

# HRM frames in different enterprises: Congruence, consequences and context



## **ABSTRACT**

In academic literature the importance of HRM frames increases, especially in the phase of introducing new HRM sub-systems. Individual HRM frames consist of assumptions, expectations and knowledge about HRM. If individual HRM frames share common contents and structures, these frames are regarded as congruent. According to theory, congruent frames of different stakeholders increase the efficiency of the introduction of organizational changes. This comparative study contrasts HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers among different European companies and industries by the means of a qualitative analysis of 94 semi-structured interviews with HR professionals and line managers. The results suggest a model with four sequential domains: HRM-as-intended, HRM-as-composed, HRM-in-use and HRM-in-integration. Each domain is influenced by different factors that should be considered during the implementation of HR changes. Furthermore it is argued that several overarching contextual mechanisms exist that influence the process of developing HRM frames. First, this study contributes to existing literature (1) by exploring the importance of HRM frames during HR change; (2) by proposing a model that regards and explains HRM as a process. Second, it contributes to literature by applying HRM frames to different contexts. Future research should extend the scope of respondents and include quantitative methods.

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## INTRODUCTION

The last two decades showed that human resource management (HRM) is widely acknowledged as a vital tool for increasing firm performance and therefore became a hot topic for enterprises (Gabčánová, 2012). The devolution of many tasks formerly executed by human resource (HR) professionals to the line adds a further node in the top-down delivery of HR practices from the HR department to the employees, namely line managers (Bos-Nehles, 2010; Renwick, 2003). Institutionalizing HR policies and practices and sending messages throughout the enterprise can offer problems due to a higher number of people that send messages, receive and interpret them and subsequently send them further. In this respect Bowen and Ostroff (2004) introduced a new process-based approach of describing and explaining the link between HRM and organizational outcomes by stressing the importance of HRM strength, which can be described as “a linking mechanism that builds shared, collective perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors among employees” (Bowen, & Ostroff, 2004: 206).

This view differs from existing theories in that it argues that the success of HRM is not just dependent on its content. The success of HR practices and policies also depends on the way of how employees make sense of their current working situation, i.e. how they perceive and interpret their work. The theory argues that successful implementation of HRM systems requires the unambiguous distribution of messages through the whole organization and its different social groups. If this criterion is met, employees can share a mutual comprehension of expected behavior (Sanders, Dorenbosch, & de Reuver, 2008; Wright, & Nishii, 2013). The perception and interpretation of different social groups, like HR professionals or line managers, of the work of the HR department in this context can be called HRM frames.

According to theory, HRM, effectiveness and organizational performance are increased with congruent frames because different groups then work toward similar goals. In order to influence desired behavior of employees it is thus assumed that sharing mechanisms like

framing are relevant factors (Hesslink, 2014). Social cognitive psychology further suggests that different social groups may have different perceptions, which applied to HRM, result in a situation where different social groups of an enterprise form and perceive different meanings of sent messages by the HR department. This happens because the sense making of organizational issues depends on mental frames of employees that are developed on the basis of perceived organizational processes (Hodgkinson, 1997).

In this regard Ridder, Piening and Baluch (2012) showed that there exists a gap in the interpretation of HRM practices that results from a difference between actual and perceived HR practices that in turn also affect perceptions and the behavior of employees. In another study it has been shown that attitudes towards HR practices and the corresponding behavior of employees can vary depending on what is intended by the HR department or what is implemented by the line, as a result of what the distinct groups of employees perceived and experienced (Kinnie, Hutchinson, Purcell, Rayton, & Swart, 2005).

These studies exemplify the importance of unambiguous messages by the HR department on the one hand and the relevance of shared frames for the implementation of HR practices and policies on the other hand. Researchers mainly agree on the point that a shared understanding of organizational issues among different social entities is generally beneficial (Kaplan, 2008). Incongruent frames on the other hand may lead to problems and conflicts around the implementation of new systems, such as misaligned expectations, contradictory actions, and unanticipated organizational consequences (Orlikowski, & Gash, 1994).

Accepting the assumption that HR specialists and line managers are two distinct social groups within a company and acknowledging that both groups are vital for implementing new HRM systems it seems to be important that these two groups share the same perceptions and understandings of the work of the HR department for a smooth implementation, i.e. having the same HRM frames. However, research showed that HR managers and the line do not (always)

share such HRM frames because they have divergent knowledge, expectations and assumptions (Bondarouk, Looise, & Lempink, 2009; Keegan, Huemann, & Turner, 2012).

Considering the importance of congruent HRM frames during the implementation of HRM systems it appears important to shed light on the process of framing, its consequences and antecedents. However, in a recent study, Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse and Figge (2014) expected personal, situational, and contextual factors to moderate the effects of cognitive frames in decision making. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the congruence of HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers and to find contextual mechanisms that might be affecting the congruence of HRM frames.

This study contributes to existing studies in at least two ways. First, it adds knowledge to literature on HRM as a process by exploring the importance of frames and suggesting contextual factors that influence this process. Second, it contributes to literature on HRM frames by applying HRM frames and building a model that explains how HRM frames evolve.

This article is structured as follows: the next section will give an outline on what is known about frames in organizations in general and about HRM frames in particular. After that, the method will give detailed information on how the study was conducted, followed by the results section where the most important findings are presented. The paper ends with a critical discussion on the findings, future research implications and limitations of the study.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Cognitive frames**

#### *Background of cognitive frames*

The discussion about cognition within the managerial context can be traced back to 1958, when March and Simon argued that every employee in an organization has his own cognitive basis, thus perceptions, thoughts, interpretations and expectations about strategic decision making

(Kaplan, & Tripsas, 2008). This cognitive basis, later called “frames”, has its roots in the scholarly of cognitive psychology (Bandura, 1986) and can be defined as a “repertoire of tacit knowledge that is used to impose structure upon, and impart meaning to, otherwise ambiguous social and situational information to facilitate understanding” (Gioia, 1986: 56). This definition of frames already indicates that it is a complex cognitive process in which the actor actively makes sense of the environment. Individual cognitive frames consist of assumptions, expectations and knowledge that consequently direct the behavior of individuals. Matheiu, Goodwin, Heffner and Cannon-Bowers (2000) argue that the purposes of frames are threefold by enabling individuals to (1) describe, (2) explain and (3) forecast situations surrounding them that are symbolically expressed by the means of language, visual images, metaphors, and stories (Orlikowski, & Gash, 1994). In other words, frames are a vital tool for people to build up mental models that allow them to interact with their environment (Mathieu et al., 2000). Mental models serve as a cognitive lens with which individuals reduce complexity of situations and simplify it, so they are able to make context-specific interpretations, decisions and act accordingly (Goffman, 1974).

Frames vary in content and structure (Walsh, 1995), which shift over context and time (Gioia, 1986). Whereas the content of a frame “consists of the things he or she knows, assumes and believes,” the cognitive structure describes “how the content is arranged, connected or studied in the executive’s mind” (Finkelstein, & Hambrick, 1996: 57). The content relates to a certain domain, e.g. corporate strategy making (Hodgkinson, & Johnson, 1994). In such domains, a frame is characterized by the ascription of attributes (Hahn et al., 2014) while an attribute is “any basis a person uses to distinguish or group objects and events” (Scott, Osgood, & Peterson, 1979: 36). Concerning the structure of frames, Hahn et al. (2014) distinguish between differentiation and integration, where differentiation is characterized by the number of elements that a frame includes and integration is defined by the degree of interconnection



between these elements (Walsh, 1995). In sum thus, the content and structure of a frame direct the interpretation of certain events and consequently lead to certain (managerial) responses (Hahn et al., 2014; Tikkanen, Lamberg, Parvinen, & Kallunki, 2005).

Another functional distinction can be made between organizational sensemaking and sensegiving (Gioia, & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kezar, 2013; Weick, 1995). In the context of change management, sensemaking is the process of creating and recreating a meaningful framework in order to understand strategic change while sensegiving attempts to influence the sensemaking process of others in favor of a particular redefinition of strategy by influencing “the outcomes, communicating thoughts, about change to others, and gaining support” (Kezar, 2013: 763). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) thus see sensegiving as a tool for making others understand and Rouleau (2005: 1415) argues that “sensemaking and sensegiving are two sides of the same coin”. Although sensemaking and framing are related, they are not the same. Both, sensemaking and framing, are cognitive tools that construct the “raw form” of reality into cognitive maps, often using pre-fabricated vocabularies or schemas (Fiss, & Hirsch, 2005). Several authors (Fiss, & Hirsch, 2005; Neumann, 1990; Weick, 1995) argue that on the one hand, frames are composed of templates of interpretations that create meaning and interpretations to guide further action. On the other hand, sensemaking is an active process of individuals to arrange and reassemble prompts in order to provide structure and guidance in a constant procedure of enactment with reality.

With regard to an organizational context, cognitive frames of managers act as “cognitive filters that admit certain bits of information into the strategizing process while excluding others” (Porac, & Thomas, 2002: 178). Hahn et al. (2014) argue that managers give meaning to otherwise ambiguous cues and situations. This in turn leads managers in their further decision making to find strategic responses.

Given that framing is a complex cognitive process consisting of assumptions, expectations and knowledge to give meaning to the observed environment, reduce complexity and forecast situations, cognitive frames can also result in biases. Managers do not have a full understanding of every single variable in their organizational environment and thus develop subjective representations (Hahn et al., 2014). Since framing is based on past learning and categorization, it is self-referring and retrospective. This can lead to a confirmation bias, which is the “tendency to take evidence that’s consistent with our beliefs more seriously than evidence inconsistent with our beliefs” (Gleitman, Gross, & Reisberg, 2010: 354). That is, when individuals attempt to test a hypothesis, they often tend to look for information that confirms the particular belief rather than information that might challenge it. In an organizational context, this leads managers to direct their attention towards cues that fit their own frames instead of signals that are inconsistent with the existing frame (Hahn et al., 2014; Palich, & Bagby, 1995). Thereby, frames can deteriorate the understanding of managers because according to Walsh (1995) it may have disadvantageous consequences like stereotypic thinking and inhibition of creative problem solving.

### ***Findings from prior research on frames***

In general, congruence of frames between different stakeholders is related to better organizational outcomes (e.g. DeChurch, & Mesmer-Magnus, 2010; Gibson, Cooper, & Conger, 2009; Okhuysen, & Eisenhardt, 2002; Reger, & Huff, 1993; Rentsch, & Klimoski, 2001), while incongruent frames were found to often deteriorate decision-making, resistance, conflicts and decreased performance among other organizational problems (e.g. Bechky, 2003; Davidson, 2006; Gibson et al., 2009; Kaplan, 2008; Lin, & Silva, 2005; Sonnenberg, van Zijderveld, & Brinks, 2014; Yoshioka, Yates, & Orlikowski, 2014). With regard to congruence of frames among different individuals, Orlikowski and Gash (1994: 180) argue that congruence is “the alignment of frames on key elements or categories. By congruent, we do not mean

identical, but related in structure (i.e., common categories of frames) and content (i.e. similar values on the common categories).” Specifically, congruence in frames of service teams and their leaders are found to have a positive effect on team performance, as a survey of 382 employees from different companies suggests (Benlian, 2013). This is in line with a survey among five companies in the medical sector that found incongruent frames to negatively affect team processes and performance (Gibson et al., 2009). One possible reason why incongruent frames lead to deteriorated team performance may be that such incongruent frames negatively affect the development of similar expectations and interpretations and thereby prevent change (Hodgkinson, & Johnson, 2011). This way of reasoning is in line with Tripsas and Kaplan (2008) who argue that inertia in technological progress can only be broken down to the extent that frames are rearranged.

Goodhew, Cammock and Hamilton (2005) found a relationship between the complexity of managers’ cognitive frames and their performance. Specifically, Goodhew et al. (2005) conducted a field study involving 30 branch managers in the financial sector, revealing that higher performing managers have considerably simpler frames, using fewer concepts and fewer linkages. The authors argue that these findings are due to clearly defined role demands and constraints that were clearly communicated to the managers in their research object. On the other hand, Laukkanen (1993) observed that in situations characterized by a complex and ambiguous environment, managers with more complex cognitive frames consequently performed better. This induces the assumption that complexity of managers’ cognitive frames has to fit the role demands within an organization for an optimal performance of individuals.

Different scholars have adopted the concepts of frames to apply it to other domains, especially in the field of information technology (IT) (e.g. Orlikowski, & Gash, 1994; Kaplan, & Tripsas, 2008) and change management (e.g. Gioia, & Chittipeddi, 1991). Therefore, the next

section will give an overview of the most important findings from these two domains with regard to cognitive frames.

### ***Findings from IT and change management***

In the field of IT, Orlikowski and Gash (1994) introduced the concept of *technological frames*, which is the individual examination of assumptions, expectations and knowledge about technology in organizations. As with frames in general, also technological frames are used by individuals to structure events and experiences, make interpretations and reduce complexity, however in the special context of technology in organizations. There are three domains within a frame that characterize its understanding and use: the nature of technology, technology strategy and technology-in-use (Davidson, 2002; Orlikowski, & Gash, 1994). Orlikowski and Gash (1994) conducted a thorough literature review combined with a case study and found that conflicts and problems can occur if stakeholders have different frames. Also the development and implementation of change policies tend to be more difficult in the case of incongruent frames. Finally, congruent frames were found to be related to higher organizational effectiveness (Orlikowski, & Gash, 1994). Congruent technological frames do not just have intra-organizational effects, because as observed, congruent technological frames also had a positive effect on the end-user satisfaction with technology (Shaw, Lee-Patridge, & Ang, 1997). Another example of framing effects outside of organizations are found by Kaplan and Tripsas (2008) who suggest that technology trajectories across the life cycle are at least partly influenced by technological frames inherent of stakeholders. The authors suggest that such frames are useful to explain the era of ferment, how a dominant design emerges as well as why incremental changes arise and the dynamics associated with discontinuities.

With regard to change management, incongruent frames can lead to negative attitudes towards organizational change (Barrett, 1999) and also behavior of stakeholders confronted with change can be influenced depending on their frame (Gallivan, 2001). Gioia and Chittipeddi

(1991: 446) argue that CEOs and the top management team “can be seen as architects, assimilators, and facilitators of strategic change” and ultimately are responsible for the success of certain changes within an organization by “making sense of, and giving sense about, the interpretation of a new vision for the institution” and thus constitute key steps in introducing and managing change. With this study in mind, it is reasonable to suggest that also HR changes are sensible of making and giving sense of different stakeholders, namely HR specialists and line managers. Therefore, the next section summarizes the theories and findings concerning frames within and about the HR department: HRM frames.

### **HRM frames**

As already indicated frames consist of tacit knowledge that is used to give meaning and structure to otherwise complex and ambiguous environments. In this relation, frames can be restructured or adjusted by the means of language, signals or more generally, communication (Gray, Bougon, & Donnellon, 1985), ideally resulting in shared frames, i.e. individual frames of reference overlap or align (Hey, Joyce, & Beckman, 2007). Research shows that the implementation of a technology heavily depends of the extent to which technological frames of different organizational stakeholders are aligned (e.g. Kaplan, 2008). The same logic applies to HRM frames, thus the way employees and other organizational stakeholders interpret HRM systems is vital for effective implementation HR practices (Wright, & Nishii, 2013). For the purpose of this paper, *HRM frames* will be defined as “a subset of cognitive frames that people use to understand HRM in organizations” (Bondarouk et al., 2009: 475). This means that employees make sense of the work of the HR department, of the messages that are sent by HRM and interact with HRM accordingly. Due to the process of sense-making, including the usage of assumptions, expectations and knowledge related to HRM, they form their behavior based on these HRM frames. Since the devolution of tasks to line managers that were formerly executed by HR specialists (Bos-Nehles, 2010), especially during the implementation of (new)

HR practices, an additional node in the implementation phase emerged. As HR specialists, with their own HRM frames, developed new HR practices, they implemented these practices themselves. Employees thus received unambiguous messages about HR practices because the messages came from the same group of people. Due to the devolution of HRM, today HR professionals develop practices and communicate these practices to line managers who in turn interpret these practices on their own with their specific HRM frames. Line managers then communicate the interpreted HR practices to the employees who finally make sense of the practices on their own (Gilbert, Winne, & Sels, 2011). Line managers thus build the bridge between HRM and employees. Research shows that in this process of implementation deviations emerge between HR practices as desired and HR practices as finally implemented because of diverse understandings of the different stakeholders (Wright, & Nishii, 2013). Academic literature further suggests that HR managers and line managers have different HRM frames, thus they interpret and understand HRM in different ways, which also affects their attitude toward and reaction to HR practices and changes regarding HRM (Guest, & Bos-Nehles, 2013; Bondarouk et al., 2009; Keegan et al., 2012).

This again shows, that the same entity, in this case HR practices, can be interpreted and understood diversely because of different cognitive frames of stakeholders. Several authors suggest that the difference in frames arises due to different backgrounds, like working experience and education, functions and anticipations (Orlikowski, & Gash, 1994; Lin, & Silva, 2005; Kaplan, 2008). However, studies also show that on the one hand, during turbulences in organizations, frames can shift constantly within individuals and teams (Davidson, 2002) but on the other hand, even with aligned frames, individuals can develop diverse interpretations and reactions (Lin, & Silva, 2005). This shows that firstly, even aligned frames are no guarantee for an effective implementation and that secondly, HRM frames can only be studied within a certain context.

### *Congruence of HRM frames*

Considering the devolution of HR related tasks to line managers (Renwick, 2003), there are at least two social groups that are included in the development and implementation of HR practices. While HR professionals develop and administer HR processes, line managers often are responsible for the implementation of HR processes on the work floor (Hesselink, 2014). Bondarouk et al. (2009) found that these distinct groups of HR professionals and line managers tend to have different HRM frames and thus different knowledge and expectations regarding HRM, which make a collaboration of these two groups challenging. This in turn, may decrease the success of HRM implementations (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013).

Research shows that congruent HRM frames improve the process of sensemaking (Bondarouk et al., 2009) and organizational performance (Bondarouk, 2006) whereas different frames have been shown to negatively moderate the relationship between talent management practices and psychological contract fulfillment (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Congruence in HRM frames is thus vital for a fluent implementation of practices, because HR professionals as developers, line managers as implementers, and employees as executives of HR practices all determine its effectiveness and its success. Within this process however, especially line managers might experience role conflict due to their need for balance of existing tasks and additional HR-related responsibilities (Bos-Nehles, 2010). Thereby, line managers feel the pressure of fulfilling expectations of both management and employees. Their perceived lack of competence and skills might decrease the implementation of HR practices (Woodrow, & Guest, 2013). HR professionals might eventually regret to share their knowledge with line managers because of their fear to be dispensable and becoming replaced by line managers (Caldwell, 2003). Such circumstances decrease the quality of collaboration of HR professionals and line managers and finally reduce the effectiveness of HR implementations. Similar HRM frames of

the distinct social groups therefore become an important factor that eventually increases HR implementation effectiveness.

## METHOD

The goal of this study is to explore the congruence of HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers and to find contextual mechanisms that might be affecting the congruence of HRM frames. As the relationship between different HRM frames and contextual factors that might affect the congruence of HRM frames is underrepresented in the academic literature yet, this research uses an explorative approach. This study draws on secondary data that a group of seven researchers (Arun, 2014; Falk, 2014; Hesselink, 2014; Horsthuis, 2014; Kremer, 2014; Polman, 2014a; Polman, 2014b) gathered by conducting in-depth studies in four companies of different industries. As a collaborative team of researchers, they conducted 94 semi-structured interviews in total (17 HR professionals; 76 line managers) that were analyzed and compared in the scope of this research. Data collection of each of the researcher lasted several months per researcher and organization, and has been conducted in 2014. The group of researchers decided for a case study design because few literature existed on the congruence of HRM frames. The current study will go one step further by examining and comparing the gathered data and relate it to contextual factors that have largely been left aside during the first round of analysis in which every researcher studied the own project. Table 1 summarizes the anonymized names of the four organizations that were research object of this study, the corresponding industry, the HRM innovation that was introduced, the number of interviewed HR professionals and line managers and finally the total amount of interviewing time per company.

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## Sampling

The researchers selected companies independently from each other by the means of purposive sampling, meaning that the researchers selected “units (e.g. individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering the research study’s question” (Teddlie, & Yu, 2007: 77). There were two criteria that built the basis for the selection of organizations that was suitable for serving as a research object: First, it had to be a big, preferably international company including “a clear well-established HRM system because this seems to significantly affect the role of HRM in organizations” (Hesselink, 2014: 5). Second, a sufficient number of HR professionals and line managers had to be engaged in the implementation process of a change within the HRM system to enrich the gathered data.

Sampling of interview respondents within the organization was also conducted by purposive sampling. In order to analyze congruence of HRM frames within and between HR and line managers, multiple participants per organization were selected who were familiar with the HRM sub-system in question.

## Measures of HRM frames

This study adopts the distinction of HRM systems based on Lepak, Liao, Chung and Harden (2006) who argue that an HRM system consists of HRM philosophy, HR policies, and HR practices, gradually decreasing in its degree of abstraction. For the purpose of this study, the domains from Lepak et al. (2006) were slightly adjusted as follows:

- (1) *HRM-as-intended* – the beliefs of the intended goal and managerial reasons for introducing the specific HRM sub-system;
- (2) *HRM-as-composed* – the views of a set of guidelines that the HRM system is intended to deliver;
- (3) *HRM-in-use* – the organization members’ understanding of how the HRM system is used daily and the consequences associated with it. It includes HR instruments and

practices, to accomplish tasks and how the HRM system is organized in specific circumstances;

- (4) *HRM-in-integration* – the beliefs of how the specific HRM sub-system is positioned in HRM within an organization.

The first domain, HRM-as-intended, describes goals as they were originally intended by HR department, their managerial relevance as well as their reason for the implementation of HR practices. It is defined by its underlying reasons and causes of HRM systems and specific purposes of HRM practices. The second domain, HRM-as-composed, includes the distinctive guidelines and parts of the HRM system. The third component, HRM-in-use, concerns the actual executive features of an HRM system and focuses on the question of how HR professionals and line managers believe HRM tools should be used in daily practice. The fourth domain, HRM-in-integration, is focused on the issue of how the distinct HRM sub-system is integrated and positioned within the HRM system, within the organization as a whole and how it is composed with HRM in general. In sum thus, the first two dimensions centralize the composition of HRM systems in general with regard to the intended use on a content level while the remaining two domains ask for the actual and intended use of the HRM system. On the basis of this framework, it is possible to assess the (in-) congruence of HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers qualitatively, by specifically asking for the interviewees' knowledge, assumptions, and expectations towards the HRM system.

In favor of the lucidity for interview partners and the comparability of HRM frames interviews concerned a specific HRM sub-system of the overall HRM system within the organization. In order to be comparable, both social groups (HR professionals and line managers) had to be involved in the HRM sub-system.

## **Data collection**

The data of this study has been gathered by seven researchers independently of each other. In general, a multi-view approach was used to come up with data, meaning that data was obtained in different departments and by different social groups within the organization, namely HR professionals and line managers. In the original setting of the study, a mixed method approach was used in order to find the link between (in-) congruence of HR professionals and line managers and its relationship to trust of employees towards the work of the HR department (see for a detailed review of the original setting Arun, 2014; Falk, 2014; Hesselink, 2014; Horsthuis, 2014; Kremer, 2014; Polman, 2014a; Polman, 2014b). For this study however, only the obtained data concerning HRM frames and possible contextual factors were considered and analyzed. Therefore, this study made use of document analysis, field notes, and semi-structured interviews for the assessment of congruence of HR professionals and line managers. In general, document analysis and field notes were used for the examination of the context, while the interviews were used to assess congruence of HRM frames.

Document analysis included records and papers that were directly linked to the organization in question, e.g. annual reports, papers concerning policies, or internal communication tools like newsletters. The field notes were used to verify data obtained by the means of the interviews or to find additional data that otherwise would have left undetected. Whereas the document analysis was useful for investigating the intended HRM system, the interviews revealed an understanding of the perception of the HRM system by the different social groups.

With regard to the interviews, semi-structured interviews with HR professionals and line managers in four companies from different industries were conducted in order to obtain data. Semi-structured interviews were used because of their depth, their high degree of details, and the possibility to understand the perspective of the interview partner (Leech, 2002).

Furthermore, HRM frames as a complex topic could be investigated in terms of opinions and perceptions of the interviewees. Finally, semi-structured interviews gave the interviewer the possibility to probe for questions and to ask for clarity or examples in order to gather more detailed information (Barriball, & While, 1994). In order to keep the interviews comparable, a consented interview guide was designed by the seven researchers (Emans, 2004). The interview guide had to be designed before conducting the interviews and was based on a thorough literature review (see Appendix A). Generally, the interview guide was divided into four parts, based on the adjusted domains by Lepak et al. (2006). Therefore, the four blocks included questions regarding HRM-as-intended, HRM-as-composed, HRM-in-use, and HRM-in-integration. Furthermore, short introductory questions concerning function, tasks and responsibilities of the interviewee and a closure including conclusive questions were added.

All interviews were recorded, which allowed the interviewer to fully concentrate on the interviewee (instead of constantly taking notes), so the interviewer could detect and react to both verbal and nonverbal articulations expressed by the interviewee during the conversation more attentively (Witzel, 2000). Another advantage of recording the interviews is that they can be transcribed afterwards, which enriches the analysis of interviews.

### **Data analysis**

The first step in the data analysis of the original research group was to transcribe all interviews and to conduct the document analysis, which delivered first background information about the circumstances surrounding the different companies in general, and the participants of the interviews in specific. The interviews were then analyzed manually by the means of open coding, which is the “part of the analysis that deals with the labelling and categorising of phenomena as indicated by the data. The product of labelling and categorising are concepts - the basic building blocks in grounded theory construction” (Pandit, 1996: 8). The analysis was conducted using meaning categorization that structured extensive interview quotations into

categories (Kvale, 1996) on the basis of the four blocks of HRM-as-intended, HRM-as-composed, HRM-in-use, and HRM-in-integration. Hereafter, the group of researchers worked in teams (where more than one researcher worked on the analysis of one company), to further analyze the data by independently finding themes and relevant issues concerning the domains of HRM frames. Through constant re-examination of the data, gradually a clear image of HRM frames emerged. With these data, the researchers went on to compare the HRM frames of the two groups of HR professionals and line managers. Whenever the researchers observed alignment of frames, they evaluated the frames to be congruent, and whenever the researchers observed differences in frames, this indicated incongruent HRM frames.

Using these independent analyses as a basis, transcripts were analyzed again for the purpose of this study. However, this time all interviews were included in one analysis. All interviews were originally conducted in Dutch. Therefore, the interviews were also analyzed in Dutch, in order not to lose relevant information in the translation process. Only those quotations presented in this paper were translated into English. Again open coding was used to reduce long statements of participants to find codes and sub-codes through reading and re-examination. The interviews were analyzed with Atlas.ti, a software package especially used in the field of analyzing complex qualitative data like interviews. The results of this analysis were compared *ex post* with the work of the research group, and in case of significant differences between the research group and the analysis of this research was detected, the codes were reviewed again. This way, this analysis of the interviews was still in relation to the analysis of the research group, while it still acknowledged possible differences in the analyses (e.g. due to higher order categorization because of the bigger amount of comparative data).

When clear categories emerged, the comparison of HRM frames between HR professionals and line managers proceeded. In a final step, elaborating on both the analyses of the research group and this analysis of all interviews, HRM frames were brought into relation

with contextual factors that might influence congruence of HRM frames. This way a model was designed that shows the most important relationships between the domains (HRM-as-intended, HRM-as-composed, HRM-in-use and HRM-in-integration) and perceptual views that influence the specific domains.

## RESULTS

### Organizational contexts

Due to the comparative character of this study, the contexts of the different companies are described before the findings of the analysis of the interviews is presented. In general, HR professionals and line managers from four companies were interviewed as can be seen in Table 1, accumulating in a total interviewing time of 133 hours. The studied companies are operating in the following industries: electronics and health care equipment, airline, dairy products, and retail.

#### *Electronic and health care equipment industry – the case of MedEquip*

*MedEquip* is a European company operating in the electronic and health care equipment sector and has business sites and R&D centers all over the world with several ten thousand employees. Their focus is primarily on performance and innovation, which is important in order to stay competitive, because according to internal papers of this company this sector is characterized by its high degree of innovation. In order to improve performance and innovation, *MedEquip* introduced a new transformation program. In the course of this program, the devolution of HR-related tasks to the line was essential to reach the aims of simplifying HR, increasing efficiency of HR processes and the empowerment of employees, managers and HR. Therefore *MedEquip* implemented a new electronic HRM system to clarify and simplify responsibilities for the line and to improve standardization of HR-related tasks for line managers. User-friendliness and simplification were central in this context.

### *Airline industry – the case of Airways*

*Airways* is a European company operating in the airline industry, which is characterized by constant change, globalization, and many competitors. Airways recently merged with another airline company, and thereby became one of the world's biggest airline companies. About 87% of the several thousand employees work in the homeland of the company, however the company is faced with national and international regulations and is heavily institutionalized. Airways is influenced by impacts of works councils, trade unions and group divisions, which make the company a 'machine bureaucracy', having many managerial layers and tight and rigid procedures and policies. The highly institutionalized structure is also reflected in HRM. Due to the financial crisis in 2009 the five-year average net result was a loss of several hundred million Euros. On the other hand, Airways won several best employer awards in the past years.

The HRM innovation under investigation at Airways is a new e-HRM system implemented in 2012, which is more centralized than before. In the past the different divisions within the company had their own administrative HR departments. In order to become more centralized, Airways implemented a shared service center to increase the centrality of the new HR model.

### *Dairy products industry – the case of VealCo*

*VealCo* is a big European company operating in the meat processing industry that is trading veal and dairy products. The company employs more than one thousand employees and emphasizes its respect for people which is reflected in an analysis of health issues of the workforce where current working conditions and possible improvements are discussed. Despite their efforts to improve working conditions and reduce health problems of the workforce, the internal annual report of 2012 revealed that high absenteeism rates are a major problem of the company, which can be attributed to the physically demanding work. A resultant problem of this high absenteeism rate is the increased workload of HR managers and line managers,

because within VealCo the administration of absenteeism is one of the most time-consuming HR processes. Since the administration of absenteeism is such a problem at this company, a new absenteeism policy is introduced, which is also the HRM innovation under investigation in this study.

### ***Retail industry – the case of Fashion House***

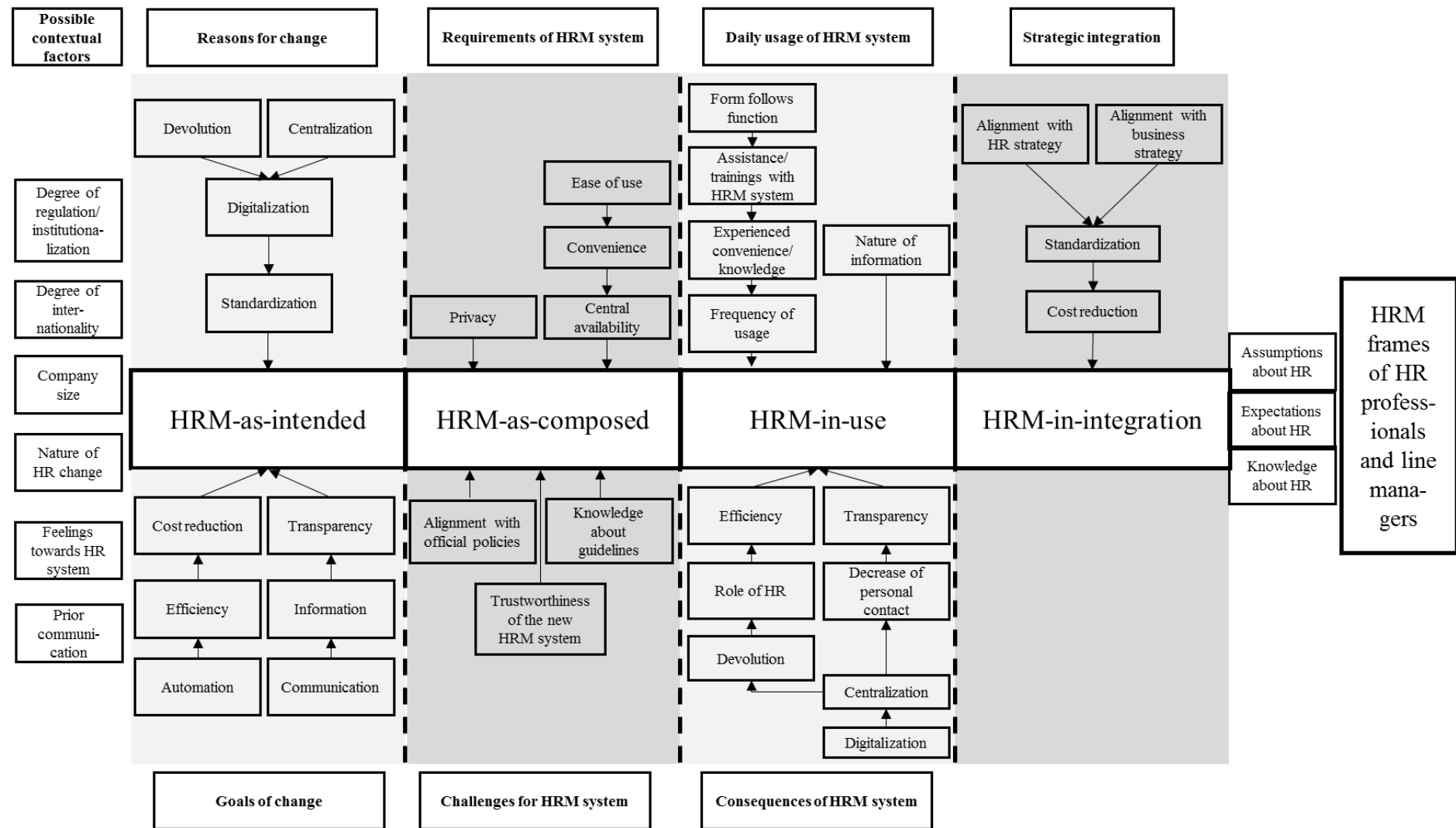
The fourth company under investigation is internationally operating in the retail industry and is called *Fashion House*. The headquarter is located in Europe and the company produces and distributes its products very quickly, so Fashion House stays flexible, innovative and cost-effective. In order to stay efficient also in terms of their workforce, speed of executing tasks has highest priority. Therefore, the company closely monitors its employees with regard to improvement of efficiency and reduction of labor costs. This is realized with a control-based approach that imposes strict regulations and procedures, offering well-defined jobs and central decision making. Due to the emphasis on efficiency, speed and cost reduction, the HRM system under investigation is a new performance management of Fashion House.

### **Perceptions of HR managers and line managers during HR change**

The analysis revealed several factors that influence the way HR managers and line managers look at HRM and thereby affect the HRM frames of the two social groups. Figure 2 depicts a model that includes all factors that are found to have an influence separated per domain. It is a process-based model of the sequential domains HRM-as-intended, HRM-as-composed, HRM-in-use and HRM-in-integration. On the left side of the figure possible contextual factors are listed that influence the whole process of HRM framing. All factors, codes, sub-codes and contextual mechanisms are defined in Tables 2 to Table 6. The next sections will explain the different domains in detail and how HRM frames are influenced.



**Figure 2: Perceptions of HR professionals and line managers during HR change**



### ***HRM-as-intended***

The model depicted in Figure 1 begins with the domain HRM-as-intended and is further split into the subdomains *reasons for change*, which are the perceived intended reasons of HR professionals and/ or top management for a change in the existing HRM system, and *goals of change*, which are the perceived intended goals of HR professionals and/ or top management for a change in the existing HRM system.

Within the first subdomain, reasons for change, one major reason is the standardization of HR-related tasks, which is mainly achieved by digitalizing such processes. This way the devolution of HR processes from the HR department to the line as well as the centralization of such processes are important. As an HR professional from Airways summarizes: “Also e-HRM is being discussed; [...], more digitalizing of the processes and also to standardize these. I am certainly a proponent of this myself. I like it that this happens because within Airways there are relatively big differences in the processes in the different divisions” (P30, HR professional, Airways). A line manager from MedEquip adds that “the HR portal standardized all kinds of things and that everything is in one place” (P63, line manager, MedEquip). That centralization plays a pivotal role in this process is exemplified by a line manager from MedEquip stating: “I think it is most important and easiest that there is one system and that this works for everybody in the same way and also that data is being recorded that belong to a person and not that an executive has his notes locally. I think that this is a big advantage; a central data system” (P48, line manager, MedEquip).

With regard to the goals of change, two things are striking: First, the intention of cost reduction, achieved by efficiency and automation is an especially recurring topic for HR professionals as well as for line managers. The feelings toward cost-cutting processes and changes however are not the same for everybody. While one HR professional from MedEquip states that “since the introduction of the digital HR world the staffing in the area of HRM in the

operational HR functions certainly decreased by one fourth or one third or even a half. Therefore, it is a sheer cost-cutting exercise” (P2, HR professional, MedEquip), another HR professional is more enthusiastic about the new digitalized and cost-efficient processes: “I find the digitalization and automation especially fantastic. When I started [to work] here, everything still was done on paper” (P33, HR professional, Airways).

Next to cost reduction, the second stream of goals are more transparency with more information and better communication. HR professionals as well as line managers welcome the intended increased transparency and say that “I find the HR portal itself an ideal tool because there is everything that you want to know about HR” (P6, HR professional, MedEquip) and another adds that “I think that this will lead to clarity and transparency, because everybody then knows: this is the way we do it. For example reporting sick, we do not have this in the system yet, but in some departments you can send an e-mail or a Whatsapp and in other departments it is said that you only may inform the manager via telephone” (P30, HR professional, Airways). Also line managers see transparency as a goal of HR change: “I think that they [introduced a new e-HRM system] to make it more accessible and to make it more transparent. By the means of the HR portal it is easy to know what is expected from you” (P69, line manager, MedEquip).

Summarizing, there is great consensus between HR professionals and line managers about the reasons and goals of HR change, overarching companies, company size and even HRM innovation itself, often resulting in the perception that most HR changes are attributed to cost reduction and efficiency as well as transparency. Table 2 comprises all codes and sub-codes including the respective definition of them.

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### ***HRM-as-composed***

This domain is divided into the two subdomains *requirements of the HRM system* and *challenges for the new HRM system*. There are basically two requirements of new HRM systems, namely privacy issues and the ease of use. Concerning privacy, especially sensitive data is a concern, e.g. one line manager states: “Also the authorization of people, that they can only see the things they have the rights for, I like that. Protection of personal data is very important; you just have to know what you are busy with. My boss knows everything of me and I in turn know everything of my colleagues, you just have to know what you are busy with. Privacy is the most important thing” (P61, line manager, MedEquip). Another prerequisite is the ease of use and related to this, the convenience of the new system as a line manager articulates: “User-friendliness is something, thus that it is easy to use. That it shows the right way itself. That it is not too complicated to search for things or to enter data. Within Airways we have a number of less user-friendly systems, so I think that this is important” (P89, line manager, Airways).

There are however some pitfalls that might deteriorate the introduction of a new HRM system that can generally be grouped into the knowledge about guidelines, alignment with official policies and the trustworthiness of the new system. Concerning the knowledge about guidelines, it is important that employees indeed *know* about guidelines, especially with regard to non-standard tasks that are seldom demanded. In the case of MedEquip the majority of line managers did not know about the existence of guidelines or where they could look them up. Paradoxically the system was so easy to use that some line managers did not even think of using guidelines as one of them said: “It is one system now. And you have to find that yourself. And because this system is so easy to use, you forget to search the guideline and find yourself still being busy looking it up afterwards” (P40, line manager, MedEquip). Another potential pitfall for the introduction of a new HRM system is that it is not aligned with official policies, meaning

not only national and local rules but also ‘house rules’ that may differ from one site to another. Because the system is developed centrally and is available throughout the company, house rules cannot be implemented as one HR professional remarks that they “every subsidiary has house rules [...]. You cannot determine these guidelines in one system” (P7, HR professional, MedEquip). In general however especially national and local rules were implemented in the systems properly. A final pitfall that emerged in the interview analysis was the perceived trustworthiness of the system, which means that the system itself does not only have to be reliable from a technical point of view but also people have to feel sure and confident with the system.

One HR professional summarizes the requirements of new HRM systems: “It has to be user-friendly, everywhere accessible, being good in terms of privacy and I think that another requirement is that as a HR manager the process has to be as simple as possible” (P31, HR professional, Airways). If these criteria are met, the new HRM system is more likely to be accepted by its stakeholders and HRM frames of HR managers and line managers tend to be more similar. The codes and sub-codes for this domain can be found in Table 3.

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### ***HRM-in-use***

This domain is divided into the subdomains *daily usage of the HRM system* and *consequences of the HRM system*. The perception with regard to the usage of the HRM system is influenced by the frequency of usage and the nature of information that can be found in the system. With regard to the first aspect assistance and trainings for the stakeholders of the HRM system play an important role as well as the functionality of the system, because this impacts the experienced convenience with the system. The finding that form should follow function is expressed in the quotation of a line manager from MedEquip who says: “I find it great actually. I am not that

sensitive for layout or whatever. If it works, it works: done” (P55, line manager, MedEquip). Some line managers also complained about missing trainings and assistance from HR, as a line manager stated: “If I have to work with a system and I got a good training, then there is no problem. And if I do not get good training, then questions arise. [...] Thus, the more you teach about the portal, the more autonomous somebody can work” (P64, line manager, MedEquip). This in turn increases knowledge and experienced convenience with the new HR system. The second factor that has influence on the usage is the nature of information that is delivered in the new HRM system. The more useful and expedient the information in the new HRM system is the more frequent is its usage. One HR professional claimed in this context that “in my mind [line managers] use the HR portal primarily for information” (P4, HR professional, MedEquip).

Concerning the consequences of a new HRM system, the analysis revealed that there are two streams of arguments: increased efficiency and increased transparency. The increased efficiency is an effect of the devolution of HR-related tasks, because as more line managers perform HR tasks and processes, fewer manpower in the HR department is needed especially for running administrative tasks. This is also confirmed by a respondent from MedEquip: “Certain activities are now disappeared from the package of HR managers, especially administrative tasks. That results in fewer tasks for HR managers” (P1, HR professional, MedEquip) and many line managers also see this point saying: “And from the perspective of HR I think that it indeed fetches the administrative aspects away from HR managers, whereby the focus is more on organizational models and talent management than on administrative things” (P40, line manager, MedEquip). Also, the role of HR managers changes, from operational to a more advisory role as line managers and HR professionals acknowledge, which is shown by these two citations: “The role of HR is pure as support, for example if people have questions regarding their retirement” (P90, line manager, Airways); “The role of HR changed from executing and operational to a more advising and tactical role. [...] Because the

operational part of HR is devolved to the line managers, also the personnel of HR decreased. The number of HR assistants reduced as well as the number of HR managers” (P3, HR professional, MedEquip). Finally, the transparency is a consequence of new HRM systems, paradoxically at the costs of less personal contact between HR managers and line managers but also among line managers. This paradox is explained by a line manager who says: “Indeed it brings more insights. Before somebody was sitting in the office and you had to go to this person. I have to admit that I found that very companionable. Due to the HR portal you have fewer contact with people, with line managers as well as HR, I really miss that contact” (P70, line manager, MedEquip). On the other hand, line managers still build the bridge between HRM and employees and they also emphasize that they appreciate the personal contact to their employees and the importance of personal contact. This is especially important for line managers from VealCo, which might be attributed to the HRM innovation of a new absenteeism policy, where personal contact is pivotal according to this respondent: “If we do not keep in touch with each other, we create a big gap between the employer and the employee, and I think that this is a bad thing” (P79, line manager, VealCo). Another line manager amplifies: “One guideline for me is also to have personal contact, communicate. Communicating is one of the things that I do a lot” (P75, line manager, VealCo). The devolution of HR-related tasks and the decrease of personal contact is mainly achieved by centralization and digitalization of HR processes as this HR professional links: “By digitalizing everything I get along with half of the people” (P7, HR professional, MedEquip). The codes and sub-codes for this domain can be found in Table 4.

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### ***HRM-in-integration***

In this domain, especially line managers did not say much about the integration of the HRM innovation. However, the general message of respondents was that cost reduction by the means of standardization is one central integration of the new HRM system in the organization. One HR professional stated that “In general: The new HRM system makes processes more standardized within HR that is transparent and visible for everybody to give more clarity. Thus, within HR the new HRM system plays a big role” (P30, HR professional, Airways). The alignment of the HRM system in the strategy is represented by the quotation of a line manager: “I do think that the new HRM system should reach its goals in terms of reduction of costs. This is feasible, but on the long run. [...] I believe that the new HRM system is functional, easy and practical. In the end a lot of processes will be integrated and it will take an important role [within HRM]” (P87, line manager, Airways). The codes and sub-codes for this domain can be found in Table 5.

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## **DISCUSSION**

Aim of this study was to investigate the congruence of HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers in different companies operating in various industries across the different domains of HRM frames: HRM-as-intended, HRM-as-composed, HRM-in-use and HRM-in-integration. By the means of this comparative study it has been found that there are numerous factors within each dimension that influence the specific domain and thereby the HRM frames of stakeholders in general. The analysis further showed that the first three domains could be divided into subdomains and that the domains have a certain sequence within the process in which people develop their personal HRM frames. The central result of this study is a



summarizing and simplifying model depicted in Figure 1 that shows the complex process of building HRM frames and which factors influence the specific stages of this process. Knowing these influences in advance of introducing a new HRM (sub-) system into the already existing HRM system can help for a better implementation. This can be done by considering these influences and work towards congruent HRM frames of the involved parties, e.g. HR professionals, line managers but also employees or top management. As literature already showed congruent frames play an important role in the implementation of new systems in organizations (e.g. Orlikowski, & Gash, 1994), a finding that also has been found for HRM frames in this study.

However, with regard to the different domains of HRM frames, the analysis further indicated that HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers became more divergent in the course of the domains. That is, while HR professionals and line managers had almost the same perceptions about the goals and reasons for change (i.e. HRM-as-intended) the perceptions divergated towards HRM-as-composed, HRM-in-use and HRM-in-integration. This increase of divergence between HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers might partly be attributed to factors like communication about the new HRM system and could thus be part of the sensegiving process, as suggested by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). In the context of strategic change the authors state that the process of sensegiving consists of distributing and disseminating an abstract vision that has been made sense of before (during the process of sensemaking) to other stakeholders. This also happens with HRM frames where especially HR professionals actively *give* sense in the sense *making* process of line managers, so they can influence line managers' perceptions in every stage of the introduction of the new HRM system. However, looking at the planning and implementation of HRM systems, the implementation of new HRM systems is communicated clearly before the actual introduction as also happened in the investigated companies of this study, e.g. by giving line managers information at first hand,

spreading e-mails to all stakeholders, writing articles in the company magazine, giving information at employee sessions and other ways. By the means of extensive sensegiving before the implementation, HRM frames of line managers can be influenced by HR professionals. This might increase the efficiency of the implementation of the HRM system.

The finding that especially HRM-in-integration is difficult to assess for many of the respondents can be attributed to the sequence of domains. Since the respondents had much more time for building HRM frames for the specific domain of HRM-as-intended, they had less time for building HRM frames concerning HRM-in-use, because HRM-in-use can only be assessed when the new HRM system is actually in use already. Only after respondents used the new HRM system frequently, they can assess how this new system is integrated into the broader image of the organization. Therefore, respondents had more difficulties to say something about the HRM-in-integration domain.

### **Possible contextual mechanisms**

In this study several overarching contextual factors were found that might possibly influence the process of building an HRM frame for HR professionals and line managers during all domains. The interview analysis conducted for the purpose of this study indicated that there are at least six factors: (1) the degree of regulation or institutionalization, (2) the degree of the internationality of the company, (3) the nature of the HR change, (4) company size, (5) feelings towards the existing HRM system and finally (6) prior communication. Beginning with the degree of institutionalization or regulation of the company, it is hypothesized that HRM has fewer freedom in developing and introducing new HRM systems. As a consequence, HRM frames are expected to be more similar in highly regulated and/ or institutionalized companies, because the role of HR seems to be clearer to stakeholders, so they have better knowledge, similar assumptions and clearer expectations with regard to HRM.

The second possible contextual factor is the degree of internationalization. As already indicated HRM frames partly consist of prior experience. Experience however is influenced by social, cultural and political background of individuals. Therefore the hypothesis regarding this contextual factor is that the more international a company is operating, the more diverse the HRM frames are because of divergent social, cultural and political backgrounds of stakeholders.

Similar to internationalization, the company size is regarded as a contextual factor that might influence HRM frames of employees. One respondent in this study wondered why the company the respondent was working for at the time of the data collection, did not introduce a certain HRM system earlier already. He did wonder about that point because he assumed that such a big company should adopt the HRM system earlier, because other competitors had similar systems already. This shows that certain expectations concerning HRM are influenced by the size of the company, indicating that bigger companies should adopt HRM systems early in order to stay up to date and competitive. However, company size might also influence HRM frames of different groups by its number of employees and thus its number of opinions. Therefore, is hypothesized that bigger companies tend to have more divergent HRM frames between but also within social groups due to the mere existence of more perceptions and opinions.

The nature of HR change, the fourth possible contextual mechanism, is the system that is renewed itself, in this study thus a new e-HRM system, a new absenteeism policy and a performance management system. The more extreme an HR change and the more people are involved in this change (especially line managers), the more important congruent HRM frames become. This is because line managers usually have to implement the HRM systems and have a major influence on their employees due to their regular (personal) contact with them. If HRM frames among line managers and between HR professionals and line managers are

fundamentally incongruent, this effect is multiplied in even more divergent HRM frames of other employees when line managers implement the new HRM system with divergent HRM frames.

The fifth factor, feelings towards the old, existing HRM system, is of importance because it may frame the framing process itself. That is, if a line manager is very positive about the existing HRM system and a new system is about to be introduced, there might be skepticism about the necessity of a new system. This in turn might have an influence on different domains like HRM-as-intended (e.g. the line manager believes that the primary reason for a new system is pure cost reduction) or HRM-in-use (the line manager is unsatisfied with the product and uses the new system infrequently).

Finally, prior communication can also influence the HRM frames as indicated earlier already. It is hypothesized that more and better communication, especially between HR professionals and line managers concerning the new HRM system, leads to more similar HRM frames and therefore increases the efficiency of the implementation. Table 6 summarizes all potential contextual mechanisms including its definition and hypothesis.

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### **Future research implications and limitations**

With its comparative focus this study tried to find overarching factors that influence the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers in the phase of introducing a new HRM system. Due to the cross-sectional character of the study, i.e. the data has been collected at one point in time, future studies should also use longitudinal designs for assessing the evolution of HRM frames from the first planning of new HRM systems until the acceptance of the new HRM system by all employees, because frames can shift over context and time (Gioia, 1986). Also quantitative methods should be implemented in future studies in order to find more

generalizable findings across more settings than this study included. Although the current study already compared different industries, future studies should research more industries and also focus stronger on other contextual variables, like sex, age, job experience and others. Also the range of respondents might be extended to employees and top management with regard to HRM frames, e.g. researching the effect of congruence of HRM frames between HR professionals and line managers on other employees or investigating the effect and communication of top management on the congruence of HRM frames between HR professionals and line managers.

Since this study is based on interviews conducted by a group of seven researchers, the author of this paper did not conduct any of the analyzed interviews. Therefore one limitation of this study is that the analysis was purely text-based without knowledge about facial expressions, gestures or other contextual circumstances that might indicate a different interpretation of the results than those that were transcribed (e.g. ironic comments of respondents). Another limitation was the regional scope of companies, including only European companies with specific characteristics, e.g. culture or relatively strict regulations by the European Union compared to American companies. Future studies therefore might profit from extending the range of companies to other regions like America or Asia. Finally, in the long run future research might develop questionnaires that allow for an assessment of HRM frames and better and quicker comparison of results.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

My special thanks go to Tanya Bondarouk for her trust, her constant support, her valuable feedback and being an excellent mentor and supervisor. Her passion for her work, her profound knowledge about the topic discussed in this paper and her interconnected way of thinking inspired me regularly to think out of the box and to develop the presented model. I would also like to thank Huub Ruël for joining this project as my second supervisor and revising this thesis.

I also would like to thank my friends and family, especially my parents, for their support and their trust in me during my whole study. Finally, my gratitude goes to my girlfriend for always encouraging and supporting me and cheering me up.

## **EPILOGUE**

This paper is my master thesis, the final paper that I have written as a Master student of Business Administration with the track HRM at the University of Twente. It was a very challenging and demanding task, but seeing the gradual progress and finally completing it was a satisfactory experience. Working with dozens of interviews, analyzing all of them and now proudly presenting the final paper was worth every hour of work.

Now having the final paper in front of me, I am also reflecting on what I have learned through writing this master thesis. The central outcome of my study is the proposed model that explains how HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals emerge and what contextual mechanisms might affect this process. As HRM frames roots in social psychology and has its application in the managerial context, it suits perfectly my education as graduated Bachelor of Science Psychology and now graduating as Master of Science Business Administration. Content-related I thus learned, that HRM frames are a fantastic example of the interrelation between management and psychology and shows that it is by far not just content that impacts

the perception of employees. It was very interesting to see that overall HR professionals speak the same language but that it also takes some effort to work with each other across departments.

Looking at the process of my thesis, this was the most challenging paper I have worked on yet compared to all papers I have written during my study. It took some time until I could finally organize the mass of information from the interviews and to find a way to present it in the results section. It was especially challenging that I did not conduct the interviews myself, because this way I missed important cues and information, like gestures and comments from the interviewees. Only working with the transcriptions of interviews without the expression or pronunciation of the interviewee made it hard to go through every piece of information and to “read between the lines”. Therefore, if I had a chance to change anything about the process of this research, I would have liked to attend the interviews.

As already indicated, this research is based on secondary data gathered by a group of seven students prior to my thesis. Being present during the discussions about the process of their studies, e.g. the creation of the interview guide, would also have had a positive influence on my work and is thus a second aspect I would have changed afterwards. It would have clarified some points in advance and the reasons for choices they made in their studies.

I thus would have done some things differently, but in sum I am very happy that I have concentrated on this interesting topic of HRM frames, because especially by analyzing all these interviews I learned a lot about what HR managers have to deal with in their daily work. And now I am looking forward to start my working life in the field of HRM.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Interview guide for HR professionals and line managers

#### Introductie notities en achtergrondinformatie

Belangrijkste vraag: Kunt u iets over uzelf vertellen (baan, verantwoordelijkheden, etc.)?

*Controleren voor:*

- Wat is uw functie? [Officiële titel]
- Wat houdt uw werk in? [Taken, activiteiten en verantwoordelijkheden]

#### HRM-as-intended

1. Wanneer begonnen de eerste gesprekken over {HRM sub-system}?
2. Kunt u nog herinneren wanneer het systeem geïntroduceerd werd?
3. Hoe verliep de introductie? [Communicatie]
4. Voor welke doeleinden is het systeem ontworpen? [Doel]
5. Wat zijn volgens u de redenen dat het systeem in gebruik is? [Redenen management]
6. Wat zijn uw gevoelens erover?
7. Wat verwacht u van het systeem?

#### HRM-as-composed

8. Wat denkt u dat de richtlijnen zijn die het gebruik van [dit systeem] waarborgen? [Richtlijnen, intenties]
9. Wat houdt het systeem in?
10. Kunt u het systeem beschrijven?

#### HRM- in-use

11. Kunt u beschrijven hoe de salarisstrook werkt?
12. Kunt u beschrijven hoe het wijzigen van persoonsgegevens werkt?
13. Hoe gebruikt u {HRM sub-system} in de praktijk?
14. Wat zijn volgens u de consequenties van {HRM sub-system}?
15. Denkt u dat u het systeem geheel begrijpt?
16. Wat vindt u het leukst en het minst leuke aan {HRM sub-system}?
17. Is er iets wat u zou willen veranderen?
18. Hoe beïnvloedt {HRM sub-system} uw dagelijkse werkzaamheden?
19. In hoeverre denkt u dat {HRM sub-system} zijn doelen heeft bereikt?

#### HRM-in-integration

20. Welke rol denk je dat [dit systeem] speelt in het gehele personeelsmanagement in uw bedrijf? [Positionering]
21. Heeft het een speciale plaats?

#### Closure

- Hebben we de belangrijkste zaken besproken inzake {HRM sub-system}? Zijn er belangrijke dingen overgeslagen?
- Mogelijkheid tot verifiëren van het transcript: vraag naar het e-mail adres.
- Overall feedback op het interview/de vragen.

**Appendix B. Table 1: Sample of organizations and interviewees participated in the study**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>HRM innovation</i>	<i>Number of interviewed HR professionals</i>	<i>Number of interviewed line managers</i>	<i>Interviewing time</i>
<b>Airways</b>	Airlines	Introduction of an electronic HRM system	7	18	38 hours
<b>MedEquip</b>	Electronics & Health Care Equipment	Introduction of an electronic HRM system	8	36	62 hours
<b>VealCo</b>	Dairy Products	New absenteeism policy	2	15	22 hours
<b>Fashion House</b>	Retail	Performance management	1	7	11 hours

Appendix C. Table 2: Codes and sub-codes of the domain HRM-as-intended

Code	Definition	Example (Dutch)	Example (English translation)
<b><i>Reasons for change</i></b>	Perceived intended reasons of HR professionals and/ or top management for a change in the existing HR system		
Devolution	Intention of devolution of HR-related tasks and processes to the line	En de verantwoordelijkheid eigenlijk te leggen bij waar het hoort. En dat is niet een aparte functie te hebben als het om mensen gaat, maar dat gewoon naar de lijn te brengen. (P8, HR professional, MedEquip)	And actually to put responsibility where it belongs. And this not to have a separate function if it is about people, but to bring it to the line. (P8, HR professional, MedEquip)
Centralization	Intention of centralization of HR-related tasks and processes to a certain system or place	Ik denk dat het belangrijkste en makkelijkste is dat het één systeem is en dat voor iedereen op dezelfde manier werkt en ook dat daar de gegevens worden opgeslagen die bij die persoon horen en niet dat een leidinggevende lokaal zijn notities over die persoon heeft. Ik denk dat het een groot voordeel is; een centraal data systeem. (P48, line manager, MedEquip)	I think it is most important and easiest that there is one system and that this works for everybody in the same way and also that data is being recorded that belong to a person and not that an executive has his notes locally. I think that this is a big advantage; a central data system. (P48, line manager, MedEquip)
Digitalization	Intention of digitalization of HR-related tasks and processes	Ik vind het een must in deze tijd. Voor [Airways] is het een grote kostenbesparing en dat je meer dingen digitaal doet. Ik sta er heel positief tegenover. Elk bedrijf zou eigenlijk een dergelijk systeem moet hebben. Het hoort bij deze tijd. (P28, HR professional, Airways)	I think that this is a must have in these times. For [Airways] it is a big reduction of costs and that you do more things digitally. I am very positive about that. Every company should have a comparable system. It belongs in these times. (P 28, HR professional, Airways)

Standardization	Intention of standardization of HR-related tasks and processes	Daar werd ook gesproken over e-HRM; [...], meer digitaliseren van de processen en deze ook te standaardiseren. Ikzelf ben daar alleen maar voorstander van. Ik vind het alleen maar fijn dat, dat gebeurt, omdat je binnen [Airways] bij diverse divisies redelijk grote verschillen ziet in de processen. (P30, HR professional, Airways)	Also e-HRM is being discussed; [...], more digitalizing of the processes and also to standardize these. I am certainly a proponent of this myself. I like it that this happens because within [Airways] there are relatively big differences in the processes in the different divisions. (P30, HR professional, Airways)
<i>Goals of change</i>	Perceived intended goals of HR professionals and/ or top management for a change in the existing HR system		
Automation	Intention to automatize HR-related tasks and processes	Voor het digitaliseren en automatiseren vind ik fantastisch. Ik kwam hier en toen gebeurde alles nog op papier. Dat heb ik iedereen snel afgeleerd (inscannen/digitaal ondertekenen). Dus er is nog wel een weg te gaan, maar men begint er aan te wennen. (P33, HR professional, Airways)	I find the digitalization and automation especially fantastic. When I started [to work] here, everything still was done on paper. I broke everyone's habit (scanning in/ signing digitally). Thus, there is still a way to go, but it is starting to get used to. (P33, HR professional, Airways)
Efficiency	Intention to increase efficiency of HR-related tasks and processes	De redenen voor het management, wat je kunt met het tool is, je kunt ook sneller communiceren. Efficiency van alle kanten. Alle gegevens staan er. Je kunt vanuit die tool ook makkelijk reactie geven op je salaris of je mist nog iets, dus een soort kennisbank. (P89, line manager, Airways)	The reason for the management, what you can do with that tool is, that you can also communicate faster. Efficiency everywhere. All data is there. You can also give a reaction from that tool easily to things like salary, if there misses anything, thus a sort of database. (P89, line managers, Airways)

Cost reduction	Intention to reduce costs induced by HR-related tasks and processes	Kostenbesparing is heel belangrijk. Ik vind het een prima ontwikkeling. Ik heb het voordeel dat de lijnmanagers waar ik mee te maken heb het eigenlijk al te langzaam vindt gaan. (P32, HR professional, Airways)	Cost savings are very important. I find it a great development. I have the advantage of dealing with line manager that actually find the progress too slowly. (P32, HR professional, Airways)
Communication	Intention of improvement of relationship between HR, line managers and employees due to better communication	Dus communicatie, maar voornamelijk je interne criteria goed doornemen en vastleggen. (P32, HR professional, Airways)	Thus communication, but especially to peruse and determine your intern criteria. (P32, HR professional, Airways)
Information	Intention of HR change for better information flow and clearer view on HR-related information	De HR portal zelf vind ik een ideale tool omdat er alles op staat wat je over HR wilt weten. De hele CAO [colletieve arbeidovereenkomst] staat er uitgelegd, alle arbeidsvoorwaarden, wat je moet doen als je ziek bent, wat je moet doen als je een vrije dag wilt opnemen, als je zwanger bent. (P6, HR professional, MedEquip)	I find the HR portal an ideal tool because there is everything that you need to know about HR. The whole CAO [collective working agreement] is explained there, all working conditions, what you have to do if you are sick, if you want to a have day off, if you are pregnant. (P6, HR professional, MedEquip)
Transparency	Intention to increase transparency of HR-related information for the line	En ik denk dat, dat voor duidelijkheid en transparantie zal zorgen, omdat je dan met zijn allen weet van; dat is de manier hoe wij het doen. Bijvoorbeeld ziekmelden, dat hebben wij dan nog niet in het systeem, maar bij sommige afdelingen mag je een mail sturen of een Whatsapp en bij andere divisies wordt weer gezegd van je mag alleen	I think that this will lead to clarity and transparency, because everybody then knows: this is the way we do it. For example reporting sick, we do not have this in the system yet, but in some departments you can send an e-mail or a Whatsapp and in other departments it is said that you only may inform the manager via telephone. (P30, HR professional, Airways)



		telefonisch de manager informeren. (P30, HR professional, Airways)	
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**Appendix D. Table 3: Codes and sub-codes of the domain HRM-as-composed**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example (Dutch)</b>	<b>Example (English translation)</b>
<b><i>Requirements of HRM system</i></b>	Possible requirements for a the new HRM system		
Privacy	Privacy of stakeholders, especially employees, has to be protected	Ook de autorisatie van mensen, dat ze alleen kunnen kijken waar ze recht tot hebben, dat vind ik goed. Bescherming van persoonsgegevens zijn erg belangrijk; je moet alleen wel weten waar je mee bezig bent. Mijn baas weet alles van mij en ik weer van mijn medewerkers, alleen je moet wel weten waar je mee bezig bent. Privacy is het belangrijkste wat er is. (P61, line manager, MedEquip)	Also the authorization of people, that they can only see the things they have the rights for, I like that. Protection of personal data is very important; you just have to know what you are busy with. My boss knows everything of me and I in turn know everything of my colleagues, you just have to know what you are busy with. Privacy is the most important thing. (P61, line manager, MedEquip)
Ease of use	New system has to be user-friendly and simple to use	Het moet gebruikersvriendelijk zijn. Je moet het zo gemakkelijk mogelijk maken, duidelijke leesbare informatie, vooral voor de medewerkers op deze werkvloer. Het moet korte teksten bevatten met duidelijke informatie. (P27, HR professional, Airways)	It has to be user-friendly. You have to make it as easy as possible, clear readable information, especially for employees on this workplace. It has to be shorts texts with clear information. (P27, HR professional, Airways)
Convenience	Convenient usage and presentation of new HRM system	Dus stap voor stap om bekendheid te creëren en het niet te ingewikkeld te maken. Heel eerlijk, de man op de	Thus, step for step to create knowledge and not to make it too complicated. Very honest, the

		vloer, sommige hebben geen hoge opleiding, vindt het überhaupt al heel eng om met de computer te werken, maar op een gegeven moment moeten ze wel. (P88, line manager, Airways)	unskilled worker, some do not have a high education, find it difficult to work with the computer at all, but at a given point in time they have to. (P88, line manager, Airways)
Central availability	HR processes that are central available	Houd het lekker centraal op één plek en houd het gemakkelijk. (P87, line manager, Airways)	Keep it nicely in one place and keep it simple. (P87, line manager, Airways)
<b><i>Challenges for the HRM system</i></b>	Possible challenges for the new HRM system		
Alignment with official policies	The HRM system has to be in line with official policies	Elke vestiging heeft huisregels, maar dat heeft niks met e-HRM te maken. Die richtlijnen kun je niet in een systeem vastleggen. [...] dus dat moet je lokaal dan regelen. (P7, HR professional, MedEquip)	Every subsidiary has house rules, but that does not has to do anything with e-HRM. You cannot determine these guidelines in one system. [...] you have to regulate this locally then. (P7, HR professional, MedEquip)
Trustworthiness of the new HRM system	All stakeholders have to be convinced that the new system is trustworthy, especially in terms of privacy issues	Hierin zijn bijvoorbeeld ook zaken als vertrouwelijkheid van persoonsgegevens in opgenomen, wat ook een belangrijke richtlijn vormt voor het gebruik van de HR Portal. (P1, HR professional, MedEquip)	In this there are also aspects included like confidentiality of personal data that is also an important guideline for the usage of the HR portal. (P1, HR professional, MedEquip)
Knowledge about guideline	Stakeholders have to know about guidelines, even if the new system is very intuitive, and there is actually no need for a guideline for standard HR tasks	De richtlijnen voor het gebruik van het HR Portal zijn er misschien wel, maar we kennen ze niet. Misschien is het heel erg makkelijk, misschien staat er wel een link voor een voorbeeld is, maar bij mij niet bekend. Misschien maak ik het wel veel moeilijker dan dat het is, dat er	Maybe there are guidelines of the usage of the HR portal, but I do not know them. Maybe it is very easy, maybe there is a link to an example, but I do not know that. Maybe I do make it much more difficult than it is, that there are tools, but I do not

		best wel hulpmiddelen zijn, maar bij mij niet bekend of ik kan ze niet vinden. (P59, line manager, MedEquip)	know it or where I can find it. (P59, line manager, MedEquip)
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**Appendix E. Table 4: Codes and sub-codes of the domain HRM-in-use**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example (Dutch)</b>	<b>Example (English translation)</b>
<i><b>Daily usage of the HRM system</b></i>	Experiences with the new HRM system during daily usage		
Form follows function	The functionality is experienced more important than its design	Ik vind het prima eigenlijk. Ik ben niet zo gevoelig voor lay-outs of wat dan ook. Als het maar werkt dan werkt het: klaar. (P55, line manager, MedEquip)	I find it great actually. I am not that sensitive for layout or whatever. If it works, it works: done. (P55, line manager, MedEquip)
Assistance/ trainings with HRM system	The degree to which users receive assistance and/ or training on how to use the new HRM system	Als ik met een systeem moet werken en ik krijg goede training, dan is er niks aan de hand. En als ik geen goede training krijg, dan komen de vragen. [...] Dus hoe meer je over de Portal leert aan iemand, hoe zelfstandiger iemand kan werken. (P64, line manager, MedEquip)	If I have to work with a system and I got a good training, then there is no problem. And if I do not get good training, then questions arise. [...] Thus, the more you teach about the portal, the more autonomous somebody can work. (P64, line manager, MedEquip)
Experienced convenience/ knowledge	The degree to which the user experiences the new system as convenient and what experiences the user makes with the new system	Het systeem is niet duidelijk genoeg, misschien kunnen we er wel veel meer uithalen, veel meer mee doen. Maar daar moet je ook een stukje kennis voor hebben en vooral ook regelmaat. Als je iets één keer in de twee jaar doet, een zieke uit dienst, dat zal je niet zo vaak tegenkomen.	The system is not plain enough, maybe we can get much more out of it, do much more with it. But you also have to have some knowledge and especially regularity. If you have to do something once in two years, an absenteeism from duty, you will not approach that so often. But there

		Maar er zullen ook dingen zijn die je wel met regelmaat tegen komt, hoe vaker je die dingen doet, hoe makkelijker ze je af gaan. (P71, line manager, MedEquip)	are also things that you approach very regularly, the more often you do things, the easier it will be. (P71, line manager, MedEquip)
Frequency of usage	The frequency how often stakeholders use the new HRM system	Als we puur en alleen naar de Portal kijken, denk ik dat er minder gebruik van wordt gemaakt dan dat wij denken. Ik heb geen idee hoe vaak. Ze [line managers] moeten wel vaak acties uitvoeren in E-HRM, een tool die vanuit het Portal kan worden benaderd. Ze moeten regelmatig iets doen in het ziekteverzuim, daar krijgen ze een melding van in hun mailbox. (P4, HR professional, MedEquip)	If we only look at the portal, I think that it is used less frequently than we believe. I do not know how often. They [line managers] do indeed often have to perform actions in E-HRM, a tool that can be approached from the portal. They have to do things regularly concerning absenteeism, there they receive a message in their mailbox. (P4, HR professional, MedEquip)
Nature of information	Which information exactly are presented in the new HRM system	Volgens mij gebruiken ze [line managers] het HR Portal voornamelijk voor informatie. (P4, HR professional, MedEquip)	In my mind they [line managers] use the HR portal primarily for information. (P4, HR professional, MedEquip)
<b><i>Consequences of HRM system</i></b>	Consequences of the usage of the new HRM system		
Digitalization	Increase of digitalization of HR-related tasks and processes due to the new HRM system	Door dat allemaal te digitaliseren kon ik met de helft minder mensen uit. (P7, HR professional, MedEquip)	By digitalizing everything I get along with half of the people. (P7, HR professional, MedEquip)
Centralization	Centralization of HR-related tasks in one system	Ik denk dat je door het systeem, zoals het er nu ligt, dat alles heel centraal is. En wat je er allemaal inzet en doet dat kan zo uitgebreid mogelijk natuurlijk. Het is allemaal wel heel	I think that due to that system, as it is now, that everything is central. And what you can possibly insert and do can be as extensive as possible of course. Everything is very central

		centraal nu. (P51, line manager, MedEquip)	now indeed. (P51, line manager, MedEquip)
Efficiency	Increased efficiency in execution of HR-related tasks	Dat de rol van HR van uitvoerend en operationeel, naar een meer adviserende en tactische rol is gegaan. [...] Doordat het operationele gedeelte van HR naar de managers is gegaan, is de bezetting van HR ook minder geworden. Het aantal HR assistenten is afgenomen, het aantal HR managers ook. (P3, HR professional, MedEquip)	The role of HR changed from executing and operational to a more advising and tactical role. [...] Because the operational part of HR is devolved to the line managers, also the personnel of HR decreased. The number of HR assistants reduced as well as the number of HR managers. (P3, HR professional, MedEquip)
Role of HR	The role that HR plays in the daily use with the new system (trainers, advisors, supervisors, etc.)	Dat de rol van HR van uitvoerend en operationeel, naar een meer adviserende en tactische rol is gegaan. [...] Doordat het operationele gedeelte van HR naar de managers is gegaan, is de bezetting van HR ook minder geworden. Het aantal HR assistenten is afgenomen, het aantal HR managers ook. (P3, HR professional, MedEquip)	The role of HR changed from executing and operational to a more advising and tactical role. [...] Because the operational part of HR is devolved to the line managers, also the personnel of HR decreased. The number of HR assistants reduced as well as the number of HR managers. (P3, HR professional, MedEquip)
Devolution	More responsibility and HR-related tasks due to the new HRM system	Bepaalde werkzaamheden zijn uit het pakket van HR managers verdwenen, vooral de administratieve taken. Dit zorgt ervoor dat HR managers minder werkzaamheden hebben. (P1, HR professional, MedEquip)	Certain activities are now disappeared from the package of HR managers, especially administrative tasks. That results in fewer tasks for HR managers. (P1, HR professional, MedEquip)
Decrease of personal contact	Due to digitalization less personal contact between HR professionals and line managers as well as among line managers	Het brengt wel meer inzicht. Anders zat er iemand op kantoor, daar moest je dan naartoe lopen. Dan vond ik wel gezellig moet ik zeggen. Door de	Indeed it brings more insights. Before somebody was sitting in the office and you had to go to this person. I have to admit that I found

		HR Portal heb je minder direct contact met mensen, zowel medewerkers in de lijn als HR, dat contact mis ik wel. (P70, line manager, MedEquip)	that very companionable. Due to the HR portal you have fewer contact with people, with line managers as well as HR, I really miss that contact. (P70, line manager, MedEquip)
Transparency	Increased transparency of HRM	Het brengt wel meer inzicht. Anders zat er iemand op kantoor, daar moest je dan naartoe lopen. Dan vond ik wel gezellig moet ik zeggen. Door de HR Portal heb je minder direct contact met mensen, zowel medewerkers in de lijn als HR, dat contact mis ik wel. (P70, line manager, MedEquip)	Indeed it brings more insights. Before somebody was sitting in the office and you had to go to this person. I have to admit that I found that very companionable. Due to the HR portal you have fewer contact with people, with line managers as well as HR, I really miss that contact. (P70, line manager, MedEquip)

**Appendix F. Table 5: Codes and sub-codes of the domain HRM-in-integration**

Code	Definition	Example (Dutch)	Example (English translation)
Alignment with HR strategy/ business strategy	The new HR system is well integrated into the existing HR strategy/ business strategy	Ik denk dat het functioneel, gemakkelijk en handig is. Uiteindelijk zullen er veel processen in komen en kan het een belangrijke rol gaan innemen. (P87, line manager, Airways)	I believe that it [the new HRM system] is functional, easy and practical. In the end a lot of processes will be integrated and it will take an important role [within HRM]. (P87, line manager, Airways)
Standardization	More standardization in the future is expected	Over het algemeen: [Het nieuwe HRM systeem] zorgt binnen HR voor gestandaardiseerde processen die transparant voor iedereen zichtbaar zijn wat meer duidelijkheid zal geven. Dus binnen HR speelt [het nieuwe HRM syteem] denk ik een	In general: [The new HRM system] makes processes more standardized within HR that is transparent and visible for everybody to give more clarity. Thus, I think that within HR the new HRM system plays a big role. Concerning my role as HR, I

		grote rol. Wat betreft mijn rol als HR zou je zeggen dat ik meer mee ga nadenken over de strategie, over de HR strategie. (P30, HR professional, Airways)	guess that I will think more about the strategy, the HR strategy. (P30, HR professional, Airways)
Cost reduction	More cost reduction due to more standardization is expected	Ik denk ook dat het HR portal heeft bijgedragen aan de kostenbesparing, want uiteindelijk als je alles goed doorrekend wel bespaard op heel veel uren intern bij elke fabriek. (P6, HR professional, MedEquip)	I think that the HR portal contributed to the cost reduction, because in the end, if you calculate everything, you save many hours internally in every plant. (P6, HR professional, MedEquip)

**Appendix G. Table 6: Codes of the possible contextual mechanisms**

<b>Contextual Mech.</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>
Degree of regulation/ institutionalization	The degree to which a company is regulated and/ or institutionalized might have an effect on the HRM frame process.	The more regulated and/ or institutionalized a company, the more similar the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers due to more restrictions and rules concerning decision making in HR-related topics.
Degree of internationality	The degree to which a company is internationally active might have an effect on the HRM frame process.	The more international a company, the more diverse the HRM frames due to divergent social, cultural, and political backgrounds.
Company size	The company size might have an effect on the HRM frame process.	The bigger a company, the more divergent the HRM frames are between HR professionals and line managers and among both groups due to more individual frames that are involved.
Nature of HR change	The nature of HR change means the HR system that is to be renewed (e.g. e-HRM system, new absenteeism policy, performance management, etc.).	The more stakeholders, especially line managers who execute and implement the new practice on the work floor, are affected by the change, the more important the congruence of HRM frames becomes.

Feelings towards HR system	The feelings of stakeholders towards the new and/or old HR system might have an effect on the HRM frame process.	The better the feelings are towards the already existing (old) HR system, the less willing are people for change, thus influencing the expectations of HRM.
Prior communication	Communication prior to a change in an HR system might have an effect on the HRM frame process.	The more and the better the communication between HR professionals and line managers before the change of a new HR system, the more similar their HRM frames and thus the easier the implementation.



## Appendix H. Figure 1: Example of coding HRM-as-intended with Atlas.ti

The screenshot shows the Atlas.ti software interface. The main window displays a PDF document titled "HRM-as-intended" with the following Dutch text:

Als ik heel kort door de bocht ben dan was het doel cost-cutting; efficiënter proces, goedkoper. Door alles te digitaliseren kun je als eerste quick win heel makkelijk cost-savings bewerkstelligen, omdat je minder mensen nodig hebt. Sinds de invoering van de HR-digitale wereld is de personeelsbezetting op het gebied van HRM in de operationele HR functies zeker met een kwart of een derde of zelfs met de helft terug gelopen. Het is dus een pure cost-cutting exercise.

Daarnaast, dat zal de organisatie wel aangeven, is het ook dat je mee moet in de vibe of volk; alles gebeurt op dit moment in de digitale wereld, in de cloud, dus is ook een kwestie van meegaan met de stroom, omdat je ook, dat is weer een kostenaspect, omdat als je al die dingen handmatig gaat doen; toen we met E-HRM begonnen we heel eenvoudig alle medewerkers die bij MedEquip in dienst komen krijgen hetzelfde contract. Dat betekent niet dat er 100 % hetzelfde in staat, maar de lay-out was hetzelfde, bepaalde artikelen die wettelijk verplicht zijn die stonden er allemaal hetzelfde in; of je nou directeur was of je was operator, het stond op dezelfde manier geformuleerd en geformuleerd. Er waren wat velden waar je wat afwijkingen kon doen. We kwamen erachter dat elke vestiging die had zijn eigen arbeidscontract. Daar stond wel ongeveer hetzelfde in, maar de een had lay-out links, de ander lay-out rechts, de een werkte met arial, de ander met times new roman. Het was een kakofonie van ellende plus dat je daarbij het risico loopt dat je dingen vergeet. We hebben het dus heel erg strak gestandaardiseerd en dat heeft ook heel veel positieve dingen opgeleverd.

En het tweede wat we toen hebben gedaan is de boel centraliseren. Dat betekent dat je de administratieve .... Eerst hebben we het systeem gedaan, dus je kon alleen nog maar een contract uitdraaien, zoals MedEquip dat wilde. Vervolgens zag je dat als je dan toch redelijk standaard werkt, waarom zet je die mensen dan niet allemaal bij elkaar, want dan kun je ook weer op 'mensen beparen'. Dus we hebben die units bij elkaar gevoegd. Vroeger hadden wel op elke afdeling een secretaresse, een administratief medewerker zitten, die de hele personeelsadministratie deed; die deed de dossiers bij hield etcetera.

The right-hand pane displays a list of codes applied to the text, organized into three sections:

- Section 1:**
  - 1-3 Efficiency
  - 1-1 Standardization
  - 1-4 Cost reduction
  - 1-5 Digitalization
  - 1 HRM-as-intended
- Section 2:**
  - 1-3 Efficiency
  - 1 HRM-as-intended
  - 1-4 Cost reduction
  - 1 HRM-as-intended
- Section 3:**
  - 1-1 Standardization
  - 1-4 Cost reduction
  - 1-5 Digitalization
  - 1 HRM-as-intended

The bottom status bar indicates: Page: 2 of 12, Size: 106%, PDF, Default.