

Exploring the mechanisms for governing the HR activities in self-steering teams in the Dutch Healthcare sector

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Abstract

In the recent years, several innovations can be seen within the Dutch healthcare sector. One of these innovations is the switch to self-steering teams. Self-steering teams are implemented to increase flexibility, productivity and lower management costs etc. However, with self-steering teams also came some challenges. Due to the fact that there is no manager present anymore, a situation can arise where the HR activities are divided among the team members of the self-steering team. This may negatively influence the internal fit among the HR activities. Having an internal fit among the HR activities positively influences employee performance, making it relevant to achieve within a self-steering team. The goal of this research is to explore which governance mechanisms are present within the self-steering teams and see what role governance mechanisms play in achieving internal fit among the HR activities. The result of this research may contribute to literature about governance mechanisms within self-steering teams and help understand why certain teams achieve internal fit among the HR activities and others don't. A case study was conducted at a Dutch healthcare organization that takes care and nurtures elderly people. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 employees from this Dutch healthcare organization that are active within a self-steering team. The results revealed informal and formal mechanisms within the self-steering teams that play a role in achieving an internal fit among the HR activities. For the formal governance mechanisms, the checklists, patient files, Vilans protocols and the Livio handbook played a role in aligning the HR activities. For the informal governance mechanisms, team and dyadic communication together with cooperation were found to help achieve an alignment among the HR activities within the self-steering team.

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Keywords

Human Resource Management, Self-managing teams, Governance mechanisms, Internal fit, HR activities

1. Introduction

The Dutch Healthcare sector has seen several changes and innovations in the past decades. One of these innovations is the transition to self-steering teams. Here, self-steering teams are defined as teams whose members (i.e. front-line employees): assign jobs, plan and schedule work, make production- or service-related decisions, and take action on problems themselves (Kirkman and Shapiro, 2001). Self-steering teams bring about some changes to the traditional approach of management, especially regarding HR practices. HR practices here are defined as practices that are implemented to manage employees within an organization (Lepak and Gowan, 2008). Whereas managers first had the authority to enact HR practices, this is now delegated to the front-line employees. This means that the focus has shifted from the leader of the group to the leadership process within a group (McIntyre and Foti, 2013). We know that reasons for implementing self-steering teams are to improve quality, productivity and quality in work life (Cohen and Ledford, 1994; Fitzpatrick, 1993). Reduction of labor cost, better problem solving and integrated working relationships are important factors as well (Spreitzer et al, 1999). In short, we know organizations implement self-steering teams to improve business performance and/or to cut costs (Cohen, 1993).

Self-steering teams come with many benefits but also create some challenges. One of the challenges can be found in the internal fit among HR activities in self-steering teams. Internal fit refers to the extent where HR activities are consistent with each other in order to achieve the company objectives (Lepak and Gowan, 2008). Employee performance is an outcome directly associated with the extent of internal fit among HR practices (Jiang et al, 2012, Becker and Huselid, 1998, Guest, 1997). In self-steering teams, it is not necessarily the case anymore that there is internal fit among HR activities. Different members of the self-steering teams are responsible for different HR activities (Kirkman and Shapiro, 2001; Lepak and Gowan, 2008). Team members need to work together with each other to align the HR activities, if not, the HR activities may pursue different goals which can lead to conflict between HR activities. Wright (1998) further supports this point by arguing that most important horizontal fit is when all HR activities promote the same organisationally relevant outcomes. For example, promoting team work but having a reward system based on individual performance will achieve the exact opposite of team work. Overall, we do not know

yet how internal fit is achieved in self-steering teams. Which mechanism or what theory is used to assure that there is an internal fit?

Governance mechanisms are a potential solution to this problem. Gooderman et al (2011, p129) states that "these mechanisms are deployed in the belief that influencing the conditions of individual actions in a certain manner will lead employees to perform certain individual actions that, when aggregated, lead to favourable organizational outcomes". By influencing and aligning the interest of different stakeholders, governance mechanisms can help achieving fit among the HR activities. To conclude, governance mechanisms can play a crucial role in achieving internal fit of HR activities. However, the challenges also extend towards the study of governance mechanisms in self-steering teams. Which governance mechanisms do self-steering teams use and which form do these mechanisms take? Do the self-steering teams use governance mechanisms at all?

This research carries some practical relevance as well. As explained earlier, having internal fit among the HR activities can positively influence employee performance. Knowing which governance mechanisms play a role in achieving this internal fit can therefore help us increase employee performance in self-steering teams where these governance mechanisms are not yet implemented. This can give us an indication why some self-steering teams have higher employee performance than other self-steering teams.

Therefore, this research paper intends to answer these questions and shed light on the subject of self-steering teams and governance mechanisms relating to internal fit among HR activities. More specifically, it answers the following research question: *'Which governance mechanisms play a role in achieving internal fit among the HR activities in self-steering teams?'*. Answering this question will contribute to the literature on governance mechanisms in the context of self-steering teams and HR practices. It will also sketch a picture on the team dynamic within the self-steering teams.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Self-steering teams

In order to answer the research question, a better understanding of self-steering team is needed, especially from a HR perspective. The introduction of self-steering teams is a response to the increasing competitiveness. One of the most defining characteristic of self-steering team is that the team as a collective, rather than an external manager, has the authority to organize, monitor and accomplish member effort (Van der Vegt et al, 2010). This means that the whole team is responsible for the success of the self-steering team. They need to come up with their own practices that can help with evaluating, rewarding and planning the performance of individual team members. To do this HR practices are put in place like pay for performance, formal evaluation or task planning etc. This also means that they are all together responsible for implementing the right the HR activities. Successful self-steering teams have made quite an impact and several positive outcomes can be observed. Self-steering teams are positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as productivity and quality (Kirkman and Shapiro, 2001; Cohen and Ledford, 1994; Cumming et al 1977). We can conclude that the goal of implementing self-steering is to increase business and employee performance.

2.1.1 HR within a self-steering team

From a HR perspective, some changes can be observed compared to the traditional teams. Self-steering team have taken a fluid form which quickly responds to a particular situation (Banner et al, 1992). The study of Banner et al (1992) further states that the role of the HRM department has changed to being a hands-on adviser for self-steering teams and works side by side with them. The research shows several important HR areas and the potential changes that can be applied to have a successful self-steering team (Banner et al, 1992).

With recruitment and selection, the primary focus now lies on the team atmosphere and the potential for successful work in such an atmosphere. Technical expertise remains important but will become secondary in self-steering team (Kochanski, 1987). Aside from that, HRM now also needs to include the team members in the selection and recruitment procedure in order to or leave it completely up to them in order to uphold the principles of a self-steering team. This means that members of a self-steering team are responsible for designing the jobs they think are needed in their current self-

steering setting. They are also responsible for recruiting and selecting the right individuals to fill the vacant spots in the team.

Regarding training and development, ‘‘Self-managed work teams will assess their own training needs and, with the input, counsel and advice of HRM professionals, participate in the design, delivery and evaluation of training programs’’ (Banner et al, 1992, p42). This means that members of a self-steering team are in charge of recognizing their own short-comings and finding the right training/coaching to overcome these short-comings.

Regarding performance appraisal, Banner et al (1992) states that the team must come up with new performance appraisal instrument which are more sensitive. Members of a self-steering team must now evaluate each other which can be a sensitive matter. The performance appraisal instruments could therefore mean more towards objective output measures. Members should determine on what kind of performance appraisal instrument suits their needs the best and which outputs they will measure.

To conclude, members of self-steering team must take into account that the setting has changed towards collective responsibility of success of a team. Each member is now a factor of success in a team since they are now equally responsible for all the tasks. This means that they need to adjust the HR practices in a way that it suits the new setting and can contribute to the success of the self-steering team. This also means that each HR practice must be re-evaluated to see if it fits the current situation of the self-steering team.

2.2 HR practices and internal fit

Several studies have shown that HR activities positively contribute to company objectives when managed correctly and are internally aligned, (Lepak and Gowan, 2008; Jiang et al, 2012). It is therefore important to have a better understanding of how this actually works. In order to understand the concept of internal fit we first need to understand the concept it relates to namely: HR systems. We will use the papers of Jiang et al (2012) and Lepak et al (2006) to sketch a clear picture of a HR system and the different levels within it. We will then proceed to identify the different types of fit within a HR system.

2.2.1 HR systems

A HR system is a bundle of HR policies and HR practices that are intended to operate in order to influence the employee’s ability to perform, motivation to perform and opportunity to perform (Lepak et al, 2006, Subramony, 2009, Jiang et al

(2012). According to the research of Boxall and Purcell (2003) people perform well when these three aspects namely: ability, motivation and opportunity, are enhanced. From these definitions we can conclude that a HR system is implemented in order to control and enhance employee competences. This should then translate into a positive influence on employee performance.

As mentioned above, HR policies are one of the components of a HR system. HR policies reflect an employee-focused program that influences the choices of HR practices and provides a guideline for these HR practices (Becker and Gerhart, 1996, Schuler, 1992). These HR policies are put in place to positively influence the three aspects of employee performance (Ability, motivation and opportunity). For example, policies about training, recruitment and selection are implemented to select and develop the right individuals. This should result in having the right individuals with the right abilities for a certain task.

Another component of a HR systems are the HR practices. HR practices reflect specific organizational actions designed to achieve some specific outcomes (Becker and Gerhart, 1996, Schuler, 1992). HR practices are there to implement the HR policy they belong to. For example, training policies are focused on enhancing the skills and abilities of employees. This policy then can be implemented by means of HR practices like on the job training or team training.

Several researchers have suggested, grouping HR policies and HR practices (Lepak et al, 2006, Subramony, 2009). The reason for this was to get a clear overview of the network of HR practices and HR policies. They saw that each bundle of HR policies and HR practices is specifically focused on influencing either ability, motivation or opportunity. A bundle of HR policies and HR practices can therefore be grouped into a policy domain. A policy domain can therefore be defined as a bundle of HR policies and practices that focus on positively influencing the one of the three aspects of employee performance. These three policy domains are the ability domain, motivation domain and opportunity domain (see section 9.1.1 in appendix). Employee performance can be seen as a function of these three policy domains given that they are aligned, making these policy domains crucial (Lepak et al, 2006, Becker and Huselid, 1998, Jiang et al, 2012).

We can conclude that there are different levels in a HR system. At the highest level we

have the three policy domains (level 1 in section 9.1.2 figure 2). A level lower we have the HR policies within one of the three policy domains (level 2 in section 9.1.2). At the lowest level we have the different HR practices within a HR policy (level 3 in section 9.1.2). These different levels make up a HR system.

2.2.2 types of internal fit

We know that a HR system consists of three different levels. Therefore, we would also expect a form of fit within and between these different levels. In this section we will identify these types of fit with an explanation assisted with a simplified model of a HR system given by Jiang et al (2012) (see section 9.1.2 in appendix).

The first type of fit can be identified among the three policy domains within the first level of the HR system (see section 9.1.2 in appendix). (Becker and Huselid, 1998, Delery and Doty, 1996). As said above, employee performance is a function of these three domains. An employee must have the right skills and the motivation to use it for the benefit of the company. However, the company must provide the opportunity so that the employee can contribute towards the organizational goals. The studies of Lepak et al (2006) and MacDuffie, (1995) both support this concept, saying that these factors have influence on employee performance. Subramony (2009) further strengthens this view by saying that ‘‘HRM bundles consisting of different practices cooperating to influence the same workforce characteristic will exert a positive influence on various measures of firm performance’’. Thus, a lack of one of these factors will negatively influence employee performance.

The second type of fit can be identified among the HR policies within the policy domains. This type of fit can be seen within the second level of the HR system (see section 9.1.2 in appendix) (Becker and Huselid, 1998, Delery and Doty, 1996). The goal of these policies is to positively influence the respective policy domain they belong to. The lack of positive influence will not necessarily affect other policies but will have an effect on the net effect of the policy domain. For example, within the KSA policy domain there are three policies namely, recruitment, selection and training (see figure in section 9.1.1). These policies are aimed to enhance the KSA domain. If the training policy would not be aligned with the other policies, it will not affect the recruitment and selection policies. However, it will affect the KSA domain as whole since it won't be contributing to enhancing the KSA domain.

The third type of fit can be found among the HR practices within the third level in the HR system (see section 9.1.2 in appendix) (Becker and Huselid, 1998, Delery and Doty, 1996). The goal of the HR practices is to achieve the desired employee outcome of a policy. If these HR practices overlap in their goal, they will not have a greater impact than when they work in isolation. This could result in an increase in costs and ineffective implementation of practices.

The fourth type of fit can be identified between the different levels of the HR system (see section 9.1.2 in appendix). Thus, between the policy domain, policies within the domain and the HR practices (Becker and Huselid, 1998, Delery and Doty, 1996). These different constructs must be aligned in order to positively influence the employee competences. The implementation of the aligned policies and practices will help to achieve this positive influence. A result can be seen in form of positive employee and organizational outcomes (Lepak et al, 2006, Delery and Shaw, 2001).

2.3 Governance mechanisms

Governance mechanisms are a potential solution for the lack of internal fit among the HR activities. It is therefore important to know what these governance mechanisms are, why they are a potential solution and in which forms they come.

Let's first start with what governance mechanisms actually are. There are two definitions that highlights the essence of governance mechanisms. The first definition is the definition of Gooderman et al (2011, p129) as mentioned in the introduction. It states the following about governance mechanisms: "These mechanisms are deployed in the belief that influencing the conditions of individual actions in a certain manner will lead employees to perform certain individual actions that, when aggregated, lead to favourable organizational outcomes". It points out two important aspects of governance mechanisms namely influencing individual actions and working towards a favourable organisational outcome. The second definition is from Farndale et al (2010) which states that in a HR context, governance mechanisms can align the interest of different stakeholders. Here, the purpose of governance mechanisms is emphasized which is making sure different stakeholder follow the same goal.

With self-steering team, the HR activities are divided. Different team members are responsible for different HR activities and may pursue different goals. This causes a lack of internal fit among HR activities which can

negatively impact employee performance. Governance mechanisms, however, can influence the actions of individuals with the purpose of aligning their interest. By influencing the individuals, governance mechanisms can make sure that the HR activities pursue the same goal and are consistent with each other. This translates into achieving a fit among the HR activities which will then positively influence employee performance. Governance mechanisms are therefore a potential solution for achieving internal fit among the HR activities

2.3.1 Formal and informal governance mechanisms

Formal governance mechanisms focus more on a contractual based approach which relies on control and regulation (Thomson and Conyon, 2012) It is more effective in predictable environments that do not require flexibility (Germain et al, 2008). Hoetker & Mellewigt (2009) further argues that formal governance mechanisms prohibit the other party from taking action which can lead to advantages which are not formally agreed upon. Governance mechanisms that comply with these descriptions, making them formal, are for example: Contracts, checklists, auditing boards, company laws, pre-determined procedures etc.

Informal governance mechanisms focus more on a relationship-based approach which relies more on trust and building a good relationship (Dyer, 1996, Uzzi, 1997). It leads to higher productivity due to the reduced risk of the relationship being broken because of personal interaction, shared values and congruent goals (Gençtürk & Aulakh, 2007). It requires both parties to invest their personnel resources into interactions with one another. This then translates into a relationship which focuses on getting advantages for both sides while diminishing opportunistic behavior (Hoetker and Mellewigt, 2009). Governance mechanisms that follow these principles are for example: communication, trust, cooperation, peer to peer pressure etc.

2.3.2 Governance mechanisms and internal fit

An elaborate description has been given of both the types of fit and the forms of governance mechanisms. However, it is not yet clear which forms of governance mechanisms may lead to achieving a certain type of fit. This section will therefore give an overview of each type of fit and the expected form of governance mechanism that produces or helps achieving this type of fit.

As mentioned before, policy domains consist of bundles on HR policies and HR practices that are intended to influence the three aspects of employee performance. The three policy domains together are then responsible for the employee performance. However, it is hard to measure the exact effect of a certain policy domain because there is no clear construct for measuring the level of knowledge, motivation or opportunity. The policy domains therefore have the highest level of abstractness within a HR system. A higher level of abstractness does not guarantee predictable outcomes and are often subject of change. For example, HR policies within a policy domain may added, changed or be replaces by other HR policies. This inherently changes the effect of the policy domain on the aspects of employee performance as well. Formal governance mechanisms perform optimally in a predictable environment that is not subject to changes. It is therefore expected that informal governance mechanisms are used to align these policy domains since it is based on the assumption that both parties put in the effort. This makes it easier to apply changes when needed since informal mechanisms like communication provide quick response to changes that may occur.

HR policies set the guidelines for HR practices and select the HR practices that follow these guidelines. It therefore needs to be somewhat consistent so that all the HR practices achieve the intended goals of a certain policy. As these guidelines are intended for the long-term use, it is not likely to change much. Formal mechanisms form a good basis aligning the HR policies because it can provide a written agreement (e.g. contract or checklist) in which basic requirements for a HR policy checked to make sure the right HR policies are selected. For example, training policy, recruitment policy and selection policy, within the KSA domain, are all put in place to attract the right individuals with the right set of skills and knowledge (see figure 1 in appendix).

HR practices are there to implement a certain HR policy. These HR practices more concrete than the policy domains and HR policies. As it is more concrete, it becomes easier to apply formal as well as informal governance mechanisms to align these HR practices. For example, when trying to motivated a certain employee, HR practices like result-oriented appraisal or pay per performance practices are put in place to do so. You can develop formal rules that says that when a certain level of performance is achieved, a corresponding form of compensation will be given. Therefore, using

formal governance mechanisms. However, you can also use communication as a means to come to an agreement that if a certain objective is achieved, the employee will be promoted. Here, trust and communication are used thus relying on informal mechanisms. Therefore, it is expected that both formal and informal mechanisms are used to align the HR practices.

When looking at the alignment between the HR system level, so between the policy domains, HR policies and HR practices, the level of abstractness decreases. Whereas the policy domains are quite abstract, the HR practices are rather concrete. We can therefore expect that both formal and informal governance mechanisms are use. This is because as the level of abstractness goes down, it becomes easier to use more formal and informal mechanisms.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

An explorative qualitative case study at Livio has been chosen as research design. Livio was chosen because it recently made a transition to self-steering team. According to Yin (2009) a case study is a design in where a researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, which can take several forms like a program, event or multiple individuals. A qualitative study focuses understanding and exploring human or social phenomena in terms of the meaning individuals bring to them (Creswell, 2014, Boeije, 2010). It is still unknown what kind governance mechanisms self-steering teams use and if they use them at al. The effects of these governance mechanisms on internal fit of HR practices has not been studied clearly either. Having done such a qualitative case study at Livio therefore gave me the opportunity to clearly study this phenomenon since they started implementing self-steering teams. Studying the self-steering teams at Livio also gave me the chance to really engage the people in such a team and examine their perspectives and opinions. Their perspective can be used to identify two aspects. The first aspect is whether the HR practices are really divided. The second aspect is what kind of mechanisms there are in a self-steering team. Their opinion can be further examined to gauge their perception of internal fit among HR activities.

3.2 Research sample

The research sample consisted of employees that work at Livio. Livio is a Dutch healthcare organization that employed about 2366 employees in 2016. It is located in Enschede

which is the east of the Netherlands. They have started to implement self-steering teams and have about 70 teams in total (Livio, 2016).

Livio is an adequate organization for this case study because they just started implementing self-steering teams. Livio has done this in a forceful manner meaning not all teams transitioned themselves into self-steering teams at the same time. There are teams that worked longer together in a self-steering context and thus are likely to have achieved internal fit among HR activities. However, there are also team that became recently self-managing and thus have not likely achieved internal fit among HR activities yet. This gives me the opportunity to assess which governance mechanisms were used in teams which have an internal fit among HR activities compared to teams who don't have internal fit among HR activities.

Six interviews have been conducted with the employees from Livio. These employees were chosen because they work in a self-steering team and could provide me with relevant information about their HR management and governance mechanisms they might use. Below a list of the interviews has been given with the duration of the interviews and their job description. To ensure anonymity, the interviewees will be noted as I1, I2, I3 etc. and their corresponding team as team A, B, C etc. Each of these six employees are active in a self-steering team in the Netherlands. Note that some of interview times are the same because the interview was held with both person at the same time.

Interviewee	Team	Job description	Duration interview
I1	A	Nurse	00:58:15
I2	B	Assistant Nurse	00:52:32
I3	C	Nurse	00:57:24
I4	D	Assistant Nurse	00:57:24
I5	E	Nurse	00:52:32
I6	F	Intern/ Assistant Nurse	00:43:11

3.3 Data collection

A semi-structured interview was used for collecting secondary data. Boeije (2010) characterizes semi-structured interviews by have prepared topics where questions can be asked about at some point in the interview. This gave the interviewee the freedom to answer on her own terms while giving me the opportunity to steer the interview towards the relevant topics. The

interview consisted of a general part and a part that specifically focuses on the relevant topics discussed in the theory section. Open questions provided the interviewee more freedom in explaining their perceptions and views. Face to face examination also provided opportunity to go further into certain topics that were interesting for the research and contributed to answering the research question. The interview was focused on exploring three pre-determined topics namely: division of HR practices, internal fit of HR activities and governance mechanisms. The goals of this interview were to see if there was a fit among the HR practices in the self-steering teams and which governance mechanisms they used. However, the division of HR practices in a self-steering team has been added because this research relies on the assumption that the responsibilities of HR practices are divided instead of centered in one person. It is therefore important to verify this assumption and look at whether the HR practices are really divided between the members of the self-steering teams

3.3.1 Operationalization

As for the operationalization of the important topics discussed in the theory a table has been made (see section 9.2.1 in appendix). The table is divided between first order constructs, second order constructs and the corresponding interview questions. The first order constructs entail the three relevant topics and their definition. The second order constructs cover the different aspects of the definition of the relevant topics from the first construct. Interview questions were then made in order to explore the different aspects of the second construct. This helped to get the information we needed in order to answer the research question.

Internal fit can be defined as a situation where HR activities are consistent with each other in order to achieve the company objectives (Lepak and Gowan, 2008). It is essentially about the congruence among HR policy domains, HR policies and HR practices. The questions were therefore focused on identifying the different types of congruence among and between the HR policy domains, HR policies and HR practices.

Governance mechanisms are mechanisms which aligns the interest of different stakeholders (Farndale et al, 2010). Governance mechanisms do this by influencing individual actions of stakeholders that will lead to certain actions that leads to favourable organizational outcomes (Gooderman et al, 2011). Alignment of interest can be achieved by the use of two broad forms of governance mechanisms namely: formal

and informal. Formal governance mechanisms focus more on a contractual based approach which relies on control and regulation (Thomson and Conyon, 2012). Informal governance mechanisms focus more on a relationship-based approach which relies more on trust and building a good relationship (Dyer, 1996, Uzzi, 1997). Questions for this topic were focused on how employees achieved the alignment of HR activities and which form they used doing so.

Division of the HR activities concerns the division of policy domains, HR policies and HR practices within the self-steering teams. Questions were therefore focused on identifying how these HR activities are divided among the members of a self-steering team.

3.4 Data analysis

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview transcripts were then further coded into a coding scheme (see section 9.2.2 in appendix). Coding is the process of organizing data by taking short phrases, words or sentence segments and placing them into a category labeled by an overarching term/phrase (Cresswell, 2014).

The coding scheme consists of 4 levels (see appendix 9.2.2). A deductive approach was used to determine the codes of the first two levels of the coding scheme. This means that the first coding level was derived from the relevant theory described in the theory section. The theory was then further analyzed and narrowed down to specific aspects of the relevant theory. These aspects are grouped and form the second level of the coding scheme. The first two levels cover the three main topics (governance mechanisms, internal fit and division of HR activities) and go further into each of these topics. An inductive approach was used to determine the third and fourth coding level. This means that the codes come from the interview data of the self-steering teams. The last levels cover codes that show the practical aspects from the first and second level codes.

Using coding as a method for data analysis was particularly suitable for this research. Since this research is a qualitative research it is focused on understanding the meaning individuals give to a certain phenomenon. Finding a parameter to measure the answers with becomes nearly impossible. However, coding gave a clear overview of the relevant topics and how the concepts relate back to the self-steering teams. This made it easier to draw conclusions about results of the topics. This then made it easier to answer the research question.

4. Results

4.1 HR system within the self-steering teams

Policy domains: each policy domain is focused on enhancing one of the aspects of employee performance. However, when conducting the interviews, it became clear that Livio incorporated each of these policy domains into general team tasks. An interviewee, who was a nurse, and had been working for a longer time for Livio stated that they have 4 team tasks: quality, business management, clients and colleagues. She further explained that these tasks were given to them by the management as predetermined concepts on which they could give feedback. A document was given which generally explained the goals of each team task.

The goal of team task quality is to provide the patients with adequate and safe healthcare. It is focused on making sure that the employees of Livio that treat the patients have the adequate skills and abilities to provide the wanted healthcare quality. The KSA policy domain can be recognized in this team task as it also focuses on enhancing the skills and abilities of an employee so that it can sufficiently execute a given task.

The goal of the team task business management is to monitor the financial situation and ensure continuity of Livio. It is focused on managing the resources of Livio and its self-steering teams. An interviewee further explained that within this team task she looks at cash flows, productivity and other numbers. She is responsible for whether they can hire a new employee, the salaries, the minimal provided hours per employee etc. The policy domain motivation can be recognized in this team task as it is focused on enhancing motivation and effort by means of adequate salary and other benefits.

The goal of the team task colleagues is to provide opportunity for development for individual as well as the team as whole. It focuses on making sure that each employee has the opportunity to grow towards the job they want. High employee satisfaction is described to be one of the important factors of a successful team and therefore also a goal to be achieved. The policy domain KSA can be recognized in this team task as it is also focused on making sure that there is opportunity to grow and fully develop the potential of an employee regarding skills, knowledge and abilities.

The goal of the team task clients is focused on providing the patients with the opportunity to give their input and shape the healthcare into the healthcare optimal for them.

This gives the client a degree of influence on which tasks the nurses or assistant nurses have to do for certain clients. The clients have therefore influence on the job design of the employees at Livio. The policy domain opportunity can therefore be recognized in the team task clients because it also focused on job design and degree of involvement for the employees at Livio.

An overall conclusion can be made that the both the management and the self-steering teams are responsible for forming the team tasks and thus the policy domains as well. The management came up with the general concepts whereas the team could give feedback and form it into their liking.

HR policies: when asked about the introduction of self-steering teams, an interviewee stated the following: *“They want to remove the top-down culture. So, the management is up and we are the down. They want to turn this around so that they are guided from the bottom upwards and not the other way around, to avoid having rules made from above and passed down to the bottom”*. The bottom up approach as described in the statement provided the self-steering teams with the opportunity to develop their own HR policies. The interviewee further explained that they had little guidance and no feedback from the pilot teams. She stated: *“I had the feeling that we ourselves had to see what works and what didn’t work in such a self-steering team. With trial and error, we found out what worked for us”*. This means that HR policies may differ from team to team since the trial and error approach may have different result per team. Therefore, the HR policies may have the same goal which is making sure that the team tasks are sufficiently executed yet differ in how they achieve this goal.

An overall conclusion can be made that the team as whole was responsible for developing the adequate HR policies. The whole team participated in the trial and error process to make sure that it worked for the whole team. The development of the HR policies can therefore be seen as a team effort as well as a team responsibility.

HR practices: when asked about the HR practices it became clear that the division was done in the team meetings. An interviewee explained the process as following: *“We looked at which roles you had and if you wanted to change. Most of us wanted to keep the team role they had. From there on we looked at which team task suited best with the team role you had. In these team meetings we managed it together to*

divide the team tasks this way”. Several interviewees gave a somewhat same explanation of the division of the team tasks and thus the HR practices as well. Two observations can be made from the explanation that was given. The first observation that can be made is that even though this explanation creates an image of a decentralized division of HR practices, the opposite can be observed. In interviewee stated the following as well about the division of HR practices: *“The nurses are in charge of most of the HR activities and they will take care of most of the stuff”*. This statement is backed up by other interviewees that also explain that the responsibility of the HR practices lies with 1 or 2 nurses or higher-level assistant nurses.

The second observation that can be made about how the HR practices are allocated. As explained by the interviewee, during the allocation process, the current skill and motivation level of the employee is taken into account when dividing the HR practices. A certain person-job fit is achieved by looking at these factors. This resulted in that even though a team member is responsible for a specific team task, it may not be responsible for all the including HR practices that come with it. An interviewee explained that she was responsible for the team task business management which included scheduling. However, the interviewee wanted to focus more on the numbers like hours worked and productivity. So, another team member did the scheduling even though this HR practice is related to the team task business management. This also means that the bundles of HR practices one is responsible for may differ per team. This is because the HR practices are allocated not only collectively as team tasks but also individually.

We can therefore conclude that the responsibility of HR practices is centralized with the nurses or higher-level nurse assistants in a self-steering team. This means that the nurses are also responsible for the execution of these practices. An interviewee explained that this probably because the nurses have more responsibility due to a higher education level. The responsibility of HR practices is therefore often appointed to nurses. We can also conclude that the HR practice bundles that the nurses are responsible for may differ per team. This is because the process allows for individual allocation of the HR practices and not only collective allocation of HR practices.

4.2 Formal governance mechanisms in the self-steering teams

From the interview data several formal governance mechanisms were found. These governance mechanisms are, documents, checklists, protocols, patient files and contracts.

Livio handbook: when conducting the interviews, an interviewee showed me a document where the goals of each of the four team tasks was described. In this document it does not necessarily mention what the employees have to do but does mention what Livio wants to achieve with these team tasks. It has therefore a degree of influence on what the employees need to in order to achieve these goals. This makes the documents a form of formal governance mechanism.

Patient files: patient files were described as files in which an employee can find what or what not to do when taking care of a certain patient. An interviewee described that in this file, you can see which tasks are done and which one still needs to be done. In this file it is also mentioned what tasks the client wants to do him/herself and which tasks needs to be done by the employees from Livio. It essentially aligns the interest between the client and the employee helping the client. This makes the patient file a form of formal governance mechanisms since it is written down and aligns the wishes of the client as well as the wishes from Livio.

Patient files + Vilans Protocols: patient files were described as files in which an employee can find what or what not to do when taking care of a certain patient. An interviewee described that in this file, you can see which tasks are done and which one still needs to be done. In this file it is also mentioned what tasks the client wants to do him/herself and which tasks needs to be done by the employees from Livio. It essentially aligns the interest between the client and the employee helping the client. One of the interviewees mentioned the use of Vilans protocols. She explained that there were general protocols in place that what described how handle clients meaning how to perform the tasks needed to take care to the client. These protocols however were made by another organization named Vilans and not by Livio. The Vilans database holds an extensive list of protocols that are focused on healthcare for clients (Vilans, 2018). The patient files and Vilans protocols combined form a basis for what how task bundle for a nurse assistant looks like and the degree of involvement when taking care of a patient. It can therefore achieve an alignment within the job design policy and among the job design practices (e.g. job

enlargement and job involvement). It can therefore function as a governance mechanism that can achieve a within-practice alignment in the HR policy regarding job design (see section 9.1.1 in appendix).

Contracts: when asked about the contracts the interviewees stated that the contract were made by the self-steering team. Such a contract included mostly the hourly pay, work hours, a job description and the how it works at Livio. These contracts are reviewed together with the HR department which means this is a joint responsibility of the self-steering team and the HR department.

4.2.1 Formal governance mechanisms and internal fit

As we already know, each of these team tasks is related back to the three policy domains on the highest system level. Each of these policy domains describes a goal that needs to be achieved in order to positively influence employee performance. The Livio handbook reveals that the overall goal of the team tasks is to help better organizing the self-steering teams. This also means that documenting the goals of each team, makes sure that each team task is aimed at improving the organization of the self-steering teams. The Livio handbook essentially aligns the team tasks by making sure each of the team task contributed in a better organization of the self-steering team. We can conclude that the Livio handbook helps achieving alignment on the highest HR system level which in this case are the team tasks that incorporates the policy domains (see appendix 9.3).

Patient files and protocols focus on what to do and how to it. The patient files lay a basis on which tasks to do when taking care of a certain clients. It designs a certain tasks bundle for an employee. The protocols say how to handle the clients and states how to perform the tasks. The combination of the patient file and protocols can therefore be related back to the job design practices which focuses on the aspects mentioned above. This combination of formal mechanisms aligns the job design HR practices in order to achieve a form of healthcare that is suitable for the client and performable for the employee. The combination of governance mechanisms therefore helps achieving an alignment on the lowest system level which are the HR practices(see appendix 9.3).

The use of checklist was also mentioned by the interviewees. They described the checklist as a list where you can see which tasks are already

done and which you still need to do. These checklists are used when taking care of a client but also when performing recruitment and selection practices. One interviewee described the contents of the checklist as what you need to arrange when recruiting someone. However, another employee described the checklist as a list which helped her in doing the job interview and selecting applicants. In case of the latter description the checklist may align the practices as it can describe prerequisites for each practice which will result in hiring the right person. The use of a checklist can therefore help achieving an alignment on the lowest level of the HR system (see appendix 9.3).

4.3 Informal governance mechanisms in the self-steering teams

Aside from the formal mechanisms, there were also informal mechanisms present within the self-steering teams. These mechanisms are dyadic communication, team communication, trust, cooperation and coaching.

Dyadic communication: dyadic communication refers to the communication between two people. This form of informal mechanisms was mostly seen between nurses/ assistant nurses that were responsible for the same team tasks and thus worked closely together. After explaining what was meant with internal fit and giving several examples of internal fit among HR activities, the interviewee stated: *'In my team there are 2 nurses and they communicate with each other about all these activities with each other. This way they both know from each other what they did and what still needs to be done'*. Here the activities she stated refers to the HR activities within the self-steering team. She confirms that dyadic communication is used to align the HR activities making dyadic communication a governance mechanism.

Team communication: team communication came mostly in the form of team meetings. All the interviewees emphasized that everything is discussed within the team meetings. These meetings are held regularly but when is it urgent, there is also a team application for the mobile from which they can communicate with each other when needed. From the interviews, it became clear that HR activities like job design, reward and punishment, recruitment and selection, training etc. are discussed during the team meetings. This is done so that everyone is up to date about these activities and to make sure that these activities are executed correctly.

Trust: trust and cooperation were also recognized by several interviewees as informal mechanisms that were present within the self-steering teams. The interviewees stated that trust is needed because they rely on each other to perform the tasks in an optimal manner. This creates also created expectation about each other that each employee is expected to meet. However, the interviewees did not clearly tie trust to any form of alignment among the HR activities when looking at them individually. Trust could therefore not be confirmed as an informal mechanism.

Cooperation: cooperation was mentioned by all interviewees as an informal mechanism that could be seen within the self-steering teams. Here, cooperation was described as team members working together to perform their individual tasks as well as their collective team tasks. Cooperation individually could not be tied to any form of alignment. However, when looking at cooperation together with team or dyadic communication, it can indeed be seen as an informal governance mechanism. When combined with team or dyadic communication, cooperation was described by the interviewees as essential to achieving alignment among the HR activities.

Coaching: the interviewees all stated that their team has access to a coach manager. The role of the coach manager is to help the members of the self-steering team whenever they need something of do not know how to handle a certain situation. An interviewee mentioned that she only uses the coach manager for solving conflict when it was not possible to solve it among themselves. The coach manager guides the team members when needed but does not actively participate within the self-steering teams.

4.3.1 Informal governance mechanisms and internal fit

When talking about internal fit, team communication was strongly emphasized. As already mentioned, the management came up with the general concepts whereas the team could give feedback and form it into their liking. Communication was used to define the goals of the team tasks and how to execute it. This means that involved parties used communication to align their vision of the goal each team task should have. We can therefore say that team communication was used to achieve an alignment between the team tasks. These team tasks relate back to the policy domain, thus an alignment on

the highest level of the HR system was achieved (see appendix 9.3).

Team communication in combination with cooperation were also seen as mechanisms to align the HR practices. An interviewee gave the following description when asked about the alignment among HR practices: *'' If you want to employ a new team member because you see in the schedule that there is a need for this. You need to communicate this with the person responsible for recruitment. The recruiter will invite the new potential team member for an interview and hire him if he fits the bill. The recruiter then will communicate back to me that there is a new team member for the needed number of hours and these are the costs associated with it. And then I can schedule him in, so he will fill in the gaps in the schedule. Decisions made about these things are always first discussed in the team meetings with everyone''*. The description explains that team communication and cooperation were used to align recruitment and selection practices with scheduling and compensation. This was done so that the right person was hired with the resources available. We can therefore conclude that team communication and cooperation are both used to achieve an alignment on the lowest level in HR system namely between the HR practices (see appendix 9.3). Dyadic communication was mainly seen between the nurses. One of the interviewees stated that the nurses were mostly responsible for the HR practices meaning the HR practices were centralized with only the more experienced nurses. When asked about the HR practices within the team she stated: *'' From what I see, we have assistant nurses and nurses and the nurses take most of these tasks upon themselves regarding HR. For example, assistant nurses are involved in the team task quality but not with the scheduling. That is done by a nurse. Also, the recruitment and selection are done by the nurses. The assistant nurses don't really have a say in that matter/process''*. She then further explained that the nurses used communication and cooperation between them to achieve an alignment among the practices that they were responsible for. These practices related back to the lowest level of the HR system (see appendix 9.3).

As for coaching and trust, both could theoretically be identified as informal governance mechanisms but both could not be confirmed as informal mechanisms when looking at the results. These two mechanisms could also be related back to any form of alignment among the HR practices.

5. Discussion and limitations

5.1 Future research implications

In the theory section, several concepts have been explained and analyzed in order to help understand the context of the research question. The study of Farndale et al (2010) and Thompson and Conyon (2012) mainly make the distinction between formal and informal governance mechanisms and the benefits of each of these forms of governance mechanisms have. They define the use of these governance mechanisms quite generally by saying they are there to align the interest of different stakeholders. They show no further application of different types of governance mechanisms in a HR system for example. The paper of Jiang et al (2012) goes further into the concept of HR systems and explains what a HR system consists of and which levels we can find in such a HR system. It also describes the concept of internal fit among the HR activities and that it can lead to an increase in employee performance.

The results of my research combine the application of governance mechanisms and concept of internal fit and HR systems. It shows that different types of governance mechanisms can be found on different levels of the HR system. The results show that governance mechanisms were only found on the Highest (policy domain) level and lowest (HR practice) level of the HR system. This can indicate that there are certain governance mechanisms that achieve alignment on only a certain HR system level (see appendix 9.3). A new HR system-oriented classification can therefore be made that classifies whether the governance mechanism is aimed at achieving an alignment on the highest or the lowest level of the HR system. Future research can explore this classification by looking if the same result can be achieved with other self-steering teams from other companies. It further shows that governance mechanisms can also be of use in HRM and not only in classical principal-agent situations.

Another insight that could be gained from the results was that governance mechanisms were used a lot in combinations. Jiang et al (2012) describes three types of relationships namely: substitutive, additive and synergistic. However, Jiang et al only applies these types to HR practices while this may also be the case for governance mechanisms. The patient files and Vilans protocols are an example of this. The patient files and Vilans protocols both were used to achieve a within-practice alignment within the job design policy. Both governance mechanisms show a dimension of how the task bundle of a Livio assistant nurse or nurse looks like. Where the

patient files showed the what tasks needed to be done, the Vilans protocols showed how to do these tasks.

This example shows characteristics of an additive relationship. An additive relationship is a relationship where both objects can work independent of each other but together achieve a greater effect that is not bigger than the sum of the individual effects (Jiang et al, 2012). While each of these governance mechanisms can work independent, combining it with certain other governance mechanisms may enhance the effectiveness of achieving an alignment among the HR activities. Future studies can go further into exploring the relationship these governance mechanisms. This may reveal that certain combinations of governance mechanisms are more effective while other combinations of governance mechanisms may be less effective in self-steering teams. Identifying what relationship, the combination of governance mechanisms may also reveal why some self-steering team may not have effectively aligned the HR activities while other self-steering team did.

5.2 Limitations

This research tried to see which governance mechanisms were present in a self-steering team and the role they play in achieving internal fit among the HR activities. However, the research was done in a limited time frame. This brought some limitation with it that should be kept in mind.

This research is only built upon the results of 6 interviews. The sample size is therefore not big enough to make these results significant. The research was also done in cooperation with only one company that implemented self-steering teams. To achieve more significant result, more interviews should be done at different companies. The interviews provided valuable insight in the perspectives and opinions of members active in a self-steering team. Therefore, if possible, all the members of the self-steering teams should be interviewed as well as more teams at several different companies. This would increase the reliability and validity of the results and should give a less biased view.

The fact that the interviews were done face to face and were semi-structured had several advantages. This made the interview dynamic making it possible to go further into topics that were interesting and worth exploring. This research is however done by only one person which may bring some form of bias as well. A researcher can unconsciously steer the interview towards his goals. While steering the interview is

good for getting the answers you want, it can also exclude answers and topics that might be relevant. With interview you also run the risk that the interviewees give socially desired answers which do not reflect the reality.

Two of my interview were with two people at the same time. This can give leeway for bias. Since one person has already answered, the other one is likely to agree with this person while this may not always be the case in reality. This can thus deform answers given by the person answering second. To counter this, I tried to rotate who answers first to that both persons get the chance to answer first.

Lastly, the operationalization of the theoretical concepts was executed not entirely correctly. The interview questions were constructed before the operationalization. The operationalization was done correctly after the interviews. However, this may have led to interview questions that did not capture every relevant aspect described in the theory section. To correct this, only the questions that that deemed relevant enough to the research question were taken into account when describing the results.

6. conclusion

This research aimed to answer the following research question: *Which governance mechanisms play a role in achieving internal fit among the HR activities in self-steering teams?* The results found that both formal and informal governance mechanisms were present in the self-steering team and play a role in achieving internal fit among the HR activities.

When looking at the highest HR system level, the policy domain level, we can see that team communication, cooperation and the Livio handbook were the governance mechanisms that had an influence in achieving an internal fit among the team tasks which incorporated the policy domains (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities, Motivation and Effort, Opportunity to contribute).

For the middle level of the HR system, the HR policy level, no governance mechanisms were found that had any influence in achieving an internal fit among the HR policies.

Lastly, for the lowest HR system level, the HR practice level, several governance mechanisms were found that contributed to achieving an internal fit among the HR practices. For the informal governance mechanisms, dyadic/team communication and cooperation (in combination with team/ dyadic communication), were found help align the HR practices. For the formal mechanisms, the Vilans protocols, patient files and checklists, were found to help aligning

the HR practices. I hope this research will stimulate research in governance mechanisms that achieve internal fit among the HR activities.

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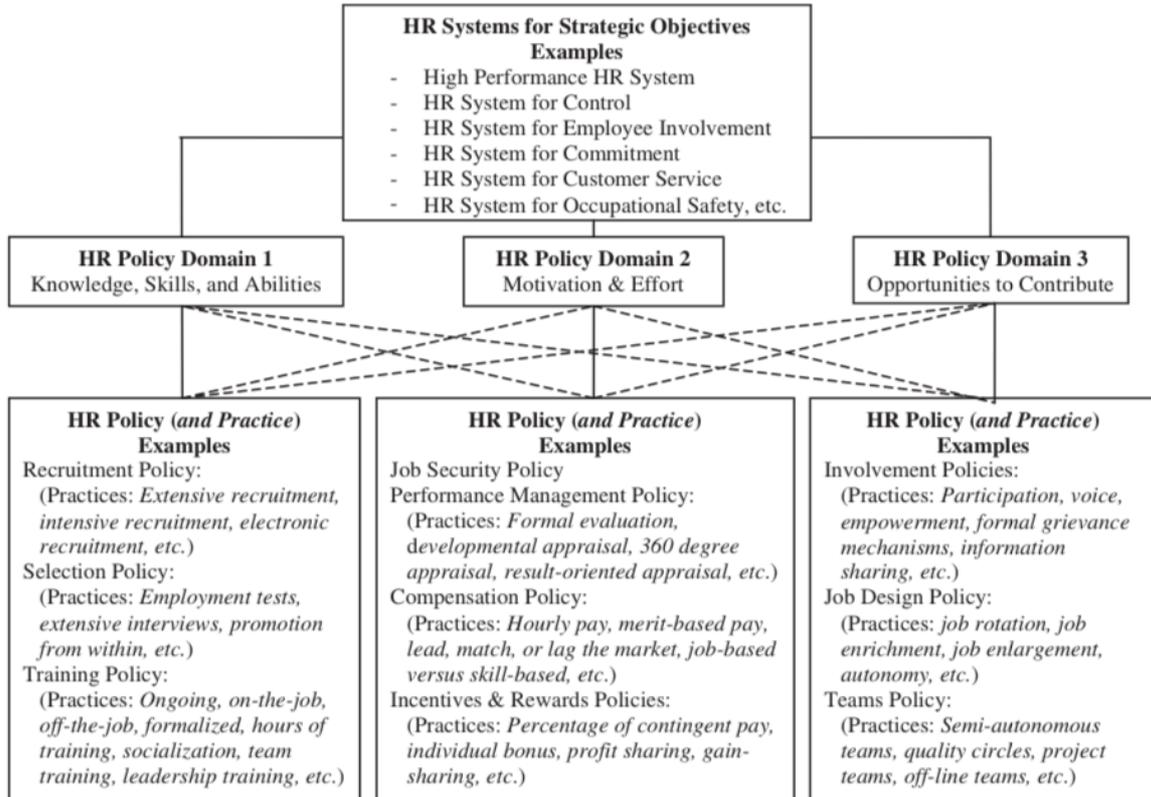
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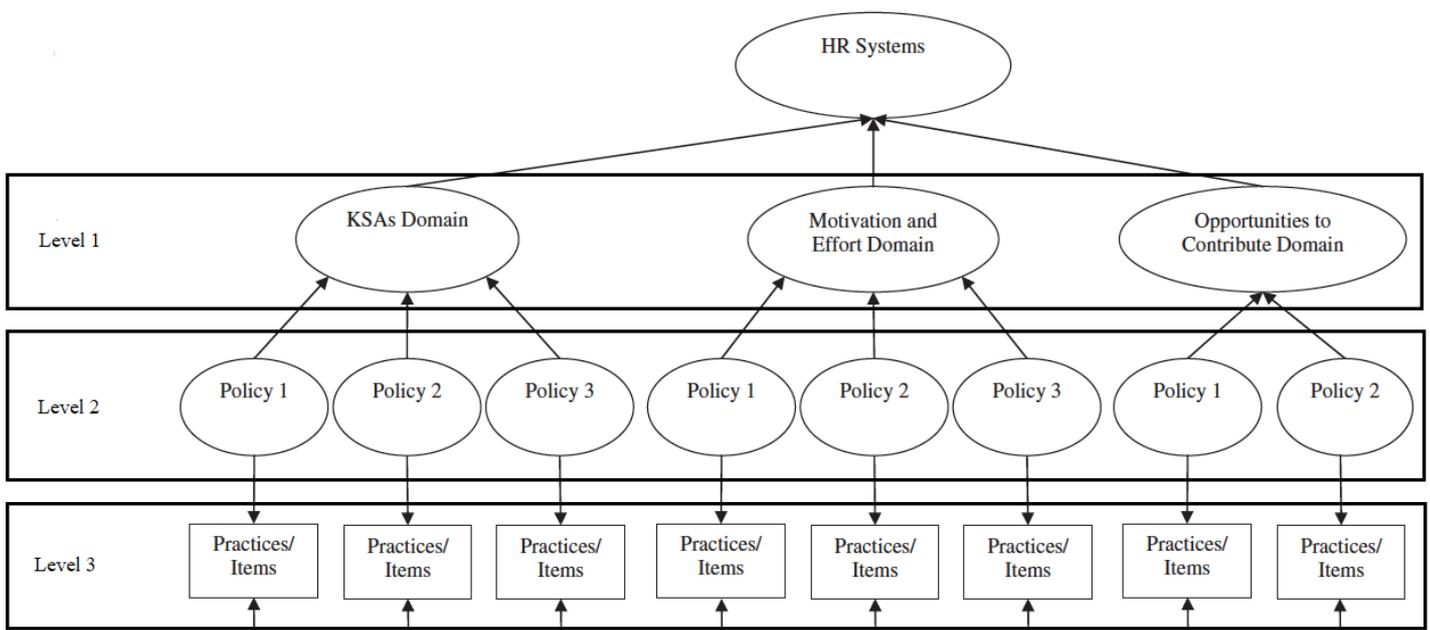
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9. Appendix

9.1.1: General overview HR system by Lepak et al (2006)



9.1.2: Simplified version of a HR system by Jiang et al (2012)



9.2.1: The operationalization of the relevant constructs

1 st order constructs	2 nd order constructs	Interview questions
<p><i>Internal fit:</i> Congruence among HR policy domains, HR policies and HR practices</p>	<p>Congruence among policy domains where policy domains are a bundle of HR policies and practices that focus on influencing the one of the three aspects of employee performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there an internal fit among these HR activities? If yes/no Why is that? - In what way do you make sure that there is an internal fit among these HR activities that are carried out by different team members? - Do you set up common goals and values for executing the HR activities?
	<p>Congruence among HR policy where HR policy reflect an employee-focused program that influences the choices of HR practices.</p>	
	<p>Congruence among HR practices where HR practices reflect specific organizational actions designed to achieve some specific outcomes.</p>	
	<p>Congruence among a policy domain, HR policies and HR practices so the different levels within a HR system.</p>	
<p><i>Governance mechanisms:</i> aligning the interest of different stakeholders by influencing individual actions of stakeholders that will lead to certain actions that leads to favourable organizational outcomes. These governance mechanisms come in 2 broad forms namely formal and informal</p>	<p>Formal mechanisms: focus more on a contractual based approach which relies on control and regulation. It is more effective in predictable environments that do not require flexibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you also use contracts, checklists, auditing boards, rules, procedures etc. to ensure that HR activities carried out by different people are coordinated? - Can you give examples of this? - Are you faced with problems in matching these activities by means of contracts, checklists, auditing boards, rules, procedures etc. If so, which? - Are these effective? If not, why is that? - How does the support for your team look like?
	<p>Informal mechanisms: focus more on a relationship-based approach which relies more on trust and building a good relationship. It requires both parties to invest their personnel resources into interactions with one another.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you also use communication, cooperation, coordination and consultation to ensure that HR activities carried out by different people are coordinated? - Can you give examples of this? - Are you faced with problems in matching these activities by means of consultation, cooperation and coordination, etc. If so, which? - Are these effective? If not, why is that? - How does the support for your team look like?

<p><i>Division of the HR activities: the division of policy domains, HR policies and HR practices within the self-steering teams.</i></p>	<p>Division of policy domains where policy domains are a bundle of HR policies and practices that focus on influencing the one of the three aspects of employee performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For which HR activities is your team responsible? - Could you point out which team member/team members are responsible for HR activities? Who does what? - Is there a clear subdivision in your team? If yes, how does this subdivision look like?
	<p>Division of HR policies where HR policies reflect an employee-focused program that influences the choices of HR practices. It also provides a guideline for HR practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For which HR activities is your team responsible? - Could you point out which team member/team members are responsible for HR activities? Who does what? - Is there a clear subdivision in your team? If yes, how does this subdivision look like?
	<p>Division of HR practices where HR practices reflect specific organizational actions designed to achieve some specific outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your role within the team - For which HR activities is your team responsible? - Could you point out which team member/team members are responsible for HR activities? Who does what? - Is there a clear subdivision in your team? If yes, how does this subdivision look like?

9.2.2: The coding scheme

1 st level theoretical codes	2 nd level theoretical codes	3 rd level empirical codes	4 th level empirical codes
<i>Internal fit:</i> Congruence among HR policy domains, HR policies and HR practices	Congruence among policy domains where policy domains are a bundle of HR policies and practices that focus on influencing the one of the three aspects of employee performance.	Congruence among team tasks (quality, business management, colleagues, clients)	
	Congruence among HR policy where HR policy reflect an employee-focused program that influences the choices of HR practices.	Congruence among protocols/ guidelines and team-based policies	
	Congruence among HR practices where HR practices reflect specific organizational actions designed to achieve some specific outcomes.	Congruence among the HR tasks executed by the team (scheduling, job interviews, rewards/penalty, hourly pay, on and off the job training, electronic recruitment)	
	Congruence among a policy domain, HR policies and HR practices so the different levels within a HR system.	Congruence among the team tasks, its guidelines within the team tasks and the HR tasks within the self-steering teams.	
<i>Governance mechanisms:</i> aligning the interest of different stakeholders by influencing individual actions of stakeholders that will lead to certain actions that leads to favourable organizational outcomes. These governance mechanisms come in 2 broad forms namely formal and informal	Formal mechanisms: focus more on a contractual based approach which relies on control and regulation. It is more effective in predictable environments that do not require flexibility.	Contracts, auditing boards, company laws, pre-determined procedures, protocols, evaluation meetings	
	Informal mechanisms: focus more on a relationship-based approach which relies more on trust and building a good relationship. It requires both parties to invest their personnel resources into interactions with one another.	Communication, trust, cooperation, peer to peer pressure, coaching	Dyadic, team-based
<i>Division of the HR activities:</i> the division of policy domains, HR policies and HR practices within the self-steering teams.	Division of policy domains where policy domains are a bundle of HR policies and practices that focus on influencing the one of the three aspects of employee performance.	Division of the team tasks (quality, business management, colleagues, clients)	Centralised, decentralised
	Division of HR policies where HR policies reflect an employee-focused program that influences the	Division of the responsibility regarding guidelines within the team	

	choices of HR practices. It also provides a guideline for HR practices.		
	Division of HR practices where HR practices reflect specific organizational actions designed to achieve some specific outcomes	Division of the responsibility regarding the HR activities within the self-steering teams.	Within the team task, outside the team task, centralised/decentralised

9.3 Governance mechanisms in self-steering teams that lead to internal fit

