An exploration of hrm devolution and the impact on line manager capabilities

Profession, Manager

1. 0Introduction and Organisational Context

1. 1Background and Organisational Context

The study will examine the impact of devolution on line manager capabilities, focusing on the effects the devolution of the Human Resource (HR) functions to the Line Mangers (LM) capabilities. A number of LM and HR professionals will be surveyed in order to assess the impact of devolution and to what extent the devolution of HR function happened. It will try to establish the relationship between the perceived efficiency of the manager in performing some of the HR functions, focusing on the various processes and procedures, soft skills involved, and the employee performance. The study will also take into account the degree to which HR supports the Line Manager where there is devolution of functions. The study will be set in the context of recent theorising about the devolution of HRM, looking both at the new ' strategic' role of HR and also at the way in which this impacts upon the LM role as more HR responsibilities are included in that role. The role of ' partnership' working, defined and described in more detail later in the study, is an influential approach to devolution, which is promoted by Ulrich (1998) and other writers, and a partnership approach that means collaborative working of LM, HR and staff in order to reach common organisationalgoalswill be considered as a particularly fruitful one on all levels throughout the organisation.

The paper is structured as follows. First the concept of HRM and HRD in the current literature will be explored, describing how this links into past and current debates about HRM practice, noting the significance of the recent

shift from labour-intensive totechnology-intensive HR service delivery (Florkowski and Olivas-Luja?, 2006; Reddington and Martin, 2006). The paper will then explore the changing shape of the HR function and HRM Devolution within theUK, and move on to present findings from this.

This following chapter will look in brief at the background to the study including the change in role of HR and the new emphasis on partnership working. The chapter will then continue to with the definitions of the major concepts upon which the study is based such as Strategic Management and Line Managers.

1. 2: Strategic Human Resources

There is extensive disagreement about the exact definition of strategic HR, but it can be seen as initially an attempt to improve business productivity and effectiveness by integrating HRM into strategic planning, and secondly an attempt to integrate an awareness of the necessity of the success of the business as a whole into the HR function (Kulik and Perry 2008). A move towards a strategic role for HR means that administrative functions are no longer the main focus of the HR department, freeing it to up focus on wider issues such as organisation effectiveness and change management of the business overall. The move towards strategic HR has seen an increase in the number of HR departments represented at top board level (Renwick 2003).

The change in HR function has been prompted by a revolution in the business world with an increasing speed of change and also a breaking down of divisions and previous boundaries that defined companies. This has led to

the view that all business functions should be aligned functionally with the strategic objectives of the company as a whole, which has since fed into the new strategic HR function.

This change in HR activities, is akin in some ways to a complete reinvention has meant that more is expected of the department in terms of the contribution it can make to the organisation as a whole (Kulik and Perry 2008). As well as the change to a strategy-focused viewpoint and the devolution to the Line, tasks are automated, simplified and hence speeded up. HR professionals experience more challenges and variations in their day-to-day tasks. The range of HR compentencies have had to expand to include more decision making (Lemmergaard 2009) as part of devolution.

In order to provide the distinction between line managers and other roles in the company, line managers can be defined as per the definition provided by Sutherland and Canwell (2006) as individuals possessing a direct managementresponsibilityfor a number of subordinates. They are said to possess line authority as opposed to staff authority that is attributed to HR managers (Sutherland and Canwell 2006). These two kinds of managers, according to Ulrich (1998) need to work in partnership together so as to carry out the devolution successfully and effectively. The partnership approach is discussed further in the next part.

1. 3: Partnership Working

The introduction of partnership working is not restricted to HR, but can be defined as the move from a dictatorial business model to one which

promotesequalitybetween stakeholders. This ' stakeholder' approach to business has been widely discussed in recent years. A prior belief in the effectiveness of individualistic and aggressive corporate policies in order to gain advantage in the market has given way to a ' more inclusive and ethical stance in understanding how companies should be run and how the fruits of industry should be distributed' (Hamilton and Clark 1996). There has been a change from thinking of the company as the property solely of shareholders as well as away from the idea that the sole concern of directors and employees should be to maximise profits. The new approach broadens this range of interests to include all those who have a stake in the company's functioning: employees, customers, suppliers and so on; and suggests that all interested ' stakeholders' should be treated ethically and equally. The stakeholder approach has been considered as the only one which ensures the long term success of the company (Hamilton and Clark 1996).

Partnership working has been fostered in theUKas well as more widely throughout theUSA, Europeand elsewhere with an aim to provide a better deal for all stakeholders in any enterprise, not just management, directors and shareholders (Dickinson et al 2008). In theUKin particular a ' partnership' way of working has been promoted as a way of improving the delivery and running of public sector services by reducing the duplication of effort, promoting co-operation and collaboration, increasingcommunicationand information transfer and promoting efficiency (Diamond 2006). Although widely used, the term 'partnership' has a very loose set of meanings. In particular there are two contrasting views of the

term, an ' idealistic' interpretation which proposes partnership as the ethical choice which companies have a moral imperative to take, and a more ' pragmatic' approach which takes a practical view of the notion as a way of defining the interrelations between stakeholders (Tomlinson 2005).

The literature review describes how partnership approach can be interpreted in terms of devolution of the HR function. It also discusses how partnership approach to employees by the means of establishing open communication, respectand recognition and efficient teamwork can lead to increasedmotivationamong the employees which is the focus of the study.

1. 4: Ulrich and HR Partnership

Ulrich is one of the most vocal proponents of a partnership approach. He writes primarily of the need for HR to work as strategic partners, but also discusses the need for partnership between HR and LM. He identifies four key roles for HR – ' partner in strategy execution'; ' administrative expert'; ' employee champion'; and ' change agent'. Of these four roles, the first is overtly identified as a partnership relationship, but the third can also be seen as fostering a partnership approach. For Ulrich, the focus is firmly upon employees and their needs in order to increase their commitment, motivation, retention rates and capabilities (Ulrich 1998, Lammergaard 2009). Ulrich's (1998) views on partnership and HR will inform the background to this research study and will inform the structure of the questionnaire.

1. 5: Research Area and Aims

Previous studies have concentrated on the new role of ' strategic' HR and the role played by devolution within it, however in the following literature review the concern will be with identifying current thoughts about the impact of this devolution upon Line Management. It will be seen that devolution has both negative and positive effects (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). There exists already evidence that HR responsibilities taken on by LM can increase productivity and motivation of the employees (Baron 2003). Existing research has suggested that a partnership approach to HR and LM relationships is profitable. Studies have suggested that as power is devolved to the line, the new relationship between HR and line does indeed work as a partnership, with most line managers reporting the existence of such a partnership between their departments and HR with HR taking on a support role (Whitaker and Marchington 2003). While there might be challenges in establishing a partnership between the HR and the line manager, and the line manager and the employees, the existence of a ' synergy' between them clearly enhances company function and should be encouraged (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). Ulrich's (1998) approach to devolution will be discussed and used to shape the research agenda. Ulrich (1998) proposes a ' partnership' approach to HR, however his focus is upon what this means for HR rather than the impact for LM and their capabilities. This study will attempt to look at the experiences of LM and their immediate capability needs in order to assess how a ' partnership' approach to devolution can improve knowledge, skills and motivation.

The overall aim of the study is to look at the impact of the devolution of some HR tasks and responsibilities to line managers from the point of view first of the line managers and secondly of their respective HR Business Partners. This aim breaks down further into research questions:

a. Is there a visible devolution of HR functionsWhat specific HR functions are devolved?

b. How has devolution of HR functions affected LM capabilities and motivation in the Kellogg European Business?

The above questions, aims and objectives lead to the creation of the framework of the literature review. The formulation of a series of interrelated hypotheses to be investigated by the research study is the next step that will be carried out as soon as the framework is defined in the literature review.

1. 6: Research structure

The structure of this research study is constructed around the research questions and includes several chapters. Firstly, the introduction defines the scope of the research and the research problem. Secondly, the literature review presents the theoretical discussion of the main variables and introduces the existing opinions of the scholars upon their relationship. The third part outlines the methodology that will be followed in order to collect and analyse research data. The following part will represent the analysis of the research findings. After the research findings are presented the conclusions will be made and the recommendations for line managers will be stated.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2. 1 Introduction

The following section will review the existing literature concerned with the nature of Human Resources (HR) and Line Management (LM) and the relationship between them as discussed in the introduction. It will look at the emergence of HR function and its development towards the devolution of certain HR responsibilities to other organisational areas including line management. Advantages and disadvantages of devolution will be considered as well as suggestions for ways in which the devolution can be improved and the role played by partnership approach suggested by Ulrich (1998). Views about the needs for better integration as well as Ulrich's (1998) perspective on the way forward for HR will be considered as a way of contextualising the research study to be carried out and as a means of understanding the research problem.

The layout of the literature review is described further, so as to outline its major topics. The literature review provides insight into how the HR evolved from its emergence as a managerialscienceand function, which constitutes the first part of the literature review. The literature review then describes what the devolution of HR functions means for all of the people involved, which constitutes the following part. It then presents the research findings of scholars regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the devolution from the point of view of the HR professionals, line managers and staff as well as the organisation as a whole. It also discusses the possible conflicts and issues with the implementation of devolution of HR functions. As soon as

these are discussed, the variables and the relationship between variables become clearer. Once the research findings of previous studies are provided, the research will concentrate on the establishment of variables. The variables will be used to formulate research hypotheses. These will be tested based on the data gathered by the researcher.

2. 2 Human Resources roles and functions before devolution

This chapter is particularly relevant because it represents the situation of the HR function before the devolution and therefore makes the changes of the devolution more obvious. In order to see how the HR thinking evolved it is important to understand that HR is a relatively new approach to the management of people within the organisation. HR first emerged as a distinct organisational area in theUnited Statesfrom the mid 20th Century onwards. Within theUnited Kingdom, HR first appeared from the 1980's (Sutherland and Canwell 2006). Like any new discipline – and many older ones – there is much debate about what it covers and the essentials of its nature. Ever since it arrived in theUKthere has been discussion of whether aspects of its function should be devolved, and, if so, which and to whom (Brandl et al 2009).

Each approach, or a combination of approaches, can characterise different organisations at different times (Storey 1992). Another way to approach the description of HR is to characterise it into the various functions performed by a typical department. This can involve a separation between the following; first, the design of organisations, including such aspects as job content and definitions; second a concern with organisational staffing (recruitment, staff

testing and monitoring, careers and training and so on) (Sutherland 2007); and third, performance and reward (job appraisals, remuneration, employee benefits and the like) (Beer et al1984). Gibb describes HR as people management in the widest sense, including within it employee resources, relationships, reward and also learning and development (also referred to as L&D) (Gibb 2003).

It is obvious from even a brief study that Human Resources is a relatively new discipline, and one that has never emerged from a state of flux into a fixed structure in order to obtain independent status within the organisation as a whole. While HR has thus embraced a wide range of different roles and been theorised in a number of ways, a core part of the function has consistently been administrative functions that were often seen by line managers as complications to the day-to-day activities. Not only have carrying out day-to-day administrative tasks been a central part of HR, it has also tended in the past to a reactive approach – responding to problems as they occur rather than becoming involved in a more proactive setting of strategies (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). This focus on administration, together with the characteristic fluidity and relative newness of the discipline, may be partly responsible for the extent to which HR is seen as a function part of which can be devolved to other departments (Cunningham and Hyman 1999).

2. 3 Strategic HR and Devolution to Line Management

2. 3. 1 Drivers for Change

As Gennard and Kelly (1997) point out the evolution of the HR function and the changes in the modern organisationalcultureand structure required the devolution of some of the more administrative functions of HR to Line Management (Gennard and Kelly 1997). The debate regarding the benefits and drawbacks of this approach intensified in the 1990's as the process of devolution started to gain momentum (Hall and Torrington 1998). There is some disagreement about the ways in which such change started; Storey (1992) suggesting that this devolution was a function of the overall instability of organisations during the 90's when a period of unprecedented change led to many corporate change initiatives being communicated to employees by Line Managers, who thus took on a HR role (perhaps with little acknowledgement either by themselves or from higher management that that was what they were doing) (Brandl et al 2009). In other words, Brandl et al (2009) described devolution as a process of transferring some of the HR responsibilities to the line managers. This can be seen both as a move forward, since the line managers always had some sort of HR responsibilities in terms of encouraging teamwork for example (Gibb 2003, MacNeil 2002), however, the new HR functions would include more HR-specific responsibilities such as carrying out performance appraisal, planning the training and development with the employees for their personal growth andcareerdevelopment and more

In addition to this ' stealth' approach, a range of other possible drivers for the change in HR function have been suggested. The main one is cost. Companies are always aware of the financial implications of the way they do business, and including some simpler HR responsibilities in Line Management duties can reduce costs (Papelexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). Moreover, a trend towards cost-centre management has led to a need to integrate LM with HR on a day-to-day basis (Larsen and Brewster 2003), meaning that the HR functions performed by LM became part of the daily routine changes to the market place also underpin the devolution of HR functions. TheUK, USAand Europe-wide market has seen vast changes including privatisation of the public sector, increases in unemployment and growth of competition. Organisations increasingly face the demand to enhance their strategic edge, which means HR must function more efficiently rather than being inundated by repetitive administration (Cunningham and Hyman 1999, Maxwell and Watson 2003). Moreover, an increase in awareness of the market place has gone hand-in-hand with an increasing awareness of the importance of customers and service supply, which has led to a consequent increase in awareness of the importance of ' people' skills across organisations as a whole (Larsen and Brewer 2003). This increasing emphasis upon market conditions and influence upon HR and LM is reinforced by Keenoy (1990). The changes in the market therefore stimulated the devolution of HR functions to LM, which is seen by the businesses to be more cost-effective while at the same time providing a variety of benefits to the company as described further under the heading of advantages of the devolution.

Other drivers include technological changes within HR. Advances in computing and IT mean procedures can be simplified and speeded up and hence line management can take over some of HR's functions (Malmqvist 2008). An increase in organisation change (restructuring, mergers and similar) since the 90's means also that HR needs to become more sophisticated and to devolve simpler functions to the line as there is an increasing need for HR to concentrate upon overseeing complex change initiatives. Moreover, most jobs nowadays are changing in nature. Not only are more complex functions demanded of even the lowest level employee, workers change organisations with increasing frequency rather than having a ' job for life'. Consequently, HR skills such asleadershipandcommunication needto be integrated into all management positions rather than remain the function of one department (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). This increased job complexity goes together with an increase in the managers' role of a leader, motivating and appraising his or her team members (Larsen and Brewer 2003). Therefore, increasingly, the managers have to perform the responsibilities of HR that are now embedded in their own roles, such as motivating, leading, communicating, appraising. The ability to perform these tasks allows the manager to be more effective in achieving the set goals through increased motivation and improved performance of the employees (Purcell and Hutchinson 2007). A further reason is speed. With devolution, decisions can be made quickly and on the spot by Line Managers rather than having to refer even the simplest personnel matter to HR (Papelexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005).

2. 3. 2 HR Focused Line Management and Strategic HR

The previous part has emphasised the need for the managerial role to include some of the HR responsibilities. Therefore, the day-to-day operational HR tasks (" recruitment, appraisal, pay, healthand safety, training and development and discipline" (MacNeil 2003, p. 295) should be carried out by the people who actually deal with and supervise staff on a daily basis – that is, Line Managers (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). Since the 90's there has been a realisation that the HR function can integrate with and improve operations of other parts of the business (Renwick 2003, Gibb 2003). It has been realised that integrating these areas of operation can help the organisation as a whole gain advantage in the marketplace and improve productivity (Kulik and Perry 2008). These recent changes in the marketplace have led to a change in function of HR with the traditional administrative part of the HR process being passed to Line Managers (Kulik and Perry 2008, Maxwell and Watson 2004). This devolution of administrative tasks has been accompanied by a move to reinvent HR as a strategic department (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). Strategy decisions are handled by HR specialists, perhaps in conjunction with senior management (MacNeil 2003).

The strategic approach to the HR role has many advocates. For instance, Ulrich (1997) is often cited as an influence in the ' devolved' model of HR (Brown and Purcell 2007). Ulrich (1997) has proposed a new model for HR and HR Management (HRM), which has a four-fold structure. According to Ulrich (1997), first, HR should work as a partner with senior executives; the input of HR staff needs to inform decisions made at board level regarding the

HR approach of the organisation as a whole. Their role is that of an ' architect', making the overall vision into a plan that can be carried out in practice. Second, HR should oversee administrative organisation and execution, ensuring that it is as efficient and cost-effective as it can be. Third, HR should be a ' champion for employees', acting to refine their many opinions into a coherent whole and presenting to Senior Management. Finally, HR should become an ' agent of continuous transformation', enhancing the organisations change capacity (Ulrich 1998). There is some debate over the question regarding whether Ulrich oversubscribes functions to HR and thus plays down the enhanced role of Line Managers in this model; however it is an exceptionally useful way of looking at the nature of strategic HR as a whole.

In response to the strategic approach to HR other theorists have attempted to characterise the nature of it in different ways, for example as ' hard' or ' soft' (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). A ' hard' approach to strategic HR emphasises the market and is oriented towards profits. This approach favours staff flexibility and underplays the value of staff benefits. A ' soft' approach highlights issues of commitment andloyalty, viewing staff as the company's most valued asset. There is some evidence that the ' hard' approach is more dominant with ' softer' concerns now being combined with the LM role (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). This could be explained by the fact that the ' soft' roles undertaken by the line managers can be combined with their standard roles, since this approach emphasizes loyalty and motivation of the staff, underlining the value the company places on its

employees. The line managers were seen to be able to motivate and improve performance of their teams from being in constant contact and having established relationships with their staff (Purcell and Hutchinson 2007).

The development of strategic HR is not without its problems. The complex process of devolution can lead to the uncovering of some contradictions in overall organisational policy which may have been previously covered by the way HR functioned (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). There also seems to be some confusion regarding the practical working of the new role of the Line Manager, and the relationship between HR and LM (MacNeil 2003). The issues regarding the new role of LM will be considered in greater depth below.

2. 3. 3 HR and LM Today

In order to be able to discuss how the devolution of HR functions to LM affects the capabilities of the staff, it is important to understand how the devolution happens and what the arising conflicts from carrying out devolution are. Research suggests that the involvement of LM in some HR decisions does have a favourable effect on the achievements of the organisation as a whole as well as allowing the implementation of a corporate vision and strategy with a beneficial effect upon performance (MacNeil 2003) and upon employee motivation (Baron 2003). There is further evidence to show that nowadays more than a half of larger organisations have moved towards the devolved model with a reduction in the size of HR

departments and a change in HR function, as well as an increase in LM responsibility (Brown and Purcell 2007).

However, the devolution has been implemented differently in different countries and other countries with a different emphasis on the roles of HR and line managers. Devolution is widespread in theUSAandUKas well as acrossEurope. Some of theUK's top employers employ highly sophisticated HR departments which make a central contribution to the effectiveness of the organisation overall. In these companies, HR is focused upon strategy, and HR strategy is integrated closely with organisational strategy as a whole. As a strategic department HR also support LM in their delivery of day-to-day practices. For instance, companies studied by Maxwell and Farquharson (2008) all had an HR director at high managerial level (though not always board level), which was perceived to reduce the gap between strategy and practical implementation. A further example of a similar move to Strategic HR practice can be seen by a recent study of Hilton's 2001 launch of a global quality initiative which made public a linkage between HR and their overall objectives for the organisation. This involved the establishment of a service brand and culture supported by a HR package covering employee terms and conditions. The brand gave a public face to Hilton's promise for treatment of employees around a mandate of recognition, respect and reward (Maxwell and Watson 2004).

This devolution of responsibility is not confined to theUKandUSA. A batch of recent research studies have shown that it is taking place acrossEurope, although the extent and nature of the devolution varies from country to

country. Drawing upon the findings of a multi-national, multi-language study, the Cranet Survey (2002), which looks at HR policy and practice around the world, Larsen and Brewster (2002) found that the involvement of LM in HR is increasing over time in all European countries. They found, however, a clear distinction between countries, withFranceand other Latin countries (SpainandItaly) having devolved least functions of HR to the line, and the Nordic ones (Finland, Sweden, Denmark) showing the greatest devolution. TheUKandIrelandare nearest the least devolved end of the scale (Larsen and Brewster 2003). In support of this, Valverde and Ryan found thatSpainfeatures a range of different ways of organising the relationship between HR and the organisation as a whole. In the seven different arrangements they distinguished, only one features sharing of HR functions with the line, although this group did make up a third of all respondents (Valverde and Ryan 2006). Studies have also been carried out inAustraliato investigate the nature of current HR workings, for example Kulik and Bainbridge (2006). This is to suggest that the devolution of the HR functions is a systematic change in organisations around the world and as any significant change it needs in-depth study so that the implementation of such change can be effective. As a result of carrying out this study it should be possible to find out what facilitates devolution and the recommendations will be made for managers.

2. 4. The New Line Management Role

The following section will look at the new role adopted by Line Management. The nature of what is now expected of Line Managers will be considered

together with the advantages and disadvantages of this new role. Special attention will be paid to things which need to be changed in order for the HR function to be effectively integrated with that of LM. Since the role of Line Management is changing with the addition of new HR responsibilities through devolution (McConville, 2006), this part will look at the new functions of the Line Management that would have effect upon employee motivation in organisations.

2. 4. 1 The Nature of the New Role for Line Management and Motivation

Research indicates that line managers play an increasingly important role in making the difference between a successful company and a mediocre one, specifically by implementing HR policies in a satisfactory way (Brown and Purcell 2007). Line managers traditionally have various functions which include setting objectives, organisation and administration as well as measurement, but also take on a range of people-focused tasks including motivation and communication. There is some evidence that line managers have failed in the past to acknowledge the people development and management part of their task (Renwick 2000). One feature of the Line Managers' role is that they are an interface between management levels above themselves and the employees they manage directly. This gives them a unique and specialised knowledge of day-to-day relations with employees and hence an insight into some functions previously assumed to be theprovinceofHR(MacNeil 2003). The move towards devolution then simply highlights the importance of these ' people skills' in order to boost their integration into the LM role.

Through devolution the line managers have gained the opportunity of directly affecting the motivation levels of their employees (Baron 2003). According to Baron (2003) through devolution the line managers are becoming faced with the challenges of motivating and leading the teams effectively. There are many theories related to leadership and a variety of opinions exists. The definition of leadership provided by Sutherland and Conwell (2004) reads that it is an individual capacity of inciting and inspiring the actions of people in a given direction. They also argue that leadership is different to management and there is a significant distinction between the two concepts. The so-called " people-skills" are a pre-requisite for successful leadership and employee motivation. The term " people skills" refers simply to the soft skills. Sutherland and Conwell (2004) say that " soft management places an emphasis on employees and motivation as a means by which productivity and performance may be achieved" (Sutherland and Conwell 2004). The soft skills of the line managers have always been a substantial part of the job and have been now connected to motivation with the emergence of the devolution approach to management.

What does the new role involve in practiceThere are various components. It can be seen first as incorporating Learning and Development (L&D) issues: helping others learn and progress. This is a wide area and includes training (induction, on-going training), performance management (making sure targets are met, offering rewards as appropriate, intervention when employee performance falls as well as the development and application of appraisal systems), leadership (team building and transition to team

working, mentoring) as well as assessment and knowledge management (Gibb 2003). Perhaps the best way to characterise the new role is by the increased emphasis upon ' people skills'. This can be seen as a shift away from integrating the principles of classic Fayol or Taylorian style management with its emphasis upon rigid systems, bureaucracy and lack of development of the individual to one which integrates the awareness, growing since the 1950's, of the role people can play in an organisation. A Line Manager therefore has to take on the role of facilitator and communicator as much as ' boss' or ' decision maker'. His or her communication skills need to be developed, including an awareness of how negative and positive atmospheres can be communicated. In order that knowledge is fully shareable throughout the team the Line Manager must create an atmosphere of mutual trust in which individuals are happy to communicate (MacNeil 2003). The ability of a Line Manager to act as communicator and facilitator can be helped or hindered by the organisational climate as a whole; there is a need for back-up from senior management and HR (MacNeil 2003). While there is clearly an increase in administrative tasks, and a change in the type of administration and paperwork to include personnel records and career development mapping, the line manager's new role is not simply that of taking on board new tasks and responsibilities but one of getting involved with people " getting every manager involved in people's issues is the key to organisational success". The LM role opens up to allow him or her to connect with employees. As ' people' skills have always been part of the LM job, it is more an expansion of

current capabilities than a new departure (Papalexandris and

Panayotopoulou 2005).

The need for more involvement with people is therefore clear. It has further

been suggested that people become dissatisfied with their jobs not because

they are unhappy with pay or conditions but because they become frustrated

with lack of organisational recognition or with the lack of opportunity for

developing within the organisation in terms of their skills and experience

(Hay 2002, Gibb 2003). It therefore becomes clear now that job satisfaction

and motivation under the new conditions need to be maintained in the

employees and this function is now being passed on to the Line Managers.

Therefore, it is important to describe what exactly that is part of Line

Management's role needs to be carried out to foster high motivation among

the employees.

2. 4. 2 Advantages of the New Line Manager Role

The new role of the Line Manager includes many new responsibilities and

therefore putting a Line Manager in charge of those responsibilities has its

advantages and disadvantages. From the point of HR, Line Management

involvement can allow the HR specialist to concentrate on a strategic

approach. Overall, responses to HR challenges can be more immediate if

handled by LM and can be more specific to location (Whittaker and

Marchington 2003, Brandl et al 2009). HR will also benefit from the increased

satisfaction from employees as it will allow them to build strategically upon

day-to-day improvements (Gibb 2003).

If LM take on HR responsibilities for L&D, more people will be able to tap into career and personal development as LM are better placed to assess their training needs and, having a closer bond with them, will have more commitment to their ' lifelong learning'. Lifelong Learning needs to be an integrated feature of working life, and the closer relationship between HR and LM can promote this. Traditionally, learning has involved a classroom situation and been organised by HR; the new approach also allows for ' on the job' learning, training and development (Gibb 2003).

There are also benefits for the Line Managers themselves. Their people management skills will improve; they will become better at creating good teams, managing teamwork and interpersonal skills. This will in turn benefit the organisation as a whole (Gibb 2003). Further research emphasises the positive effect upon the business as a whole by devolution of HR to the line. Both business strategy as a whole and HR strategy have been shown to improve. It has also been suggested (McHugh et al 1999) that Line Managers can input effectively into organisational change with their enhanced role and ability to communicate to all team members. Baron (2003) has also suggested that the LM have a lot of impact on employee motivation. Moreover, LM will see an increase in the importance of and respect for their role as they take on more of the devolved functions and their job becomes more complex, and also as change within organisations increases with the complexity of modern working life (MacNeil 2003).

Further studies show the advantages of devolution of HR functions to Line Management. Kulik and Perry (2008) provided evidence for the positive

effects of devolution with their study of 174 HR managers and directors. They asked them to assess change over the preceding years in overall responsibility, degree of integration with other units and involvement in organisational strategy. They found that devolution had an overall positive effect in that respondents reported that devolution led to their HR unit being perceived more positively by LM than in non-devolved organisations. They also report an overall increase in HR responsibility and better integration with Line Management. They conclude that HR is in fact better able to play the strategic role they were intended to play by the devolution (Kulik and Perry 2008). Renwick (2003) looked at the attitudes of 40 Line Managers towards the devolution of HR functions and discovered a rather more mixed response. There were both negatives and positives about the devolution. Positive aspects included the willingness of LM to take on both responsibility andaccountabilityfor the new HR tasks, and flexibility in approach as well as keenness to become involved. The respondents were successfully managing large numbers of employees, and taking a professional attitude to the new tasks, not simply dismissing them as ' soft' aspects of the job. They also saw HR in a positive light, a source of help and support as well as seeing career benefits for taking on the new role (Renwick 2003).

Maxwell and Watson (2004) studied employees of Hilton, finding that there was a strong sense of responsibility amongst managers for their team members and also strong feelings of support for them (4. 51 mean and 4. 40 mean on scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is disagree strongly and 5 agree strongly). There was however less senses of responsibility towards the company as a

whole. The commitment was primarily towards the team and the individuals in it (Maxwell and Watson 2004).

2. 4. 3 Problems with the New Line Manager Role
A number of problems with the new tasks and responsibilities of Line Managers has been noted, although one way of approaching these is to see them as areas which can be improved. Problems fall into a number of distinct areas.

2. 4. 3. 1 Difficulties in relationship and communication

These can appear in different ways. The Line Manager may fear disputes with their staff regarding decisions made about performance, pay and career development (Cunningham and Hyman 1995). They may be reluctant to take on role of learning facilitator, and personalpersonalityclashes might impact upon employee training. Relationships between employees and management may not be as neutral as is possible with a dedicated PR department (Gibb 2003).

There can also be an assumption on the part of HR that line managers are more technically competent and knowledgeable than they in fact are, and that the HR function can be picked up by simply doing the job. This can lead to a lack of training offered by senior management and hence to poor performance (Brewster and Larsen 2000, MacNeil 2003).

Problems are also common between HR and LM. Cunningham and Hyman (1995)stressthe inherent difficulty in attempting to transfer an HR vision to employee relations. The relationship between HR and the line can be marked

by lack of clarity. To what extent does LM influence the development of HR strategy, for instance This lack of a two-way process can be frustrating for Line Managers (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005).

Another problem, highlighted in a study by McConville of middle managers, was a lack of trust between middle and senior management which meant that the middle managers felt powerless to exert any influence over higher levels of decision making (McConville 2006). Cunningham and Hyman (1999) found in addition that there was evidence for poor leadership from HR and a low quality of advice given to LM. Training was also poor, with little ongoing development to help LM integrate personnel aspects into their role (Cunningham and Hyman 1999). Further tensions arose because of conflicts between line and HR over the precise lines drawn between their functions (Renwick 2003).

2. 4. 3. 2 Lack of Integration in Practice

Despite extensive debate, there is evidence that the degree of line involvement is not as extensive as it might be (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). This is confirmed by a study by Cunningham and Hyman (1999).

2. 4. 3. 3 Increase in Work Load and Pressure for Line Management

The LM work load will increase with new responsibilities and the need to balance other demands of the job with new role. This can lead to a resentment of HR and reluctance to get involved with HR work

(Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). Maxwell and Watson also identify heavy work loads and job pressure as a major source of problems with devolution (Maxwell and Watson 2004) as does Renwick (2003). Whittaker and Marchington (2003) suggest that time constraints mean that LM do not have time to attend in full to ' people management' issues, tending rather to concentrate on the day-to-day running of their department and solving problems as they appear. The shortage of time and consequent pressures upon LM is particularly problematic in the public sector where there is added pressure from having to implement policies originating with government while also dealing with professional bodies' standards, monitoring and also the increasing commercialisation of the sector (McConville 2006).

2. 4. 3. 4 Conflict in Approach

HR and LM operate from fundamentally distinct viewpoints with different priorities, which can also lead to conflict and problems. Line Managers are typically very involved in the day-to-day running of the department, reacting to issues as they arise. They can resent the need for staff to take time off for training and resent the need to take such a personal viewpoint, perhaps dealing with their own problems with home life for example. The characteristic LM approach can mean less opportunity for staff development. While a separate HR department is focused upon learning and staff training, line managers have more than one focus, so, for example, if the department is short-staffed any training and development might be put to one side. There would be a pressure to deal with short-term problem rather than address the long-term solution (Gibb 2003).

2. 4. 3. 5 Lack of Support

There is some evidence that Line Managers feel less supported by HR than they would ideally like (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005). Some LM perceive HR specialists to be out of touch with reality, both in terms of LM function and with the business as whole, feeling that they base their decisions on principles that have little to do with either the nature of the industry or the problems faced by the line. HR are further seen to frustrate Line Management with legal constraints or union issues; to be slow in acting, wanting to go into a great deal of detail before anything is done; and to prefer theory over practice with a particular liking for the type of theory that fails to translate well or quickly into practical action. They are seen to live in something of an ' ivory tower', their remoteness underlined by they preference for intranet communication and email over person-to-person contact (Whittaker and Marchington 2003).

2. 4. 3. 6 Lack of Skills

A further area of concern is skills. LM lack the specialist skills of the HR department (Whittaker and Marchington 2003) also Renwick (2003). Hence the quality of training in the organisation might fall. Neither are line managers as good at evaluating training materials or delivery (Gibb 2003). Line Managers can also be suspicious of HR specialisms, dismissing their ideas as ' faddish' or, on the other hand ' just common sense'. They downplay the need for HR systems, and this can lead to inconsistencies in approach and function (Whittaker and Marchington 2003).

2. 4. 4 Differing Perceptions of HR and Line Management

Perceptions of the new role of LM can further vary between HR and LM. It has been suggested that HR Business Partners are more positive than line managers about the benefits of devolution for the organisation in terms of both employee satisfaction and motivation and overall organisational performance. There is also a difference between the way LM and HR see the reasons for devolution, with HR seeing the benefits for individual departments while LM seeing the exercise as primarily one to cut costs (Kulik and Bainbridge 2006). Further, LM perceive their skill set very differently than do HR, a study showing, for example, that Line Managers viewed themselves as good at all aspects of HR including recruitment, personal relations, training and appraisals, while HR saw the line managers as much less able in all respects (Cunningham and Hyman 1995).

In general, HR Business Partners usually identify themselves more as part of the organisation as a whole. They also believe that Line Managers do more HR work than they in fact do. Further, HR believe they support LM more than LM believe they are supported by HR; HR also believe that LM put up barriers to integration (LM do not think this); HR believe that LM are less competent at HR than LM believe themselves to be. These areas of disagreement can lead to less trust between the two groups and hence to a deterioration in performance. (Maxwell and Watson 2006). Wesselink distinguishes 5 areas of difference in belief between the two functions: desire (LM and HR want different things), capacity (LM spend less time on HR than HR think they should), competency (LM believe themselves to be more competent at HR than HR think they are), support (HR think they give sufficient support to LM,

LM disagree) and policies and procedures (LM think them unclear, HR disagree) (Wesselink 2008).

HR policies are increasingly implemented by line managers, often independently of the HR function; the (IRS 2008 Survey) explores the balance of responsibilities, along with HR practitioners' views of the way in which line managers discharge their people management duties. Line managers continue to take on responsibilities that once lay within the HR department. However, HR practitioners are not always convinced that they are doing the work effectively.

This survey shows that four out of five (80. 2%) organisations have devolved more people management responsibilities to line managers over the past three years. Most commonly, as table 1 shows, this devolution of responsibilities has included team briefings.

Line Managers' Involvement in People Management

Table 1 shows where the primary responsibility for a range of people management issues rests. The research shows that line managers are most likely to take primary responsibility for team briefings, team development, appraisal and performance management, and agreeing flexible working arrangements. Since the 2006 IRS survey of line manager responsibilities, there have been some significant changes, most notably in the following areas:

Employee engagement: in 2006, one in three (33%) organisations left this solely to line managers. The 2008 survey shows that this is the case in just 14. 9% of organisations, with responsibility shared in three-quarters (73. 6%) and resting solely with HR in the remainder (11. 6%).

Flexible working: one in four (25%) organisations in 2006 left flexible working arrangements specifically to HR. In 2008, this is the case in just 14% of organisations, with almost six in 10 (59. 5%) involving line managers – and more than one in four (26. 4%) making it the sole responsibility of line managers.

Recruitment: HR is now more likely to be involved in some part of the recruitment process. In 2006, one in six organisations (16%) left recruitment to line managers, with no input from HR. Now, just one in 20 (5%) organisations do so.

2. 4. 5 Competence of Line Managers to undertake HR Tasks

If line managers are the delivery point for a variety of employment policies that are intended to raise the performance of the workforce, then line managers are held more accountable for their HR/people management practices under HR models of practice (Hope-Hailey et al, 1997, p. 8). Furthermore, line management practice may itself distort, and possibly even undermine, the contribution which HR policies are supposed to make towards organisational success (McGovern, et al, 1997, p. 12). Purcell and Hutchinson (2007, p. 3) note that it is often observed that there is a gap

between what is formally required in HR policy and what is actually delivered by line managers.

Dealing with Underperformance

Having established that line managers play a fundamental role in managing performance, in their teams, the results of (2011 IRS survey) do not inspire a high degree of confidence in capability of managing underperformance.

Six employers in 10 (59. 1%) either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement: " Managers are confident and competent in managing underperformance in my organisation." Private sector services organisations are more optimistic about the ability of their line managers to handle underperformance, with 54. 3% of such employers strongly disagreeing or tending to disagree with the statement, compared with 71. 1% of public sector organisations.

This headline result chimes with the findings on this issue in chart 2, where the lack of confidence or competence of managers emerges as the main barrier to improving individual performance. The results for the manner in which line managers handle performance are similarly lukewarm, with less than half (47. 5%) of survey respondents strongly agreeing or tending to agree with the statement: " Managers handle performance management issues in a consistent and fair manner." Again, private sector services organisations give their line managers a bigger vote of confidence – 55. 8% of such organisations strongly agree or tend to agree with the statement compared to 33. 4% of public sector bodies.

2. 5 Area of Needs to Improve New Line Manager Role

The previous section has shown that there are some problem areas which occur in the implementation of the new role of Line Management. These problems in turn suggest some needs that must be addressed in order to improve their performance. The improved performance of the line managers will in turn increase staff motivation and business performance.

2. 5. 1 Training

Training is one area that needs attention. Often managers are left to forge their own way and develop their own ideas about best practice. This leads to inconsistency and lack of fit between HR and other departments regarding working conditions and personnel policies. It is therefore a good idea to train management to take on the new responsibilities (Brandl et al 2009) Maxwell and Watson's (2004) study suggests that most line managers who feel there is a barrier which stops them carrying out their role as they should also feel that training would remove this barrier. While they felt confident in their ability to support training for their staff, they also reported a need for training themselves with 36% reporting that training would help them to some extent with 38% saying that it would help them to a great extent (38%) (Maxwell and Watson 2004). These needs are further collaborated by Brown and Purcell (2007). They report a recent survey suggesting that 88% of HR managers think Line Managers are insufficiently trained at performance appraisal for example. Their own study of 535 organisations by questionnaire, and further in-depth studies with 5 organisations suggested that lack of skills on the part of Line Management is the biggest barrier to the successful implementation of a reward strategy (Brown and Purcell

2007). The need for training is reiterated by Whittaker and Marchington (2003).

2. 5. 2 Communication

There is a need for the overall vision of an organisation to be communicated with a uniform voice from senior management in order to give managers a consistent picture of the organisation's objectives as a whole. This need is underlined by Brown and Purcell's (2007) study which suggests that breakdown in communication between HR and LM can lead to LM shrugging off their responsibilities for HR as well as blaming the HR department for their failings. In addition, the study suggests, communication breakdown can lead to HR developing plans that do not take into account the needs of particular local units. Most organisations, in fact, fail to take into account the experiences and input of line managers when attempting to develop a strategy for the best way to deliver HR plans. This has led to a ' vicious circle' in which HR, finding LM inadequate to the tasks devolved to them, attempt to claw back more functions into their control. This in turn underlines the need for training (Brown and Purcell 2007).

Kulik and Bainbridge (2006) also make suggestions for improving the relationship between HR and LM and hence for the devolution of HR functions based upon their study of Australian managers: lines of communication should remain open before, during and after the devolution of power and feedback should be encouraged (Kulik and Bainbridge 2006).

2. 5. 3 Role Definition and Ownership

Line Managers need to ' own' their new role in order to get the best from their staff (McConville 2006). LM should be supported in owning their new roles by HR (Kulik and Bainbridge 2006). Equally, LM need to be able to foster a sense of responsibility and ownership amongst the staff they manage in order to get the best from them, through increasing their performance by all means. There has been found to be a strong correlation between job autonomy, sense of achievement and job challenge amongst employees; this can be boosted by the way Line Managers are perceived, including their leadership and motivational abilities and the way they carry out HR practices. Commitment amongst employees is boosted if they perceive LM as handling HR satisfactorily (McConville 2006). The crucial element is the ' perception' – there can be a significant gap between actual HR policy in the organisation and employee perceptions, which may be created by the employees' relationship with the LM (Purcell and Hutchinson 2007). The emphasis on the need for employees to perceive LM well is also backed up by a study by Renwick, who states the need for the employee to trust the Line Manager's ability to handle HR and their motives for doing so (Renwick 2003).

2. 5. 3 Motivation and Teamwork

Personal motivation is very important for a Line Manager to work well. He or she should believe in the need for HR in order to integrate it fully into his or her practice (Brandl et al 2009). LM should fully understand the notion and nature of teamwork and employee motivation and if necessary be trained in this area. Luckily LM does generally seem to acknowledge the importance of

teamwork and the consequent need for training (Brandl et al 2009). Teamwork applies both to motivating staff to work together well and to the manager working well with the team. A study by McConville suggests that Line Managers believe that being free to manage their own staff is necessary in order to promote teamwork and cohesion (McConville 2006).

Even though there is a multitude of schools of thought on employee motivation including those of Maslow and Herzberg, this study is aiming to focus on understanding the devolution of the HR functions and only approaches capabilities as a result of successful and efficient devolution of HR responsibilities the Line Management.

2. 5. 4. Partnership Working
2. 5. 4. 1 Definitions of Partnership

As Renwick (2000) points out, the partnership approach to relationships between HR and LM is a feature ofNorth USAtheorising. The idea behind partnership working is that it allows collaborative relationships between two equals in which both sides can feel able to input ideas and draw upon the relationship. It is a non-hierarchical model. Much of the literature which discusses definitions of the term accentuates the differences in meaning and use. Partners are interdependent, and share information and workload as well as vision and objectives. The aim is to provide a seamless experience for the beneficiaries of partnership (Glasby and Littlechild 2004, Axelrod 2004, Seidle 1995).

2. 5. 4. 2 Need to Include Partnership Working into HR Function

Perhaps the most overriding need to improve LM performance of HR roles is the need to instigate a partnership working approach. Certainly, there is already a closer relationship between HR and LM, a ' synergy' (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005, p. 282). LM particularly expresses a need to work towards a partnership (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). Partnership working involves a unified and coherent HR strategy (Renwick 2000). Currently, although there have been moves towards this approach, HR tend still to take the lead rather than work in partnership (Hutchinson and Wood 1995). Overall, HR has most involvement with areas of specialist knowledge and less with day-to-day issues (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). A partnership model would allow an increased input from LM into strategy considerations.

1. 1Research Suggestions

The above consideration of the current needs and areas for improvement in the LM role can be used to shape the research study.

Existing research seems to support the need for a ' partnership' approach throughout the various levels of devolution. A study in 2003 looked at the devolution of HR processes as part of an overall company plan to increase productivity and boost branding. The study found that 13 senior LM's embraced the new HR aspects of their function, had no fear of their new role, liked the idea of being more involved in performance, and felt that the strategic issues should remain with HR. One notable finding was the demand for more partnership between HR and LM. HR should be less remote, and there should also be a two-way communication process between the two

functions (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). While it should be noted that this research was conducted within a healthcare framework, which might produce a very specific set of results which cannot be generalised to other areas, these and other studies do seem to underline the demand for more partnership.

Renwick (2000), also pursuing the ' partnership' approach, underlines the need to investigate the dialogue between HR and LM. In particular, it is useful to look at why the departments relate to each other in the way they do, and seek a theoretical explanation for this interaction. He suggests that further research is necessary on the attitudes and motivations of both HR and LM by examining the relationship between the two. He recommends the use of theories, like Ulrich's (1998), which emphasise the consensual nature of the relationship as powerful tools for explaining the relationship between HR and LM (Renwick 2000). He suggests Ulrich's (1998) ' functionalism' but also to look at Turnbull and Wass's (1998) ' organic relations' (Turnbull and Wass 1998, p. 99), and Brehm and Kassin's (1993) Social Exchange for example. Ulrich (1998), it has been shown, proposes a new vision of HR which embraces the strategic viewpoint as well as a partnership one. He emphasises, in the first of his four ways in which HR should develop, the partnership between HR and Line Managers, and also that the HR executive should be a champion of employee causes in his third way (Ulrich 1998). His third imperative can be read as a plea to extend the notion of partnership to employees in general, which is why this research regards partnership as a principle applicable throughout the organisational hierarchy; he also

emphasises that ' soft' concerns are as important as ' harder' ones like targets and finances, and that ' people' issues must be taken seriously. People issues have therefore been made one of the key focus areas of this study. Elsewhere Ulrich (1998) discusses the idea of the strategic partnership between HR professionals and Line Managers. Line Managers have ultimate responsibility for management of people (Ulrich 1998) and the efficiency of people management together with various soft skills required for the role lead to the increased motivation of employees (Baron 2003). HR should therefore partner with managers to help them structure systems and process (HR Focus 1997).

The 2008 IRS survey found that line managers continue to take on responsibilities that once lay within the HR department. However, HR practitioners are not always convinced that they are doing the work effectively. This IRS survey shows that four out of five (80. 2%) organisations have devolved more people management responsibilities to line managers over the past three years. Line managers are increasingly expected to implement people management policies. These duties range from managing flexible working requests to handling grievance and disciplinary procedures. HR practitioners are not always impressed with the way that line managers carry out these responsibilities, and assess their performance as poor in some areas. Line managers are judged ineffective in training and development, maintaining personnel records, and absence management. HR practitioners believe that training for line managers should be compulsory, and that levels of training and support on offer are inadequate.

A partnership approach in which HR and LM act as equals seems fruitful. However, we have also seen above that working more closely with employees is part of the new LM remit and involves being able to communicate openly, work as a team (Gibb 2003, MacNeil 2003). The study will allow the researcher to see if there is correlation between LM/HR integration and the core people skills that affect motivation and performance of employees. The findings of the study will provide recommendations to the people in managerial roles and HR Business Partners regarding the most effective ways of developing LM in facilitating effective devolution and ensuring increased performance and motivation through devolution of the HR functions to the line managers.

2. 7 Summary

From the literature review the following conclusions can be made and they will be then compared to the findings of the data analysis. First and foremost, the devolution of HR functions has both advantages and disadvantages (Renwick 2003, Maxwell a