

# Support for the first-line manager and self-managing teams provided by HR departments

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## ABSTRACT

The traditional organization form has changed towards being more decentralized, because of the increasing internal and external complexities in the environments. This resulted in the re-introduction of self-managing teams where they start to perform more HR activities which were initially performed by the HR department. Additionally, the HR department is seen by many more as a coach and a support function to the self-managing teams. The primary objective of this study was to identify what HR departments can do to optimally support both the first-line manager and the self-managing teams. This was done by the means of a case study at the healthcare organization Livio in Enschede. It includes interviews with six members of self-managing teams and the usage of secondary data, which is a transcript of a previously conducted interview with a HR manager of Livio. The findings of this study indicate that the HR department should give more explanations and guidance, for example, when new HR initiatives are implemented or when a transition towards new organizational developments is happening. Moreover, they should also provide more trainings, workshops and courses to let the team members enhance their knowledge and develop their skills and capabilities to deal with changes.

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## Keywords

Health-care sector, HR departments, HR practices, support, self-managing teams, first-line manager and level of self-management.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The healthcare sector is now the world's largest industry including great values from one hand; and great costs from the other (Ramadevi, Gunasekaran, Roy, Rai, & Senthilkumar, 2016). This brings along an increasing competition and changing environment, demanding the healthcare institutions to reform and change their visions and strategies (Croes Krabbe-Alkemade & Mikkers, 2016). Healthcare becomes more demand-driven, which leads to taking more and more into account the wishes of the clients and customizing according to those (Lako & Rosenau, 2009). The customers want to reduce healthcare costs, improve their health status and increase their satisfaction with medical care. Moreover, they also demand higher quality and more diverse and flexible care (Schultz, Feldman, & Christianson, 2001). To deal with this increasing internal and external demand-driven complexity, organizations have to be more active and dynamic to survive. Also, be more flexible, efficient, innovative, client focused and a continuously improving organization (Amelsvoort & Amelsvoort, 2000). One of the ways to achieve that is by decentralization of the organization, which is expected to improve the input and throughput performance and create better conditions for meeting the different objectives of efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, quality and service. Furthermore, more responsibility is assigned to the employees to increase their motivation (Saltman, Bankauskaite, & Vrangbaek, 2007). Visser and Bunjes (1995) argue that self-managing teams are one of the best approaches to achieve decentralization. Smets (2014) adds, they are used in order to cope with the changing environment. Self-managing teams are defined as a "group of individuals who can self-regulate work on their interdependent tasks" (Goodman, Devadas, & Griffith Hughson, 1988, p. 296). They have control over the management and execution of activities and have the responsibility and authority to initiate management activities (Goodman, Devadas, & Griffith Hughson, 1988). They differ from traditional teams in terms of team-member authority in decision making and handling internal processes. A reason for self-managing teams to be implemented in the healthcare sector is the increased quality of healthcare (Lusky, & Ingman, 1994). By changing the traditional organization form, self-managing teams start to perform more HR activities which were initially performed by the HR department. In addition to this, the role of the supervisors is expected to be more of a 'facilitator and coach' and they will not act as 'cops' or 'rule enforcers' (Peters, 1987). The HR department becomes a real support function to the self-managing teams (Banner, Newman, & Peery, 1992). Rondeau and Wager (2002) have collected data from 283 nursing homes and found out that progressive HRM practices show improved efficiency, better financial health and an increase in flexibility and reputation. They recognize that HR is a key driver for enhancing organizational learning and employee morale, which results in a high-quality of care and a reduce in medical errors.

This research investigates what HR departments can do to optimally support both, the first-line manager and the self-managing teams. Thus, What kind of HR practices/services the HR department has to offer to provide the most efficient and effective ways of working for both the first-line manager and self-managing teams? The answer to this question is important to know, because the role of HR is considered critical in creating the right values and behaviors in healthcare workers which assumingly results in an adaptive and learning culture. It is also supposed to help to overcome barriers and hurdles which the organization will face (Vestal, Fralicxn, & Spreier, 1997). Applying results of this research, it is going to be easier

for the healthcare institutions to respond to the changing environments, demands of patients and also providing the best healthcare they can give. Next to this, answers to the question equip the HR department and managers with information and tools to support the teams at the healthcare institution in their development towards self-managing teams.

## 2. DEVOLUTION OF HR TO SELF-MANAGING TEAMS

### 2.1 Self-managing teams

Self-managing teams have the authority to determine the organization, monitoring, and management of member efforts, in order to accomplish the team's work (van der Vegt, Bunderson, & Kuipers, 2010). By allowing self-management in teams, the employees are encouraged in development of their initiative and initiation of their creativity (Banner, Kulisch, & Peery, 1992). It is argued by Donovan (1987), that while implementing the structure of a self-managing team, the fact that the teams do not have an authority figure which tells them what to do will be experienced as an unpleasant feeling. However, after this feeling of unease, employees seem to grow to enjoy their new power. The members coordinate each other, rather than an external leader. They determine for themselves the appropriateness of behavior and by coordination of their work in order to meet collective and individual goals (Stephens & Lyddy, 2016). Moreover, self-managing teams are argued to move and change more fluidly and quickly, responding to the needs of a particular situation (Banner, Kulisch, & Peery, 1992). These type of teams also have the autonomy to make decisions which were traditionally the responsibilities of supervisors and managers (Alper, Tjosvold, & Law 1998). According to Fredendall and Emery (2003), self-managed teams are used as a substitute for leadership and also as a tool for continuous improvement.

### 2.2 Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (HRM) is defined as the process of acquiring, developing and maintaining competent human resources in the organization in order to achieve the goals in an effective and efficient matter (Khanka, 2003). Additionally, organizations have recognized the potential for their people to be a source of competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994). To be able to create this competitive advantage through people careful attention should be paid to the practices that best leverage these assets (Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003). Wright, Gardner and Moynihan (2003) argue that HR practices are strongly related to organization commitment and that both HR practices and employee commitment are strongly related to profitability and operating expenses. It differs per organization how the HR practices are done and who is performing them (Foot & Hook, 2009). According to Harris (2011), a top three of the best practices which can help an HR function to meet and excel modern challenges are: 'structured governance and business case development', 'developing advanced workforce planning capabilities' and 'implementing the "right" HR philosophies'.

### 2.3 HR support

Leppers and Eikenaar (2011), argue that in a self-managing organization the support should be organized as close as possible to the implementation. There are no big, isolated staff departments of specialists who work from a distance on the work floor and who are too busy with increasing their own efficiency. This means that their relationship with the executive departments will come on second place. Support and execution are part of the same organizational unit and it is determined in

the daily interactions and contacts what the most effective way is to give support in order to achieve goals. The responsibility of the supportive services is to offer the primary process as much as possible as they need. In order to achieve this, a flat organization is needed. Too many layers in a self-managing organization will hollow the self-management and lead to frustration, conflicts and inefficiencies. 'The span of support' is the amount of employees that are provided with support and the 'span of control' is the amount of employees which can be content wise controlled and followed. In this case the span of control becomes the span of support. The most important responsibilities of the HR department is to ensure that the employees are able to work independent and to develop and coach them (Morley et al., 2006).

## 2.4 Conceptual model

To substantiate this research with literature, in total five concepts were derived and four of them were derived from four theories. These theories are: '*theory of work design*', '*role theory*', '*socio-technical systems theory*' and '*strength of the HRM system*'. Considering the theories, I will not go too much in depth into each theory, but each theory offers a special unique message which is valuable for my research. Thus, main ideas were picked up from each theory and out of each theory a concept is developed which is applicable for the main research question. Moreover, by each concept a sub-question is developed and therewith a research framework is set up. Below can be read which special unique message each theory offers, how the concepts are developed and why the four theories are linked to the main research question.

The theory of Hackman & Oldman (1976) suggests a model that specifies conditions under which individuals become internally motivated to execute their jobs effectively. This is called the '*theory of work design*' and it fits for this research, because it explains what conditions have to exist in order to motivate the members of self-managing teams to perform the task within their team in an efficient and effective way. It focuses on the interaction between the HR departments and first-line managers in order to provide the most efficient and effective ways of working. This theory shows that *motivation* is an important concept for self-managing teams. Motivation is defined by Robbins (1993, p. 202) as the "willingness to exert high levels of effort toward organizational goals, conditioned by the effort's ability to satisfy some individual need". In this context a need is an internal state which makes certain outcomes appear attractive. Motivation is an important concept, because motivated members of self-managing teams will improve productivity, provide high levels of performance and ultimately ensuring the success of the organization (Wiley, 1997). Therefore, the first sub-question is: '*What conditions have to exist to motivate the members of self-managing teams to perform their tasks in an efficient and effective way?*'.

The next theory focuses more on the behavior of the members of self-managing teams, namely the '*role theory*'. It states that people behave in different and predictable ways depending on their own social identities and the situation (Biddle, 1986). This theory considers how the employees can react or behave to the responsibilities they get from the different HR practices which will be implemented by HR departments and first-line managers. Moreover, it considers scripts or expectations for behavior that have to be understood by all and also closely followed by the performers (Biddle, 1986). The concept summarized from this theory is *responsibility*. This is defined as "the belief that one possesses pivotal power to provoke or prevent subjective crucial negative outcomes" (Rhéaume et al., 1995, p. 159). Responsibility is considered to be an important concept, because by giving more responsibility to the self-

managing teams it can be seen how they respond to it and whether they need more support for performing their tasks. Therefore, the second sub-question is: '*How do the members of the self-managing teams react to the given responsibilities by the coach manager and HR departments?*'.

'*Socio-technical systems theory*' considers the design of work structures in a way that a "best match" is obtained between employees and technology by making changes in the technology (i.e. equipment and process layout) and the work structure (i.e. work roles and their relationships) (Cummings, 1978). This theory is useful, because it designs a work structure which is reactive to the task requirements of members of self-managing teams and it considers the social and psychological needs of employees. It also involves the changes in the system and task environment which arise when HR departments offer HR practices in order to provide the most efficient and effective ways of working for both the manager and self-managing teams. This theory shows that *systems* is an important concept for self-managing teams. The systems are the technology changes which have been implemented during the transition towards self-management. Therefore, the third sub-question is: '*What are the changes in the system and task environment which arise when HR practices/services are done by the self-managing teams?*'.

In order to understand the linkages responsible for the relationship between HRM and firm performance, the theory of '*strength of the HRM system*' is considered. It describes the features of an HRM system which results in a powerful organizational climate including that individuals share a common understanding of what kind of behaviors are expected and rewarded (Bowen, & Ostroff, 2004). Researchers Bowen and Ostroff (2004, p. 203) argue that "the strength of the HRM system can help explain how individual employee attributes accumulate to effect organizational effectiveness". This theory shows that *climate* is an important concept for self-managing teams. So, a strong climate can be seen as a strong situation, which means that the employees know what is expected from them and know what is truly important. Therefore, the fourth sub-question is: '*In what way can the desirable powerful climate be achieved?*'.

The fifth concept is the *support*. This includes the support provided by the HR department and the coach manager for the self-managing teams. This concept matches with the main research question and is developed to understand what kind of support the teams receive, want and expect from the HR department and the coach manager.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research design

The research design is a qualitative explorative case study at Livio in Enschede, combining individual semi-structured interviews with record analysis and observation. The interviews were planned in close collaboration with Livio, by my supervisor. A case study is defined as an in-depth exploration which includes multiple perspectives of the difficulty and exceptionality of a specific project, policy, program or system in a 'real-life' context (Simons, 2009). The objective is to obtain multiple perspectives about the topic 'self-managing teams' and the way this has influenced the employees, managers and HR departments. This is a suitable approach for this research, because it allows a lot of detail to be collected about the self-managing teams and the data is richer and of greater depth. A deeper understanding is provided and a look into the interactions and thought processes of the respondents (Cooper, 2014). The focus of the study is on the provided

support by the HR departments for the first-line manager and the self-managing teams and what kind of support they actually need in order have the most efficient and effective ways of working.

The organization is suitable for this study, since it fulfils the required demands such as operating in the healthcare sector, being in transition towards self-managing teams and having implemented them. The healthcare sector is also a different and unique sector, which brings along new information, novelties, results and conclusions. Therefore, this is a very interesting area for research.

### 3.2 Interview selection

A total of six interviews was carried out with healthcare employees of Livio. They are all members of a self-managing teams with a different education level and experience. The self-managing teams are also in a different phase of self-managing. Table 1 shows which employees were interviewed, where the first employee is called R1 (Respondent 1), the second is called R2, etc. Table 1 shows how old they are, in what team they are, where they are located and what the exact duration of the interview was.

**Table 1. Sample**

	Age	Function	Team	Location	Duration Interview
<b>R1</b>	46	EVV	De Hatteler	Enschede	00:40:30
<b>R2</b>	47	Level 5 nurse	De Hatteler	Enschede	00:47:10
<b>R3</b>	65	3 IG	Boekelo	Boekelo	00:40:27
<b>R4</b>	46	3 IG	Pathmos	Enschede	00:36:07
<b>R5</b>	27	Level 4 nurse	Brammel-hoek	Haaks-bergen	00:30:16
<b>R6</b>	23	Level 4 nurse	De Veldmaat	Haaks-bergen	00:32:27

In addition to this, secondary data is used, existing of an interview transcript with the HR manager at Livio. This interview was conducted by M. Renkema, MSc. He shared it and allowed me to use this transcript for my research.

The members of the self-managing teams are interviewed in order to uncover what kind of support they actually receive and what kind of support they would like to see from the coach manager and HR department. By looking at the transcript of the interview with the HR manager it provides an insight on what kind of support the HR department intends to give, what is actually given and how much they feel is necessary. This creates a different perspective and view on the received, wanted and expected support.

### 3.3 Data analysis

The interviews were recorded with permission of the respondents and afterwards transcribed.

Coding was used to identify what kind of support the self-managing teams receive from both the HR department and coach-manager. First, every interview with a member of the self-managing team was placed in a table in Word and the quotes which were important for the five concepts were marked. This provided per interview a clear overview what was

said about what concept. Every concept stands for a category. So, concept one is *motivation* and therefore my first category is called *motivation*. This was also done for the other four concepts. After marking everything, I opened another Word file and I merged all the quotes from the first concept together and I did the same for the second, third, fourth and fifth concept. It resulted in five separate Word files with all quotes from each interview. After this, I started separating the quotes with different codes. These codes are derived and combined from my quotes and can found in a code tree in appendix 2. Finally, the quotes were translated. The same steps were taken in order to analyze and code the transcript of the interview with the HR manager of Livio. This code tree can be found in appendix 3.

For the conducted six interviews, there is a total of five categories. Within these categories, codes and sub-codes exist. The total amount of codes for the first category is ten. For the second one there are nine. The third one exists of five, where the first code is divided into two sub-codes. For the fourth category there are seven codes. Finally, the fifth one exists of 2 codes where the first code has four sub-codes and the second code has five sub-codes. Therefore, in total there are 33 codes with 11 sub-codes. For the conducted interview with the HR manager there are in total eight codes and four sub-codes.

The strategy open coding was applied initially for analyzing the interviews. The first time when I read all the interviews, I coded all the codes, also the once which were not important for my research. This has helped me later when I started marking and combining the quotes which were important for my five concepts. Axial and selective coding was also applied. An example of a coding scheme can be found in appendix 4.

## 4. FINDINGS

This section summarizes the key findings of the interviews carried out at the healthcare organization Livio.

### 4.1 Livio

Livio is a healthcare organization located in Enschede, Haaksbergen and Berkelland, all – in the Eastern part of the Netherlands. They employ around 3.500 employees and volunteers. Livio is active in different healthcare areas, curative care, living and health. Their mission is to bring additional value with their services and products to the people in need of it. They are convinced that their life quality for a huge part depends on the extent to which they are able to guide their own lives and to be as long as possible independent in their environment. Even though, more additional and external help is eventually required. Livio has three shared core values which provide directions to all actions and decisions made by the directors, care specialists, Livio-employees and volunteers. These core values are effectiveness, expertise and collaboration (Livio, 2014).

The organization is relatively flat, with only two layers below the board of directors. The first layer consists of the administrative secretariat, which is linked to the market & communication department and the quality department. Below these are four different branches, namely the home care branch, the residential care branch, facility services branch and the HR department branch. Underneath the home care and residential care branches are the self-managing teams with no form of hierarchy and no team leader is formally appointed. They do have a coach manager whose job is to guide the teams and to coach them to become fully self-managed. This started in 2014 when the organization started working with less managers for the first time, causing the operational managers to be replaced by coaching managers. These kind of managers coach and provide guidance to multiple self-managing teams and are

called 'coach-managers' at Livio (Livio, 2014). In total, there are 60 self-managing teams with around 15 employees per team (Appendix 5).

## 4.2 Motivation

To motivate members of self-managing teams to perform their tasks well, being appreciated is considered to be an important aspect. The team members feel more motivated when the coach manager mentions and lets them know that they are performing well. A team member said:

*'It means more if you get to hear a little more often that you are actually doing it well. And not specific for one person, but as a whole team. I think that it will for sure help, this will keep you more motivated' (R5)*

However, sometimes the coach manager does not regularly give compliments to the team. They have mentioned that they miss these kinds of compliments in order to be motivated to perform their tasks. A team member said:

*'I miss sometimes the compliments which she gives to our team. It is never, or almost never, gosh so good of you that you are holding on for so long. There is always a point of criticism, or things we must pay more attention to. It would be nice to just get a compliment about that we are doing it good' (R5)*

What can be read in the quotes is that the feeling of being appreciated does increase motivation.

Freedom within the teams also is a positive sign for the motivation of the team members. Two team members said about freedom:

*'It is positive for my motivation to do my job with so much freedom. When you are constantly facing a bureaucratic mill, then it is not very enjoyable' (R2)*

*'I think on one side it would be positive for my motivation when I get the freedom, but on the other side I think that you should not be too much released' (R5)*

By looking at these quotes, both team members did indicate that freedom is very important for their motivation. Being able to think on your own, to make your own decisions and to, in some way, be your own boss does give them motivation. However, it is also mentioned that the team members should not be provided with too much freedom.

Another important aspect for motivation is considered to be stimulation. Team member three indicated that it is good for their motivation when they think that they can do it, they get stimulated. According to her, you will look more confident and that is something which is considered for her to be important too. She said:

*'It is good for my motivation when I think I can do it. You get stimulated. You look more confident and that is according to me important' (R3)*

Being challenged at your work will make you more motivated. A team member even indicated that she wants to have more challenges at work, because that is according to her so much fun. You have to be motivated in everything you do. She said:

*'I want to have more challenges. And that is what I think is so much fun to just get a new challenge over here (R6)*

Another aspect for motivation is being busy. A team member has indicated that she is less motivated, when she knows that she will have a busy day. Then she feels actually like not doing it. However, another team member said the opposite:

*'When you are for a while not busy and you do not have clients who need a lot of help, I do not want to say that I am less motivated then, but it is much more fun when it is a bit busier and you have a more complex care' (R4)*

This team member indicates that it does not necessarily influence her motivation, but she has more fun when it is a busy day.

According to some team members, there are also other conditions which have to be present in order for them to be motivated. Finding a job which suits you, will make you motivated to perform your tasks. Moreover, other team members become more motivated by the autonomy, which results in better performance.

To conclude, the factors which I have found that influence motivation as perceived by the respondents are: being appreciated, amount of freedom, received trainings, amount of autonomy, being stimulated, amount of information, being challenged, suitability of the job, being busy and agreement with colleagues.

## 4.3 Responsibilities

Questions were asked to the members of the self-managing teams to figure out how they react to the given responsibilities. Some team members indicated that all those given responsibilities is something to which they have to get used to. It is a new way of thinking for them, because they have to figure it out on their own and have to find a solution together. A team member said:

*'But it is a thing for people, so yeah now it becomes our problem and that is a big thing and a lot of people experience it as: this is now a problem of us, even though it of course beforehand also was a problem of us, however it was solved by other people. This is also a phase of getting used to' (R1)*

Another observation that the members noticed in their behavior is an increase in their sense of responsibility. They get more sense of responsibility because they have to take care of tasks by their own and they are getting more involved with tasks. A team member said:

*'An increase in responsibility. Not only on the schedule, but on all places where you are getting more involved, because you grow closer to each other. That you have to discuss and consult each other' (R1)*

A reaction to the increase of responsibility is that the team members take the responsibility to take over a shift for a colleague. They also feel responsible and do a task, because no one is doing it.

The given responsibilities made sure that the teams became much stronger. The collaboration between the members goes well within the teams. They know what they have on each other and who has what team task. A team member mentioned:

*'Our team works good together, we got each other's back, even when things are not clear, we can just ask things to each other. When we need each other's help, than it is good. When you have a duty and something unexpected happens, the others are actually always by your side' (R4)*

A team member indicated that with the increase of responsibilities, she found that they should sit together as a team and discuss and decide what they are going to do via which way and how they are going to approach each other. Therefore, giving each other feedback is seen as something rather difficult. Another member said:

*'The hardest part for us as a team was giving each other feedback. That was experienced from the beginning as very difficult. You are facing the flexibility of everyone, which we were not used to' (R1)*

Feedback is most often given during the meetings in order to keep the whole team involved in that matter. This also shows that being open and including each other is important.

Diving tasks is almost the same at all teams. Most of the time the division goes by saying which tasks you would like to do and then you will be assigned to perform that particular task. However, in some teams it is the case that the tasks are divided according to whether a team member has the competences to perform that particular task... exactly like this team member said:

*'It is always someone who works permanently in the team. They look at what competences someone has, in the sense of whether someone is capable enough to determine who is going to do which route, who makes which distribution' (R2)*

The members have indicated that they have to do a lot of tasks on their own. For example, the job applications, searching for people, scheduling, fixing the client schedules, maintaining and keeping up their own financial records and maintaining their own expertise. These are some of the tasks which they have to do on their own and it brings along responsibility.

By looking it from the side of the HR department, they have indicated that their core value is responsibility and that they have to take their responsibilities. However, sometimes it is necessary to let go of those responsibilities and that is considered to be the hardest part according to the HR manager. He has also mentioned that the coach manager has responsibilities and these are:

*'You are responsible for that team or for a couple of teams and you have to provide service and you have to watch on what level that team is, where they stand. What do they need? Do they need me to make a decision for them, fine. But you also have to explain that. Or do they need me to only give solution directions. The essential of the OIM method (solution-based interactive method) is: you provide solutions, you do not tell them which one, but you provide them' (HR manager)*

The coach manager actually facilitates and supports the teams, not more and not less.

The relationship between the HR department and the self-managing teams is that the department tried to explain carefully that the team tasks are now a responsibility of the team and when they have questions, they can always go to the HR department.

To sum up, the factors which I have found that show how is reacted to the perceived responsibilities by the members of the self-managing teams are: becoming accustomed, increase of the sense of responsibility, being conscious, collaborate more, receive and provide feedback, dividing tasks, increase of team task responsibility, division of roles and amount of autonomy. The HR department has to take responsibility and also needs to learn how to let go of those responsibilities. When teams have questions concerning the team tasks, they can always visit or contact the HR department for help.

## 4.4 Information systems

By providing tasks to the self-managing teams, some team members indicate that changes came along in the system and task environment. A team member made it clear that everyone

should move on and not stand still in time, because there is going to be a lot of change.

The switch from paper files to electronic files is a system change which was mentioned a couple of times by the members. However, a team member had more expectations about the introduction of the electronic files. She said that it was very moderate introduced and they had to be very self-reliant. They did receive some sheets and further they had to figure it out on their own. However, with bigger changes a PowerPoint is included. Another member said about the transition:

*'It is the transition from the paper files to electronic files and it is: it is coming and it is implemented. It were new phones which included all pagers together. And it is coming, they are on the chargers, here is the manual, there was a moderate explanation and you have to figure it out all by yourself' (R1)*

The learn portal provides you with all the necessary information. This is a system to which all the team members have access to.

*'With the learn portal you can choose from, e-learning, or updating your skills. Every three years you have to do exams, also in practice, like giving injections etc., placing a catheter or probe food. That is something that is checked by the MTH team' (R3)*

In conclusion, the changes that arise in the system information are: implementation of electronic files, transition towards another system, implementation of the system and the learn portal.

## 4.5 Climate for self-managing teams

In order to figure out in what way the desirable powerful climate can be achieved, different questions were asked about this to the members. A member indicated that it has been a very eventful year. However, the fact that it was an eventful year did ensure that they had to become flexible and were moving towards self-management. It made them figure out how they were going to keep themselves standing during the movement towards horizontal working.

Another important aspect for the climate is ensuring to have matching teams. A team member said that in order to have matching teams you just have to look what type of person you have and what kind of you need. That takes a lot of effort.

According to a team member, the space you get in self-management is also important. The biggest reward is that you are able to see what it does with you as a team. A team member said:

*'The space you get in self-management. How are you going to set that all aside. It is a challenge to unroll new things and to have the freedom to put in some budget for a project' (R1)*

According to the HR department, the space provided in the sense of that it is a process where you beforehand already accept and realize that your organization is different on different places and that the pace in which things happen can and should be different. This is the reason why the term self-managing has changed to professional organizing.

Moreover, the communication between the team members was also mentioned often. By having good communication, the whole team tries to stay involved with everything and talk a lot to each other. A team has a talking home, which makes them sit together and talk.

*'It is going a bit better. We have been already through some rough things. We try to as much as possible, by the means of a*

*talking home. Everyone has to come to the office after his routine and sit together and talk' (R4)*

However, all teams did indicate that their communication is on the right track, but it can still be improved.

*'Our communication to each other. It is kind of good, but it can be a lot more improved' (R4)*

In summary, the factors I have found that help in achieving the desirable powerful climate are: being self-managed, have matching teams, receiving space, get more insight, follow protocols, amount of change and good communication.

## 4.6 Support

### 4.6.1 Support from the HR department

What became clear from the responses of the team members is that when they need support from the HR department, then they know where they are and they will definitely approach them. You can always go to the HR department when you have questions. A team member said:

*'The HR department is very approachable; if you have questions you always get a good answer on it. With hiring new colleagues they thought good about it together with us, about how you should handle it and what is clever to do. But also about the financial numbers, if you have some questions about that you can also always contact them' (R4)*

According to the HR department, the support provided for the teams is that the HR department motivates, guides and makes the teams enthusiastic, because that is what the department has to do. It is also about providing solution directions and that the team has to make the choice. That is what you eventually want to achieve, making decisions on the basis of consent in the team. Moreover, they have to guide the process. That they perform the law gate keeper in a good way. However, an aspect which is still considered difficult by the HR manager is letting go.

*'We find and think that we know it of course so much better. Well, and that is the process in which we are right now, to let it go. To let the teams learn, but also help them with that, because we also did not do that. Because it was, good luck. You are now doing self-management, have a nice game. No, we are now, and that starts at our coaches, doing training' (HR manager)*

The HR department provides especially for three aspects support. First one is support with education.

*'The only thing I received support for is with my education, so how that works, how you have to sign in. The HR department helped me with that' (R2)*

Secondly, the department provides support with retirement. A team member approached the HR department to fix her retirement.

*'I did have conversations with the HR department about the request for my retirement' (R3)*

The last type of support from the HR department for the teams is helping with job applications, because job applications go through the HR department. A team member said about their support:

*'Then we go to the HR department by ourselves to tell them what we have got. They tell us how you should deal with contracts, what wise is and what kind of contract is suitable to give. They take care of those things. They make sure that the contracts are prepared. So, we do not have to go after them for it. We tell everything to the HR department what we agreed up*

*on with the new employee. Sometimes we are not quite sure whether someone has the skills, but we do want to give her a chance. And that is also something we discussed with the HR department, they gave us advice' (R4)*

Moreover, the HR department also likes to receive feedback whether it is a success or not and what the reasons are. They also set up the contract after the person is hired.

Providing information to the teams is, according to the HR manager, something which is not done enough by the HR department.

*'We apparently did not do enough in explaining the story. In good explaining of the story. And telling the story in a simple way' (HR manager)*

The HR manager is convinced that they do not provide enough information. They accept too easy that it will go digital.

To conclude, the HR department is approachable for all questions of the teams. They provide especially support for education, retirement and job applications. Guiding the process, providing solution directions and letting the teams make the choice is important. However, more information should be provided to the self-managing teams and sometimes they should let the teams go.

### 4.6.2 Coach manager

The interview questions were asked in a way that the members of the self-managing teams would provide answers about the received, expected and wanted support from their coach manager.

The team members have indicated that the coach manager provides support on demand. When the team members have questions on problems they can always go to the coach manager. A team member said about the coach manager:

*'We are always very open to each other. She has her doors always open. So if something has to be shared, then it is shared. During the team discussions we have, we indicate by ourselves whether we find it necessary that she joins us or not. But if it is the case that we feel the need for her to join us or we urgent have to discuss things with her, then we indicate this to her and then she can join us at our meeting. However, I think it is everyone's responsibility to make sure that the really important things get to her. And I think that that also happens' (R1)*

The coach manager also provides support for other things, for example when help is needed with job applicants, protocols and she tries to keep the performance of the team as high as possible. Also to keep an eye on the costs. However, what a team member said is that sometimes the coach manager walks in to ask how the team is holding on, but it is the intention that the team approaches her first. So, first the team has to try to figure it out on their own and later if they cannot find a solution, the coach manager can be asked for support. She can be seen as a contact point for the teams.

*'I think especially giving us support, when we cannot figure it out on our own. Give tips. Sometimes even taking over. Sometimes that is necessary' (R5)*

*'We always ask for support. She cannot sit all day here with us; we also do not have the time for that, so no, if something is wrong, she is helping us. We mail her or what so ever' (R3)*

The expected support from the coach manager is that the team members need to have the feeling that someone is actually listening to them and it will be taken care of. They would like to see from the coach manager when a critical point has reached that she takes the lead, gets everyone around the

able and tries to fix it. Another team member said about the expected support from the coach manager:

*'I think it is important that I know that there is a back-up. So if we have questions that the opportunity exists and we will get help. And there are of course moment when you think, well now a supervisor can make the decisive decision' (R1)* A team member said that she and her team have indicated that they were so busy an entire year and everything could not be done anymore. This is the moment where she expected from the coach manager to take the lead and provide more help and guidance.

The teams want to have more information provided by the coach manager when, for example, something new has been introduced. According to a team member this will save a lot of time and trouble.

*'To have a PowerPoint. Just clear and insightful, with a tablet for everyone and explaining: this is the system, step 1, step 2. Just that it is accessible for everyone. So, I would like to see when they implement something, that a better, broader explanation is given beforehand' (R1)*

Also, a team member mentioned that the coach manager is now more at the background and she would like to see her come more to the foreground.

*'I think for the coaching part, that the coach manager might come more to the foreground, because I do notice that there a lot of coach questions in the team and that is sticking around' (R2)*

Support provided by means of courses is regularly mentioned as something which is considered to be important for the teams. They would like to have more courses and receive information through them, because if someone sends them some papers they will not bother reading it. Moreover, a team member would like to receive a course in giving feedback. This is considered for some team members to be a direct offense. Another example of what teams want to learn from a course:

*'In the course should be told that you know very clear, what a coach does and what we have to do by ourselves, where in the middle you can meet each other' (R5)*

A team did already receive a course in which was explained to them what their team tasks were and what they had to do exactly.

The teams also received support for performing team tasks. A team member said about this:

*'The last couple of months were are actually more doing it and we are guided in it, by the person who is scheduling now, how we should do it. We received some instructions on how the system looks like. All the colleagues received instructions' (R1)*

All things considered, support by the coach manager is provided on demand. When the team members need help or advice, they can always contact or visit the coach manager. More information for the teams should be provided by the coach manager and she has to take the lead. Also, the coach manager has to come more to the foreground.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

In this part I will show how my sub-questions and research question are demonstrated by the done research and I am going to show how the field's knowledge has been changed by the addition of this new data. My results from the conducted interviews will be reflected upon based on the theories which I used for my theoretical model.

To motivate the members of the self-managing teams some conditions have to exist. The members have to feel appreciated by their coach manager. Trainings have to be provided for them so they are able to work on their competences. Moreover, they should be provided with freedom and enough information. Being busy is considered for some members to be a positive thing and for others a negative. Providing the members an amount of autonomy and agreement will also stimulate them and is going to result in motivation. These are the conditions which are motivating the team members and ensures that they are going to perform their tasks in an efficient and effective way.

The given responsibilities to the member of the self-managing teams generates different feelings and behaviors among them. Becoming accustomed to the increase in responsibilities is needed. The collaboration between members has become stronger and they are now more conscious about their responsibilities. Because of the increasing amount of responsibility they got more sense of responsibility and they started providing more feedback. The division of tasks and roles is now a responsibility of them and they are aware how this has to be done. The team members react in a positive way to the increasing responsibilities. The result is that by becoming self-managing, which includes definitely more responsibility, they accept this and it ensured that their sense of responsibility increased.

To find out how the best match can be obtained between the employees and technology by making changes in the technology and work structure, I looked on what the changes are in the system and task environment when HR practices and services are done by self-managing teams. The biggest system change was switching from paper files to electronic files. This was a difficult change for the employees, because of a lack of explanation. The transition from one system to another is not going well, also because of not enough provided information and guidance. The members have to be very self-reliant. Therefore, these are the major changes in the system and task environment.

How HRM and firm performance are linked, is described through the climate of the organization. In this case, the employees do not always know what is expected from them and what now truly important is. They are moving towards self-management and this is something of which they are aware of. However, questions did arise what is now truly expected from them since they are becoming a self-managing team. Something which is considered important is the gained space and insight in their work environment. Additionally, communication between team members is expected to be good, but this is not the case at some teams and needs improvement. By improving the explanations and guidance for the teams, they will be able to better understand what is now expected from them.

Finally, the provided support from the HR department and coach manager for the self-managing teams is considered. First it will be viewed from the side of the members of the self-managing teams and afterwards how the HR manager is looking at this. According to the employees, the HR department is always approachable for questions. Support is provided especially for education, retirement and job applications. The coach manager provides support on demand. When there are questions from the employees, she is always willing to provide guidance. However, the members indicated that they do not get enough information and that work-related things are not always clear. They want to see the coach manager come more to the foreground and want to have the feeling that she is present as



back-up. So, the teams still need more support, because they still do not function perfectly alone.

According to the HR manager, the HR department has multiple responsibilities with the self-managing teams and needs to learn to let them more go. Moreover, the department is there to motivate, guide and make the teams enthusiastic. By looking at the first sub-question on how the employees are motivated now, it can be concluded that the HR department is doing that well. Their role is to provide service, support and guidance. However, the HR manager indicated that not enough information and explanation is provided for the teams. Which resulted in that the teams have a lack of knowledge. That is why they want to have more courses in order to increase their knowledge and information so they know what is expected from them and what their tasks and responsibilities are.

### 5.1 Future research and limitations

A case study was performed, including semi-structured interviews and literature analysis in order to figure out what support should be provided by the HR department for the coach managers and self-managing teams. However, it was possible to conduct only one case study with a small sample of respondents, because of the limited timeframe of this research. Empirical population-oriented generalization is not possible now, but I see that my conclusions are relevant within the research and theoretical scope. Conducting multiple case studies in different healthcare contexts and settings could help to enrich the theoretical modelling towards differences between care and cure organizations, and/or self-managing and traditional teams.

#### 5.1.1 Trustworthiness of the study

It has been taken into account that participants of the interview might provide socially desired answers, even though before the interview it was clearly mentioned that their personal opinion is needed and appreciated and not the opinion of the organization. This is considered to be a response bias and a risk, because employees might give socially desired responses instead of choosing responses which are a reflection of their true feelings. Therefore, it was tried to be minimized by using a probing technique. These are follow-up questions which were asked if the received answers were not fully clear, understandable, vague or ambiguous. Also, they were asked if I wanted to obtain more specific or in-depth information. For example, after a vague response was received from a member of the self-managing team of Livio, questions which were asked were: 'Could you give an example?', 'Could you please tell me more about.?', 'Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?'. Moreover, care was taken to ensure that the Livio employees understand the nature and goal of my study and that is it not obligated to participate.

Doing research presents a range of issues around validity, also known as the trustworthiness of our interpretations of qualitative data. Different ways exist in order to achieve this, including having regular meetings with the circle group and supervisors and having discussions about certain subjects. This was the case for my research and it contributed to the quality of my gathered data and interpretations I made. Practicing, at least two times, with the circle group and supervisors how to conduct interviews was done to secure the outputs quality within the constraints of a limited number of data. A member of a self-managing team indicated that he wants to read my thesis at the end. Another important thing which I have applied with my interview partner is inter-coder reliability. After conducting the interviews and transcribing them, we started coding together. Moreover, we did also code for each other the answers from the

entire interview, so not only mine research related answers. We both coded entirely one interview first and after every interview we checked what we both coded and what the code was. Sometimes it was the case that we both coded something different and then we had small discussions about why this particular code is assigned to that quote. This resulted in the same coding scheme for all six interviews. So, we agreed both on the coding of the content with an application of the same coding scheme. To sum up, all these techniques help to establish credibility.

## 6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this research aimed at answering the research question: '*What HR departments can do to optimally support both the first-line manager and the self-managing teams?*'. Results show that the teams are not provided with enough information and work-related things are not always clear. They also do not always know what is expected from them and what is considered to be important. More trainings, workshops and courses is something which the members want in order to gain knowledge, develop themselves and their skills and capabilities. The transition from one system to another was badly introduced and explained. They wanted to be provided with more guidance, because it was all very suddenly. However, the HR manager indicated that not enough information and explanation is provided for the self-managing teams. Thus, what the HR department can do in order to support them is to provide more trainings, courses and workshops. Clear and sufficient information, explanations and guidance should be provided, for example, when new HR initiatives are implemented. This includes also the transition towards new organizational developments.

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## APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

André Pieffers & Anastasia Cvetkovski

Naam medewerker Livio:

Tijd en datum:

### Introductie

Het eerste gedeelte van dit interview gaat over de HR/P&O afdeling en de bijbehorende ondersteuning van deze afdeling binnen uw organisatie. Het tweede gedeelte gaat over de rol van de team coach en zijn invloed op de motivatie van het team. Mijn interview partner en ik zullen beide vragen stellen.

Graag vragen wij u vriendelijk om uw eigen persoonlijke mening en niet die van de organisatie. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden, het gaat vooral om wat u vindt u uw beeld over de HR/P&O afdeling en de bijbehorende ondersteuning en over uw motivatie en die van uw team en de manier waarop de teamcoach deze kan bevorderen.

Wij willen ook nog benadrukken dat alle informatie die u ons geeft, wij zeer vertrouwelijk zullen behandelen. Deze informatie zal niet doorgegeven worden aan derden. De enige personen die deze informatie te zien zullen krijgen en de mogelijkheid krijgen om te lezen, zullen wij en onze begeleider zijn. Daarnaast zal uw naam niet genoemd worden in ons onderzoek en blijft het volkomen anoniem.

Wij willen u graag om toestemming vragen om het interview op te nemen. Nadat het interview is uitgewerkt, zullen wij de audiobestanden vernietigen.

### Algemene vragen

- Kunt u iets over uzelf vertellen?
  - Opleiding, werkervaring, werken in de gezondheidssector
- Wat betekent voor u 'professioneel organiseren' (SMT's)?
  - Eigen mening,
  - Wat is de onderliggende reden voor Livio?
- Waarom is het fenomeen 'zelfsturende teams' naar uw idee geïntroduceerd?
  - Eigen mening erover. Via officiële communicatie? Redenen, visie, missie
- Kunt u iets vertellen over uw ervaring met het werken in professioneel georganiseerde teams (bij Livio)?
  - Eigen ervaring/ondervinding (mening)
  - Positief/negatief (t.o.v. oude situatie)
- Wat is de rol van de coach-manager bij het professioneel organiseren?
  - Wat zijn uw verwachtingen van de coach-manager?
  - Welke karakteristieken heeft de coach-manager nodig?
- Wat is uw rol precies binnen het team? – voorbeelden geven (dus ook gedrag)
  - Wat vindt u van de rol van uw teamgenoten?
  - Hoe worden de (team)taken verdeeld onder de leden van het zelfsturende team? (recruitment en selectie van medewerkers, training, planning, functioneren, doelen stellen/plannen maken, etc.)
  - Welke team taken voert u uit? En welke uw collega's? (= waar bent u verantwoordelijk voor)
  - Wat is uw mening over deze verdeling van taken?
- Wat is er nodig om professioneel organiseren tot een succes te maken?
  - Wat is er nodig? Wat zijn naar uw idee de voorwaarden voor effectieve ZSTs? (dus voor professioneel organiseren)

### Specifieke vragen Anastasia

#### Huidige ondersteuning – noodzakelijke ondersteuning

- Hoe verloopt de samenwerking binnen uw team? Kunt u hier voorbeelden van geven? (Wie is er verantwoordelijk?)
- Wat voor ondersteuning bij het professioneel organiseren krijgt u van de HR/P&O (personeel en organisatie) afdeling? En op welke gebieden?
- En wat voor ondersteuning van de coach-manager?
- Wat zijn uw verwachtingen van de ondersteuning van de P&O afdeling? Welke en waarom?
- Wat voor ondersteuning had u graag gewild? (dus verbetering nodig en graag verandering willen zien)
- Welke gebieden hebben volgens u nog ondersteuning nodig?
- Hoe zou u de prestaties van uw team beoordelen? Waarom?
- Wat motiveert u om uw taken uit te voeren en uw werk effectief en efficiënt mogelijk te doen? Vindt u dit voldoende?
- ALS ZE TAKEN KRIJGEN (want de vraag is of ze überhaupt taken krijgen) →
- Hoe reageert u als u taken krijgt die u moet doen? Positief/negatief? Hoe gaat u hiermee om?
- Team eigenschappen →
- Wat vindt u van de samenstelling van uw team? Hoe zou u de normen en waarden beschrijven? Hoe zou u de relatie met uw 13college's omschrijven?
- Wat voor beloningen krijgt u van de HR afdeling of managers?

### Specifieke vragen André

#### Vaardigheden

- Wat zijn de vaardigheden die u nodig hebt om uw werk te doen?
- Op welke manier kan, volgens u, de coach-manager bijdragen aan de benodigde vaardigheden van u en uw team?
- In welke mate wordt uw motivatie beïnvloed door de vaardigheden die u heeft?

#### Vrijheid om keuzes te maken

- In hoeverre heeft uw team vrijheid om zelf beslissingen te nemen zonder daar een coach-manager bij te betrekken?
- Wat is het verschil tussen sinds de introductie van professioneel organiseren wat deze vrijheid betreft?
- Hoeveel vrijheid heeft u als individu om bepaalde beslissingen te nemen over uw werk, dus zonder team of manager hierbij te betrekken?
- Hoe kan de coach-manager van uw team bijdragen aan deze vrijheid/om deze vrijheid te bevorderen?
- Op welke manier beïnvloedt de vrijheid van uw team jullie motivatie?

#### Belang van het werk

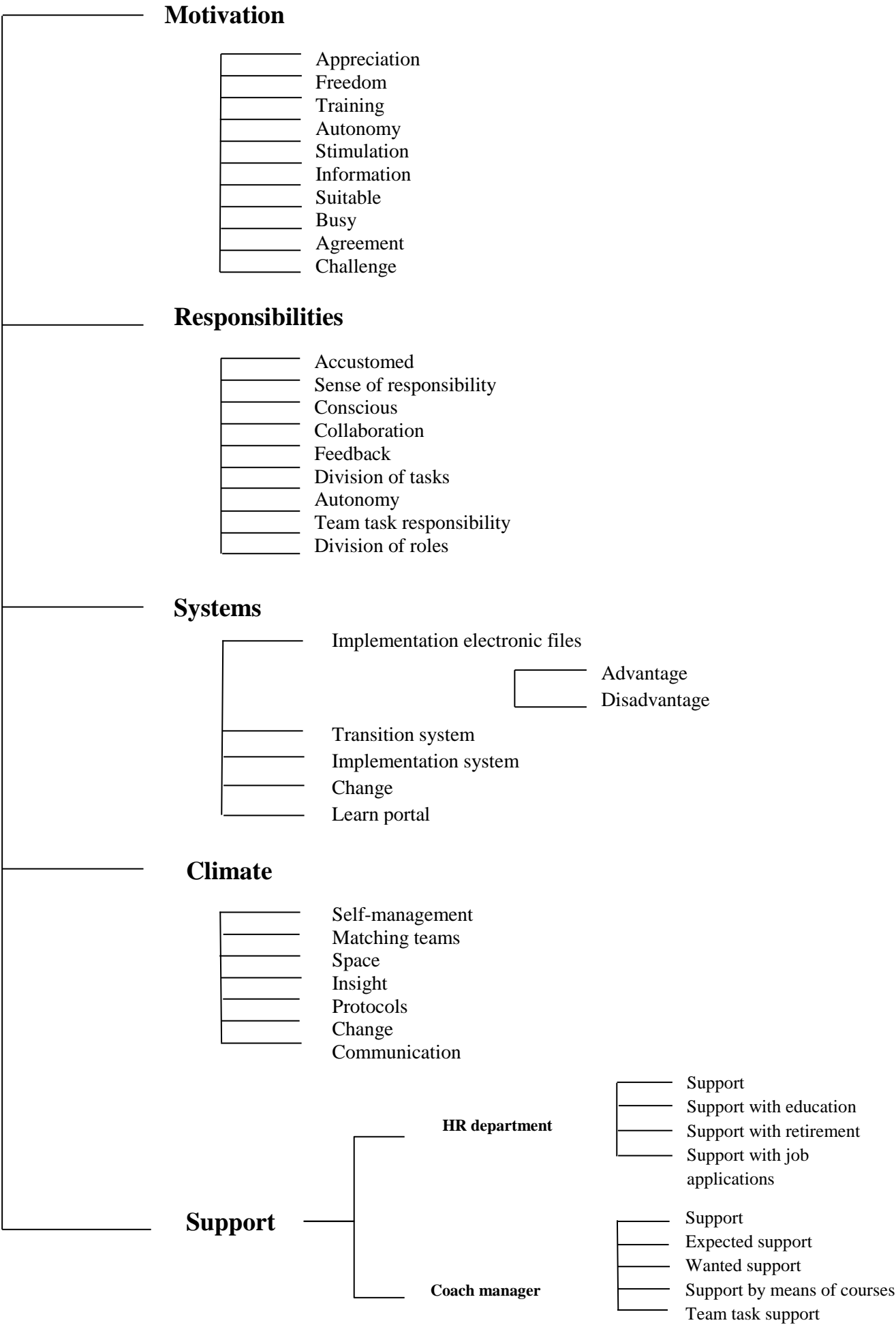
- Waaraan meet u voor uzelf of uw werk belangrijk is?
- Hoe kan uw coach-manager bijdragen aan deze waardering van u en uw team?
- Hoe draagt deze waardering van u en de rest van uw team bij aan de motivatie van het team?

#### Bijdrage aan de organisatie

- Hoe merkt u dat uw werk belangrijk is voor Livio?
- Hoe kan uw coach-manager bijdragen aan dit gevoel van bijdrage aan de organisatie?
- Hoe heeft dit gevoel (van bijdrage aan de organisatie) invloed op de motivatie van uw team?

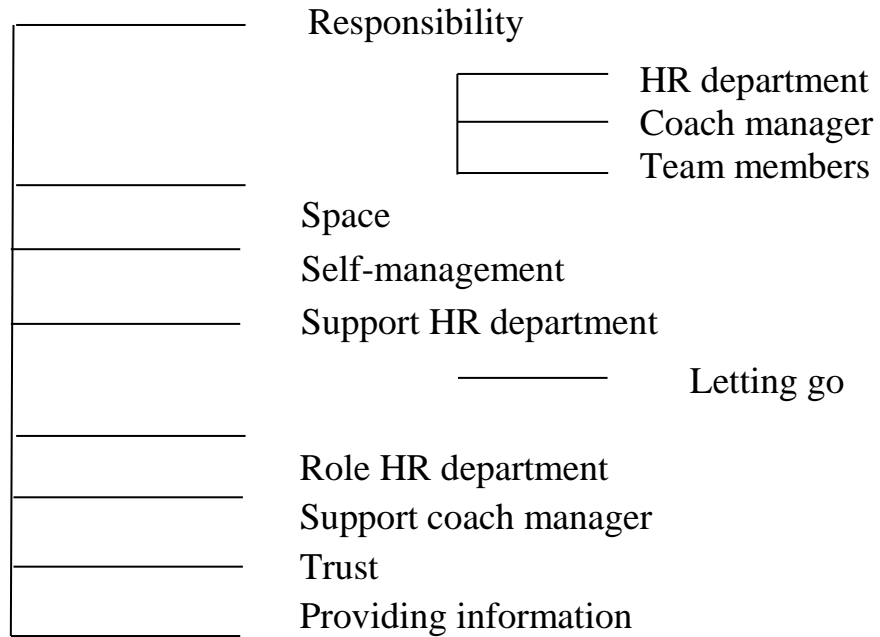
Bedanken voor het interview. Wij zullen dit interview uitwerken en u een kopie hiervan toesturen. Mochten wij nog vragen hebben, is het mogelijk om dan met u contact op te nemen? Zo ja, via telefoon of mail?

**APPENDIX 2 – CODE TREE SIX OF CONDUCTED INTERVIEW**



## APPENDIX 3 – CODE TREE INTERVIEW WITH HR MANAGER

### Support from the HR department



## APPENDIX 4 – EXAMPLE CODING SCHEME

**Table 2. Example of a coding scheme**

	Theme + Category	Quote
R1	Responsibilities - Accustomed	'I think that the hardest thing for our colleagues now is when a schedule does not get around, it is returned to us and then it is a new way of thinking: we have to find a solution together'
R2	Motivation – Freedom	'It is positief for my motivation to do my job with so much freedom. When you are constantly facing a bureaucratic mill, then it is not very enjoyable'
R3	Systems – Implementation system	'And the disadvantage is, when something new is being introduced, a new computer program, exactly like what is happening now, the new computer program arrives today, but you should have known it yesterday'
R4	Support – CM – Expected support	'It has to have a goal and purpose. You want to have the feeling that someone is actually listening to you and that it will be taken care off'
R5	Responsibilities - Sense of responsibility	'She walks in sometimes to ask how we are holding on. But in general, it is the intention that we approach her'
HR	Support from HR department – Support HR department	'Provide advice, support, take care of. And no pampering, but taking care of. Like guys.. and especially provide service. Unlocking systems, those kind of things'



## APPENDIX 5 – ORGANOGRAM LIVIO

