charmaz, 2014).

Specific description has been provided about the manual and NVivo data analysis processes, with an overview of the emerging codes, memos and categories to be discussed in subsequent chapters. Although this detail provides future researchers with an indication of the research process followed, the researcher believes that it cannot be accurately repeated as cited in Charmaz (2014:13), Clark (2005, 2006, 2007, 2012) stresses, “the research reality arises within a situation and includes what researchers and participants bring to it and do within it thus, relativism characterizes the research endeavour rather than objective, unproblematic prescriptions and procedures. Research acts are not given; they are constructed. Viewing the research as constructed rather than discovered fosters researchers reflexivity about their actions and decisions”

Trustworthiness and criteria for ensuring the quality of this research are presented and specific attention has been given to the Charmaz’s (2006) quality criteria, which will be utilized in chapter 6 to discuss the trustworthiness of this study of conGT research.

Ethics and key learnings from developing and undertaking the selected methodology conclude the discourse held within this chapter.

The intention of this chapter was to provide the reader with three key messages. Firstly, to provide the reader with knowledge of what the researcher brings to the table in terms of experience and philosophical thinking. Secondly, to provide the reader with knowledge of how this study of research was undertaken. Finally, to provide quality criteria as an underpinning for the emergent conGT within the following chapters.

In conclusion, this methodology chapter shows the researchers aligned with conGT. Whether the reader agrees with the researchers philosophical position or trustworthiness of conGT is irrelevant in critiquing this study of research. The only criteria, which should be considered, are this highlighted by Charmaz (2014) herself - Credibility, Originality, Resonance and Usefulness.

4 FINDINGS AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HRM INTEGRATION

This chapter provides an overview of the results taken from the study, including a discussion of the findings for each case group – employees, line management and HR in respect of each theme emerging from the study.

Exploration was undertaken through semi-structured interviews with three employee groups to gain a triangulated perspective of the current and future perspective of Human Resources Integration. The research study resulted in three core themes emerging. The first theme explores whether HR can be disbanded. The second theme explores how HR can be undertaken, if the HR function is disbanded. The final theme explores HRM integration, providing a status quo picture of HRM within the case study, in addition to future development opportunities.

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of the research population, with key data presented to provide the reader with information about the each of the participants and participant groups.

The second part of this chapter presents the findings and perspectives of the three participant groups (employee, line-manager and human resources) collected within this study in relation to whether the HR department could be disbanded.

The third part of this chapter presents the findings and perspectives of the three participant groups (employee, line-manager and human resources) collected within this study in relation to how the HR department could be disbanded.

The final part of this chapter presents the findings and perspectives of the three participant groups (employee, line-manager and human resources) collected within this study in relation to status quo and future orientation of HRM integration within the case study.

4.1 Data Summary

This summary provides an overview of the results taken from the study, including a discussion of the findings for each case group – employees, line management and HR. 36 interviews were completed, with 12 employees, 12 line managers and 12 Human Resources respondents included within the study. The sample of subjects came from a DAX30 German Automotive manufacturer, with an age range from 27-63. All candidates were employed in full-time positions. The following table illustrates the distribution of the years of experience within the organisation, age and gender.

Interview Number	Interview Group	Years of Experience within the company	Age	Gender
E1	Employee	30	46	M
E2	Employee	5	31	F
E3	Employee	12	35	F
E4	Employee	18	49	M
E5	Employee	10	27	F
E6	Employee	4	35	M
E7	Employee	22	50	M
E8	Employee	19	44	M
E9	Employee	12	37	M
E10	Employee	2	36	M
E11	Employee	6	42	M
E12	Employee	10	47	M
HR1	Human Resources	11	27	F
HR2	Human Resources	2	22	F
HR3	Human Resources	21	39	F
HR4	Human Resources	18	47	M

HR5	Human Resources	15	40	F
HR6	Human Resources	20	49	F
HR7	Human Resources	22	51	M
HR8	Human Resources	25	49	F
HR9	Human Resources	40	63	M
HR10	Human Resources	20	39	F
HR11	Human Resources	25	54	F
HR12	Human Resources	10	38	F
L1	Line Manager	30	45	M
L2	Line Manager	9	40	M
L3	Line Manager	4	32	M
L4	Line Manager	30	50	M
L5	Line Manager	2	28	M
L6	Line Manager	14	40	F
L7	Line Manager	45	60	M
L8	Line Manager	20	35	M
L9	Line Manager	15	53	M
L10	Line Manager	25	42	M
L11	Line Manager	17	37	M
L12	Line Manager	10	37	M

TABLE 2 - Gender and AGE distribution

As can be seen from Table 2, a greater population of males were interviewed for the study, specifically within the line management roles. Contrary, more females from the HR department were interviewed as part of the study.

The number of direct reports held by each line manager varied between 2 and 100, with 2 General managers included within the study, 9 managers and 1 team lead.

L1	Line Manager	Manager	10
L2	Line Manager	Manager	30
L3	Line Manager	Manager	12
L4	Line Manager	Manager	23
L5	Line Manager	Manager	2
L6	Line Manager	Manager	12
L7	Line Manager	Manager	14
L8	Line Manager	Team Lead	20
L9	Line Manager	General Manager	25
L10	Line Manager	Manager	12
L11	Line Manager	General Manager	100
L12	Line Manager	Manager	20

TABLE 3 – Number of Direct Reports

The Human Resources population included 2 employees, 7 Managers and 3 Plant Directors.

Interview Number	Management Level	HR Responsibilities
HR1	Employee	HR Shared Services
HR2	Employee	HR Shared Services
HR3	Manager	HR Manager – Strategic HR Development
HR4	Director	HR Plant Director
HR5	Manager	HR Manager – Business Partner
HR6	Manager	HR Manager- Business Partner
HR7	Manager	HR Manager – Business Partner
HR8	Director	HR Plant Director
HR9	Director	HR Plant Director
HR10	Manager	HR Manager – Business Partner
HR11	Manager	HR Manager – HR Development
HR12	Manager	HR Manager- International HR

TABLE 4: Human Resources Job Roles

The business areas, in which the employees and line managers work, can be seen in the following table:

Interview Number	Business Area
E1	International IT Systems
E2	Engineering
E3	Marketing
E4	Company Council
E5	International Markets + Digital Services
E6	Transport/Marketing
E7	Quality Parts
E8	Assembly
E9	Finance/Logistics
E10	Financial Services
E11	Research and Development
E12	Marketing
L1	Engineering
L2	Information Technology
L3	Finance
L4	Engineering
L5	Aftersales
L6	Marketing
L7	Finance
L8	Tool Making
L9	Information Technology
L10	Engineering
L11	Logistics
L12	Information Technology

TABLE 5: Functional Areas

All subjects were willing to discuss their organisation with openness and no subject refrained from answering a question. However, the interviewer was asked on a number of

occasions for confidentiality reassurances before answering the question. In all cases, when confidentiality was confirmed, the subject continued by answering the question. Whether these reassurances were enough and the answering of questions was manipulated to put the organisation and the subject in good light, cannot be judged. Where subjects digressed from the asked questions, it was not discouraged for the subject to continue talking in the event of destroying the subject's willingness to speak about the organisation. As many were talking in a second language, reassurances about their English were given to boost self-esteem. Where necessary, the researcher held the interview in German or rephrased questions in German, depending on the needs of the participant. For the purposes of the research project, any comments made about aspects of the organisation outside of the study's focus have not been included in the report.

As presented in the methodology, line and axial coding was manually completed for each interview undertaken. An example of a manually completed overview can be found in appendix 5. During and following the coding process, 103 memos were written, varying from a few lines to a full page of text, with examples also to be found in appendix 6. Following the utilisation of NVivo to code the data and the comparison of the data with the manual coding, the data set included 2327 line and axial codes. The data was assigned to 88 nodes. The 88 nodes can be seen in the following table:

Can we disband HR – Yes. But...	Governance	Transparency
Betriebsrat	Forced Union Membership	Fairness
Hindrance	Trust	Conflicts with line manager
Employee or Management	Consulting Line Management	Specialist Knowledge
Big Picture	Company Fit	Culture
Heart	Personnel connection to the company	No company focus
Size	Image	Importance of HR
HR initiated ideas	A company without an HR department, still needs HR, but how...	Outsource
Supplier Manager	Decentralised HR	Team assistants
Digitalisation	SAP	Automate via IT system
Artificial Intelligence	What does HR do?	Recruitment
Administration	References	Workforce planning
Training	Payroll	Person based pay
Future development potential	Apprentices	Leadership
Grading	Appraisal	Engagement
Entertainment	Performance management	High performance teams
Data management	Talent management	Health and safety
Succession planning	Expats	Disciplinarians
Pension	Employee driven	Social media platforms
Transfer responsibility	Procurement	Steering committee
Integration – Now and Future	Strategy	CEO recognition
Board level HR representation	Top-down	Cost reduction
Cost minimisation strategy	International	Functional set-up
Divisional	Line management	Consulting line management
Need to be more involved in the business	HR Business Partner	Dave Ulrich
Law knowledge	HR overwork and lack time	Flexibility
Change	Reorganisation	Structure
Specialist knowledge	Middle-man	No contact with HR
Policies and Procedures	Employee Services	Speed
Gender and Sexual Discrimination against men in HR		

TABLE 6: conGT Nodes

To ensure data analysis was coherent with the conGT, a methodical bundling of data was undertaken, which is inexpensive and aids the collection of meaningful data (Silverman, 2007). Through constantly comparing and relating back to the relevant themes and issues, specific clustering took place, adding meaning (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Ultimately, by constantly comparing the codes, in respect of the research question and themes, relationships and patterns emerged from the data, thus highlighting the core themes, as is normal practice within conGT research (Charmaz, 2014; Silverman, 2007). The comparative analysis resulted in 18 core nodes emerging, within three core themes. Each theme is presented below in a table, with associated core node bundles, core node descriptions and example code.

Theme	Core Nodes (Sub Nodes)	Core Node Description	Example Code
Can we disband HR?	Governance (Transparency, Betriebsrat, Fairness, Hindrance, Trust, Conflicts with Line Managers)	HR is expected to maintain a governance role, being an inbetweeners between employees and line management. The function should ensure transparency and fairness. Consistency of practice can be deemed hindering.	"The HR department should in my view control that all employees in one company have the same opportunities like training, salary, benefits. So that we can keep our employees. I wouldn't be happy in a company if I would find out that my colleague has different opportunities to me and that's an important part in the HR role for me, to control all this." (HR1)
	Consulting Line Management (Specialist Knowledge)	The HR function is required to consult line management in activities, which line managers do not need to undertake everyday.	"I personally would prefer that the HR as a consulting function, as a supporting function should be strengthened rather than coming away with a checklist" (L12)
	Big Picture (Company Fit, Culture, Heart, No Company Focus,)	The HR function is expected to hold a big picture view, ensuring in different practices that company fit and culture are ensured.	"The personal contact to their people in the company. So, for the payment I don't need personal contact in the company but when I have problems with my contract or I am pregnant, I would like to have a person where I can go and with people I can talk in confidence" (HR1)
	Size	The size of the organisation is perceived as a reason to avoid closing the department.	"A really, really small company that starts to need an HR officer. Maybe there are companies who do all those HR stuff for those small companies. But I think that as the company grows they would want to have somebody on the inside I guess" (HR5)
	Image	Closing the HR department could result in image issues for the organisation occurring	"I think (HR is needed) for the standing out for the company, image." (HR1)
	Importance of HR	HR is perceived as important	"In my opinion the HR department is a very important department" (E1)
	HR initiated ideas	The HR department is a hub of innovative ideas	"I reflect on any HR topic, any HR topic regularly with all the inner ones. So, if there is an upcoming topic in the market or in the scene like whatever, digitisation or whatever, I start to begin a discussion in the regular meetings" (HR4)

TABLE 7: Core theme 'Can we disband HR?', Core Nodes bundle and description

Theme	Core Nodes (Sub Nodes)	Core Node Description	Example Code
A Company without an HR department, stills needs HR, but how...	Structure	HR could be restructured so that a centralised HR function is no longer required	"The superior, the line managers could do all the strategic things together with the CEO... use the legal department" (E3)
	Outsource (Supplier Manager)	All HR activities could be outsourced to external partners	"I think it would be difficult because I think there would still be a lot of administration work that somebody has to do, and, umm, and that needs to be outsourced then" (E12)
	Decentralised HR (Employee Driven / Transfer responsibility / Steering committee)	All HR activities could be decentralised to line management, employees or steering committees	"I would delegate everything regarding recruitment back to the business and core divisions." (E4)
	Digitalisation (SAP, Automate via IT System, Artificial Intelligence)	Digitalisation could automate processes, thus freeing up resources within the HR function	"At the moment we are start with the new IT system so to get a higher level, to get quicker" (HR1)
	What does HR do? (Recruitment, Administration, Workforce Planning, Training, Payroll, Future Development Potential, Grading, Appraisal, Engagement, Performance Management, Data Management, Talent Management, Health and Safety, Succession Planning, Expats, Discipline, Pension)	A general multi-perspective of what HR does through the eyes of employees, line managers and HR perspectives.	"Okay. So recruiting people. Training people. Changing positions. And giving them their contracts" (E7)

TABLE 8: Core theme 'A Company without an HR department, stills needs HR, but how...', Core Nodes bundle and description

Theme	Core Nodes (Sub Nodes)	Core Node Description	Example Code
Integration – Now and Future	Strategy (CEO Recognition, Board Level HR Representation, Top-Down, Cost reduction, International, Functional Set-up, Divisional)	The status quo and future orientation of Integration in relation to organisation strategy.	"Umm, I believe so, but I'm not one hundred per cent sure. I'm not aware, for example, of what it is called. But imp pretty sure that they have one." (E10)
	Line Management (Consulting Line Management, Middle-man)	The status quo and future orientation of Integration in relation to devolving HR activities to line management and the role of HR as a middleman.	"Yearh, of course, yeah. I mean they are the first point of contact for any kind of employee queries – we (Business Partners) are not. We are here to support the managers, really. We are not here to support the employees." (HR10)
	Policies and Procedures (Employee Services, Speed, Gender and Sexual Discrimination against men in HR)	The status quo and future orientation of Integration in relation to organisation policy and procedures.	"it has to be some process that is the same all over the company" (E12)

TABLE 9: Core theme 'Integration – Now and Future', Core Nodes bundle and description

The three main themes “Can we disband HR?”, “A Company without an HR department, still needs HR, but how...” and “Integration – Now and Future” emerged in relation to the original research questions and are presented in the remainder of this chapter.

Each theme will be broken down into four sections. Firstly, the theme will be discussed in relation of the employee perspective, focusing on the data collected from the employees within the study. Secondly, the perspective of line managers will be discussed, before the perspective of the HR respondents is presented. Each theme will then be concluded with a summary of the data, comparing the three perspectives in keeping with the comparative analysis approach (Silverman, 2007, Charmaz 2014).

The first part of this chapter has provided an overview of the research population, with key data presented to provide the reader with information about each of the participants and participant groups. The following three sub chapters will discuss the core findings focused on the three case groups – employees, line management and Human Resources before revisiting the core themes emerging from the data. The data will be presented through quotes and references from the respondents. To further ensure confidentiality of the participants in the study, specific job titles will not be presented. In general, when referencing responses, the respondents interview number will be utilized e.g. (E4, L12, HR4). When a specific quote is referenced from a respondent, the respondent will be referenced accordingly. The employees will be referred to via their interview number and business area e.g. (E1, International IT Systems). The Line Management respondents will be referred to via their interview number, management level and business area e.g. (L6, Manager - Marketing). The Human Resources respondents will be referred to via their interview number, management level and business area e.g. (HR 10, HR Manager – Business Partner).

4.2 Can we disband HR?

4.2.1 Can we disband HR? The Employee Perspective

Evidence from employees indicated that the HR department could not be disbanded. E2 quoted “someone needs to do the work so why bother closing it?” and E6 said “it could, but”, effectively supporting the retention of the department.

The main responsibilities of the HR department, identified by the employee respondents, included ‘Governance’, Training and Development’, ‘Recruitment’ and ‘Data Maintenance’. In addition, evidence for the department being in control of ‘payroll’, the ‘establishment of policies’, ‘dealing with resignations’ and ‘appraisals’.

The primary reason for not disbanding HR, according to the employee respondents, was that HR is a neutral partner and employee advocate, with E2 stating that HR have the “employees back” (E2) and E6 believing HR are “like Switzerland”, in essence employee advocates and neutral in their positioning. E3 felt all ‘people decisions’ were made by the HR function, rather than line management. Although, the employees believed HR’s role was to act as a middleman ensuring consistency fairness between employees and line management. In spite of this role, a number of respondents questioned the integrity of HR. An example statement:

“So, that they are neutral, yeah thanks. At least that’s what they should be. But the question is always much trust can the employee actually laid in the line, in the hands of HR. Because you never really know if they, they stay neutral or they just, they always act the company’s interest.” (E6, Transport/Marketing)

E11 also questioned the neutrality of the HR function and stated that the “firm council is on your side, and HR department is on the other side”. Despite the company council having a mandate to support employees, an employee may find it difficult to raise a grievance because by approaching the company council representative, the grievance becomes escalated and HR are often unwilling to take action against the manager (E4), further supporting a management agenda for the HR function.

E8 believed that chaos would be the result of disbanding HR suggesting the company “would be like a wild west”, and E3 believing that the function was necessary to have an overview of company structure. The size of the organization was a predetermining factor in retaining the HR function (E2). E4 believed that standardization was inevitable because the use of SAP was standardizing the processes, rather than SAP being adapted for previously thought through processes. E4 highlighted that agreement with the company council often utilized the ‘SAP’ argument and because of the company council agreement to adapt policies, limited flexibility was apparent. E7 stated that “HR is like the kitchen, the kitchen sometimes works against the company. Sorry that is unfair on the kitchen”, highlighting the challenge that the organization often has in finding flexibility within a rigid framework of company policy. E5 highlighted that employees and management are expecting increased flexibility and speed, although the standardized and agreed processes can counteract these wishes.

The role of HR within the recruitment process, as being justification for retaining HR, was highlighted by the employee respondents. There was hope that the people in the HR department have expert knowledge to support the recruitment process, with a fundamental responsibility of the department to ensure “getting the right people in the right jobs” (E7), which E10 believed would not occur without the HR department stating “you’re losing

the... Your most valuable assets because you don't get the right people any more". In addition to finding the right people, the HR department was expected to be the controller in salary negotiations.

Data maintenance was highlighted, with E12 stating, "the work needs to be done whether it is by this department or another so why bother restructuring". In combination with maintenance, checking data surrounding sickness and holiday entitlement was specified, as well as the creation of employee references. Further exploration highlighted that the shared service centre is responsible for managing these activities (HR4, HR10).

The importance of the department undertaking training and development activities was identified, more specifically a number of employees highlighted the need of the department to manage the apprentices (E1), in keeping with the German system (Festing, 2012).

Finally, disbanding the department could be perceived negatively by external stakeholders, with E4 stating "we cannot on the one hand suggest that people are most important assets if we'd then go about closing the HR function."

In defence of the HR department, according to the employees involved in the study, HR is required to create a positive image, govern the organization, support recruitment, support training and development; provide administration services and maintain data.

4.2.2 Can we disband HR? The Line Manager Perspective

Similar to the employee respondents, line managers respondents questioned the possibility of disbanding the HR function. L9 suggested that it could be disbanded but "you

need a kind of guidance” and this would need to be provided from somewhere else so why not the HR function? L4 argued that it “would be a difficult task”, L12 believed the concept “extreme” and L8 responded, “no chance, I think that is a big mistake”.

The position held by L9 that line management require **guidance** was further explored and was clearly recognized as the primary role and justification for the retention of the Human Resources Department. L1 argued that all line managers do not need to be HR experts and when support is needed surrounding a specific, which is not a daily occurrence, support is required. L3 reiterated the need for line management support for questions, in particular to surrounding recruitment, organizational changes, diciplinaries, company policies (L2, L3, L6, L9, L11) and legal questions (L1, L2, L5, L9). L1 suggested training all line managers in everything would be a waste of resources. Indirectly, L2 argued HR are useful because one can push the blame and maintain positive relationships with team members, utilizing the phrase “sorry HR says no” and L12 argued HR provides a buffer between line management and employees.

In addition, **governance** was expected. Primarily, to ensure consistency across the business, aligning different views. Expectations included the HR function having an overview of the organization, providing cross-departmental advice, manage suppliers and several managers expected the HR department to be the supervisory function of line-management, ensuring that line management are doing what they should be doing. L5 stated that HR is required to avoid small dictators appearing within the line management structure.

When asked what does HR do, in addition to guidance and governance, additional roles identified included Workforce and Succession Planning, Training and Development,

Payroll, Organizational structure and Recruitment. Administration and data maintenance was also suggested.

Additional reasons for maintaining the function included, “it is impossible to not do HR” (L6) and “the [administrative] work still needs to be done” (L4), with an expectation that administration would be dumped on line managers. An expectation of the HR department to ensure training and development was undertaken, with L8 identifying HR as the lobbying voice behind the training budget. L9 indicated that HR is needed to conceptualize HR topics and L11 indicated HR is needed to identify business priorities and “increase the bandwidth of knowledge held by management”.

The size of the organization was a reason to maintain the HR function. Finally, two arguments for a disbandment never occurring, included the notion that “HR are a powerful bunch of people” (L10) and “requirements of cultural shift and movement away from experts in particular fields” (L1) would be required in order to see the disbandment of the HR function.

4.2.3 Can we disband HR? The HR Perspective

Employees and Line manager respondents indicated their support for the Human Resources Department and prior to the research; the researcher would have assumed HR personnel would have done the same. Nevertheless, the assumption that HR would defend HR was not clear-cut, with mixed views being expressed. The HR respondents indicated that the department could be theoretically disbanded with HR7 stating “the basics [administration] you cannot get rid of”, but questions marks were raised whether this course of direction would be successful. For example, HR3 asked “who makes the, the

HR work?”, HR5 “so what do they do with HR?”, HR4 said “I don't like the idea”, and HR12 “yes I think so but... if it is a really big global organization, it makes sense to have a core team”.

The **size of the organisation** being a reason to retain the HR department was again explored. HR7 felt there was a “critical mass” when it became more effective to have a core function. HR12, agreed with this perspective suggesting even if the department was disbanded, a core team would be required for efficiency reasons. For example, if HR activities were outsourced, an HR account manager would be required to select “which HR tools, for example, to buy, on which provider to choose” HR, an argument held by a number of HR respondents. In addition, HR4 argued that if activities needed to be centralized for efficiency reasons through economies of scale, than why not the HR department? HR5 believed costs would increase without a central HR function and HR9 stated that they would have “great doubt that you would end up any better off”. Although when questioning the respondents about cost effectiveness, the majority of participants were not clear whether alternative solutions e.g. outsourcing would be more appropriate. HR1 argued against outsourcing “because HR is simply a part of the company” and that is how we do things around here.

Governance was again identified as a reason to avoid disbandment. HR1 believed that a role of the HR function was to ensure rules were consistently maintained, believing people would come when they wanted, if HR was not present. Doubt that line management would take over this responsibility spread to recruitment, with HR2 and HR4 believing line management do not have the specialized knowledge required and “candidates must be selected by HR” (HR2). Concerns were expressed that “a lot of things would not get done” (HR2), as line management do not have the time (HR2, HR3, HR8,

HR9, HR12) and in particular will not want to do the administration work. HR1 also believed inconsistencies across the organization would appear with “every manager do different things for his own department”. Concerns were also raised about inconsistencies appearing. Even HR12, who believed HR could be disbanded, raised concern of inconsistencies. HR9 stated that HR needs a “policeman mentality” and “when things are done, they are done consistently” and without an HR function there was a “danger that of course those are then done differently”. To conclude, HR6 stated that HR needed to govern bad managers in their actions (e.g. recruiting, inducting, disciplining and appraising) and the support for line managers was a necessity in curtailing this risk.

Support for line management was indicated as a reason to maintain the function, with HR7 and HR8 specifically stating that line management need a business partner and “consultancy role”. HR10 indicated the importance of sharing knowledge and a number of HR respondents agreed the business partner was required to coach, keep line-management up-to-date. HR11 believed HR needed to improve line management.

The HR department was also recognized as a **knowledge centre**, with concerns being raised about the loss of knowledge, if the department was disbanded. HR4 said, “ideas develop over time [but] without core function, how do we keep this knowledge” and argued that new knowledge was created through the discourse between line management and human resources. HR7 said the department is “the hub of data” (HR7), and the goal of the department is to have “one integrated SAP-based system” (HR9), with the belief that this makes things easier (HR2). HR11 argued HR is required to synchronize the worldwide HR system. HR10 stated, “the systems are more world orientated in consensus” and HR9 reconfirmed “we have one [leadership] bonus system world-wide”.

HR2 proposed HR are lobbyists of learning and said, “no one would be interesting to have a training”. Further exploration supported the notion that HR is **lobbyists** for people initiatives and learning. Additionally, respondents saw themselves as **sparring partners** for line management. Although HR8 saw HR as an employee advocate, the majority of participants clearly saw their role supporting management. HR7 said, “the focus is not so much any more on the employees” and HR 10 stating “I’m serving the management and the management team”. HR5 stated despite wanting to create a “welcoming environment for international employees” and “to make a fairer assessment”, our number one priority is “the support of the leads in their role as a leader”.

Despite a management focus, an emotional presence was apparent, with HR being seen as the “personal contact to the people in the company” (HR1). HR5 suggested, disbandment “maybe you lose the, the heart” and the “kind of belonging to the company” and HR7 “it is like cutting out sometimes the heart”. Further investigation suggested several HR managers saw the department being responsible for culture creation (HR9) and ensuring “cultural fit” (HR10). HR8 stated in order to know the “**DNA** of the business... you have to touch it”. HR5 believed overly outsourcing the department would lose the DNA of the business, with over “dependency on third parties” and “a lot of companies which are not in the company”.

Disbandment could result in the **lack of synergy** across the organization was again highlighted. HR10 said HR “need to see [the] whole business”. HR respondents expressed concern about the **loss of HR strategy**; in particular HR4 believed there would be a loss of differentiation from the market, supported by HR7, who stated “you don’t have an advantage in any other things. Nothing which is typical for your company and which may be is an advantage”. In addition, HR4 and HR8 expressed the requirement to think

strategically about future workforce planning and the shortness of talent available within the market. Although, strategy was seen as a factor, no HR respondent had knowledge of the companies HR strategy, discussed later in this chapter.

In summary, the disbandment of the HR function was received indifferently, with two main views, 'no' and a number said 'yes, but'. Arguments for the **efficiency via economies of scale** as the company had reached "critical mass" (HR7). In addition, the majority of HR respondents were concerned about the **loss of knowledge**, held by the HR function. Defence of avoiding disbandment included **Governance, Synergy, DNA, Lobbying and Support for Line Managers, loss of a sparring partner and HR strategy**.

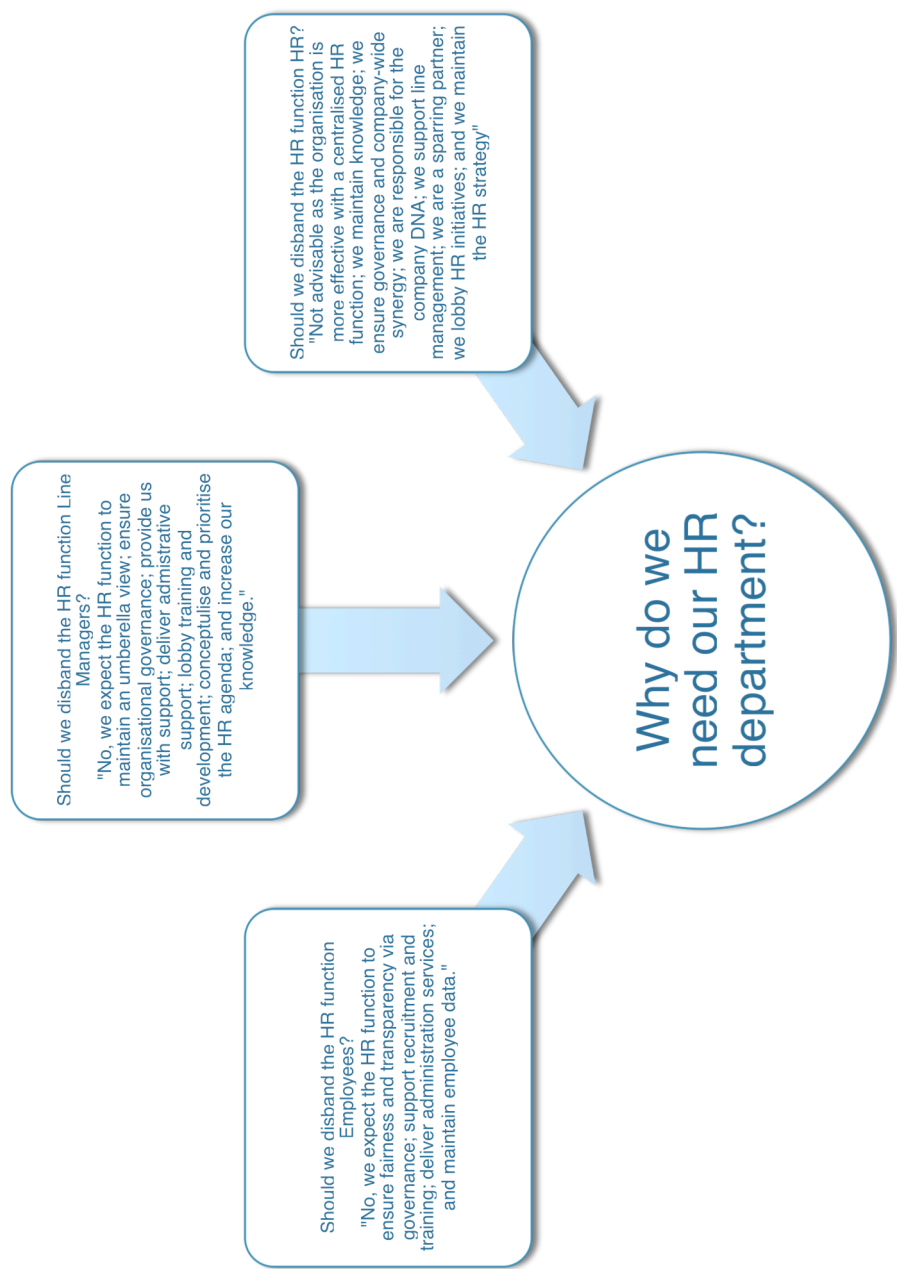
4.2.4 Combining the perspectives – Can we disband HR?

The springboard for this exploration was the critical perspective of HR, which has resulted in some organizations saying "No" to Human Resources. As reported by Weber and Feintzeig (2014), LRN Corp. chose to disband its Human Resources department in order to force people issues into the business. Further examples indicated that this is not a one-time occurrence as highlighted by Semler (2003) and Welbourne (2012), who demonstrate the possibility of disbanding the HR function and integrating Human Resources into the organization. Cooper (2001) suggests via devolution of responsibility to line managers, HR could be disbanded. A notion support by John (1998:23) who adopted the position that "HR should be torn apart, outsourced and downsized". Fischer (2016:50) relights this field of enquiry by suggesting that we should "kill HR". This research study explored the topic by asking 12 employees, 12 line managers and 12 HR representatives, whether HR should be disbanded.

Contradictory, to the views expressed by the researchers above, both employees and line managers unanimously argued for the retention of the HR function within the case study organization, albeit with differing requirements. HR surprisingly was the only respondent group to suggest that it could be done, however with a significant 'BUT'.

In conclusion, an overview of the opinions expressed within the case study, justifying the presence of the HR function within the case study has been depicted in the 'HR Function Justification Model' model presented on the following page.

4.2.5 Case Study: HR Function Justification Model



4.3 A Company without an HR department, still needs HR, but how?

4.3.1 A Company without an HR department, still needs HR, but how? – The Employee perspective

In spite of employee respondents arguing that HR should not be disbanded, each respondent group was asked hypothetically how they would disband the organization, if a decision were undertaken to force this directive. This chapter considers the perspective put forward by the employee participants.

Devolving responsibility to line management was suggested by employee respondents, in addition to devolving administrative responsibilities from HR to functional departments. In particular, line managers could undertake hiring and pay negotiations responsibility (E1) as well as, workforce planning (E4). Although, E10 highlighted that this option would require additional administrative support for each function and questioned whether decentralizing would be more effective, especially as the service centre offered an economies of scale benefit. An alternative approach in maintaining responsibility within the organization included the suggestion that HR responsibilities be **transferred to another central department**. For example, E9 suggest the legal department could take sole responsibility for employment law and E3 added to the ideas proposed by E9, suggesting finance could take on responsibility for pay role.

Outsourcing was deemed a viable solution. Outsourcing of recruitment was suggested, in addition to pay and administrative tasks, although concerns about the interface with the company council were raised.

“I believe what really.... so, i have noticed two points. the question is: do i outsource HR or not? If i do outsource HR, the HR management integration is extremely important in terms of collaboration with the works council. If HR stays they usually have an interface. But in general, the collaboration with the works council shouldn't be underestimated.” (E4, Company Council)

Alternative options for recruitment included participants suggesting **employee wide recruitment drives** via recruitment platforms, such as LinkedIn and Xing taking the place of a central department. Employee driven responsibility was also suggested as an option for employee training and development. A number of participants also offered the option of increasing the responsibility for the **company council**, especially for internal conflict resolution. E1 suggested that the company council could become an arbitration service and E6 suggested the employee advocate aspect of Human Resources could be expected from the Company Council. Albeit, E4 argued that changing the role of the company counsel and expecting the company council to take on more responsibility, would require a cultural shift. Firstly, the company council would need to be seen as a trusted partner, which would take a paradigm shift, as it is currently conducted as a political front between two parties - employees and management, often with the HR role being that attuned to a ombudsman ensuring that law and processual agreements have been followed (E4). E4 also stated that political trade-offs regarding recruitment and lay-offs was common and the role of the company council did not always favour the employee. E1 suggested with the disbandment of HR, the organization could consider the implementation of a career counsellor - someone who could provide guidance about career development, training and development opportunities and also recommend guidance in difficult situations. Evidence emerged that employees expected the contact point for career training and development, in addition to their manager.

Additionally, the continued **digitalization** and automising of HR processes, as a means of disbanding the function was identified. E3 suggested prior to digitalizing tasks, consider which processes could be **eliminated** e.g. asking for references. E5 believed Artificial Intelligence could also take a greater role in the future.

The significance of the CEO and senior management was explored. E3 suggested that the CEO and senior managers would need to take more responsibility for the HR strategy, supported by E12, who believed disbandment would leave responsibility for HR initiatives and governance of HR with senior management and the CEO, and question marks would be raised whether all necessary activities would in fact get done.

4.3.2 A Company without an HR department, still needs HR, but how? – The Line Manager Perspective

In spite of line management respondents arguing that HR should not be disbanded, hypothetically line managers agreed, it could. Line management participants were asked how they would disband the organization, if this direction were undertaken.

Line managers suggested activities would be **decentralized to line managers**; however being handed responsibility would be a burden. Significant concerns were raised about governance issues, as decentralizing HR would require “more integration between group leaders and department managers” (L10) and would lead to “no absolute strategy for all of it” (L12). L5 suggested this option would require the organization empowering line managers, specific objectives being established for line managers to undertake these practices (L12) and management structures would need to be involved in conflict

resolution (L3, L10). L2 believed recruitment, succession planning and talent management could be devolved to line management, and again at the expense of an overview and governance function ensuring line managers were following protocol. It was believed that line management would become accountable for the development of people (L4, L11, L12). Recognition that there would be administrative activities, but rather than being integrated into line managers workload, this administrative work would need to be covered by other parties within the functional areas. In addition, **handing responsibility to another department**, for example moving legal issues to the legal department (L3) or finding training providers to purchasing (L11). Alternatively, disbandment of the functional structure, would result in HR personnel being divisionally structured across the business.

Digitalization of HR process via IT was explored, with the suggestion that data protection could become the responsibility of the IT function (L4). L12 responded to the idea of digitalization with “even more automation oh dear... dealing with people shouldn't be automated”. Further inquiry enforced the requirement for a personal contact within the HR function whom could provide managerial support.

The **company council** taking a supportive role in mediating conflicts between management and employees was identified. Although L8 reiterated this option would be unlikely, because the company council is like ‘two fronts’ with a “game is played” between line management and the company council, reiterating the requirement of the Human Resources function to favour the side of line management.

Outsourcing activities was identified as the most viable solution, with positive favour by line managers for this disbandment approach, specifically highlighting payroll and administrative activities. The researcher, in reflection, was surprised at how little

strategic relevance was placed on pay systems within the organization. Outsourcing administration was a preferred solution to devolving responsibility to line management. Line managers suggested outsourcing all activities where there were clear “black and white rules” (L9) or where services could be purchased as a “pay-as-you-go” service (L11). Suggestions were even made for outsourcing HR strategy to business partners such as Roland Berger and McKinsey, although reluctantly. L7 suggested a combination of outsourcing and devolvement to line managers, albeit line management would require a “direct line” to the suppliers without ideal quality checks.

Exploration of disbandment highlighted Line managers would be in favour of outsourcing activities rather than integrating the activities into line manager activities. The disbandment could be undertaken, according to the entire line manager respondents, by decentralizing, handing responsibilities to another department, changing the role of the company council, structuring the function divisionally, digitalizing and outsourcing. Although, significant concerns were expressed by line managers that the umbrella view and governance of HR would be compromised.

4.3.3 A Company without an HR department, still needs HR, but how? – The Human Resources Perspective

HR respondents suggested that the HR department could hypothetically be disbanded. All HR respondents were asked how they would disband the organization, if this direction were undertaken.

The core components of disbandment identified **outsourcing** and **decentralizing** responsibilities to functional and line-management level. Legal advice, training and recruitment were areas, which could be outsourced. HR7 identified the latter could be done in conjunction with line managers. Surprisingly, several respondents suggested payroll could be easily outsourced. HR7 specially said “it's easy to outsource payroll” and HR12 “I do not have the impression it is seen as a strategic element”. Outsourcing would be required, as the function and line management would not have time to undertake all required activities. HR6 suggested becoming leaner and “cancel variable bonuses” and “don't do variable pay”, advocated by Pink (2009) in creative roles.

The concept of decentralizing highlighted two streams of thought - **decentralizing HR activities to line management** and **decentralizing HR activities to functional areas**. HR1 believed with administrative support, each remaining business function could manage their own HR, although time was perceived an issue, along with potential chaos (HR2, HR11), with differing functions potentially undertaking differing activities. Alternatively, suggestions were made for **divisionalising HR** and structuring HR within each business function (HR9, HR10), although HR7 criticized this approach, sponsoring a functional approach. Similarly, responsibilities of the HR department could be **handed to another department**. E.g. IT becomes responsible for IT processes, Legal department covers employment law. HR5 argued an alternative central department; meetings between departments or a “guideline for everything” would be necessary to ensure synergy. **Employees** and **company council** could take on additional responsibility. HR1 said the “company council could be the head from all the social HR work”, HR7 said employees could be responsible for their own data and “employees recruit employees” (HR3).

Conversely, HR9 stated that “outsourced or decentralization loses the control of influence HR has to pull strings”.

Decentralizing activities to line management also raised time and consistency issues. HR respondents suggested administrative activities, recruiting, employee engagement, training, along with conflict resolution with the support of the management could be decentralized to line-management. HR5 suggested an increase in interline-management communication as a result of decentralizing activities. HR10 suggested the company could be open to legal complications, if the correct support network was not available for line managers and HR9, informed the researcher that line management “shouldn't need to have a lot of HR input on a daily basis”, that line management only contact HR when they “have questions” and currently HR is a partnership between the HR department and Line Management.

Finally, the HR respondents highlighted the **digitalization of HR** with all letters and contracts now being done via SAP (HR10). HR4 highlighted that “Try to digitize nearly everywhere I can”. HR2 and HR12 said that references were automated, again raising the issue why they are done at all. Increased digitalization of HR services was recognized as important for the department, especially as the company is moving towards one SAP based system.

In summary, the main disbandment options included outsourcing, decentralization and digitalisation. The capabilities of line management, consistency of practice, competence and time were reasons for outsourcing to be marginally preferred against the alternative options. Surprisingly, the outsourcing of payroll seemed a viable activity and was not considered a strategic aspect of HR.

Through exploring the disbandment of HR with HR personnel, arguments for maintaining the department within the case study included **size of the organization, loss of knowledge, Governance, Synergy, DNA, Lobbying, Support for Line Managers, Business sparring partner and focus on HR strategy.**

4.3.4 Combining the perspectives - A Company without an HR department, still needs HR, but how?

4.3.4.1 Structure

Armstrong (2017) argues that there are no absolute rules to organizing the HR function, supported by emergent evidence within this study, which suggests that the HR function could be disbanded. Specifically, HR activities could be outsourced, digitalized and devolved to line management, disbanding the HR function.

Nevertheless, Armstrong (2017) does suggest that there are guidelines on how the function should be structured. Firstly, the head of the function should report to the chief executive and should be on the board. Secondly, in a geographical structured organization, each operational unit should be responsible for their own HR management, within the framework of a clear strategy and HR policy. Evidence emerged that the HR plant directors had some autonomy, however were unaware of the overall strategy (HR4). And finally, Armstrong (2017) recommends the utilization of shared services, which Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) argue in the future needs to be considered 'professional services'

and be more inclusive of client needs. A shared service centre is utilized by the case study organisation.

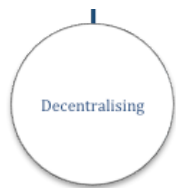
The most significant aspect of HR structure is that it needs to align with the company strategy and fit the needs of the business (Ajagbe et al. 2016; Long et al. 2013b, Kavale 2012, Armstrong, 2017). Exploration of how the HR function structures itself without a clear strategy resulted in vague responses stating that the department is structured based on the Ulrich Model, rather than being aligned to a specific HR strategy (HR8).



Bartlett and Goshal (1993) highlight four distinct models of organization: Decentralized federation; Coordinated federation; Centralized hub; and Transnational. Evidence emerging from the case study suggests that HR

is focused on centralization, in line with a cultural minimization strategy (Hammer et al. (2003). For example, the organisation utilises a worldwide performance management system and is working towards the utilization of SAP as the standalone HR system (HR10). Brewster (2004) argues cost; quality and productivity pressure and benchmarking best practice can lead to this approach being adopted. Nevertheless, organizations need to find a balance between consistency and adaptability (Perkins and Hendry, 1999; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1991). Ulrich (1998) advocates the fundamental starting block is to distinguish between core and non-core activities, with the 'professional services' taking shape from the alignment with strategy and greater consideration of client needs (Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015). The lack of HRM strategy transparency within the case study did not allow the researcher to consider the organisations current for future 'professional services', although this could be done once a clear strategy is communicated throughout the organisation.

4.3.4.2 Decentralisation



An alternative option to a centralized HR included the decentralizing of activities to line management. In addition, decentralization to employees and company councils was also suggested. Albeit, no significant research and literature exploring the possibility of delegating activities to both employees and the company council could be found.

All respondent groups indicated the devolvement of HR activities to line management as an option for disbanding the HR function, supported with significant literature that devolving activities to line management is required for the integration of HRM (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; 2002; Hope-Bailey et al., 1997; Truss et al., 1997; Sisson and Storey, 2000). Although, question marks were raised whether decentralising would be more effective, especially as the role of HR was often unclear. Moreover, evidence emerged in keeping with Gerpott (2015) that by decentralizing activities, tensions would emerge.

HR respondents spoke openly about decentralizing activities to line managers, although line managers stated being handed responsibility would be a burden and question marks were raised why they should do HR's job. Furthermore, arguments by all respondent groups emerged that time and consistency issues would appear. Similarly, activities such as recruitment, succession planning and talent management could be devolved to line management, but at the expense of a strategic overview.

Significant concerns were raised about the loss of HR control and governance from all respondent groups. Interestingly, all respondent groups including line managers raised concern about line managers not being governed, with the organisation potentially being

open to legal complications if the correct support for line management was not available. Questions were raised whether the organisation really wanted to empower line managers to truly manage or whether the control was in place to ensure the organisation's culture was upheld, reducing risk via clear processes.

Although, evidence emerged that decentralizing activities to line management had already taken place and could be utilized in the future, line management support would nonetheless be mandatory, especially for activities that are a non-daily occurrence.

In conclusion, there are benefits and disadvantages of devolving activities to line management (Renwick, 2003). Decentralizing to line management was proposed as an alternative to a centralized HR department, albeit with concerns about governance and a lack of strategic overview. In order to enhance vertical HRM integration (Budhwar, 1998; Sheehan, 2015), strategically aligned devolvment of activities to line managers is recommended, although without a clear HRM strategy, which activities need to be devolved or centralized cannot be considered within this study.

4.3.4.3 Outsourcing



Whilst exploring how the HR department could be disbanded, outsourcing of HR activities was also suggested by employees, line managers and human resources respondents. In reflection, this is unsurprising as there is an increasing trend of HR activities being outsourced (Lever, 1997; Klaas et al., 1999; Cooke et al., 2006) with Human Resources Outsourcing (HRO) experiencing substantial growth (Cooke and Budhwar, 2009; Lawler and Boudreau, 2009). Ruth et al. (2015) claim that HRO is characterizing the manner in which companies operate, with Adler (2003:53)

stating that HRO is “the key trend shaping the future of HR”. The primary reason for this growth is HRO is considered to be a source of competitive advantage (Ulrich and Brockbank, 2009). The shift from an internally focused HR function, to one of an outward focus, is being facilitated by the benefit promises (Martin et al., 2008).

A number of theories support the introduction of HRO in organisations, including transaction cost economics (TCE), the resource-based view (RBV), micro economics, industrial organisation, agency theory, real options theory and IT (Mol, 2007: 36), although research tends to focus on TCE and RBV approaches as these models encourage outsourcing (Adler, 2003; Alewell et al., 2009; Cooke et al., 2005; Galanaki et al., 2008; Klaas et al., 2001; Sim, 2012).

TCE theory is concerned with whether an organisation should purchase or produce its products or services (Alewell et al., 2009; Williamson, 2007). Cost reductions and measurable results are typically the key motivator for following this approach (Bharadwaj and Saxena, 2010; Lawler et al. 2004). Although, Williamson (2007) argues that knowledge of the organisation’s surrounding and requirements is a greater indicator of HRO success, with Tremblay et al. (2008) and Cappelli (2011) arguing that knowledge of value creation, rather than cost needs to be understood. More significantly, as highlighted by Klaas et al. (1999), should a service provider not acquire the internal knowledge, quality of service can reduce.

The RBV model justifies outsourcing, as focusing contributions of internal activities on competitive activities can gain advantage (Galanaki et al., 2008). In essence, the option of outsourcing provides the organisation with the option of focusing resources on core competencies (e.g. Barney, 1991; Glaister, 2014). Decisions whether to outsource can be made on whether activities are strategically aligned, with non-strategic activities being performed externally (Ruth et al., 2015) and core activities being undertaken internally

(Barney, 1991; Lilly et al., 2005; Ulrich, 1996; Ulrich and Brockbank, 2009).

The contextual environment for both TCE and RBV is relevant, with individual actors playing an important role in decision-making (Kroon and Paauwe, 2013). In addition, the contextual environment changes over time, thus activities, which are positively adding value today, may be inappropriate in the future (Conklin, 2005; Cooke et al., 2005; Galanaki et al., 2008). Alewell et al. (2009) found that decisions are often related to organizational changes such as restructuring decisions, movements of innovations, authority changes, and the introduction of new personnel policies. Hern and Burke (2007) reiterate this position stating that the HR's competitive advantage can be reduced in the long-term by the changing environment and advocates regular reviews, supported in further readings (Conklin, 2005; Cooke et al., 2005; Galanaki et al., 2008).

Both these models encourage efficiency, although the core decision to outsource is “largely determined by the need and strategic fit to outsource” (Sim, 2012: 710), with HR bolstering the organisation's competitiveness (Conklin, 2005; Glaister, 2014), freeing up resources from transactional activities. Furthermore, Armstrong (2017) highlights that there are three main reasons for an organization to consider outsourcing. Firstly, services can be provided faster and cheaper than in-house solutions (Kamath, 2007; Oza and Hill, 2007; Edgell, Meister and Stamp, 2008; Potkány, 2008; Hansen, 2009) as services can be provided faster or cheaper than in-house solutions. Concentration of HR effort, as HR employees can then work on core value adding activities, rather than administrative tasks (Taylor 2007; Thompson, Strickland and Gamble, 2005; Kosnik, Ji and Hoover, 2006), reduce development costs (Cooper, 2007; Potkány, 2008; Marquez, 2007a) and reduce workload (Hansen, 2009). Finally, the HR function can gain expertise, especially when knowledge is limited in-house (Heywood, 2001; Lohr 2007; Maidment, 2003). More specifically, outsourcing to obtain new technology being a significant factor in deciding to outsource (Adler, 2003; Khanna and New, 2005). Additionally, Miller (2006) highlights the

boosting of revenues, profits and overall business outcomes, in conjunction to the benefit simplified financial forecasting (Shelgren, 2004). Finally, outsourcing activities can promote flexibility as professional services may be more dynamic than in-house built solutions (Makenna and Walker, 2008; Young S., 2007).

There is common opinion that HR outsourcing leads to improvements in quality and these perceived returns are the driver for outsourcing (Bharadwaj and Saxena, 2010; Pereira and Anderson, 2012; Galanaki et al., 2008). Motivators to outsource are supported by the TCE and RBV model, with reasons to outsource being highlighted above. Nevertheless, Vernon et al., (2000) claim that decisions to outsource can be irrational, with decisions retrospectively being reversed.

Furthermore, outsourcing can also create other problems (Armstrong, 2017). More specifically, outsourcing can have negative implication on employees' perspectives and attitudes, especially if there are potential unemployment issues (Kessler et al. 1999; Kakabadse and Kakabads, 2000; Leverett et al. 2004). In addition, there is an increased risk of losing confidential data increases with outsourcing (Sullivan. J, 2004; Grauman and Paul, 2005). Robinson and Kalakota (2004) highlight outsourcing providers may have hidden costs and internally developed solutions can be more cost effective (Marquez, 2007b; Thomas., 2005). There may be a loss of in-house knowledge (Domberger; 1998) and a loss of centralized control (Marquez, 2007b), which in turn would make governance more difficult.

Armstrong (2017) recommends "rigorous analysis and benchmarking" before outsourcing, although believes outsourcing a viable option, if it delivers "a better service at a lower cost." Heywood (2001) suggest considering outsourcing unintegrated activities, specialist knowledge activities or aspects of HRM , which are too time-consuming. Although, Jeffay,

Bohannon and Laspia (1997:45) believed companies would outsource all of the HR, Muller (1996) recommends avoiding outsourcing core strategic competencies and (Datar, 2003) recommends integrating core activities into line-management and outsourcing non-business relevant activities.

Moreover, there needs to be a decision whether activities are core to the business and need to be aligned vertically integrated via decentralisation or whether activities horizontal integration and outsourcing options are feasible. Arnold (2000) argues that the outsourcing subject, outsourcing partner, and outsourcing design need to be considered in the context of the organisation's strategic direction. As the HR strategy has not been clearly communicated, undertaking a review of HR activities in context of outsourcing is not feasible.

The importance of HRO is not only a viable alternative to HR, as emerging from the study, but a component of a sound HRM integration. Various models, including TCE and RBV support motivations for outsourcing activities. A contextually appropriate and strategically aligned HRO strategy can enhance competitive advantage. Albeit, in order to undertake a HRO review, a transparent HR strategy is necessary, to ensure the alignment of HRO within the contextual framework of the organisation. Without doing so, decisions related to outsourcing may be ineffectively undertaken and thus, could be depriving the organisation of increased competitiveness.

4.3.4.4 Digitalization



Further to outsourcing, digitalisation emerged as a medium to disband the HR function, with evidence emerging from employees, line managers and Human Resources Participants. HR4 said irrespective of disburdenment,

“I try to digitalise nearly everything wherever I can. Whatever I see I keep of a little project in optimizing digitalisation. I do not digitalize every recruiting or interview. I have, last week I met a colleague they are using a interview robot (laughs) and its really interested, interesting, I do not do that. I’m optimizing my digitalisation” (HR4, HR Plant Director)

Digitalization of HR, or commonly referred to as ‘e-HRM’, despite other names being utilized (Bondarouk et al. 2017) is the “ configurations of computer hardware, software and electronic networking resources that enable intended or actual HRM activities (e.g. policies, practices and services) through coordinating and controlling individual and group-level data capture and information creation and communication within and across organisational boundaries” (Marler and Parry; 2015). Another definition, sees e-HRM as “covering all possible integration mechanisms and contents between HRM and information technologies (IT), aiming at creating value within and across organisations for targeted employees and management” (Ruël, 2009). HR7 said:

“I have to live in the ideal world. Ideal world to have all processes in HR started from recruiting, ending with leavers management under-, underlined by an HR IT system. One HR IT system for example take SAP HR. And based on a global database. That’s my dream, yeah. From, if you once type in the data of your recruits, yeah. It will be implem-, it will also be available the data in learning, in talent, in performance and in leavers. You have the same data in one system and systemly (systematically) going through data flow. That’s the digital HR part of it” (HR7, HR Manager – Business Partner)

The reasons for more companies adopting e-HRM is the hope that administrative and strategic actives will improve (Strohmeier, 2009; Marler and Parry; 2015). Ruël et al. 2007 state the reasons for undertaking e-HRM include cost reduction, service improvements,

and providing actual professionals with more time to focus on value adding and strategic activities. HR4 said:

“So, the core of digitisation says one thing I know about digitisation is wherever you can install end-to-end process, process. So, for example which happens at the certificate (reference) generator. You do not need any more an HR interface for generating a certificate. So, you have a classical end-to-end process where the HR works... So, if you come to the strategic core I have heard a lot about digitalisation in terms of analytic, helping you to analyse, analyse the HR environment in terms of understanding employees or applicants better, to optimize your strategy around that” (HR4, HR Plant Director)

Dixit (2017) argue e-HRM supports the business by reducing costs by substituting labour costs for cheaper IT solutions; creating data and information can be done faster and cheaper; and innovation via this data can provide the organization with strategic know-how, supported by Bieasalski (2003). In addition, e-HRM can provide employee self services and allow employees to manage their own data, a form of decentralising HRM to employees (Strohmeier 2009; Lohse, 2016). Strohmeier 2009 suggests these benefits include operational (e.g. administrative advantages), relational (e.g. e-learning and self-management) and transformational benefits (e.g. Increase in knowledge management) and can include line managers completing tasks such as “appraisals, evaluate employee costs, generate HR reports and determine turnover and absenteeism, process training request and oversee competence management” (Brown et al. 2008) and employees having “access to everything they need to change and managed a personal files, plan their development, process financial documents and apply for career growth for promotion” (Dusek, 2006). HR8 said:

“Yeah, we have the (digital) personal file, the file. Then we are talking now, we have an e-learning tool. So, this is not development but it belongs also to the whole, the whole complex. We are thinking now about a talents suite. So, it help us to find out where are the talents in our... So, it helps, different steps. So, there is the e-learning tool. It shows us the talents. We can use if for a compensation and benefit as well” (HR8 – HR Plant Director).

Research has suggested e-HRM can also support succession planning (Beulen, 2009); can reduce head-hunter and recruitment costs (Barber, 2006; Miebach, 2017); speed up recruitment processes (Reddick, 2009; Lang et al. 2011; Barber, 2006; Melanthiou et al. 2015; Böhm and Jäger, 2016); reduce training costs (Alghafri, 2015, Laumer et al., 2009; DeRouin et al. 2005); support the HR user and reduce data entry mistakes (Ruël et al. 2007; Ruta, 2009; Guy and Wishart, 2012; Lohse, 2016); reduce time spent by HR personnel on administrative (Bell et al. 2006; Bondarouk and Ruël, 2013; Reddick, 2009; Stone et al. 2015); allow more time for consulting employees (Bell et al. 2006); increase communication and networks (Bondarouk et al. 2017; Strohmeier, 2007); can help hurdle language and cultural differences (Strohmeier, 2007); and improve the image of the HR function (Lang et al. 2011); and improve transparency of data (Hertel and Schroer, 2008; Lohse and Morczinek, 2004). Although, evidence for all areas did not emerge, HR9 highlighted the focus is to find common digitalisation solutions, streamlining the HR approach taken across the group,

Notwithstanding the significant arguments for e-HRM, Martin and Reddington (2010) highlight that failures do occur. Teo et al. (2007) argue software can be expensive, difficult to implement and require people within the system to change. Pearce (2010) argues the personal touch of face-to-face communication is lost (HR1), training becomes simplified and HR headcount drop. E7 argued that the organization needed to further digitisation to remain world-class and E4 questioned whether everything needed to be digitalised:

“Staff or employee is recruited, everything is standardized, everything works through digitalisation and works great. For example the performance assessment process or target agreement process, are all set up with the (IT) tools. So that is ‘state-of-the-art’. The only question is, do we need processes in such format, standardized with tools?” (E4 – Company Council)

Gardner et al. (2003) argue that previous administrative tasks become technological tasks rather than strategic. Reddington and Hyde, 2008 state that opinions of e-HRM differ between line managers, as emerged within the study (L4, L7, L11, L12).

Ruël and Bondarouk, 2014 argue the field lacks in-depth theoretical knowledge and organizations should be cautious of expected immediate success. Brinner (2007) believes utilizing e-HRM shifts the focus of HR towards hard, at the expense of the employee advocate. Bondarouk et al. (2017) quote Block (1983), “ if I define a successful system as one that is developed on time and within budget; it is reliable (bug free and available when needed), and maintainable (easy and inexpensive to modify); meet its goals and specified requirements; and satisfies the users, how many of you would say that your organisation has successful systems?”

Despite reservations, Bondarouk and Ruël (2009) suggest positive results are typically reported, with emergent data supporting this position (HR4, HR7, HR9, E7, E8, L4, L8) although Hannon et al. (1996) highlight the importance of standardized HR processes for the adoption of e-HRM, a necessity of horizontal integration, which in turn can integrate international business units (Bondarouk and Boudreau, 1992). In reflection, with the case study implementing global HR solutions, for example performance management (E4, HR11), a continuation of e-HRM is necessary. Ruel et al. (2004) and Bondarouk et al. (2017) highlight the importance of transparency, an open culture and a clear strategy for the adoption of e-HRM, again supporting the requirement for a transparent strategy within the case study.

Strategically, Payne et al. (2009:527) state that e-HRM “undoubtedly contributed to the overall business, customer satisfaction, effectiveness in meeting business goals and

business improvement” and Bondarouk et al. (2017:114) maintain that “An e-HRM system used to its full potential is, in our views, such a unique organizational resource”, which from the RBV perspective is difficult to imitate and thus will competitive advantage.

Typically e-HRM is undertaken by external suppliers (Armstrong, 2017) and therefore overlaps with the theory discussed surrounding outsourcing. According to Armstrong (2017) there are two particular models of e-HRM. The first being the ‘integrated best-of-breed model’ which combines different systems and the second is an ‘application suite model’, which is sourced from one vendor combining different modules. Evidence emerged from the study that the case study is following the latter approach, with a move towards one organizational wide SAP system (E4, HR7, HR8, HR9, HR11).

E-HRM was proposed by the respondents within the study as an alternative to traditional HR, although the supporting literature exposed the importance of digitalizing HRM, in line with the organisational HR strategy. Again, in order to align an appropriate digitalization strategy, there is a requirement for a transparent HR strategy.

4.3.5 Disbandment and Integration go hand in hand

Through the exploration of HR disbandment, evidence emerged from the three-respondent groups that disbandment is possible, principally via the outsourcing, digitisation and devolvement of HR activities. The supporting literature review on HRM integration and these three core topics, indicates that these areas are also essential to the furthering of HRM integration. Horizontal integration can be supported via digitalization and outsourcing (Payne et al 2009; Bondarouk and Ruël 2009; Armstrong 2017; Bondarouk et al., 2017; Miller, 2006; Armstrong 2017), whilst vertical integration can be furthered through

decentralizing human resources (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; 2002; Hope-Bailey et al. 1997; Truss et al. 1997; Sisson and Storey, 2000; Link and Müller, 2015). The question of disbandment brought into focus what the function does and generated a discussion of what activities are core to the function, similarly highlighting what HR activities could be undertaken through alternative methods. In reflection, the researcher believes that by asking the question of disbandment, attention on core services and integration can be explored further,

Nevertheless, in order to consider the relevance of the HR services in context of the case study, the organisation firstly needs to have a clearly defined and transparent strategy. Only then, can a review of the core and non-core activities (Professional Services) be completed (Ulrich, 1998). Subsequently, decisions regarding outsourcing, digitisation and decentralizing to line management should be considered and reviewed. Without doing so increases the risk that inappropriate decisions are being made about aligning HRM with organisational strategy, which could hinder HRM integration.

In reflection, whether outsourcing, relying on digitalisation or devolving activities to line management, the HR function will need to undertake change in order to enhance integration. Similarly, the HR function will need to relinquish control of HRM, potentially to line management. Both change rather than stability and the relinquishment of control are together recognised by Gerpott (2015) as areas of paradoxical tension and should not be underestimated in the furthering of HRM integration within the case study.

The combined interview data and supporting literature discussed within this chapter has highlighted the importance of considering disbandment of HR in the context of HRM integration. Firstly, the organization requires a clear strategy. Secondly, core and non-core

professional services need to be considered, before finally identifying how the services will be delivered. In conclusion, these core elements have been summarized in the emergent conGT model, 'Integration Review Model' presented on the following page.

4.3.6 Case Study: Integration Review Model



4.4 HRM Integration – Now and Future

4.4.1 HRM Integration – Now and Future – The Employee

perspective

The previous chapters have shown emergent data defending the retention of the HR department, despite a lack of transparent knowledge about what the HR department actually does. E1 stated that HR is “the glass bowl and nobody knows exactly what they do” and E11 stated “the department is a black hole... I know something about every department, but not this one”. Both these quotes raised the topic of transparency, which was continuous theme throughout the study. An example statement:

“yeah, I think that’s... there is no transparency about what the HR department does in the company... so, maybe that would be, err, a point. yes. that you get more transparency about what they do.” (E11, Research and Development)

Evidence from the employee respondents highlighted a lack of decision-making transparency (E1, E9), with question marks being raised whether HR or line managers were the decisive decision-makers, in particular to the recruitment process (E1, E9). No employee was aware of an HR strategy. E4 stated that it is “very hard to recognize a clear strategy in the company” and “maybe it was in one of the drawers but not obvious to the employees and the company”, despite being a company council representative.

Asking questions about the future of HRM integration with the employees was often met with hesitation. E6 said “It’s a difficult question. I don’t really think that I can judge that”. Although, the collected data was limited in volume in comparison to the data collected

from the line management and Human Resources respondents, asking questions about the future of HRM led to some interesting lines of enquiry. It emerged that the department is often believed to be administrative (E12) and the future requires these processes to be delivered faster (E8). The administrative perspective could be due to the department having limited contact with employees after the entry interview, as E3 said “I never see them to be honest” and with further exploration, E10 stated “basically, except for the interview at the first place, I had no contact with HR”. A common theme about the future of HRM integration reiterated the requirement for transparency and ease of access to the HR department (E1, E2, E4, E6, E10).

“more open towards all people in the company so that they... so that it is easier for them to come to... to get in contact with the HR department.” and “Umm, I guess in-in getting more involved with the -with the actual employees, and setting up more meetings, focussing more on getting the people to-to attend a training or attend-attend some sessions. Currently, they're offering, some, yeah... but they not really pushing people to go, and many people are just stuck with their regular tasks, and they-they don't really go to those trainings and use those opportunities” (E10, Financial Services)

The suggestive nature of the latter statement is consistent with the employee voice around the future of HRM integration, with the suggestions perceived as a hunch more than a thought-through strategic direction of HRM. In addition, the lobbyist role of the HR department was evident, specifically in regards to training.

The final theme, which in reflection did not surprise the researcher, included the bias of opinion towards the employee. Exploring the future of HRM integration with the employees, there was an underlying expectation that the future would balance the companies with employees needs (E1, E2, E4, E6, E11, E12). Further exploration with HR respondents provided the researcher with a clear picture that HR views itself as a management led function working primarily for management. HR10 explicitly stated:

“I mean they [line-managers] are the first point of contact for any kind of employee queries - we are not. We are here to support the managers, really. We are not here to support the employees. I’m a business partner to the managers, here, yeah and to the management team. So, employees would... can’t come to me”. (HR10, HR Manager – Business Partner)

In conclusion, the paramount concern of employees for the future of HRM integration is the need for transparency.

4.4.2 HRM Integration – Now and Future – The Line Management perspective

Although the line manager needs for retaining the function held similarities with employees, line managers were more vocal about future expectations of the HR function, clearly seeing the role of the function as a business partner of line management. L1 highlighted little contact with the HR function but would call on them for support for example, saying:

“I don’t have any targets which are set by the HR department or by the business to do with the people that i manage. So, it’s purely just the management of the guys on a day-to-day basis. Obviously, anything when they need to be disciplined for anything which i haven’t been luckily that how long have i been doing management now, almost twenty years. I have never had to discipline anybody formally but obviously if somebody did step over the line then I have to take care, take care the, the original disciplinary action. So, you know written warning and whatever... HR would be involved but that’s nothing had to do so i don’t know. Again, another thing that i speak to HR to say what is the official disciplinary process because i don’t know.” (L1, Manager – Engineering)

In regards to policy development, L7 stated “thats too far away from me” although would expect HR advice on unknown policies. L2 argued that training line managers to do everything would be irresponsible because they only need to undertake HR procedures occasionally. L1 expects consultancy on rules, laws and processes. L4 stated that each department has HR representation, in the form of a business partner, whose responsibility

is to support with workforce planning, decision-making and recruitment. A number of respondents stated that the business partner is predominately providing processual advice. An example from L2:

“they responsible for about 500 employees, they cannot know them in, on an individual basis. It's more like to say okay now this is management responsibility to take care of this and to prepare perhaps a meeting with the works council. Then they would join some help but only on a processual or methodological level... so, can't get really good support, more that they be there because HR has to be there” (L2, Manager – Information Systems)

The future role of the business partner was explored with line managers seeing the role changing to an integrated business consultant. L2 states:

“they are now too far away from the whip real business, too far away from the real people and that is why cannot support you in your daily work when you have people or when you want to do tend management together because they're not able to speak with you on the same, on the same level. They, they can explain the methodology perfectly, yes, but they're not able to, to review together perhaps a development plan and going into a real good discussion regarding ploys because they do not know the employees. They also do not know what the employees are doing. And they are or what the role of the employees. Different role description but there is no image what does that mean because they never worked in there. Of course, that's the my expectation but they have to get a good picture or good feeling what are the employees in the area are doing and if you do not know this really you cannot, you cannot understand the problems and also the, the, the argument sometimes why you want to let's say you want to move somebody up or say a low performer because they have no idea they'd work of these guys. How the hell should they know.” (L2, Manager – Information Systems)

Additional budget and increase of business partners was highlighted. Although all did not suggest an increase in business partners, expectations were clearly made that the HR department needs to understand the business. L9 sees the future role of the HR business partner closer to line management and more involved in all decisions, including development. L3 states “ we need an HR department who understand your needs as a line manager and we need to “ be working together”. L11 stated:

“having someone who is integrated into business, who knows the people, rather than it just being them coming in doing spot interviews or looking at, you know, performance reviews. I think you probably have affected talent management if you have someone internally who knows the people that you're referring to, or has the ability to talk to their managers in depth, with context, and why they again be, you know, suitable for the future leadership roles in the company or, or, you know more senior roles in the company” (L11, General Manager – Logistics)

Support regarding the development of employees was indicated as an area for improvement. L4 indicated that when HR normally gets involved, it is because there is a specific business need. L2 highlighted:

“you as a line manager do not have an overview over the whole company. So, if you're thinking about developing somebody, put him on a real development plan or a different functional area than the HR function, it's not it's not the way unfortunately another company but the HR function would be able to have a broader view throughout the whole company.” (L2, Manager – Information Systems)

Similar, “more training as required to lead people” (L5) and did not want to simply be dumping ground for administrative activities. L6 reiterated the need for consultancy and business involvement, rather than process support. Interestingly, the business consultant is the main contact for the line managers but not responsible for training and development, which emerged within the HR respondent interviews and is discussed below.

Statements that the role of the human resources was to support line management solve conflicts with employees, whereas the role of the company council was to support employees (L8). L4 highlighted that policies agreed with the company council must be followed and the role of the company council is to govern the decisions made by human resources and line management. For example, finance says there is enough budget to employ someone, the manager finds someone and HR agrees the appointment, but the company council disagrees - the recruitment does not proceed. Nevertheless, all line managers identified governance as a key role of the HR function. L3 stated “that there

needs to be trust” and HR’s role is to approve the actions of line managers. L1 was more explicit stating that some must “look over the shoulder of the arseholes”. L5 identified the governance of HR as a risk mitigator and “HR has taken a bit of a doctor’s role” suggesting a neutral independence. L6 focused on “fairness across the business” and ensuring consistency of pay, quoting:

“to even moneywise there is a... They [line-managers] make, make it inconsistent. And I think that is definitely a job that HR could, where, you know, where their responsibility should lie, where they say, set the goals for all departments” (L6, Manager – Marketing)

Unanimous support for HR taking a governance role, although through governance the HR function can hinder, rather than support the business. L12 suggested HR processes tend to slow down the business. L6 inverted the IT system was hindering requirements stating “oh, but this will not be working of our SAP Systems”. L2 said:

“perhaps one hurdle as they say okay, you cannot, you cannot hire a person which do not have a two-point nil, the minimum of two point nil degree diploma but if this person is a really good working experience and from the correct, perfectly fit into the team than my is this, this board all this, this, this hurdle necessary any more. So, I do not understand it because if I want to have this person and also, I already did some interviews with this, with this person. HR is not involved and they want, they do not want to be involved. They just want to be involved in the last interview and I decided first two interviews that is the right guy for my team. Then this work interviews coming and an HR says' yes, yeah, it's a good guy but you know he has only got the deploying with 2.5° or average degree... He has', I can understand that but what's the problem now? He perfect, he fits in here, it has a good working experience before and I want to have this person and then you have two, to argue, have to provide arguments why you want this person knows a little bit, let's say overhead just hindering factor” (L2, Manager – Information Systems)

Following the interview with L7, the researcher wrote the memo:

“It seems the Human Resources department has made itself part of the operational process within many people activities to justify it's own position within the company, rather than delivering the consultancy and support desired by its customer. Rather than finding business solutions, HR will focus on following the predefined policies, providing little, if any flexibility”. (L7, Manager – Finance)

Finally, improvements included the need for increased trust between line management and HR. Exploring this topic further highlighted the requirement for transparency with the HR department being described as a 'secret' (L3) 'black box' (L2) and having 'a lot of cloud around them' L10. L6 said:

"they don't want things to be transparent ... they were not able to give me that transparency. And transparency is very important" (L6, Manager – Marketing)

Transparency of the organizational strategy and HR strategy was particular unclear. Surprisingly, the organizational strategy was unclear and there was no knowledge of the HR strategy. Responses included: "I don't know if they have, like, a proper, like, strategic approach" (L6), "I wouldn't say that I'm fully aware" (L5) and "I'd imagine so"(L10). L11 was aware that HR was represented at board level and could imagine "having a feasible strategy that's rolled right down to shop floor level" but whether anybody would know about the strategy would be "roulette of the line manager". L1 stated "HR strategy is separate from line management". L11 expressing "Umm, no, I was not deeply concerned with this strategy". Finally, L4 had no knowledge of the HR strategy, although assumed that such a strategy would be developed top-down similar to other areas within the organization.

Questions surrounding policies received similar responses with line-managers unaware of any contradictions, as surely the policies had been thought through in conjunction with the company council (L4). Although L12 did not "have the impression that we have a specific strategy on how to align them".

In conclusion the line managers expressed a need for the HR department, with governance and line-manager support emerging as the core services required by those interviewed. Exploration of disbandment highlighted a preference for outsourcing rather

than devolving activities to the line, as line managers do not have the time, resources or want to be the dumping ground for administrative activities. Discussion about disbandment of HR reiterated the significance of an umbrella view and HR governance delivered by the function.

The interface for line managers with HR is via the business partner. Line managers highlighted the processual support provided, although recommendations emerged for this role to be improved, especially if HRM integration is to be furthered within the organization. The most significant improvements included increasing trust, via greater business knowledge and support; being the responsible contact partner for training and development of employees; and investing within the role.

Finally and most significantly, the emergence of a lack of HR strategy transparency was identified as significant area for improvement in the future.

4.4.3 HRM Integration – Now and Future – The Human Resources perspective

Before discussing the core themes raised by the HR representatives, HR9 provided a summary of the structural status of the HR function. Although, a detailed organisation chart was not shown for confidentiality reasons, agreement to provide a general indication of the functional areas is described below, thus allowing the reader with further evidence of the current status quo.

HR9 highlighted the main functional areas within the HR department, which subsequently all report to the HR Board Member. The areas include Business Partners, change

management, business development, young talent development, HR development, HR Recruiting, Shared Service Centre (Administration and Payroll), Employer Branding, HR Legal, Strategy and Project Management, Compensation and Benefits and finally, International HR. The business partners are the primary interface to the business and management, with the Shared Service Centre identified as the main contact point for employee enquiries and administrative requirements. The subsequent departments are seen as competence centres supporting the Business Partner team. HR8 highlighted that the function was established with Ulrich's model in mind. This supports the view by Festling (2015) that German structures typically follow an Ulrich based model.

HR9 summarised the purpose of each area and is presented in table 10 below:

Business Partners	The Business Partner team as supporting all employees and managers of the organisation by dealing with issues relating to human resources and labour law and answering questions. The department ensures the optimal staffing of all departments of the organisation, taking into account the economic factors and the interests of the employees and organisation. HR consultants are expected to identify the internal and external trends of the organisational working environment. The Business Partners are the first interface to management.
Change Management	The Change Management Team create a change management concept, plan and control activities along the change management architecture (communication, qualification, participation/feedback) for cross-divisional change processes. Proactive support the Business Partners to drive the change process forward interlinking and controlling of external consultants and change managers
Strategic HR Development	This function is seen as the think tank for all innovative and new topics for the organization with regards to personnel development. Development, elaboration, introduction and evaluation of concepts, measures, standards and tools within personnel development for overarching topics. Specific attention is on optimization, digitization and governance of processes and tools in human resources development.
Young Talent Development	The focus of the department is on training apprentices and students (dual studies), from recruiting, support and development through to final placement in the company The department is responsible for training junior staff as part of the trainee programmes include graduates and doctoral applicants.

HR Development Organization	This function is seen as the expert in the field of HR Development: Training, Consulting/Coaching, Team and Personnel Development, Training and Moderation. The function is responsible for the development and implementation of individual development, in addition to the development of team development and qualification concepts.
HR recruiting	The function is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the recruiting strategy of the organisation and the preparation of the recruitment plan. The main tasks include searching for suitable employees for current and future needs of the organisation.
Employer Branding	Support the company in attracting and retaining the right talent, creating attention for the employer and inform about employer strengths and special achievements in order to make the company an "Employer of Choice" for potential and existing employees
Shared Service Centre	Performing the payroll run and all associated subsequent activities. Providing decision making, advice and specialist knowledge in the areas of wage tax, social security, labour law and litigation. The main contact function for all employees regarding employment contracts, payroll, social security, taxes and references and are available to answer any questions.
HR Legal	Includes the entire field of labour law. Creation, updating and checking of different contracts. Main interface to the Company Council. Participation in personnel changes and restructuring and also is responsible for training managers and HR employees in labour law.
Strategy and Project Management	This function is responsible for coordinating and controlling all HR projects within the organisation. In addition, the department is seen as a think tank for all innovative and new topics for the organization, supporting senior management to develop the HR function and the organisation, as required.
Compensation and Benefits	This function is responsible for research, development and maintenance of the remuneration system of the organisation, aligning with trade union and company council agreements. The function research and understand the current and future competitive markets for employees' salaries and social benefits, supporting a performance culture through the remuneration system. The function undertakes salary surveys to see how their salary rates compare with those of other companies.
HR International	The HR International function is responsible for coordinating all HR activities between domestic and international subsidiaries, specifically where international convergence is insisted by senior

TABLE 10: Department Overview (source: HR9, HR Plant Director)

The status quo of HRM integration, according to the HR respondents, was recognized as being an area of future improvement. HR12 stated that “I don't think HR is really integrated in any way“, although the researcher in reflection felt this statement was exaggerated. HR11 said “I can't really say how they [HRM Integration is] developed or how the status of them [HRM Integration] is... Because I'm part of it”. HR3 highlighted the first problem “to answer your question is that everybody in the HR Department have to know the company strategy” that strategy is not clearly communicated. **Transparency** of the HR strategy has also been questioned. Although HR3 suggested HR strategy transparency was difficult because “not it only funny themes, topics and if the strategy is to save costs and sometimes this also to reduce the workforce and so, that our topics we don't talk with the rest of the company”.

The topic of **Management vs. employee advocated HR** was discussed with HR respondents within the interviews. HR10, a HR business partner stated “I'm serving the management and the management team”, if employees have issues, “Employees go to the manager or HR services”. HR5 stated our number one priority is “the support of the leads in their role as a leader”, HR4, an HR director, did not mention employees within the interview and focused on the support of line management. HR7 highlighted that there has been a shift of attention within the function, with two distinct areas being apparent, “HR services and HR consultants” (HR8), similar to the evidence about HR in Germany (Wächter and Muller-Camen, 2006; Festling 2015). The development in the future would include the **Business partner** role being responsible for the whole employee life-cycle,

including training and development (HR8, HR10); “should be more active” and “have new ideas, bring them to the line managers” (HR11) and will be in the future the “common touch point for all things” (HR9). HR7 believed the value adding parts of HR such as talent management, recruitment, performance management, competency development could only add value if the business partner and line management worked together. HR6 highlighted confidence could only be gained through “understanding the business, be flexible and not to refer to a early to Labour Law and regulations”. HR8 said the business partner needed to be the “sparring partner” for line management. Although for the future the business partner needs to provide more advice than simply governance (HR7), be “skilled and understand the business” (HR4), “become more of a consultant” (HR2). HR5 said:

“in my understanding the business partner model means that HR defines together with the business and develop together with the business and HR strategy and all the HR measures. So, we are not only delivery unit, not only operations but we consult the business how to handle any employee topic. We are consulting and we are listening to them regarding their business needs to server on development HR strategy” (HR5, HR Manager – Business Partner)

The role of HR business partner, according to the HR respondents, has shifted to a business and line management partner at the expense of the employee advocate role, supporting the theory of Ulrich (2016). Although, HR10 stated that line management were not always the focus, because some activities of HR had been “outsourced to agencies” the business partners role “biggest challenges to deal with suppliers”. HR7 discusses at how the business partner of the future needs to provided more advice rather than simply governance. HR10 argued the business partners “need to see whole business”, need to keep an eye on “cultural fit” and business partners need to be “sitting in team meetings”. Despite the business partner clearly seeing their role as management support, the bigger picture is recognized as being important for consistency and fairness (HR9), an expectation highlighted by the employee respondents.

Governance was a theme highlighted by both employees and line managers. Again, multiple codes relating to governance were highlighted within the HR respondent interviews. HR1 argued the function needs to be “ensuring fairness within the firm”, HR5 said “we want our employees treated with respect”. L10 stated that we need “keep the business consistent”. The sincerity with which these comments were communicated, provided the researcher with the impression that HR believe consistency and fairness are fundamental aspects of HR, albeit practices may be consistently balanced in favour of line management (HR10). Nevertheless, HR1 did confirm that the role of the business partner was to keep an eye looking over line management practice and ensure policies and procedures are being followed. HR9 highlighted the consequences of being inconsistent and thus saw consistency and fairness as a fundamental aspect for the future of HRM integration. HR9 said:

“One of the things that I think I did, is kind of the policeman mentality which is sounds negative but it is very important. When things are done and I’m not suggesting you need to have too many polices and procedures, just the way it is done. But when things are done, they are done consistently. And one of the worst possible outcomes of, of pushing things out into different departments, decentralizing them, is that then everybody does things differently. And we have had cases of that where manufacturers wanted to go its own way with complete nightmare outcome for things like, I don’t know what, but I cant remember, but they were doing little reward areas where they were doing things in manufacturing. And I think that although of course you can always embrace different departments doing different things as long as this is fully consented and all on the rest of it. There is a danger with that with the employees. So, why they doing that in this department.” (HR9, HR Plant Director)

HR3 said that following policy becomes more important than the business or specific situation. HR3 also found it interesting that policies were often asked for, put in place and then management tried to work around the agreed policies. HR4 reconfirmed this position, talking about line management, “they want policies and then we give them policies... Then how do we get around the policy” is the following question. HR4 believed a role of HR was

to ensure people within the organization are not working around policies, “if we can stop it than we do it”. HR11 believed processes were not integrated stating:

“what we miss is a strategy. And we miss [identifying] good managers, so someone has missed to look for good managers” - if the managers are not good or need to be changed, maybe the recruitment practices need to be reviewed but they're not. HR needs to govern line managers because they change once they are within the roles, with some becoming dictators once the power goes to their heads” (HR11, HR Manager – HR Development).

Contradictory, HR2 stated “everything works perfectly”, which was a defensive response to the company’s policies and procedures. HR12 highlighted that different departments are developing policies and do not necessarily align, saying:

“Yes, well, contradictions maybe, maybe too much, but also the different policies haven’t been aligned. So, like for example the policy for our expatriate management and the policy for, umm, the travel policies, for business travels... its been a totally different team that designed the travel policies, and they never tried to-to coordinate their strategy or plans with ours, for example. So, they did-they did their job, we did our job, and, umm, there hasn’t been a, umm, a formal process of aligning these policies. We knew each other, and this is why we head of it... Oh, they do [develop] a new policy, but no formal process of aligning policies within HR.” (HR12, HR Manager – International Assignments)

In addition, HR12 stated that there is no horizontal integration across the business, which is difficult and HR should be happy if “you can have a set of principles”. HR10 critiqued the horizontal integration of recruiting specialists and grading systems, stating “grade structure does work because need to use management structure to pay appropriate amount of the specialists”. Despite, HR12 stating that there was not horizontal integration, HR11 did state that the goal of the HR function was to have one SAP based IT system worldwide, supported by HR8 who said the organization wanted “one system for the whole group... Pull the same dataset for every individual”. HR10 stated “the systems are more world orientated and commonised”, with “One bonus system worldwide” already in place (HR9). The current agenda of HR is to implement a unitarian framework of HR policies and

procedures, all managed via one IT system. Although, HR5 believed policies were simply there and the line managers managed the business between the policies and procedures.

Discussing the business role above, HR7 recognized that HR work needed to be completed in partnership with the line manager, a notion supported by HR12 who believes there should be a link, although in practice “HR is really separated from line management” and line managers are left alone “sometimes suffer of these formalised processes”. HR12 said “I think effectively lots of HR work is be (SIC) done by the line managers“ although HR2 believes line managers need encouragement to undertake HR activities, saying “I think it would be difficult if they don't get a push”. HR5 believed line managers are there to do HR work and the HR business partner is there to support and advise, hoping in the future line managers “take in mind more of the HR issues that we raise”. HR4 “reason for not delegating to line management is mistrustful fear of differing interpretations, or a lack of governance”. HR2 highlights image becomes an important part of developing the image saying:

“Superiors are positively attached to the personnel Department. If the leadership shown (sic) a negative attitude towards the HR Department, then integration can certainly not take place, so there is a requirement for human resources to have a positive image and therefore... and not to seem like a bad person” (HR2, HR Employee – Business Partner)

Delegating or decentralizing responsibility to line management, which is required for future HRM, causes a significant area of tension (Gerpott, 2015), highlighted by the reluctance of both Line Managers and Human Resources participants, within this study, to support further devolvment of responsibility.

Exploring the future of HRM integration, HR12 recognized the importance of increasing **digitalisation**, allowing employees and managers to manage their own data. HR10

believed **horizontal integration** between business locations needed to be harmonized, albeit with an adapted pay system, which encourages complete flexibility. HR10 imagined a pay system “separate pay scale from job grade” and “allow individualised pay” rather than the current interrelated job pay structure, allowing individual employees “structure your own payment structure”, potentially returning to individual pay. HR6 recognized that the HR department should **priorities and be leaner**. Nevertheless, “HR doesn't necessarily have to be the one coming up with the ideas, it can help shape them and move them along” (HR9), though being involved from the beginning of change initiatives was paramount to providing a service expected from the business. HR5 argued HR needed to have a greater involvement in the selection of leadership positions and be provided with a larger budget. HR4 reinforced the requirement for “collaboration between line management and HR” and the need for HR to be “**consulting the business**”. HR3 argued this also need support from line management, especially highlighting “management stick to agreed rules and policies” and a change in the role of the business partner from purely process checker to business decision-maker. Finally, HR3 stated the first step is to “write down **HR strategy** and present”.

The future of HRM integration highlighted the need for further **digitalization, balancing the harmonizing of policies and procedures and flexibility, need for governance, decision-making business partnership and transparency of HR strategy**.

4.4.4 Putting the views together - HRM Integration Now and Future

4.4.4.1 Strategy

German organisations are one of the least likely to have a written down HR strategy, which Wächter and Müller (2002) argue may be influenced by codetermination. This was evident within the case study with no respondent aware of the HR strategy. A typical response including “I don't know” (E1), “I'm not aware of a personnel strategy” (L10), and “it hasn't been communicated to us” (HR12). HR1 and HR4 believed that there was a written down strategy, although lacked connection to overall strategy. HR1 said:

“I think the HR strategy is the same like twenty years and our company strategy is changed or changed in two years. So, I think there are, I don't know how to say, there are similarities but I think the HR strategy is a own strategy” (HR1, HR Employee - HR Service / Operations).

Further exploration led to vague answers and HR4 could not explicitly explain the HR strategy. HR8 “yeah, that, yeah. We have, yeah, that is, that has something to do with strategy” on being asked about the human resources strategy. “We never said the HR strategy is set in this way” there is no tacit strategy within the business - “we do it for other departments but not for us”. HR7 stated the HR strategy could not be clearly defined it “is developing not standing still”.

Contrastingly, evidence emerged suggesting turnover encouragement through early retirement (L3), flexibility (HR10), controlled pay (L2); and cost minimization (L8) could be the strategic focus. Nevertheless, further exploration consistently led to a lack of transparency surrounding the companies HR strategy. Nevertheless, evidence emerged

assuming that HR would be involved in strategy development, with HR8 stating the “HR director is sparring with CEO” and HR2 stating, “we are definitely a big part of the strategy within the company, because many topics, strategic topics are HR topics”, albeit nobody within the study could provide light on HR consultation. Additionally, HR4 and HR7 both stated that strategy is developed top-down within the organization.

Further exploration with HR4 and HR7 highlighted that both parties were unaware of the content. HR4 started discussing policies rather than strategy when asked. Similarly, throughout the study, respondents were not clear about strategy, often discussing different topics rather than admitting a lack of knowledge. This supports the research by Muller (1996), who noted confusion in undertaking research surrounding the HR strategy.

HR9 confirmed "HR is on the board" and that the business has a regional approach to its human resources with the hope that "meetings between subsidiaries" will ensure alignment.

Without a clear transparent strategy, respondents within the case study could not discuss HR participation in corporate strategy development. Nevertheless, it was assumed that HR would be involved with HR8 stating the “HR director is sparring with CEO” and HR2 stating, “we are definitely a big part of the strategy within the company, because many topics, strategic topics are HR topics”, albeit nobody within the study provided light on HR consultation. HR5 indicated HR direction is derived from organizational strategy “I mean we have some... we have some kind of description... we have projects that align with the overall strategy”. Additionally, HR4 and HR7 both stated that strategy is developed top-down within the organization.

The literature review supports an integrated two-way approach (Boxall and Purcell 2006; Katou and Budhwar, 2006; 2007; Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015; Sheenan 2015). Only when employees are involved in the process, can strategy be promoted (Kaplan and Norton, 2006) and be well accomplished (Huselid et al. 1997). Wei (2006) argues that transparency of the fit between a firm's strategy and HR strategy will enhance the horizontal and vertical fit (integration) of human resources management.

In summary, although a number of HR respondents believed there was an HR strategy, further exploration suggested no updated HR strategy existed or if it does, had not been communicated. No respondent group, including senior HR participants were in a position to discuss HR strategy. With Budhwar (1998) questions in mind, HRM integration is evident with HR representation on the board. Nevertheless, no HR strategy was transparent within the organization and thus no one within the study could discuss whether HR had been consulted in the development of corporate strategy. The breakdown of strategy into a clear set of work programmes was assumed by a number of research participants, but again the lack of transparency of HRM Strategy, restricted the deeper exploration of this topic. In conclusion, HRM strategy transparency is an area where the case study can improve in the future.

4.4.4.2 Policies and Procedures

During the research, respondents were asked about inconsistencies between HR practices, although no useful data emerged. Further exploration suggested the role of the company council being involved in establishing policies (E4), German Culture (L1) or lack of transparency (L7).

Secondly, Wei (2006) supports the notion that via the policies, it is important to maintain 'options of HR practices', thus providing the organization, HR department and line managers more flexibility in finding the correct solutions for the direction of the organization, which rigid policies may restrict. HR10 did highlight that the goal of the organization is to implement complete pay flexibility, saying:

"Comp and Bens, you know, the benefit packages. Why do you have a car why cant you have the money for the car? Why cant you pick what you want? Do you want a bonus, or do you not? It's looking at that whole package, and thats what you can get an amount, and you can do what you want with it" (HR10, HR Manager – Business Partner)

HR11 supported this claim indicating pay could become completely flexible in the future, although a lack of transparency surrounding pay made this difficult, supporting the research by Kimich (2015). Nevertheless, on 6th July 2017, the Entgelttransparenzgesetz - EntgTranspG (Pay Transparency Act) was introduced to challenge this status quo, with a primary target to counteract the approximately 21% difference in female and male incomes (<https://www.bmfsfj.de>, 2017).

Thirdly, Wei (2006) proposes that horizontal fit will be improved if the organisation invests in HRM activities. Evidence emerged that the business partner role is responsible for between 600-800 employees, with line managers expecting this number to be decreased.

Kim et al (2003) highlights four methods to integrate internationally. Firstly to centralize decision-making authority - secondly through creating international teams and committees - formalization of processes and procedures across the organization - finally information based integration through databases and electronic information. Evidence emerged within the study that the organization has one formalized performance management system worldwide (HR4, HR5, E11, HR9) and the goal, despite excel sheets needing to be filled

out (L2), is for the company to use one database system SAP (HR2, HR7, HR8, HR10, HR11).

Additionally, the HR function is clearly seen as a process controller within the organization, ensuring that policies are followed consistently across the business, with significant evidence emerging that the department is controller of 'following rule of laws'. E12, whilst discussing grading, stated:

"... Because it has to be the same process that is the same all over the company. I think HR doesn't do the grading anyway. They'll just that for a process rather than... And oversee this rather do the grading themselves, because they can't, as it needs to be done by the manager anyway", (E12, Marketing)

E2 stated that the department would still be needed to overlook decisions made by outsourced partners, although by doing so, evidence emerged that HR could also be hindering flexibility, which is common in Germany (Lawrence, 1999, Wächter and Muller-Carmen 2002). In referencing to outsourcing, E4 stated:

" well, even if they, they would have it done by somebody else you would still need one person from, from your department, from your department but from, from human resources Department which... Gives his okay, no? Which rights also the contracts with this company". – (E4, Company Council)

Interestingly, E3 felt governance was an aspect of German business culture, which when further explored was met with agreement. E3 stated:

" Because, it's a German thing I guess, because you need to control what's happening in your company. Because, it might change. People are afraid that people are treated differently. And then and the one who was louder get more money, more employees, more I don't know. So, could be like just not a fair process of recruiting. Further process of

payment. The process of workload that is distributed. I think that's the fear of a lot of people. That's what we want to have a structure [Control]". (E3, Marketing)

The controlling of rules to maintain consistency across the business was perceived as an integral part of the HR function being integrated into the business. The perception included this department "having the back" of the employees, although further exploration uncovered that this was idealism, with E4 stating:

"That is how I would imagine it. But in reality, this of course doesn't happen. If an employee has a problem with a manager they go to the works council not to HR. But I have experienced both. Often the works council can't help, either because as soon as you involve the works council you get into a conflict or reinforce the conflict. And if you go to HR, they don't help you and say that you should speak directly to your manager. So, no matter where you go in ninety per cent of the cases, you have to help yourself because neither one side or the other can or will want to help you" (E4, Company Council)

This statement by a company council member highlights the lack of transparency around the grievance process within the organization, thus restricting the challenge of rule breakers to be voiced. HR11 highlighted that employees needed to speak to their managers or employee services, although employee services is being increasingly digitalized and is not seen as an avenue of grievance. If the employees contact with HR is fundamentally via IT channels or the line manager, how can issues be raised with HR. Exploration uncovered that employees could speak to their departments business partner, which E12 did in relation to future training needs, but these wishes were ignored. L3 highlighted a similar experience, believing employee driven training wasn't advocated, developmental decisions were made top-down, with training being provided as a business need, rather than a cultural norm.

The need for the function to be effective and efficient has led to a function utilizing employee services and the digitalization of many tasks, although the HR function is expected to control activities. HR8 stated:

"it has to get done. So, everyone would do what they wanted and there would be no standards and inefficiencies. It would probably work because something is always work out. But it probably wouldn't be very efficient, like I said. It would be a mess.", with E8 suggesting without the HR function and the supporting governance role E8, the organization "would be like a wild west", (HR8 – HR Plant Director).

Support is evident for the HR function to provide sound governance, specifically in ensuring consistency, which HR10 believes is a fundamental task of HR. HR10 said:

"Umm, I think they [HR] must keep the business consistent in our approach to people. I know that's an overall term, but we must make sure that employees are treated consistently for the business, legally, you must make sure, that happens. But from an employee engagement point as well. Just to make sure employees are treated the same... you have a person get a special deal and it reverberates around the departments [and] hm-mm, it's a breed for discontent, isn't it... [and] lack of motivation". (HR10, HR Manager – Business Partner)

In summary, when discussing policies and procedures HR was seen a controller of process. Questions about integration consistency were answered with discussions about governance, with governance and consistency being a primary concern. Limited evidence emerged of integrated policies, with different departments working in silo. Moreover, no evidence emerged that policies and processes were being aligned to a common HR strategy.

4.4.4.3 Devolving to Line Management

Budhwar (1998) highlights the level of line management devolvment and vertical integration can be understood via the exploration of line management activities. No evidence emerged that line managers believed that they were the owners of HRM practice, although evidence emerged from the case study that the devolvment of HRM to Line Managers had occurred. L1 highlighted responsibility for ensuring Health and Safety

training was completed; L2 discussed the role of line management in recruitment; L10 discussed working with the company council to deal with conflicts; L2 highlighted the need to monitor work times and L9 discussed his own role in workforce planning. L9 elaborated on his responsibilities, stating:

“Normally, as a superior [line-manager]... the line function there are three different topics you can influence: working hours, job location, and work content. So, the working hours is the time defined by the company agreement and the labour law, and by all the topics that are given, and by the agreements HR is doing with the, umm, trade union. The job location, so where you are working as well is defined outside of my control. We have, umm... all the agreements are defined by central HR, and anything that I can really influence is work content., what are they doing, what topics they are working on. So, what HR is doing is, umm, all the framework... I don't have to bother about contracts, the time, umm... Working hours and the location we are working in.” (L9, General Manager – Information Technology)

Rollinson et al. (1996), highlight that HR are often involved in grievance and disciplinary cases to police or govern line managers within the process. Evidence of this, supporting the view by Wächter and Müller (2002), could be seen within the case study (L8). Additionally, evidence emerged that line managers were involved in recruitment, although were not the final decision maker (L2), as HR could veto a decision. Further evidence emerged from the case study suggesting HR is governing line-management (L4), to ensure they do not fall foul of the law or company policy. Budhwar (1998) states that line managers making decisions are fundamental for the vertical integration of HRM. Currently, decision-making is limited and when completed, can be overturned because line management is not clear about the alignment of processes to strategy (L2).

Further exploration identified that line managers are undertaking appraisals on a yearly basis, a common system across the whole organization, with responsibility sitting with line managers, supported by an HR Business Partner. The role of the ‘business partner’ is to

increase the orientation of HRM through the establishment of strategic consultants for other business units (Marchington, 2015). Additional data confirmed the utilization of the HR Business Partner role, albeit with suggestions of improving the support delivered to line managers (E11, HR2, HR4, HR5, HR10, HR11, HR12, L1, L2, L10). HR10 said:

“In my understanding the business partner model means that HR defines together with the business and develops together with the business the HR strategy and all the HR measures. So, we are not only a delivery unit, not only operations but we consult the business how to handle any employee topic. We are consulting and we will listen to them regarding their business needs to further on develop HR strategy.” (HR10, HR Manager – Business Partner)

Similarly, HR6 highlighted that the HR director “is trying to keep in close contact with the members of the board to, to recognize their needs very, very early” in combination with “business partners to have a very close contact to the business managers or also the managers of our central divisions to understand their needs, their challenges and to support them with whatever they need”, thus suggesting a top-down, bottom-up approach to HR, with a primary focus internally on line management activities. Although, line management respondents did not concur and believed the support being received was processual, rather than consultative. L2 said:

“I think human resources has to be more, what coming from a processual, processual and methodology point of view.... Methodology point of view. More in a, in a content and. and line function point the few. They are now to far away from the real business, too far away from the real people and that's why cannot support you in your daily work when you have people or when you want to do talent management together because they're not able to speak with you on the same, on the same level. They, they can explain the methodology perfectly, yes, but they're not able to, to review together perhaps a development plan and going into a real good discussion regarding employees because they do not know the employees. They also do not know what the employees are doing. And they are or what the role of the employee is. The different role description but there is no image what does that mean because they never worked in there. Of course, that's not my expectation but they have to get a good picture or good feeling what are the employees in their area are doing and if you do not know this really you cannot, you cannot understand the problems and also the, the, the argument sometimes why you want to let's say you want to move somebody up or say a low performer because they have no

idea of the daily work of these guys. How should they know.” (L2, Manager – Information Systems)

Ulrich and Duplebohn (2015) argue that the focus of HR needs to be outside in, with more focus towards customers and key stakeholders. This argument is supported by Cooper and Madigan (2002) who believe customer and investor interests should be the focus of the department. Reflecting on the role of the current business partner within the case study in retrospect of the Ulrich et al. (2016) model, the researcher wrote the following memo:

“Evidence emerging from the case study suggests the role of the current business partner within the case study is focused on the ‘delivery enablers’. I am surprised by the lack of strategic awareness being presented by the HR representatives and the narrow-minded focus towards supporting line management, rather than focusing on how the actions of HR can support increasing the performance of the business. The organizational enablers seem to have a back seat role, despite a number of HR respondents highlighting the focus of the companies DNA. Line managers highlighted the focus of the HR business partner on process, rather than innovation and change. Company council agreements and a strong company council may stop this happening, although innovative solutions could be sponsored. This however doesn’t seem to be the case. HR4 highlights how the image of the department is not good, although how can it be if they lack clear strategic direction, transparency and are focusing all their activities towards line management. Overall, my interpretation emerging from undertaking this study is the current business partner role needs to be positioned transparently as a consultancy arm of the business,”

Employees within the study suspected the focus of HR to be towards line management, although this had not been clearly communicated. HR8 even concurred that there is ambiguity stating:

“We are very slow. Processes, responsibilities, responsibility and the structure is not clear to our customer and not to us.” (HR8 – HR Plant Director)

E12 highlighted how he approached his business partner for training support. Two problems with this action was that firstly, the business partner is not responsible for training and secondly, the employee should, according to the business partner, speak with

the line manager. Ulrich (1997; 2015) and (Burke et al. 2007) would argue the need for building trust and HR balancing the paradoxical nature of supporting line management and employees. A business partner that works in a transparent and triangulated manner with employees and line managers could enhance the trust between each actor and increase the employee advocate and 'soft' approach of the role within the business, thus not only meeting the expectations of line managers, but also the expectations of employees.

Currently training and development options are often left to line managers to identify, highlighted via training matrixes or the appraisal system. HR4 stated that line management do not always have the specialized knowledge to make training decisions, and thus if the decisions were made in tandem with a business partner, priorities could be identified easier and the chances that the alignment of training activities to strategy would be enhanced.

"Limited business knowledge" (L2, L5, HR9) and lack of generalist knowledge were a primary concern when exploring the business partner role. Although, theory suggests this can be answered by increasing the generalist business knowledge of the business partner (Beer, 1997; Lawler, 1995; Ulrich; 1997). Dowling and Fisher (1997), in particular believes HR need to broaden their business experience and can "benefit from cross-training in HR processes" (Mohrman and Lawler, 1998: 443-4).

Similarly, line managers may not have the skills or motivation to support employee interest, especially if the focus is a cost minimization strategy (Torrington and Hall, 1996; Cappelli, 2013; Link and Müller, 2015). Line manager involvement is an area requiring considerable improvement (McGovern et al., 1997; Flood, 1998; Renwick, 2000, 2003; Francis and Keegan, 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). Evidence emerged from the

case study that line managers expected more training (L3, L4, L5, L6) to undertake their people duties. HR9 countered, saying:

“Well I think that it is a partnership and that comes back to word that you used. Business partnership, whatever. And I think that the line manager probably has an understanding of his team or her team and can do the daily, the daily interaction without too much of a problem. And that’s where HR should take place on a daily basis. The manager should need, shouldn’t need to have a lot of HR input on a daily basis. People who want, have question should be able to ask and find the answers to them remotely potentially as we said. And is only when things were more complex or need of consolidation: salaries, employee development being the obvious ones, training to some extent, that could be mixed as well. And I think that the encour-, we would encourage managers to do the, as much HR type things with their team and been seen as the focal point for their teams on HR, it is possible. That pretty much is the case right now. It’s when it goes beyond that, to consolidate or they have questions or they want to do things differently which may or may not be the right thing. That they need an extra level of professional input and guidance.”
(HR9, HR Plant Director)

Interestingly, data consistently emerged from line managers that additional support was necessary. L3 said:

“I think its very important to have a hand on my right side who can give me advice for, for tis going deeply into law thing sometimes if work... I think a good HR structure within a company is a, is a solid base I would say. If our have a HR department who understands your needs as a line manager for example then the working together is much, much easier than if not. Simple as that. The understanding of the problems of other departments from side of the HR... ...If i have a problem for example I need somebody, a headcount for that kind of position then the trust of HR department in my management position should be there. I think its very important. So that trust between HR and other departments because it could, it could easier the whole process during next year’s” (L3, Manager – Finance)

Regular meetings are taking place between business partners and line managers, with HR11 confirming that business partners often attend team meetings. Nevertheless, the business partner role is to ensure processual support, rather than contributing to a partnered decision-making process through in-depth business understanding.

In summary, line managers recognize that they are involved in HR process, although knowledge why they have to undertake particular actives is not always clear. The lack of

strategy and clear direction seems to be hindering the relationship between HR and Line Managers. Line managers would like to gain additional training and support and would advocate the business partner being further involved in the business. Line managers would like the business partner to provide greater input into the decision-making earlier, rather than checking after activities have been done. Additionally, line managers expect their business partners to have a greater understanding of the business, knowledge about the business and all the employees within their areas. Line managers would like the option of talking to their business partner about specific employees and business problems, with credible advice being provided. In conclusion, the line manager desires consultancy level support.

4.5 Conclusion

Within this chapter, the perspectives of employees, line managers and the HRM participants have been presented in context of the three main themes. This study utilized a 'triad' comparative of opinions between employees, line-managers and Human Resources participants, differing to other studies that have targeted HR managers (Sheenan et al. 2013).

The starting point for considering disbandment included the critical perspectives of HR, which considers tearing apart, killing or closing (John, 1998; Cooper, 2001; Semler, 2003; Welbourne, 2012; Feintzeig, 2014; Fischer, 2016). All respondents in the study were asked about disbanding the HR department, with contradictory evidence emerging. The emerging data defending the need for the HR department has supported the constructivist grounded theory model 'Case Study: HR Function Justification Model'.

Further exploration of how HR disbandment would be considered led to the emergent 'HRM integration review model'. The model highlights the importance of considering core and non-core HR activities in relation to a transparent HR strategy, before considering digitalization, outsourcing and the possibility of devolving HR activities.

The requirement for disbandment and HRM integration to be considered within the same context has highlighted the paradoxical nature of subject, which needs to be explored further.

In reflection, the researcher prior to the research would have assumed that the HR department would defend HR and management/employees would be overly critical and potential support the disbandment of HR. The emergent evidence has contradicted this view.

Furthermore, this chapter has provided a triangulated view of the status quo and future orientation of HRM integration with the case study, presented via the emergent data as interpreted by the researcher. Through immersion in the data and the literature, the researchers reflections resulted in strategic recommendations being identified, which are presented in the following chapter.

5 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The final objective of this research project is to develop a strategic recommendation for the future development of HRM integration within the case study. This chapter will present the strategic recommendations, which have emerged through comparative analysis of the literature and data.

The strategic recommendations are the conclusion of the data findings from the three themes presented within the previous chapter. Emphasis will be made on the future development of HRM integration for the case study organisation.

conGT recognizes the role of the researcher in the emergence of theory (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher recognises that these strategic recommendations are the researchers own interpretation of the findings. Additionally, in reflection the researcher recognizes that ones own epistemological perspective, ontological perspective and own experiences hold bearing on these strategic recommendations.

Each sub-chapter within this chapter will focus on a strategic recommendation. Firstly, the strategic recommendation will be presented in relation to the findings. Secondly, the researcher will suggest how the recommendation could be actioned in context of the case study. In addition, suggested actions will include organisational actors, potential investment costs and benefits to the organization.

The chapter will conclude with a summary of the strategic recommendations.

5.1 Strategic Recommendation 1 – Avoid disbandment of the HR function

Literature presented within this research paper suggests that HR should be disbanded or 'killed' in order to force HR back into the organisation (Weber and Feintzeig, 2014; Semler, 2003; Welbourne, 2012; Fischer 2016). Exploring the possibility of taking this approach resulted in a constant opinion emerging. The conGT model, which emerged from the research, highlights the view by the employees, line managers and human resources respondents that the HR department is a necessary function within the case study.



Figure 5: Case Study: HR Function Justification Model

Therefore, the researcher would recommend the case study organisation disregarding the literature on disbanding HR and focusing on delivering appropriate services to the departments stakeholders, specifically the two core customers, employees and line management. The researcher would recommend senior HR management consider the

emergent data on why each respondent group needs the HR department, especially as no additional costs would be incurred, prior to the establishment of the future HR strategy.

5.2 Strategic Recommendation 2 – Communicate a transparent HR Strategy

Although evidence emerged from the research study that HR may be strategically involved, with HR holding a place on the board, no evidence emerged of a transparent strategy, in keeping with the position by Wächter and Müller (2002) and Festing (2012) that German companies are less likely to have a written down HR strategy.

Nevertheless, the literature supporting a transparent top-down bottom-up HR strategy is overwhelming (Boxall and Purcell 2006; Katou and Budhwar, 2006; 2007; Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015; Sheenan 2015). Exploration of the HRM strategy within the case study was inconclusive due to a lack of transparency.

Berggren and Bernshtyen (2007) advocate that strategy needs to be clearly communicated. Budhwar (1998) argue that along with board representation and HR involvement in strategy development, there needs to be a written personnel strategy translated into the business. Arguments for transparency have been highlighted within this paper, including increased accountability, with individual contributions to performance becoming more evident (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007); alignment of organisational and individual goals can improve performance (Sirota et al. 2005); increased participative leadership, employee involvement and motivation (Gomez-Mejia et al. 2003; Sirota et al. 2005); increases employee empowerment (Gomez-Mejia et al. 2003); clearer understanding of ones own goals and relationship to other employees' and organization'

objectives (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007); reduce risk (Marschall and Weetman, 2007); transparency can improve reputation (Geraats 2004); promote collaboration between employees (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007); transparency can lower the cost of capital (Barth et al. 2013) ; can positively influence market position (Eldomiaty and Choi; 2006; Ke et al. 2013); and increased organizational effectiveness (Berggren and Bernshtyen, 2007; Christensen and Cheney, 2015); and create higher trust and credibility (Norman et al. 2010; Sandoff and Widell 2015). Thus, the researcher would recommend the case study making the HR strategy transparent.

The researcher would recommend the organisations HR Director revising the current HR strategy before confirming the organisations HR strategy at the next available board meeting and subsequent supervisory board meeting. Once agreed at board level, the plan of making the HR strategy transparent should be communicated to the company's Betriebsrat (Company Council).

Thereafter, the HR strategy can be communicated to both the HR function and organisation. The researcher would recommend communicating the HR strategy to the organization through the utilization of the internal communication team. The internal communication team may decide to launch a larger campaign or simply email all employees within the organization. The researcher would expect the internal communication team to provide consultative advice, specifically regarding a communication action plan and costing.

Additionally, the researcher would recommend communicating the HR strategy top-down through the HR management structure, utilizing weekly team meetings to present the HR strategy and discuss the implementations for the wider context of HRM within the

organisation. These meetings would provide lower levels of the HR team, the opportunity to provide feedback, highlight discrepancies in practice and strategy, with future alignment of HRM activities taking focus. Furthermore, the HR strategy should be shared with all subsidiaries and plants internationally, so that local HR Directors and their teams can align the local strategy, applying consistency whilst considering the local implications. Finalization of this process could be completed within three months.

Following on from this one time process, the researcher would recommend the organization and HR team implement a process of reviewing the HR strategy regularly with strategy updates communicated to the organization accordingly. For example, the board could confirm the HR strategy on an annual basis as a prerequisite to the company's target setting process.

In conclusion, making the HR strategy transparent does not have direct financial costs but the time invested at board level and in subsequent HR meetings should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, the researcher believes the overwhelming evidence emerging through the literature review about the advantages of HRM strategy transparency, including the possibility of gaining competitive advantage, provides a strong argument for taking this approach.

5.3 Strategic Recommendation 3 – Review HR activities in context of transparent strategy

According to Berggren and Bernshtyen (2007: 413), the primary factor required in order to enhance company performance from transparency is by having a “clearly defined strategy that is broken down into individual actionable goals through the organization”. Core activities, policies and procedures which are correctly aligned, is fundamental to ensuring

a congruent fit between HR practice and business strategy (Miles and Snow, 1984; Baird and Meshoulam, 1988; Wright and McMahan, 1992; Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Greer, 1995; Armstrong 2017) and can lead to competitive advantage (Huselid et al. 1997).

Although, without transparency, how can the core activities, policies and procedures be correctly aligned, which is fundamental to ensuring a congruent fit between HR practice and business strategy (Miles and Snow, 1984; Baird and Meshoulam, 1988; Wright and McMahan, 1992; Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Greer, 1995; Armstrong, 2017).

Limited evidence of integrated policies emerged within this explorative study, with further evidence indicating that different HR departments are working in silo. Moreover, no evidence emerged that policies and processes were being aligned to a common HR strategy. Therefore following on from strategy recommendation 2 and the communication of a transparent HR strategy, the researcher would subsequently recommend reviewing all HR policies and practices in accordance with the clear strategic direction.

In order to start this process, the researcher recommends utilizing the emergent conGT HR Integration Review Model, starting by distinguishing between core and non-core activities, in the context of the organisations transparent strategy, as recommended by Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015).

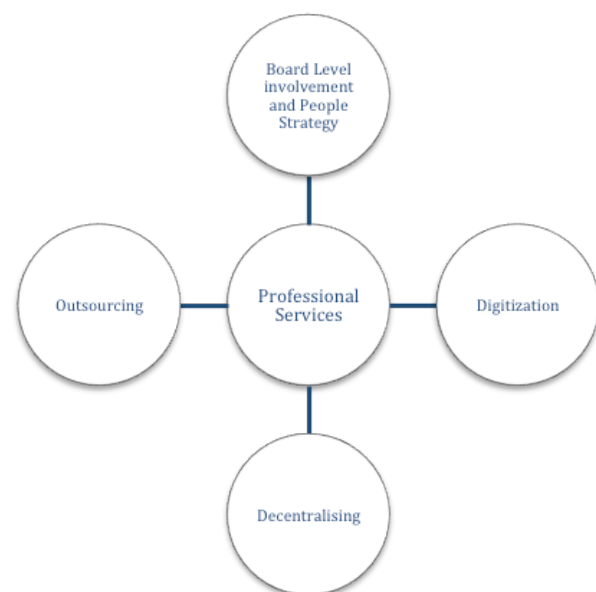


Figure 6: Case Study: Integration Review Model
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Furthermore, the researcher would recommend that decisions be made which activities need to be outsourced and digitalised. The benefits of digitalising activities can enhance HRM integration (Payne et al 2009; Bondarouk and Ruël 2009; Armstrong 2017; Bondarouk et al., 2017). Similarly, outsourcing can support services being delivered faster and cheaper; increase expertise; and improve company performance (Miller, 2006; Armstrong 2017). Vice versa, the researcher recommends that activities, which have already been outsourced or digitalized be critically reviewed in the context of the transparent strategy.

Evidence emerged through the study that a 'hard' approach was being followed, with the structure of the HR department structured similar to Ulrich's (1997) function, in keeping with the view that German HR functions are typically structured in this manner (Festing, 2012). The organisation utilises a Business Partner role to support line managers in the HR activities, which have already been decentralized.

The decentralization of activities to line management is consistent within the literature and is deemed fundamental for HRM integration (Schuler, 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Budhwar, 1998; Hope-Bailey et al. 1997; Sisson and Storey, 2000; Sikora and Ferris, 2014; Sheenan, 2005; Link and Müller, 2015). This theme also emerged during the interviews as being important for the future of HRM integration. Nevertheless, putting career development in the hands of line management was compared to playing roulette, with employees and line managers alike with expectations being raised that the HR function should continue lobbying training and development, in addition to monitoring line managers activities.

Especially as “Line managers might lack the skills, motivation or hierarchical power to support and represent employees’ interests (Renwick, 2003), specifically when HRM is urged to focus on strategic issues and cost efficiency (Winstanley and Woodall, 2000), which can create tension (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Line manager involvement is an area requiring considerable improvement (McGovern et al., 1997; Flood, 1998; Renwick, 2000, 2003; Francis and Keegan, 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

Undertaking a detailed review could snow ball into a timely project, swamping significant resources from other projects and daily activities. The researcher would recommend utilising two approaches to review all HR activities in context of the transparent strategy. Firstly, when the HR strategy is communicated to each HR team, the HR hierarchy can ask each team member to review his or her activities, communicating back at the following team meeting. This top-down bottom-up approach would quickly highlight incongruences and improvements to senior management. The recommendations could then be considered individually with cost, time and implications being reviewed independently. Secondly, the researcher would recommend adding an objective to each HR member’s targets, to ensure that HR activities, policies and procedures are continuously considered in context of both the organisation’s focus and HR strategic direction.

A quick review utilizing the team meeting structure would avoid direct costs being invested, although the time investment would be significant with HR team members taking time to consider their activities in context of the strategy, possibly creating presentations or reports, and presenting recommendations within team meetings. Undertaking this activity would also raise expectations that some recommendations will be initiated. The board must be aware that some recommendations may have financial implications, although could be agreed independently of this action.

Additionally, policy and practice amendments may be difficult to implement quickly due to the requirement of the Betriebsrat codetermination rights. Nevertheless, the researcher would like to believe that increased transparency would improve trust between management and the Betriebsrat, supporting the implementation of future policy.

In conclusion, the researcher believes the overwhelming evidence emerging through the literature review about the advantages of aligning HR activities with HRM strategy will justify the time spent and potential challenges of undertaking this action. The initial review could be undertaken over the following 12 months, with systematic reviews being undertaken annually.

5.4 Strategic Recommendation 4 – Review Business Partner Role in context of a transparent HR strategy

Gerpott (2015) illustrated that 28 of the German DAX30 companies have implemented an Ulrich-style structure, with many small and medium-sized companies mimicking their larger counterparts (DGFP, 2011; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012; Festling, 2012; Giardini, Kabst, and Müller-Carmen, 2005; Thill et al. 2014; Shrank, 2015) and although critiques of this approach exist, evidence emerged from the case study that the Business Partner model is being followed. Further explorative raised questions about the business partner role, with evidence emerging for the role to be reviewed.

Firstly, Marchington (2015) advocates the importance of the strategic consultancy role of the HR business partners. Data emerged that the current business partner role is focused on processual activities and lacks the business understanding to strategically support line management. Emergent data indicated that line managers would like the business partner to be further involved in the business; provide greater input into the decision-making rather

than being a controller of process; and have a greater understanding of the business, knowledge about their business areas and all the employees within their areas.

Beatty et al. (2003) believe the primary role of HR executives is to create a culture, which encourages openness needed to gain the trust of customers and investors. According to Ulrich et al. (2015), this requires a shift to an outside in, inside out mind-set, supporting not only a 'best fit' approach but also the 'RBV' approach. The increased understanding of the business, a shift in mind set and greater knowledge of the employees, in combination an outside in mind-set would enhance the strategic contribution of the role, shifting a focus of 'delivery enabler' to strategic partner (Ulrich et al. 2015).

Aligning the Business Partner role with the needs of the business could result in a mixture of performance classifications including HR-related outcomes, organizational outcomes, financial outcomes and capital market outcomes (Dyer and Reeves, 1995, as cited in, Boxall, Purcell and Wright, 2007). Additionally, aligning the business partner role can enhance horizontal fit (Wei, 2006) but would require further investment.

Evidence emerged that the business partner role is responsible for between 600-800 employees, with further investment required to decrease this number. Reducing the number of employees within a business partner's responsibility, credibility and trustworthiness may improve (Ulrich et al. 2015). Although this study makes no recommendation on how many people/departments a Business Partner should support, the structure of the Business Partner role should be reviewed in context of the organisations HR strategy.

The discourse on the business partner role does raise concerns for the employee advocate role, expected by employees, although expectations could be managed through increased transparency.

The most significant aspect of HR structure is that it needs to align with the company strategy and fit the needs of the business (Ajagbe et al. 2016; Long et al. 2013b, Kavale 2012, Armstrong, 2017). The Business Partner role could be adapted. In conclusion, the researcher recommends reviewing the Business Partner role in relation to the emergent data within this study and the organisation's transparent HR strategy. Responsibility for the review could be delegated to the Head of HR Business Partners, with recommendations presented to the HR Director. The review could be completed within the following 12 months, undertaken within the current meeting framework or through the initiation of a specific workshop, inviting key stakeholders from the business to review the support role in context of the organisation's needs and the transparent HR strategy.

5.5 Strategic Recommendation 5 – Review the governance function of the Business Partner and establish a transparent grievance process

A consistent theme emerging for the future of HRM, is the overwhelming support for the HR department to play a role in organizational governance, specifically governing the line management practice. Findings within this study reiterated that strategy development and application of policies and procedures needs to be consistent and fair, with HR respondents expressing an intrinsic sense of responsibility in ensuring consistency and fairness.

In consideration of the literature review and the German business model, including supervisory boards and co-determination, which effectively ensures business practice is continuously governed; HR taking a governance role may have been expected. Although, for sound governance to be present, transparency and trust is required (Greenberg, 2009). Evidence emerging from the case study highlighted the lack of transparency surrounding the HR function, specifically around responsibilities, strategy and roles.

The lack of transparency surrounding the roles and responsibilities of HR could be due to the lack of contact that a number of the respondents held with the function. Nevertheless, the researcher would recommend the HR function starting a campaign to increase awareness of the HR function, which could be undertaken in tandem with communicating the HR Strategy. Role booklets, sharing job descriptions and creating an internal HR website with information about the team could support transparency, although the researcher would recommend utilising the services of the internal communications team to establish a clear plan.

Furthermore, question marks must be raised whether the Business Partner, who is evidently focused on servicing line-management, is in a position to govern line-management practice. In reflection, this raises a significant area of concern, especially as no evidence of a clear grievance process emerged from the study. Therefore, the researcher would recommend starting a project group with the Betriebsrat to ensure a fair and open grievance procedure is communicated transparently to all employees, within the following 12 months.

In conclusion, the researcher would ensure a transparent grievance process is implemented, minimizing the reliance on the Business Partner to ensure sound

governance. In addition, the researcher would recommend reviewing the expectations of the Business Partner in context of the organisational strategy and future Business Partner role, ensuring the governance aspects of the role are transparently communicated to all stakeholders within the organisation.

5.6 Strategic Recommendations – Potential benefits for the research participants

The recommendations presented within this chapter are intended to contribute to the continuous improvement of the organisation and could subsequently benefit various parties involved within the study. The table on the following page summaries the potential benefits of each recommendation with specific consideration of each respondent group involved within the study.

Strategic Recommendation	Potential Benefits
Avoid disbandment of the HR function	The evidence emerging from this study suggests the function has a valued contribution to make to the organisation and could benefit the parties involved within the study. Employees should benefit from the continuation of the governance role of the function, as disbandment could lead to a decrease in fairness and transparency within the organisation. The employees will also benefit from the continuation of administrative services and single point of enquiry for employee data related questions. Additionally, the function has a role in consulting line management and maintaining an umbrella view of HR topics within the organisation, such as lobbying organisational-wide training initiatives and the company DNA. Overall, disbandment would not be encouraged because of the emergent benefits arising from this study and subsequent consequences for employees, line management and HR employees from taking this approach.
Communicate a transparent strategy	Recommendation two could provide a general benefit to the organisation and shareholders, via the potential of increasing competitive advantage and/or share value. Further transparency of the HR function could increase the awareness of the functions responsibility for employees and line management, whilst providing clearer rationale and focus for HR employees in their everyday work. The clarity for HR employees and function could lead to resources being aligned and utilised more appropriately.
Review HR activities in context of transparent strategy	Alignment of all activities in context of the transparent strategy, there is the opportunity for the organisation to align resources more effectively and potentially enhance competitive advantage. Additionally, the alignment of activities to strategy will benefit HR teams within the organisation focus their resources, whilst at the same time possibly benefitting line management with clarity over their own HR responsibilities.
Review Business Partner Role in context of a transparent strategy	Revision of the Business Partner role in context of a transparent strategy, there is the possibility of benefiting the organisation by reducing tensions and the 'black box' within the organisation. Employees and line management can both benefit from an enhanced business partner role, in that they can potentially receive the services and support they demand of their HR function. Additionally, by providing a more effective support network for line management, one would assume the quality of line management could improve and subsequently the everyday working environment for all employees resulting in overall business performance.
Review the governance function of the business partner and establish a transparent grievance process	A transparent grievance process could benefit the organisation and line management become aware of unheard grievances, which could be impacting morale or performance. The provision of a formal process to challenge or express concerns about company policies can reduce hearsay and ideally resolve problems before they transpire benefiting all parties. Furthermore, a formal process provides employees with a voice to protect their own welfare and encourages line management to listen.

TABLE 11: Strategic Recommendations – Potential benefits for the research participants
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5.7 Summary of Strategic Recommendations

The final objective of the study was to develop a strategic recommendation for the future development of HRM integration within the case study, with further implications for the industry. This objective has been fulfilled through the five strategic recommendations presented within this chapter.

The researcher recognizes that the recommendations emerging within this study have been the result of the interactions between the researcher and respondents involved in the research study. The interpretive belief of the researcher is that the strategic recommendations have emerged as a result of the explorative study undertaken. The individualized nature of HRM integration means that the recommendations stated here, may not be appropriate for other organizations. Nevertheless, the arguments for HR transparency are significant and could be transferred to other organizations.

In conclusion, the researcher recommends the case study organization to follow a four staged process of enhancing HRM integration within the organization, rather than 'killing HR'. The HR defence model in provides justification for the retention of the department.

The first stage, requires the Board and the HR Director to define, write down and make the HR strategy transparent throughout the business. Significant literature supports this approach with benefits of HRM integration, governance and potential competitive advantage possible. A communication plan should be realised with the internal communications team and realised within 3 months.

Secondly, in the context of the HR strategy, all policies and practices should be reviewed, supporting the alignment of practise and the optimization of horizontal and vertical integration. Consideration to outsourcing, digitalisation and decentralizing to line management should be considered. A full review should be completed within 12 months of communicating the HRM strategy.

The third stage recommends the organization reviewing the current Business Partner role in context of the HR strategy. The role should benefit the vertical integration of core HR activities in line management activities, whilst providing appropriate support for employees and line managers to move in the direction of the organizational and HR strategies. A review should be completed within 12 months of the HR strategy being communicated.

The fourth recommendation includes a transparent reflection of governance within the Business Partner role, in addition to the implementation of a transparent grievance process. The grievance process should be established and communicated with support of the Betriebsrat and completed within the next 12 months.

5.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the strategic recommendations presented within this chapter have emerged from the literature review; the different perspectives voiced by employees, line managers and human resources respondents within this study and the interpretation of the data by the researcher.

The constructivist grounded theory presented within the previous pages, concluding with the strategic recommendations presented within this chapter will be delivered to the managing board of the case study. The theory will hopefully be discussed and developed in context of the larger organizational picture in keeping with Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1995; Charmaz, 2014).

The next chapter, which concludes this research thesis intends to critique the constructivist grounded theory presented in this report, highlighting the limitations of the study and recommending further research implications.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this constructivist grounded theory study was to explore the HRM integration within a German Automotive Manufacturer. The case study, a DAX30 company, was identified through the convenience of the authors network. The utilization of one organization was in keeping with HRM integration, which is organizational specific (Boxall and Purcell, 2006).

In effect, this study was an explorative investigation into HRM integration within the case study organization. Firstly, the project aimed to **establish a status quo reflection of HRM integration within the case study**, providing readers an introduction to HRM within a German Automotive Manufacturer. Secondly, the researcher explored HRM, through a blank canvas strategy, **the future role of HRM integration within the case study, according to a comparison of employees, line management and HR respondents**. Typically, research focuses on one group and the comparison provided an insight into the different perspectives. Thirdly, this investigation intended **to develop a strategic recommendation for the future development of HRM integration within the case study**. Through the utilization of Constructivist Grounded Theory, this thesis has fulfilled these objectives. The theory emerged through the meticulous application of the methodology recommended by Charmaz (2014).

This chapter will firstly provide a reflection on how the theory contributes to research and practice. Secondly, reflections on the theory and methodology will be presented before the chapter evaluates the credibility of the emergent grounded theory.

Reflections on how the grounded theory can be generalized for a broader audience will be

presented, in addition to the limitations of the study. To conclude the chapter, the researcher will recommend future research direction and development direction of the theory.

6.1 Summary of Theory, Research and Practice

According to Glaser (1998) GT can support the emergence of new theory where there has been little research and can support the development of new ideas into past problems. Similarly, Charmaz (2014) sees the benefits of GT, although “the constructivist approach treats research as a construction but acknowledges that it occurs under specific conditions - of which we may not be aware and which may not be of our choosing” (Charmaz, 2014:9). The term ‘constructivist’ acknowledges the subjectivity, researchers involvement and the interpretation of the data, which is in keeping with a social constructivist position. The researcher recognizes that the emergent theory presented within this thesis has been ‘constructed’ within the social contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013) of the research study and is the interpretation of researcher. Albeit, the theory here has been rigorously subjected to comparative analysis and supported with extensive literature evidence. The discourse held within the previous chapters has been presented with the intention for readers to gain an understanding of the emergent theory and contextual position of the research. The researcher believes acknowledging ones own ontological position in this research process adds integrity to the theory presented within these pages.

The theory presented in this thesis has been ‘constructed’ through semi-structured interviews with employees, line management and Human Resources respondents and supporting literature review. The conGT presented within this thesis, has contributed to theory, research and practice, with the researchers interpretations below.

The contributions to practice are most significant for the case study organization. This thesis provides the board with a status quo reflection of HRM integration within the organization and strategic recommendations for the future, most notably being the increased transparency of HRM strategy, created through two-way linkage with the organizational strategy (Boxall and Purcell 2006; Katou and Budhwar, 2006; 2007; Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015; Sheenan 2015).

Through exploring the topic within the context of German organization, this thesis also contributes to knowledge on German organizations for readers outside of Germany, in particular discussion about structure, co-determination and presenting views from employees, line-managers and HR respondents. The researcher, being bilingual and able to utilize a network within the industry, was able to gain trust privileged access to sensitive data, which is presented within this study and adds to the limited research surrounding German organizations (Pudelko, 2006).

Although inconclusive, there is significant support that Strategic Human Resources Management can improve competitive advantage (Beer et al. 1984; Barney and Wright, 1998; Tovstiga, 1999; Wright et al, 1994; McDuffie 1995; Guest, 1997; Schuler and Jackson, 2005; 2007; Armstrong 2017). Despite, significant support research intermittently appears calling for a cull (John, 1998; Welbourne, 2012; Fischer; 2016). This study explored whether these later arguments should be considered. Contrary to these views, support was expressed for the HR function, with employees and line manager's adamant that the HR function is a necessary part of the organization. HR surprisingly was the only respondent group to suggest that disbandment of the HR function could be done, however with a significant 'but'. The conGT model 'Case Study: HR Function Justification Model'

presented within this report contributes further evidence for the departments existence, in wake of constant attacks.

Further exploration of disbandment held within the study, highlighted the similarities between disbandment and integration, expanding on the theory of HR paradoxes, by Gerpott (2015). Although aspects of HRM integration have been recognized as paradoxes (e.g. centralization vs. decentralization), the subject as a whole has not been recognized as paradoxical. In order to integrate HRM, HRM requires disbandment. The concept of disbandment and integration going hand in hand is clearly paradoxical, as the necessity of disbandment requires integration, and integration of HRM is supported through disbandment. The researcher proposes that HRM integration vs. Disbandment be recognized as paradoxical and further research be undertaken to explore umbrella tensions caused by this paradoxical dimension.

This thesis has proposed new theory in the field of HRM integration, reconfirmed some knowledge claims within the field and provided new avenues of direction for the future. Moreover, the contributions of knowledge within this paper overlap both theory and practice. The discourse held within this paper on HRM integration provides additional insight into the theoretical realm of HRM integration, in addition to providing strategic recommendations to the case study. In conclusion, the key contributions to knowledge presented within this thesis is firstly an Insight into HRM integration within a German Automotive organization. Secondly, the conGT model justifying the retention of the HR function, with varying perspectives supporting the arguments for not disbanding the function. Thirdly, for a wider audience the consideration of the paradoxical nature of HRM Integration. Finally, specifically for the organization, strategic recommendations for the board to consider.

6.2 Reflective summary of Constructivist Grounded Theory

This study has been conducted fully from the ontological, epistemological and methodological position of Constructed Grounded Theory. Alternative grounded theory approaches were considered and discounted because of their ontological position, for example Glaser's classical grounded theory, which is nominatively positioned. Inductive data construction and theoretical sampling were used to construct categories, whilst ensuring constant comparison throughout the study, as recommended by Charmaz (2014).

The researcher followed the approach stipulated by Charmaz (2014), believing the approach provided both a focus and flexibility, not available in other methodological approaches, such as 'comparative analysis'. The continual comparison provided the researcher with the time to develop codes and memos and continue exploration further within the fields, which were emerging from the data source.

As a reflection, the researcher under-anticipated the amount of flexibility the approach required and in future studies the researcher would be able to embrace the flexibility from the beginning of the study. Importantly, the researcher now believes the approach requires balancing the need for gaining new code and themes, whilst exploring predetermined themes within the study. The researcher reflected after the first couple of interviews, to avoid exploring topics at the beginning of the interview, because this could be leading the respondents. The researcher found asking standardized questions at the beginning of the interview and refraining from prejudicing respondents' opinions supported the collection of new data. The later part of interviews was then utilized to explore topics and themes already identified within that comparative process. The researcher believes that this approach allowed the researcher not only to identify and explore themes further, but also allowed the researcher to know when saturation point had emerged.

The researcher recognised a saturation point when no new coded data was occurring and further exploration would not contribute to the memos and themes emerging from the study. For future studies, the number of participants may be reduced, although as part of the DBA proposal process, predetermined numbers were suggested, and the researcher fulfilled these obligations, in agreement with his supervisors.

Fundamental to Grounded Theory is the comparative method, which requires the researcher to constantly compare data throughout the study (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser 2005). Presented within the methodology chapter are the formal reflection points of the study, although from the experience of the researcher, comparisons are occurring constantly throughout the research study, can occur at any time, whether that is during an interview or in the shower. Albeit, starting this process straight away was unrealistic due to the inexperience of the researcher and the time period required for both the research proposal and ethical procedures. Nonetheless, from agreement to progress, the researcher retain diligent to capturing memos.

The researcher on reflection found it beneficial to write memos continuously, even if the memo was on a scrap piece of paper or by writing an email to oneself to reflect upon the data. Often there was not time to write perfectly and the researcher found capturing the idea more important, a recommendation for all future conGT researchers. In addition, the researcher would recommend starting the memoing process as early as possible, even if research or ethical agreement is required. A challenge for a DBA student is capturing the ideas that occurred earlier on the programme, which an experienced conGT researcher would capture. In summary, the inexperience of the researcher on this project led to inefficient memoing earlier in the project, which improved as the study developed.

All Memos were kept in a file or in the interview notes and were continuously reviewed as part of the comparative method. Nevertheless, the researcher found maintaining a sequential record of thoughts challenging as the researcher found interpretations and themes emerged in a disordered manner. For example, a theme may appear but is not explored completely to the end before other themes appear. The balance of the conGT researcher is to recognize code and themes relevance to previously explored topics. This requires a diligent approach to memo taking. Although some researchers may be better at writing formal memos, the researcher found capturing memos more important than grammatically literacy. Moreover, the importance of continuously comparing code, memos and themes in was paramount to the evolution of the theories presented within this paper.

The researcher found manually coding and comparing data brought the theories to life, although because of the significant amount of data, the researcher found it difficult to remain focused on line coding and detail at times. Often thoughts about the bigger picture and comparisons to previous interviews made manual line coding a challenge. Nevertheless, by manually coding, the researcher felt complete emergent in the data and reflectively believes this significantly supported the research study. As highlighted within the methodology chapter, NVivo was utilized towards the end of the research study, effectively requiring the researcher to reset and restart the analysis. Although, the researcher felt that saturation point had been achieved, the research supervisors pushed for the data to be analysed via the support of NVivo. In reflection, the restarting of the process allowed the researcher to capture code, supporting emergent themes and was a beneficial step in the process.

The researcher expected further analysis from NVivo, although Vivo does not do the work. The system is limited by the data and coding completed by the researcher – queries, reports and hierarchies. Additionally, the analysis tools available are predominately quantitative and would be more suited to a ‘comparative analysis’ study or a qualitative study, which is aiming to justify itself through quantifying the data.

Reflecting on the analysis process with the support of the NVivo software, on reflection the researcher found coding significantly easier than when coding manually. In addition, the structured recording of code was easier to sort, in comparison to the manual process. Although, this may be due to the manual process already being undertaken providing the researcher with a unconscious prejudicial framework. The researcher believes the NVivo step within the analysis process supported the structural construction of the data, supported an additional comparison of the data - manual vs. NVivo analysis, reasserted the core themes, and provided the researcher with evidence that saturation point had been reached.

Further learning from undertaking the manual and NVivo analysis included the awareness of how time-consuming nature of analysis. The researcher was in the fortunate position to work on the research project full-time for 6 months of 2017, although had this analysis needed to be undertaken as a part-time student, the required project length would have been significantly longer.

During this study, the researcher followed the recommendation by Charmaz (2014) to undertake the manual analysis and subsequently restart the process utilizing NVivo. In future research projects, the researcher would consider undertaking manual and NVivo analysis in tandem, possible through the flexibility offered in conGT.

Additional learning included that total emergence in the data is necessary for the researcher to gain the benefit from the grounded theory approach. Continuously comparing the data, code, memos and themes supports emergent theory develop. This thesis is a presentation of the emergent theory at this point in time, but similarly how Ulrich's model has evolved in the last 20 years, further research projects could support the evolution of the models presented within this thesis.

In conclusion, following the conGT methodology highlighted by Charmaz (2014), the inexperienced researcher is provided with substantial methodological guidance. Albeit, the process is rather abstract and requires the researcher to be willing to start a journey without knowing the destination. The comparative approach is time consuming and requires the researcher to continuously shift between an 'etic' and 'emic' viewpoint, often moving in an unknown direction, resulting in the emergence of new theory or the development of new ideas. Fortunately, for this inexperienced researcher, the research proposal phase required clearly defined research objectives. Some GT practitioners argue that objectives should not be written. Although, without these objectives, the researcher may have got lost and is glad they were present within this study.

6.3 Evaluating the trustworthiness of the emergent theory

The research proposal process required study aims and anticipated outcomes to be presented, which is considered unwise (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as research outcomes will emerge from the data (Charmaz; 2014). Despite these views, meeting university proposal guidelines within conGT are recognized (Hunter et al., 2011). The researcher had identified three research objectives, which have all been met.

The first objective included establishing a status quo reflection of HRM integration within the case study. Through the utilization of literature and the emergent data within this study, the current status was presented in chapter 4.

The second objective included the exploration of HRM according to a comparison of employees, line management and HR respondents. The presentation of the data in chapter 4, along with the corresponding models includes these varying perspectives, providing the reader with alternative perspectives of the topic.

The final objective included the development of a strategic recommendation for the future development of HRM integration within the case study, which was presented in chapter 5.

The researcher anticipated that employees, managers and HR personnel would have differing expectations, which was evident within the study. The triangulation perspective provided greater scope for comparative sampling, recommended by (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and Charmaz (2014) and increases the conceptual evidence supporting the emergent theories.

Secondly, the researcher anticipated that the HR function would have a role to play in the future, albeit with a different construction to the one utilized today. The emergent theory supports this anticipated outcome, although the unanimous voice by employees and line-managers supporting HR surprised the researcher.

Although the researcher anticipated a discussion surrounding the core services and structure of the HR department, the lack of HR strategy restricted this discussion.

The researcher also anticipated challenges to HRM integration, in particular by line-management. Despite line-managers not wanting to be a dumping ground for administrative tasks, the line-managers involved in the study expected further integration and support. The researcher expected the results to generate discussion on future training and identification of HR service gaps, which in fact did occur.

Finally, the researcher anticipated the research outcomes to provide a strategic recommendation for the future of HRM in the case study organization, and a springboard for further research to be undertaken in the field, which has emerged.

The researcher followed the conGT methodology of Charmaz (2014:1), which requires researchers to being with “inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis.” (Charmaz, 2014). The comparative methods, according to (Charmaz, 2014) are paramount in ensuring trustworthiness of the study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage a goodness of fit with Guba (1985) also highlighting criteria to determine trustworthiness as **credibility**, **transferability**, **dependability** and **confirmability**. Credibility being how congruent the findings are with reality. Transferability focuses on how the findings can be transferred to other situations in context. Dependability focusing on the clarity of methodology of study so that it can be critiqued and potentially replicated. Confirmability is about ensuring the results of our experiences of the informants rather than the preferences of the researcher. Utilizing Guba (1986), the researcher believes transferability, dependability and confirmability have been realized. conGT

provides a theory, which can be compared and expanded within the context of further theoretical sampling ensuring, being adapted for a wider audience. The method followed has followed Charmaz (2014) recommended model and can be followed through the writings within this thesis. And finally, the reflective nature of the conGT approach and requirement to start with inductive data supports confirmability. The philosophical positioning of the researcher is argumentation to avoid discussing reality topics.

Tracey's (2010:837) "Big-Tent" model processes eight key criteria for assessing quality. Firstly to identify whether a topic is worthy, relevant timely and offers significant interest. The researcher claims the topic is of significant interest to the case study organization and the wider audience, with HRM integration an on-going field of interest.

Secondly, to ask whether there is a richness of data collection and analysis providing rigour. The data emergent from this case study was taken from 36 respondents, across three sub-groups including employees, line-managers and Human resources respondents. Each sub-group has 12 respondents, which is recognized by Charmaz (2014) a sufficient number of interviews to discern themes. The researcher felt saturation point had been reached prior to the interviews concluding, fitting with a saturation strategy recommended by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Mason (2010).

Thirdly, does the research show sincerity, via reflexivity and transparency? The researcher believes through following the methodology recommended by Charmaz (2014) and continuously comparing data and thoughts, in the context of the supporting literature review, both sincerity and credibility have been achieved. The combination of the emergent theory has significant contribution for the case study and has resonance for future parties to evolve the conGT within this study with further conceptual input.

Similarities between each of these models of assessing qualitative trustworthiness can be identified and compared with Glaser's (1978:4-5) criteria of fit, work, relevance and modifiability. However, these Glaser's criteria emphasizes the alignment of GT with a positivist perspective that will hold the test of time, thus the final review trustworthiness will be undertaken utilizing Charmaz (2006; 2014) criteria for assessing trustworthiness.

The four evaluation criteria, which are credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness (Charmaz, 2006:186) are supported by a list of questions, presented in the methodology chapter. This sub-chapter provides a reflective answering of these questions and evidence arguing the attainment of trustworthiness of this conGT study.

6.3.1 Credibility

The researcher found the approach to the study is credible as the methodology recommended by Charmaz (2014) has been followed diligently throughout the process. Through the continuous comparison of inductively sourced data, in combination with the supporting literature review, the conclusions and recommendations presented within this thesis are coherent and credible. The researcher followed a saturation strategy and feels that the range and depth of the observations were appropriate to this exploration, although acknowledges that further studies in other contextual situations would support the development of the emerging theory. A systematic comparison between observations and categories was undertaken, presented within the methodology chapter. Additionally, the wide-ranging observations gathered within the study support the topic of HRM integration, with the claims being made within the thesis being appropriate for an independent part to acknowledge. In conclusion, the researcher believes this research to be credible, due to:

an integration of inductively emergent themes and literature; procedural credibility, through diligently following Charmaz's (2014) approach the rigorous application of the constant comparative method, ensuring closeness of the theories to the data (Glaser 1998; Charmaz 2014).

6.3.2 Originality

The consideration of disbanding HR within the research methodology and the emerging theory both provide this study with originality. The study challenges the need to disband HR, contributing to the discourse on the justification of HR, albeit from a non-financial perspective.

The study has also contributed to the discourse on hard and soft HR, supporting the theory that hard HR tends to be followed. Additionally, new insights into how the business partner role could be developed within the context of this organization have been explored.

The study has contributed original insight into the paradoxical nature of integrating HR, and suggests HRM integration is paradoxical, arguing for further exploration in the field.

The study supports the theory that DAX30 companies don't have a transparent HR strategy, providing literature evidence challenging this trend.

The study has provided new light on HRM integration within the context of a German Automotive Manufacturer.

Finally, the research has presented a strategic recommendation for the case study.

In conclusion, the researcher believes the conGT presented within this thesis provides original theory. The contribution to theory includes data challenging the disbandment of HRM, increases awareness of the paradoxical aspect of HRM integration and provides new insight into HRM integration within a German Automotive Manufacturer.

6.3.3 Resonance

The grounded theory presented within this thesis portrays the fullness of the experience studied within the study. Although, the researcher had research objectives, the scope of the study maintained significant vagueness, thus allowing the themes to inductively emerge from the data.

Employee respondents highlighted the taken for granted aspect of HR being a neutral partner and the role of governance within the case study being of paramount importance. Additionally, the contribution provides deeper insight into the relationship between HR and Line management. By interviewing employees, line managers and HR respondents, the research has provided a triangulation of views, which provided greater opportunity to compare data, increasing the resonance of the role of the HR function in HRM integration.

Checking data with respondents following interviews ensured the grounded theory makes sense to the people involved. The contributions presented within this thesis resonate with the HR respondents involved within the study. This provides the researcher with encouragement that the wider community within the organization will also see value in the contributions of this study.

Moreover, the contribution highlights the need for greater transparency in the case study.

6.3.4 Usefulness

A summary of the report will be sent to management board and each of the candidates. Additionally, a copy of the thesis will be sent to the HR director and two plant directors. The author believes the recommendations within this thesis will be considered in context of the future strategy.

Additionally, a copy of the report will be sent to a number of business partners who may reevaluate their role within the business, supporting a bottom up approach to changing the 'business partner' and 'hard' HR culture within the organization.

The defence of HR can be utilized as an argument for future HR agendas within the organization, and the process to induce this data could be considered by other researchers and practitioners in alternative companies and industries. Similarly, the additional strategies and conGT models presented within the report could be developed further in the context of alternative companies and industries.

The strategic recommendation to benefit from increased transparency, in addition to the potential benefits of enhancing HRM integration, could be useful for multiple industries and organizations. Although the researcher recognizes that complete transparency may not be possible in all contexts, the arguments for transparency are so significant, that the

researcher feels German Automotive Manufacturers need to consider these arguments and follow suit.

Finally, the research contributes to a better world by reminding HR that it has a moral obligation to ensure fairness, consistency and play a significant role in governance. Only doing so will support the integration of HRM. Adapting the strategy according to the emergent theory will hopefully improve the working environment for all parties involved in the study, with the uniqueness of triangulating the working relationship between employees, line-management and Human Resources creating a unique environment for all employees, which is unique.

In conclusion, this research study has fulfilled the aims of the research study, with anticipated results being challenged and supported through the reasoned reflections of the researcher. Reflection of the thesis in conjunction to the criteria set out in these three models, highlights the believed trustworthiness of this thesis. Moreover, the researcher has considered the trustworthiness of the thesis utilizing the criteria stipulated by Charmaz (2014), for conGT.

Charmaz (2014: 338) states, “when born from reasoned reflections and principled convictions, a grounded theory that conceptualizes and conveys what is meaningful about a substantive area can make a valuable contribution”. The researcher believes this thesis provides a valuable contribution.

6.4 Generalized reflection for a broader audience

The conGT presented within this study has emerged in the context of the case study organization, a DAX30 German Automotive Manufacturer with the conclusions and strategic recommendations being primarily focused on the case study. Charmaz (2014:322) argues the social, “social, historical, local, and interactional contexts” strengthens the conclusions and allows other researchers to make nuanced comparisons to other theory and studies, supporting a general audience.

Moreover, Charmaz (2014:322) highlights that “Generality emerges from the analytic process rather than as a prescribed goal for it.”. The researcher has presented the philosophical and methodology approach undertaken within this conGT case study research project, with the conclusions and strategic recommendations emerging from the data, recommended by Charmaz (2014:322) as a “safeguard against forcing data into your favourite analytic categories”. In addition, ethnographic differences were not specifically addressed, although were recognized within the emergent themes, which Charmaz (2014) stresses the generalization of categorizes and themes.

In order to increase the generalization of the theory presented within this thesis, further theoretical sampling across further organizations would support the development and substance of the conGT presented within this thesis. In particular, sampling in different industries or/and across the spectrum of the DAX30, would provide additional context and substance to the theories, whilst providing greater insight into German HR.

Through further theoretical sampling, comparison and research, this research can be modified and expanded to a wider audience (Glaser 2003), although for this GT study the researcher has come to end. (Glaser 2001: 183) states GT “must come to an end, usually

based on human limits, with an appeal to future research to give directions”, which is presented within the final sub-chapter of this thesis.

In conclusions, Charmaz (2014) states through undertaking and reading GT, generalization can be achieved as “imaginative interpretation sparks new views and leads other scholars to new vistas. Grounded theory methods can provide a route to see beyond the obvious and a part to reach imaginative interpretations”.

6.5 Study Limitations

Following a philosophical and methodological approach carries a set of assumptions (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 255), which need to be understood and taken into consideration when undertaking research. This research was undertaken from an ontological position of relativity and epistemological position of interpretivism. Through undertaking the DBA program and exploring the philosophies of research, the researcher unearthed Charmaz (2014) Constructivist Grounded Theory, which is positioned within the paradigm of the researchers beliefs. The approach resonated strongly with the researcher and has been followed throughout this study. Following this approach means the researcher has held assumptions in line with Constructivist Grounded Theorists, which is apparent within this study.

A literature review was requested as part of the research proposal, which limits the grounded position of the researcher. Although some literature and knowledge is always required to start (Charmaz, 2014), the researcher would limit this input in the future. Differing to traditional research studies, a comprehensive literature review is conducted following the research, which this thesis has attempted. Nevertheless, the researcher may be uninformed of research in other fields, which could support this study.

The foremost limitation within this study is the researcher. Although conGT recognizes that the researcher brings something to the table Charmaz (2014), the knowledge held by the researcher prior to the study could have influenced the research. The researcher attempted to clear his mind, let all knowledge 'lay fallow' and be open to the data emerging throughout the study. The researcher believes the change in thinking between the assumptions recognized during the research proposal and the final thesis, shows evidence that the researcher maintained this position.

The researcher undertook the research alone and thus, the interpretations are based on the researcher alone. Utilizing multiple researchers, with researchers outside the field of HRM could have been utilized. The researcher utilized feedback mechanisms with respondents to ensure that meaning had been appropriately interpreted.

The sole researcher on this study was undertaking their first large-scale academic research project, as part of a study towards a Doctorate of Business Administration. Despite support from the university and supervisors, the limited experience is a limitation of the study. With further experience, the researcher may have asked more questions, explored topics differently and been willing to enter a vague research methodology with more flexibility. For example, the researchers awareness of NVivo was limited before the study and the researcher would consider combining manual and NVivo analysis in future studies. With hindsight knowledge, especially regarding differing coding strategies, the researcher would be able to interpret data earlier, potentially reducing the time required to explore fields and opening the opportunity to explore unturned avenues.

Methodology design can also raise limitations, with the researcher recognizing the limitations raised through the use of purposive and snowball sampling. These limitations were raised during the proposal phase of the study and agreement between the researcher and supervisors for this approach was taken, due to the benefits of the researchers network being a significant benefit in gaining noteworthy access, which may not be possible for other researchers.

Additionally, the sampling approach led to respondents being drawn from differing cultural backgrounds, more specifically nationality, gender and ethnicity. No noticeable differences emerged from the study and these differences were not considered further within the context of the study. Interviews were undertaken in English, German and English/German, with all interviews translated into English before formal analysis was undertaken, recommended by Charmaz (2014). The sub-chapter 'Cross-cultural Research' within the methodology chapter on provides detail on the limitations of undertaking cross-cultural research and the implications on this study. In summary, cross-cultural barriers and language may have limited the contextual environment.

This thesis does not attempt to test the theory presented, rather presents a grounded theory. Academics and practitioners seeking validity may want to research the grounded theory proposed within this thesis with methods more suited to larger populations and claims of validity. Additionally, the researcher is convinced that HRM integration is unique to an organization, and thus the conGT developed within this study needs to be considered in the context of this organization. Although generalizations may be drawn from this study for other organizations and industries, further exploration would be required to evolve the theory accordingly.

The necessity for the case study organization to remain confidential, may reduce the credibility of the study, as this does limit the context for the outside reader. Similarly, the necessity for individual confidentiality restricts the contextual data about respondents, which was shared between the researcher and supervisors, with a wider audience.

The research was limited to employees, line-managers and human resources respondents, with further exploration of stakeholders and in-depth knowledge of the company council being groups to consider in the future. Undoubtedly, considering additional groups and furthering the range of the research would have allowed the researcher to explore the topics further.

Despite the researcher recognizing the studies limitations, the research demonstrates credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness. Most importantly, it must be stressed that conGT acknowledges the evolution of theory, allowing future research to overcome the limitations of this study. Most significantly, this research has been undertaken in one substantive environment and although has the potential to offer generalized applicability, the researcher recognizes the requirement for further theoretical sampling in differing areas to support the evolution of the theory presented within this study.

6.6 Future Directions

According to Glaser (1997) and Charmaz (2014), Grounded Theory research should be continuously advanced, with the emergence of contributing data evolving theory. Firstly, the models and strategic recommendations within this thesis will be delivered to the board of the case study and should be discussed in context of the larger organizational picture.

Additionally, grounded theory emerging from this study supports the retention of the Human Resources function. Grounded Theory emerging from this study recognizes that the case studies HR function has a significant role to play in the integration of strategy within the business, although a review of strategy and aligned policies needs to be undertaken to further the recommendations presented within this thesis. Furthermore, the consideration of outsourcing and the utilization of SAP could be researched further, once clarity about the HR strategy has been realized.

The emergent data recommends the review of the 'Business Partner' role. The case study organization should consider the implementation of the new role, which will require investing in the future. A study to review cost, structural and realization implications should be undertaken, once agreement for the future role change has been agreed. Simultaneously, the organization should consider developing a communication campaign throughout the business to prioritize transparency.

Further research could be undertaken in alternative organizations and industries, providing opportunity to gather further data and comparing the recommendations made within this case. Further data may provide opportunity for the Grounded Theory to be developed further.

The researcher would appreciate researchers in alternative research paradigms to build context around the grounded theory presented within the thesis. Through considering the conGT through multiple paradigms, the theory can develop evolve for a wider audience. Furthermore, the research objectives considered within this study could be explored utilizing differing research methodologies to reinforce or challenge the trustworthiness of this conGT.

Future work may consider the contextual context of the people involved within the study or increasing the cultural focus of the study to look at intercultural implications of HRM integration. This research was undertaken within a German Dax 30 organization, and the German model of HR has been briefly discussed. Further research could deepen the cultural implications or provide ground for comparing the conGT within this researcher with other cultures. Furthermore, research could be undertaken within the German Mittelstand, potentially uncovering differing emerging themes.

The emergent data and theory presented within this thesis can be utilized by both business professionals and academics as a foundation for future studies in HRM integration and business in Germany. The wide-ranging reach of the topic discussed in this thesis has included, amongst others, governance, outsourcing and e-HRM. HRM integration is the glue, which brings all of these topics together and thus the research in this thesis could be considered in relation to multiple avenues of research within the field of HRM. In particular, the researcher would recommend further research being undertaken into the paradoxical nature of HRM integration and the subsequent tensions.

Emergent data throughout the study highlighted the tensions between the Human Resources department and the company council. Further research could be undertaken looking at the differences in power relations between HR and company councils within Germany, providing more insight into why the codetermination model creates mistrust and two contrasting sides. Nevertheless, Festling (2012) suggests the codetermination model creates stability, although evidence emerged that a state of rigidity can also appear. Further research could be undertaken to explore this issue further, in addition to employee-centric or self-serving HR.

Through exploring HRM integration, structure emerged as a theme, highlighting a model based on Ulrich's (1997) model. Further research exploring organizational structures within German organizations could be undertaken, more specifically in context of HRM integration.

In conclusion, the scope of HRM integration provides significant opportunities for future study. The uniqueness of HRM integration within each company suggests different models could appear, albeit within the context of general guidelines. This study has explored the topic of HRM integration within a German Automotive Manufacturer, meeting the research objectives and presenting the emergent Constructivist Grounded Theory for future academics and business practitioners to evolve.

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APPENDIX 3 – Semi-structured Interview Structure

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APPENDIX 6 – Example Memos

Appendix 1 - Saldaña (2013) Reflection Questions

- How did you personally relate to the participants and/or the phenomenon?
- How did the interview support your study's research questions?
- How did the interview support/contradict your code choices and their operational definitions?
- What emergent patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions emerged?
- What possible networks (links, connections, overlaps, flows) among the codes, patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions) emerged?
- Did the interview support/contradict an emergent or relation existent theory?
- Do you recognize any problems with the study?
- Do you have any personal or ethical dilemmas with the study?
- What future directions for the study are foreseeable?
- What are the analytic memos generated thus far?
- How does the interview support/contradict the final study report?
- What thoughts need to be memoed?

Appendix 2 – Pre-Interview Forms

EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Mr./MS. XYZ,

Thank you for agreeing to be involved in my Doctoral Research Study. As we have already agreed on the phone, we are meeting on XY/XY/XY at XYZ.

As discussed, can you please review the confidentiality sheet and frequently asked questions attached, prior to us meeting. We will have the opportunity to discuss and sign the paperwork, when we meet.

Naturally, if you have any further questions before we meet, please do not hesitate to contact me my email or phone.

Kind Regards,

Christopher Chamberlain

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the project title?

Explorative Study of HRM Integration within the German Automotive Industry.

Why have I asked you to take part?

I have asked you to take part because you currently work within the German Automotive Industry and I feel your views would add value to the research I am undertaking.

What will I be required to do?

You will be required to partake in an interview, which will be recorded lasting a maximum of 90 minutes. Following the interview, you be sent the core findings from the interview for you to confirm that these were your views. In most cases, this will be done by email. However, a phone call or subsequent meeting may be required, if there are unexpected discrepancies.

Where will the interview take place?

This will be agreed by phone and confirmed in writing.

When will I have the opportunity to discuss my participation?

When the key findings are discussed with you, your view on the process will be asked for. Naturally, if you are uncomfortable with any part of the process, please let me know.

Who will be responsible for all of the information when this study is over?

The information will be published within the doctoral thesis. All supporting evidence will be destroyed once the qualification has been awarded. Findings from thesis may be published in academic journals.

Who will know of my participation?

Only my research supervisor and myself. All published materials will refer to you as a number ensuring your full confidentiality in the process.

How long is the whole study likely to last?

The study will be completed by the middle of 2018.

How can I find out about the results of the study?

You will be provided with an executive summary following the conclusion of the study.

What if I do not wish to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary.

What if I change my mind during the study?

You have a right to withdraw from the study up to 3 months following the initial research interview.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

Explorative Study of HRM Integration within the German Automotive Industry

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read the Frequently Asked Questions for this study and have had details of the study explained to me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Frequently Asked Questions, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Frequently Asked Questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Contact details:

Researcher's Name (Printed): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Researcher's contact details:

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.

Appendix 3 – Semi-structured Interview Structure

- Clarify paperwork with participant and reconfirm confidentiality. Address any concerns prior to starting interview.
- Explain the purpose of my research topic is to explore Human Resources Management integration within your organization.
- Explain in layman's terms that HRM Integration is the “full integration of HRM with organizational strategy; HRM policies that cohere; and the integration of HRM with line management activities”
- Start dictation device
- How do you perceive the status quo of HRM integration within your organization?
 - Link with organizational strategy?
 - Policies that cohere?
 - Line Management?
- Some companies have closed the HR department to force HRM integration. Could your company do this?
 - Why? / Why not?
- If the company did close the department, how would HR get done?
 - What roles are undertaken by HR?
 - Who would do what?
 - What must be done by HR function?
- Coming back to the definition of HRM Integration, what needs to be done to progress HRM integration within your organisation?
 - People strategies?
 - Do HR policies contradict each other?
 - How do you perceive the HR role in HR? Tick!
 - What contradictions to do you see in your companies HR?
- Is there anything else you feel would contribute to this topic?
- Stop Dictation Device
- Explain that the participant will receive a copy by email, to clarify. Anything that feels has changed or needs to be considered, can be highlighted later.
- Reconfirm participation and confidentiality and close the interview

Appendix 4 – Post-interview Notes Example

Summary L2

Line Manager (30 Employees) - IT - 40 Age - 9 Years of Experience - M

- I could feel that the line manager was frustrated by the role played by managers... the interviewee spoke candidly about their view... I felt that i could hear a desire for a function that would help the candidate do his job, but overcompensated in governance restricting the manager to do what he needed to do. A manager who is about to get a promotion and expat role with 80 employees. The requirement to break rules, or ignore policies that were considered petty, as long as he wouldn't get in trouble provided interesting input. Despite the frustrations, support for a department was there...

- There is the importance for a core HR function, which retains the specialist knowledge e.g. law and coordinates activities which are company wide or are more efficient to be conducted by a small core group of people, rather than the mass line management. LM are doing the work they need to do to meet targets....

- Some services can be outsourced
- Supported the notion that there is no link on a strategic level.... lack of investment...
- The requirement for specialist knowledge
- Centralized control and overview
- Support and consultancy
- Control
- Centralised for efficiency
- Support
- Development

- Outsourcing.
- I should ask for other contacts...
- I could spend hours talking to each participant and balancing what to ask and push into, is an interesting balancing act... I think as the interviews progress and themes start to present themselves that the questions will refine into particular directions... this method of research is open but makes it difficult to focus on key areas.
- Interesting that all are defending a function... this individual clearly has a greater overview of the role, clearly highlighting some key functions... the ideas of closing the function is unrealistic.
- Future direction - How do HR market themselves?
- Future direction - How do HR provide the service, which is needed?
- Streamlining governance and policies... Focus on the important and let managers lead. - -
How about a policy, which allows managers to decide?

Appendix 5 – Interview Analysis Chart Example

Theories	Codes (Lines)	Codes (Axial)	Memos	Closing? Justification	How?	HR Requirements	Interview Notes
<p>Theme of strategy of int.</p> <p>There is separate from business if glass bowl (C)</p> <p>Report: lines divide between the managerial and labour side</p> <p>line manager</p> <p>involved in decision making process</p> <p>To keep a overview of LM</p> <p>the individual in career development</p> <p>The career path</p> <p>Why? Everyone can see everyone's pay. Does this support fairness?</p>	<p>Transparency (lack of)</p> <p>applying rules freedom</p> <p>recruiting</p> <p>doing operational work</p> <p>Something referencing</p> <p>Making sure looking for</p> <p>presenting the company</p> <p>inviting people dealing with issues</p> <p>Knowledge of what's happening</p> <p>fairness</p> <p>equal treatment</p> <p>Sticking to rules</p> <p>Reporting structures</p> <p>Control</p> <p>Need to be flexible for younger generation</p>	<p>HR as middleman fairness</p> <p>HR is not seen or old-fashioned</p> <p>The org utilises fixed rules</p> <p>lack of knowledge of HR strategy</p> <p>Size seems to be a decisive factor in not doing dpt.</p> <p>The need to manage company identity</p> <p>Need for fairness</p> <p>Requirement for HR to control</p> <p>HR need to ensure fair processes</p> <p>Fairness could appear through transparency</p> <p>Company council</p> <p>Work rules & structure - sometimes at expense of flexibility</p>	<p>challenge the use of effectiveness</p> <p>explore the company council move</p> <p>lack of pay transparency in organisation</p> <p>controlling aspect of HR, an outdated premise</p> <p>Transparency issues around what the dpt does, the role in strategy dep. & pay</p> <p>Would transparency enhance integration?</p> <p>HR seen as the decision maker</p> <p>without the factor who would do these tasks?</p> <p>the decision is made by HR</p> <p>perception of strategy limited</p> <p>Control of org</p>	<p>No... The size of the organisation</p> <p>need skills talented people to recruit on and off-line</p> <p>How much we can pay?</p> <p>controllers of pay</p> <p>job descriptions</p> <p>who would decide these things?</p> <p>Requirement for a dpt to have an overview of company structure</p>	<p>Employee wide recruitment</p> <p>Stop producing or asking for references</p> <p>Line manager could undertake tasks</p> <p>Automate activities</p> <p>Other departments could fulfil tasks</p> <p>Outsource HR</p> <p>transferring to other people</p> <p>Xing recruiting</p> <p>The team leader or line manager could do the work</p> <p>Accounting could do salary</p> <p>utilise feedback or providers</p> <p>Automating procedures</p> <p>why</p> <p>social notes</p> <p>Review system</p> <p>360° feedback</p>	<p>Reorganisation Consultant</p> <p>The department ensures fairness</p> <p>ops position</p> <p>salaries</p> <p>contracts</p> <p>universities</p> <p>formal reference</p> <p>salary info.</p> <p>deal with sickness</p> <p>Recruitment</p> <p>what we need & how we find them</p> <p>law</p> <p>The dpt is a mediator between the employee & the manager</p> <p>support colleagues in daily tasks</p> <p>Reports to HR</p> <p>managerial seen as meeting economic goals</p> <p>HR the people goals</p> <p>finding flexible solutions</p>	<p>Felt that before starting, although participated engaged in discussion</p> <p>why one reference seen as so important?</p> <p>Is the company council relevant?</p> <p>Possible future flexibility required for next generation</p> <p>improve support of managers via meetings + regular discussion</p> <p>HR should have knowledge of the business + the people</p> <p>Allow the legal dpt to manage recruitment law</p> <p>Use headhunters</p> <p>Automatic recruitment pre-selection</p>

Appendix 6 – Example Memos

28th October 2017

“Undertaking the manual coding process brought me into my data... I found it difficult to stay structured and often felt that I was memoing, rather than coding... my mind was wondering from code to memo to code to memo... I found it difficult to manually line code and felt I was often looking at the bigger picture – The utilization of NVivo subsequently helped me structure my coding... line coding seemed easier on the computer because I could code specific text by creating nodes... the process of axial coding via NVivo was also straightforward because you could highlight the specific text parts. Within the manual process, I found it difficult to record all of the codes separately... the manual process included highlighted sentences, identification of key words and writing “code” on paper, followed by writing all of this into word. Although, using NVivo would have eliminated the step of writing all of the key codes into word, I felt that the immersion in the data created by this step very useful, as it is very similar to how I emerge myself in books. “

1st September 2017

“another good reason for not closing the function is for the impulse of HR initiatives into the business”

7th December 2017

“This evening working through the data gathered surrounding alternatives to a centralized HR department and comparing these thoughts with the chapter surrounding the HR integration, the researcher saw an overlapping of data in such a way that that the following modal was drawn on paper. In order for horizontal integration to occur, policies and processes need to align, although in doing so become the options of outsourcing and digitalization. Vice versa, the options of outsourcing and digitalization require clarity around policies and processes. Similarly, vertical integration could be utilised to disband the department or integrate activities to board or line management. The topic of integration in itself is a paradox because in order to integrate HR into the business, one needs to consider how to disband HR... the two elements are aligned. Albeit, by going too far the HR department melting pot may no longer provide the necessities required to move forward. Do too little outsourcing, and the department doesn't gain from outside knowledge, decentralize and efficiencies are not apparent, do not enough digitalisation and you will be in trouble, not having access to the board is difficult. HR integration in the future is balancing vertical and horizontal integration, through looking at outsourcing and digitalization - board involvement and decentralization... retrospectively. Decentralization is more than simply devolving to line management... this could also include transferring responsibilities to more aligned parties, employees or the company council.”