Integrating Strategic Human Resource Management in the Land Registry

A Critical Analysis

By

Darragh Horan

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material which I now for the assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of MA in Human Resource Management is entirely my own work and has not taken from the work of others, save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: _Darragh Hore_

Dated: _17/6/2004._

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This research dissertation examines the approach taken by the Land Registry to integrate a strategic approach to Human Resource Management since the launch of Strategic Management Initiative in 1994 and Delivering Better Government in 1996. In particular it examines the role and re-orientation of the Human Resource unit in the Land Registry to take account of more developmental and strategic focus as envisaged in the Civil Service Modernisation Programme.

The methodology chosen for this dissertation is a case study methodology. The case study method is a qualitative approach, which is found useful for social science research and studies. The case study method will allowed me to look in depth at a complex and single instance phenomenon in the Land Registry. I will analyse the Land Registry's human resource practices critically and determine the extent to which the human resource activities are integrated and aligned with the strategic needs of the organisation. A multi method approach using both primary and secondary research data was used in this dissertation

The launch of the Strategic Management Initiative in 1994 set the scene for reform in the civil service with significant emphasis on developing greater strategic capacity for departments to help the government facilitate economic and social development. The policy document Delivering Better Government in 1996 sought to develop this capability further by setting out the vision and road map for change in the civil service. It proposed reforms consistent with matching the skills of individuals with the needs of departments, and the creation of a more flexible workforce. In particular the Delivering Better Government proposed a number of reforms for Human Resource Management in the Irish Civil Service such as developing greater autonomy and responsibility for HR units, re-orienting HR unit's activities and focus to take a more strategic/developmental approach and devolve responsibility for day-to-day human resource issues to line management. The development by each department of a human resource strategy linked to the overall strategy for the organisation and reforming arrangements for the recruitment, placement, tenure, promotion and development of staff was also proposed.

It can be concluded from the research that an overall strategic management framework in which Human Resource Management can evolve is in place within the Land Registry. However, in terms of human resource policy and practices, there has been only been individual development and innovations, rather than a more integrated strategic approach to Human Resource Management. However, the Land Registry like all civil service departments must adhere to centralised policy. This is creating a lack of flexibility to recruit and retain competent staff and deal with under-performance. There is evidence among those interviewed for a considerable level of continuing commitment for change. However, within the Irish Civil Service, an often repeated criticism of Strategic Management Initiative and Delivering Better Government is that it has lead to reform fatigue. It is therefore important that the Human Resource unit in the Land Registry identify, support and communicate the case for civil service reform and modernisation.

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List of Abbreviations

COMD	Civil Service Centre for Management and Organisational Development
CPSU	Civil Public Service Union
CSC	Central Selection Commission
CMPR	Committee for Public Management Research
DBG	Delivering Better Government
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRMWG	Human Resource Working Group
IPA	Institute for Public Administration
NCI	National College of Ireland
IMPACT	Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
PPF	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
SHRM	Strategic Human Resource Management
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative
SP	Sustaining Progress

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1 Introduction

Chapter Objectives

This chapter

- provides a background for the dissertation;
- describes the focus of the dissertation; and
- the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Background

The Land Registry is a multi-disciplined organisation with a staff of approximately 600, comprising legal, technical and administrative personnel. The Land Registry is organised on a geographic basis for administrative purposes, four offices in Dublin and an office in Waterford. The Land Registry was established in 1892 to provide a system of compulsory registration of title, which would be simple, inexpensive and easily accessible. The services the Land Registry provide include:

- Registration of titles for the first time - First Registrations

- Assessment and recording of the legal effect of transactions on the folios and on the Registry maps;

- Supply of evidence of title and certified maps;

- Search facilities;

- Copy facilities;

- Ground Rent Purchase Scheme.

The Land Registry is a section of the Irish Civil Service and thus is a part of a hierarchical organisation with common administrative grading and pay structures across thirty Departments and Offices. The launch of the Strategic Management Initiative in

1994 set the agenda for change in the Irish Civil Service with a focus on developing strategic capability in Departments and Offices to implement government policy and facilitate long-term economic and social development. The policy document Delivering Better Government in 1996 sought to develop this capability further by setting out the vision and road map for change in the Irish Civil Service.

1.2 Focus of Dissertation

Prior to the commencement of the Strategic Management Initiative (1994) and the subsequent development of the Delivering Better Government (1996) there was little emphasis on the development of a strategic approach to human resource management in the Irish Civil Service including the Land Registry.

The objective of this dissertation is to investigate the level to which the Land Registry have integrated a strategic approach to Human Resource Management as envisaged by the Strategic Management Initiative (1994) and Delivering Better Government (1996) policy documents. This dissertation examines the approach taken by the Land Registry to the development of a strategic approach to Human Resource Management and its subsequent implementation since the launch of Delivering Better Government (1996) policy documents. It will particularly explore the re-orientation of the role of the Human Resource unit in the Land Registry to take account of the more development and strategic outlined in Delivering Better Government (1996).

The hypothesis is that the Land Registry have now began the process of re-orientating their Human Resource function to provide for a more development and strategic focus as envisaged in the policy documents Strategic Management Initiative (1994) and Delivering Better Government (1996).

1.3 Structure of Dissertation

This research dissertation has been structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides a broad definition of Strategic Human Resource Management and reviews the literature on the subject to date.

Chapter 3 describes the policy context for a more strategic approach to Human Resource Management in the Land Registry.

Chapter 4 describes the rational and choice of research methodology for the dissertation.

Chapter 5 describes the research results and main findings.

Chapter 6 discusses and analyses the research results and findings of the research conducted in the Land Registry.

Chapter 7 summaries the conclusion of the research dissertation, and makes a number of recommendations for the Land Registry, based on the research results and findings and best practices.

2 Literature Review

Chapter Objectives

This chapter

- provides a broad and contrasting definition of the terms HRM and SHRM;

- describes the historical development in the context of the seminal texts and the academic responses to these;

- considers the integration of a strategic approach to HRM in the context of the public sector; and

- sets the focus of Chapter three and the approach to HRM through the Strategic Management Initiative and Delivering Better Government.

2.1 Defining HRM and SHRM

At the outset it is important to clarify the distinction between personnel management and Human Resource Management (HRM). The origins of the traditional concept of personnel management can be traced to post World War 1 through concern for the basic needs of employees. The development of personnel management from the 1940's to the 1970's saw an increase in the status and professionalism, particularly in relation to industrial relations issues. The concept of HRM, as a new strategic approach to the management of people, evolved in the early 1980's. Its evolution was influenced by a range of factors, including increased competition caused by deregulation and globalisation and the influence of notable academics in the US and UK. Although it has been suggested by many that HRM is no more than a rebranded version of personnel management, Storey (1989) identifies four features of HRM that distinguishes it from traditional personnel management:

- it is explicitly linked to corporate strategy;

- it seeks to obtain commitment of employees rather than compliance;

- employee commitment is obtained through an integrated approach to human resource policies; and

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- unlike personnel management, which is primarily the domain of specialists, line managers own HRM as a means of fostering integration

Academics differ in the definitions of the role of Human Resource Management. For example, Fombrum, Tichy & Devana (1984) consider the *"The critical management task is to align the formal structure and the HR systems (selection, appraisal, rewards, and development) so that they can drive the strategic objectives of the organisation."*
Torrington and Hall (1987) believe that *"HRM is directed mainly at management needs for human resource to be provided and deployed. There is a greater emphasis on planning, monitoring and control rather than problem solving and meditation. It is totally identified with management interests being a general management activity and is relatively distant from the workforce as a whole."*

Many academics differ in their definition of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM). For example Schuler & Walker (1990) noted that human resource strategy referred to a short-term focus on business needs and defined it as *"a set of processes and activities jointly shared by human resource and line managers to solve people related business problems."* Schuler (1992), who offers an excellent definition states that SHRM is *"all those activities affecting the behaviour of individuals in their efforts to formulate and implement the strategic needs of the business."* This definition highlights two important dimensions that distinguish SHRM from traditional HRM. Firstly it entails the linking of human resource management to strategic management processes of the organisation. Secondly it implies co-ordination between all business functions including human resources.

To explore the various meanings of SHRM and more importantly to consider the differences, I have used Boxall's (1992) suggested framework for reading SHRM literature. Boxall has broken the framework into two distinct parts, seminal texts and major academic responses to these texts. This will allow for a more holistic view of SHRM, which will disregard definitions that only relate to a specific element of SHRM.

2.2 Seminal Texts

There are two influential American schools of SHRM. Two key institutions Harvard and Michigan represent these. These are *Human Resource Management: A General Managers Perspective* (Beer et al., 1984) and *Strategic Human Resource Management* (Fombrun et al., 1984) that Boxall considers as seminal texts.

At the heart of the Harvard approach Beer et al (1984) are the responsibility and the capacity of the managers to make decisions about the relationship between the organisation and its employees such as to maximise the organisational outcomes for key stakeholders. This framework tends to adopt a particular approach to workplace relations, emphasizing unitary, and integration, individualistic systems, undermining workforce organisations or collectivist values as outcomes of management choice about key HRM levers affecting the organisation. This approach focuses on managers' responsibility to manage four key HRM areas, employee influence; human resource flow; reward systems and work systems. The Harvard approach seeks to operationalise HRM as an employee relations strategy in which the goals of commitment, high quality, flexibility and strategy are integrated. Beer et al (1984) emphasises the need for management to be able to choose a range of options for strategic decision-making and see their framework as a means for doing this. In saying this Beer et al (1984) gives reasons for a poor match between HRM policies and business strategies. One that *"managers develop business plans and make capital investments with inadequate regard to the human resources needed to support the plan."* Beer et al (1984). The second reason is that the HRM function develops programmes that are not relevant to the needs of the line manager as these programmes are not developed in co-ordination with the business plan. Boxall (1992) believes that the Harvard framework should not be underestimated because it puts forward the idea that HR strategy should be linked to business strategy, this is why I believe it is an important seminal American text.

The second American seminal text that I have chosen is from Michigan, *Strategic Human Resource Management* (Fombrun et al., 1984). Fombrun et al., (1984) developed the notion of SHRM, which entailed the interconnection of business strategies, organisational structures, and HRM. HRM processes were best designed to support the implementation of corporate strategy. The key contributor argued in a statement by

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Fombrun (1984) *"just as firms will be faced with inefficiencies when they try to implement new strategies with outmoded structures, so they will face problems of implementation when they attempt to effect new strategies with inappropriate HR systems. The critical management task is to align the formal structure and the HR systems so that they drive the strategic objective of the organisation"* Fombrun et al (1984). A survey of strategic planners and senior human resource executives in a sample of Fortune 500 companies was presented as evidence by Fombrun et al (1984) of the perceived need for a more structured but flexible fit between HRM and business strategies. Boxall argues that the framework is less adequate than that presented by Beer et al (1984). However, the significance of Fombrun's et al (1984) contribution is that he developed the proposition that organisations will be more effective to the extent that their HR strategies match or fit their business strategies.

Figure 1

Beer et al (1984)

Figure 2

Selection

Performance

Rewards

Appraisal

Develop
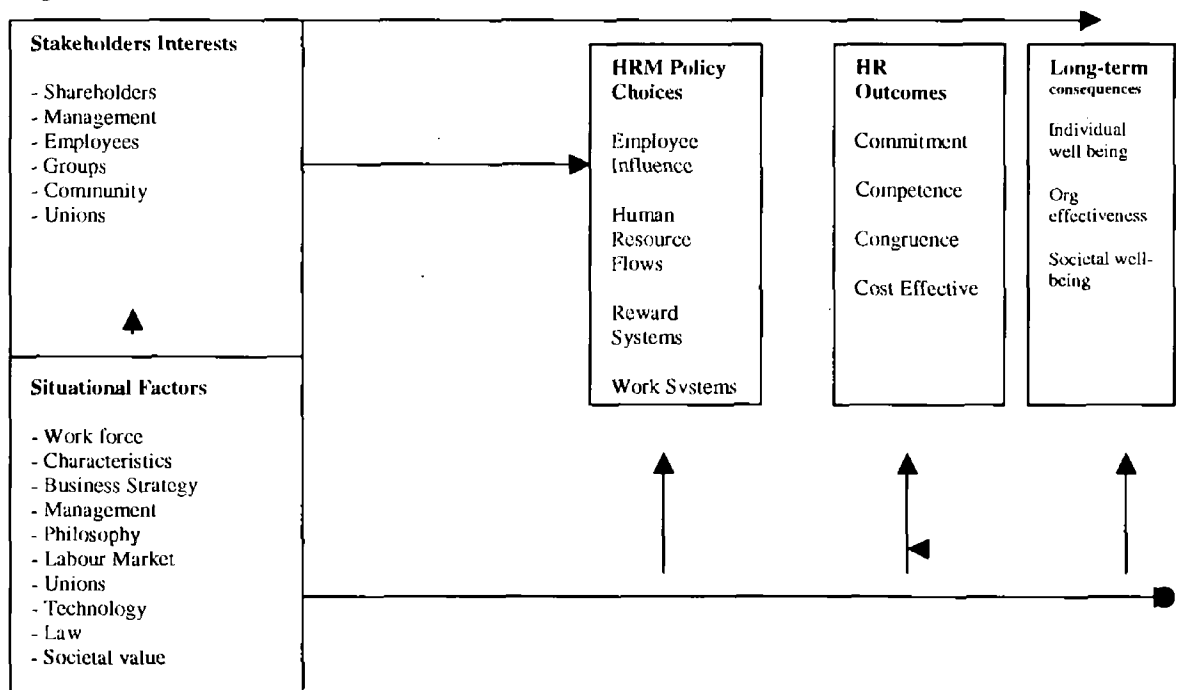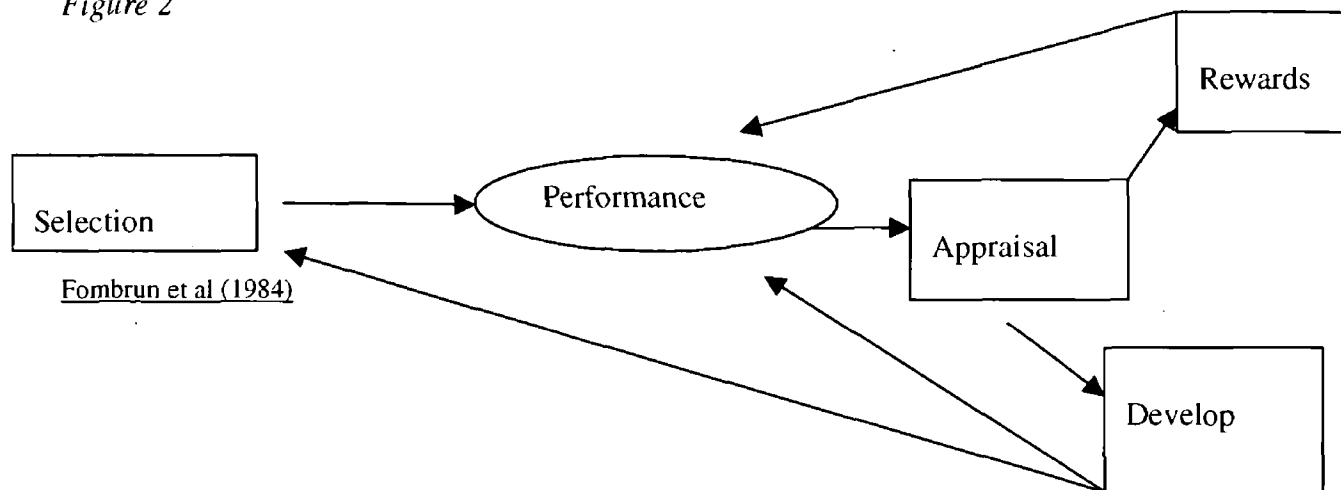
Fombrun et al (1984)

I have chosen these two seminal texts because Beer et al (1984) *Managing Human Resource Assets* offers a conceptual framework as a new way of thinking towards SHRM and not a tool for analysis. Fombrun et al (1984) *Strategic Human Resource Management* is chosen because it provides the first major statement on the need for organisations to align the organisational structure with the HR practices so that together they can drive the organisational objectives. Together the two seminal texts have encouraged HRM to be seen as a management strategy rather than a series of personnel practices and policies.

2.3 Academic Responses

The most important critical response to the American seminal texts came in Storey's (1991) *New Perspectives on Human Resource Management*. This publication brings together a range of critiques by a broad base of UK academics. From these Boxall (1992) views David Guest's work as significant because he builds on the Harvard Model put forward by Beer et al (1984) to arrive at his own theory. Guest (1991) review of developments in HRM in the UK revealed only modest innovations. Guest (1991) believed *"HRM has been constantly talked up and that the evidence from USA reveals considerable diversity of practice, raising doubts about the extent of its application"* Guest (1991) also considers Hendry and Pettigrew's (1986) four fold classification of

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HRM strategy as a useful addition to the debate. Hendry and Pettigrew's argue that the strategic aspect of HRM consists of four key elements:

- the use of planning;

- a coherent approach to the design and the management of personnel systems based on a employment policy and manpower strategy;

- matching HRM activities and policies to some explicit strategy; and

- seeing the people of the organisation as a strategic resource for achieving competitive advantage, Hendry and Pettigrew (1986).

Guest (1991) comes to the conclusion that there is no evidence to support the view that there is a general trend towards SHRM. Guest (1991) is very critical of what he sees as piece meal innovations in management practices rather than integrated strategic changes as in frameworks put forward by Beer et al (1984) and Fombrun et al (1984). Boxall (1992) questions this assessment put forward by Guest (1991) and cites a contrasting view by Wolfgang Streeck (1987), which sees management as engaged in a process of experimentation and views the 'creative incrementalism' as representing an important aspect of strategic learning. Fombrun's et al (1984) matching model of SHRM was build upon by Miles and Snow (1984) and see HR strategies varying according to whether a company is a prospector, a defender or an analyser.

The academic debate on SHRM has moved forward from strategic frameworks to view SHRM as a core competency for competitive advantage. The current thinking by academics is that competitive advantage can be achieved and sustained from a firm's internal resource, in particular its human capital with emphasis on behaviour. "As other sources of competitive successes have become less important, what remains as a crucial, differentiating factor is the organisations employees and how they work" Pfeffer (1994). Sisson (1990), stresses on the integration of HR policies with each other and business planning. That the responsibility for HR must move to the line managers with

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commitment and initiative. Beaumont (1992) says that there is a need to establish a close relationship between business strategy and HR strategies, with a strategic integration or fit. Ulrich (1998) argues the case for HR could never be more compelling, that an organisation can achieve excellence through a focus of learning, quality and teamwork. Ulrich suggests that the way forward is the HR function formulating and executing strategy in collaboration with senior/line managers. The academics are now saying that organisations can maintain competitive advantage with less emphasis on products, and markets but more on knowledge, competency, innovation and adaptability. In response to these challenges the role and the function of HR has broadened. HR specialists are increasingly acting as change agents to assist the organisation in meeting business challenges. Added to this the role of 'business partner', working with senior management and providing the link between business and people strategies. Ulrich suggests that HR professional must be able to perform multiple roles. In creating a Multiple Role Model for HRM, Ulrich (1997) emphasises that in order to create value and deliver results, HR professionals need to concentrate not on the activities or work of HR but on the deliverables of that work. Ulrich describes a framework (see appendix 2), which describes in terms of deliverables, four key roles that the HR professionals must fulfil to become a strategic partner within the business:

- The management of strategic human resources;

- The management of firm infrastructure;

- The management of employee contribution;

- The management of transformation and change;

Figure 3   Table: Ulrich's Multiple –Role Model for HRM

Definition of HR Roles			
Role/Cell	**Deliverable/Outcome**	**Metaphor**	**Activity**
Management of Strategic Human Resources	Executing Strategy	Strategic Partner	Aligning HR and business strategy: Organisational Diagnosis
Management of Firm Infrastructure	Building efficient infrastructure	Administrative Expert	Reengineering organisation process: Shared services
Management of Employee Contribution	Increase employee commitment and capability	Employee Champion	Listening and responding to employees: Providing resources to employees
Management of Transformation and Change	Creating renewed organisation	Change Agent	Managing and transformation and change: Ensuring capacity for change

Ulrich emphasises that for HR to be effective it does not simply involve moving from operational to strategic work. It means 'learning to master both operational and strategic processes and people' (Ulrich, 1997). However, the pressure to deliver core processes correctly leads to dilemma for HR professionals, with many concluding that their departments are not ready for strategic HR.

One of the key debates to day is whether to take an open or closed approach to SHRM. The open approach which Fombrun, Hendry and Pettigrew are writing about. They argue that there is a single very limited range of HR strategy options. They believe it would be contingent thus a cost reduction strategy would have different implications to an innovation strategy. On the other hand the closed approach is were there is one approach for all business strategies, Peters and Waterman (1982) imply that "*that regardless of the nature of the business, or the business strategy of the stage in the product life cycle, one HR strategy is appropriate.*

In this chapter the seminal texts have provided a view of HRM, which is integrated into the strategic and business planning process of an organisation, which has formulated academic thinking towards SHRM. The main responses to these seminal texts, while questioning the innovation, and the extent to which the strategic integration is taking

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place, share the view that decisions about HR are strategically critical to the business to the degree that they must be aligned to achieve value and competitive advantage.

2.4 The integration aspects of Strategic HRM in the Civil Service

A key theme running through the models discussed earlier is integration, which according to Guest (1987) lies at the heart of a strategic approach to HRM. Guest identifies integration at three levels:

- integration of HRM polices with business strategy (external fit);

- integration of a set of complementary HRM policies (internal fit); and

- integration of HRM into the line management function.

This is elaborated on further by Guest and Hoque (1994) who argue that the key is strategic integration. What this means is that personnel strategy must fit the business strategy, the personnel policies must be fully integrated with each other and the vales of the line mangers must be sufficiently integrated or aligned with the personnel philosophy to ensure that they will implement the personnel policy and practise.

Integration with strategy

Linking HRM strategy with business strategy is however not an easy task. According to Purcell and Ahlstrand (1995), the literature provides little practical guidance in relation to linking HRM with business strategy. Indeed it often ignores the significance and power of both organisational politics and culture as variables in linking HRM with business strategy. This may be particularly problematic in the public service, in which a range of factors including conflicting objectives, multiple stakeholders, short-term political pressures and existing structures complicates strategy-making process.

Internal integration of HRM policies

The second integrative aspect of HRM relates to internal fit, the integration of a proactive and complementary set of HR policies. Achieving such fit is problematic however, particularly in organisational structures in which there are divisions of responsibilities between central and departmental levels. In such structures, the more significant HRM issues may actually be determined outside the department in the higher reaches of the organisation, thus limiting the ability of the department to integrated HRM policies. In the public sector context, attention has been devoted in literature to the arguments for and against the decentralisation of personnel policies in the public sector. For example, the decentralisation of HRM policies from central level was identified as a prerequisite for the successful development of HRM policies at line departmental level in the US Civil Service. At the same time, the process of decentralisation may be difficult as there may be vested interests to be overcome and much bargaining to take place. The implications of not decentralising the HRM responsibilities are highlighted by Lawton and McKevitt (1996) in a case study of Cologne City Council. They observed that while strategic change requires the devolution of responsibility, the strong role of central departments of finance and personnel may constrain the autonomy of line departments. Where significant decentralisation of HRM from central level to departmental level does not take place, internal integration of HR policies may be undermined. The literature suggests that in order to develop an integrated set of policies, it is necessary to critically assess the structure of and responsibilities for HRM at central level. It then can be decided what policies should remain centralised and what can and should be decentralised to departmental level. Even were decentralisation is feasible, it may not be desirable. For example Purcell and Ahlstrand (1995) suggest that decentralisation of pay bargaining can create problems, in which changes agreed in one department may create discontent in another. This may create difficulties particularly in the public sector, where the government is a regulator and an employer. While decentralisation for HRM from the centre increases autonomy at line department level, it also creates a challenge for the central function, as it would have to go through an internal transformation in order to have the ability to help change at departmental level.

Integrating HRM with the line management function

The final integrative aspect of HRM concerns line management, as it is argued that if human resources really are so critical for business managers, then the HRM is too important to be left to personnel specialists. Research by Bevan and Hayday (1997) indicates that managers may be reluctant to take on the HRM responsibilities that they do not perceive to be a legitimate part or their job, particularly if they are not correctly consulted on such responsibilities. Armstrong (1997) suggests that line managers may be happy for the personnel function to deal with people management issues, particularly in relation to disciplinary and grievance matters. Armstrong suggests that successful devolution of responsibilities to line managers requires a balance between providing help and advice and creating a culture were line managers take the responsibilities for managing people issues. The structure of a large bureaucratic organisation such as in the pubic sector, in which there is often a centralised personnel function, may also reduce the ability of line managers to take the responsibility for HRM. Another key issue for the devolution of the HRM function to line managements is the development of skills and competencies required to do the role effectively. Boyle (1995) suggests that the development of such skills represents particular challenge in the public sector, where managers may see themselves as specialist rather than people managers. This analysis suggest that there are three key requirements for the devolution of HRM to line management:

- training and development of managers to equip them with the appropriate skills and knowledge required to deal with HRM issues;

- the provision of incentives for managers to take on responsibilities for HRM issues; and

- a culture where HRM activities are visibly valued by management.

Boghanor (2001) raises questions in respect to the application of strategic HRM. He argues that trends towards greater open recruitment could give rise to two key difficulties,

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maintaining pubic service standards and ensuring that the civil service does not become politicised. Boghanor also suggests that there is 'at very least a tension, if not a fundamental contradiction between the idea of joined up, or holistic government, and indeed to incentivise civil service reform through measures as performance related pay'. It is necessary to consider the relevance of the forgoing themes to the public sector, since it is frequently argued that there are unique dilemmas, which characterise management in the public domain. Farnham and Horton (1996) outline three responses to this issue:

- Strategic management may be perceived to be secondary importance to a public sector manager. For example the public sector manager operates in an environment with complexities and constraints, which do not arise for the private sector manager, such as political, legal, and public dimension and the absence in most areas of competition.

- Management practices including HRM may be perceived to be generic and equally applicable to the public sector.

- Finally, they describe a new public management (NPM) model, which differs from both public administration and private management. NPM emerged as a model of public sector management in response to the pressures to cut public costs and a political ideology, which saw the need to develop a more market-orientated culture in the public sector. This model emphasises the central role which HRM policies, including recruitment, training, and communication strategies, can lay on achieving the cultural change necessary to bring about employee commitment.

A number of other contributors suggest that there are features inherent in the public sector that may impede the implementation of a strategic approach to HRM. Storey (1989) suggests that while a bureaucracy may ensure consistency, equity and impartiality, it may also result in a lack of responsiveness that may conflict with the flexible, commitment based nature of HRM. Similarly, Barnhart (1997) suggests that in a bureaucratic structure, staff may be accustomed to following centrally determined rules and circulars, and re-allocation of responsibilities for HRM may represent a significant

challenge to the status quo for many who are comfortable with the existing structure and culture. This implies a need for a planned approach to change in moving to a more strategic approach to HRM.

2.5 Summary

The historical development of HRM has evolved from a series of fragmented personnel practises to a holistic or process view of HRM, at the heart of which is the development of people focused strategies to generate organisational capability to drive strategic goals. The seminal texts in this chapter have provided a view of HRM, which is integrated into the strategic and business planning process of an organisation. While each model discussed may differ in terms of the approach of HRM as a management tool, they all share an underlying holistic and strategic view of HRM. The main response to these seminal texts, while questioning the scope and level to which a strategic approach is taking place, share the view that decisions on HR are strategically important to the business.

In a public service context the integration of a strategic approach to HRM may be problematic. A range of factors including conflicting objectives, multiple stakeholders, short-term political pressures and existing structures complicates the strategy-making process. The strong role of the Departments of Finance may constrain the autonomy of line departments whereby individual department will be unable to implement distinct policies based on business needs. However, decentralisation of policies such as pay bargaining can create problems, in which changes agreed in one department may create discontent in another. Finally, the structure of a large bureaucratic organisation such as in the pubic sector, in which there is often a centralised personnel function, may also reduce the ability of line managers to take the responsibility for HRM.

3 HRM in the Irish Civil Service

Chapter Objectives

This Chapter

- describes the context in which reform was required in the civil service;
- sets out the policy documents for a more strategic approach to HRM;
- considers the core issues of greater autonomy and responsibilities for HRM to departmental level, line managers and the role of the HR function through the policy documents; and
- sets the context for my research methodology and findings.

3.1 Rising demand for public services and the context for reform

Despite ongoing pressure for a reduction on public spending, the early 1990's witnessed a demand for public services to increase in terms of both quantity and quality. For example net population growth in recent years has resulted in considerable demands for housing and other forms of infrastructure provision. Rising demands for public service did not just express themselves in volume terms. During this period, Ireland also experienced a rise in consumerism. Increases in revenue available to fund public service provision has gone hand in hand with rising public expectations of standards of service. According to Powell (1997) such 'empowerment' of citizens represents a 'new public management service ethos, characterised by democratic and inclusive values and devolution of power to service providers.' This ongoing change in Ireland coincided with an unexpected wave of international state-centre reforms, generally termed New Public Management Theory (NPM), which swept around the world in the 1990's. New Zealand, Great Britain and Australia initiated this trend with a series of reforms that featured a set of generally common elements. These included privatisation, deregulation, and reorganisation to encourage competition among departments, the use of 'customer' as a metaphor for describing users of government services and an emphasis on performance management. The intent of these actions was to improve government efficiency by moving administration from its stodgy bureaucratic roots to a nimble, entrepreneurial future (Kaboolian, 1998).

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3.2 Policy context for a more strategic approach

The launch of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) in 1994 set the scene for reform in the civil service with significant emphasis on developing greater strategic capacity for departments to help the government facilitate economic and social development. These proposals were aimed at reducing bureaucracy in the civil service and the provision of excellent service to the public through a customer focused culture, effective and efficient use of resources and better policy co-ordination between departments. The policy document Delivering Better Government (DBG) in 1996 sought to develop this capability further by setting out the vision and road map for change in the civil service. The core themes in DBG are accountability, transparency, freedom of information, democratic participation of citizens and customer orientation. It proposes reforms consistent with matching the skills of individuals with the needs of departments, and the creation of a more flexible workforce. DBG states that the 'creation of a results driven civil service clearly aligned with government priorities and focused on quality of service is not possible within existing personnel structures' which have 'too narrow a focus' and that a more proactive approach is required. It states that the emphasis will be placed on performance, and the skills of staff will be fully developed and utilised to meet the needs of the organisation.

DBG highlight a number of HR recommendations to reform the existing personnel function, these included:

- reducing the degree of central regulation and control of the HR function and developing greater autonomy and responsibility for control and management of personnel resources to individual departments and offices;

- departmental personnel units should reorient their activities and focus to take a more strategic/developmental approach and devolve responsibility for day-to-day HR issues to line managers;

- the development by departments of a more broadly defined understanding of personnel management to ensure sufficient attention is given to areas such as resource planning, career management, staff development, workload distribution and performance management;

- the development by each department of a HRM strategy linked to the overall strategy for the organisation;

- developing and rolling out effective performance management, measurement and appraisal systems;

- reforming arrangements for the recruitment, placement, tenure, promotion and development of staff; and

- to ensure that the civil service is a model employer in respect to equal opportunity provisions.

The National Level Partnership 2000 (P200) agreement for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness sought to reinforce this vision by directly linking progress in the implementation of the modernisation programme to the final payment of 2%. This agreement also provided for the establishment of a formal partnership process in the Irish Civil Service through which local action programmes for modernisation could be developed jointly in each department between management, staff and unions. P2000 in particular emphasised the need to implement an effective performance management process. This lead to extensive research on an appropriate performance management system for the civil service. Associated with this was the requirement that departments progressively increase training and development budgets to 3% of payroll.

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) further develops this process by linking the final phase of 4% to the creation of performance indicators and the achievement of targets. PPF again emphasised the importance of developing innovative and flexible human resource management policies and strategies. In particular it called

for 'a more strategic approach to HRM issues and greater involvement by line managers in the management of their staff'.

Sustaining Progress (2003) (SP) is an ambitious social partnership agreement in respect to HR reform. Two key pieces of legislation will be introduced during the lifetime of the agreement:

- reform of the Civil Service Regulation Act, to enable the Secretary General of a Department to perform all functions pertaining to the appointment, performance, discipline and dismissal of staff below the Principal Officer Level;

- the introduction of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Bill which will enable individual departments, which are licensed to do so to recruit directly if the wish;

SP 2003 set out other initiatives for HR:

- improvements in promotion systems, to ensure greater use of competitive, merit-based arrangements;

- the evaluation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS);

- a target spend of 4% of payroll on training and development in each department and the development of a civil service training and development strategy; and

- ongoing implementation and development of a range of equality of opportunity and family friendly policies;

3.3 Line Managers Responsibility for HRM

Prior to SMI and DBG, the line manager would not have any real responsibility or accountability for HRM issues. The line manager would have little or no say in critical issues such as selection, discipline and the management of under performance. Generally, line managers would view all significant personnel issues as the domain of the Personnel Unit or Senior Management. The main policy report (1997) developed by the Human Resource Working Group (HMWG) envisaged a new and evolving role for the line manager as a manager of human resources. In addition to the management of financial resources, this role would encompass the proactive management of people within their own divisions. This process would involve a phased devolution for various HR responsibilities Personnel Units to line managers. According to the HRMWG (1997), this evolving role for line managers should encapsulate:

- responsibilities for training and the wider development of people within their division to achieve organisational goals;

- more direct involvement in the selection of people for their divisions whether at the recruitment, selection and promotion;

- direct responsibilities and accountability for operating an effective and continuous performance management system;

- assuming immediate responsibility for tackling under performance in their division; and

- developing an open and participative style of management in their division.

3.4 Reorientation in the role of the Departmental Personnel Units

A central theme of DBG concerns the need for modernisation of the HR function in the civil service. DBG acknowledges that the level of central deregulation of the HR function has been increasingly called into question. A range of proposals were outlined to reform HRM, most notably:

■ each personnel section should re-orient its activities to take a more strategic/development approach, facilitated by the devolution of responsibility for day-to-day human resource matters to the line manager; and

■ the re-orientation should tale place in conjunction with an incremental but concerted process of devolving authority from the Department of Finance to departmental levels.

It also stated that each department should develop a HR strategy, which should be linked with its business strategy. Finally it proposed that the Department of Finance should institute a programme of training and development for staff assigned to departmental personnel sections. To advance the process of change, a HRM working group was established to develop proposals for change in the HR function. The HRM Report envisaged a fundamental shift in the remit of the Personnel Units. These Units would now be required to adopt an advisory, consultative and supportive strategic approach to support the achievement of departmental goals. This new role would evolve from the traditional reactive and operational focus to a more proactive and strategic approach, focused on the achievement of departmental goals. To achieve this change, it would require the provision of expert advice and support in areas such as strategic planning, employee relations, development, and change management.

3.5 Summary

Rising public demand for a more effective and efficient civil service required the government to respond. The government responded with two policy documents, SMI and DBG. These two policy document set vision and agenda for change with significant emphasis on developing greater strategic capacity on departments to help the government facilitate economic and social development. It proposed reforms consistent with matching the skills of individuals with the needs of departments, and the creation of a more flexible workforce. DBG in particular outlined reforms to the existing personnel function, such as moving from being mainly administrative in nature to taking on more of a development and strategic role, and from central regulation and control of the HR function to devolution of autonomy and responsibility to departmental managers. It required each department to develop a HRM strategy linked to the overall strategy for the organisation.

Although significant development has taken place in the practise of the HRM within the civil service, it is now clear that the HR function is being encouraged as integrated approach to the management of strategy rather a series of personnel practises. This study will attempt to investigate the extent in which the Land Registry has integrated a strategic approach to HRM as envisaged through the Strategic Management Initiative and Delivering Better Government.

4 Research Methodology

Chapter Objective

This chapter

- explains the rationale for the choice of research methodology;

- considers the important sources of documentary evidence as secondary research data;

- describes the sample frame used; and

- sets out the research framework used to design primary research questions.

4.1 Methodology

The methodology chosen for this dissertation is a case study methodology. The case study method is a qualitative approach, which is found useful for social science research and studies. Robson (2002) defines case study methodology as a 'strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence'. The case study method will allow me to look in depth at a complex and single instance phenomenon in the Land Registry. I have chosen this method for two reasons; firstly it is an appropriate method to use on a public service organisation since they are not very secretive and are more open in their operations than a private company may be. Secondly the single case-study approach is appropriate when the case represents an example for testing a theory or model, thus opening the possibility of generalising my finding and recommendations to similar organisations in related circumstances. The role I will play in this dissertation is one of a critic. I will analyse the Land Registry's human resource practices critically and determine the extent to which the human resource activities are integrated and aligned with the strategic needs of the organisation, while using relevant theory from key sources to illuminate the content and widen my understanding. This will involve answering key questions as stated in my introduction.

The main criteria for considering the choice of methodology were that:

- the necessary time and relevant information can be obtained in the time constraint available; and

- that the information can be obtained in such a manner so as to allow reliable and valid analysis.

A number of methods of research were considered which took into account these criteria. Having considered the research options available to me I have decided to opt for a mixed or multi method approach (Campbell and Fisher, 1959), using both primary and secondary research data. This approach allows for wide coverage whilst adhering to the criteria of time constraint as well as the type and quantity of data required. The choice of methodology and rationale behind my decision is explained below.

4.2 Semi-Structured/In-depth Interviews

The use of semi-structured/in-depth interviewing is advantageous to the qualitative approach I am using, in particular because of the exploratory nature of my research. It will allow personal contact with participants of the research, which increases the response and feedback provided and may also decrease the possibility of bias. It can increase the number of questions that can be answered and permits the use of open-ended questions that may be too complex for a questionnaire. This method will allow relevant information to be obtained in the time scale available. The questions for the semi-structured /in-depth interviews is based on the following research framework outlined in this chapter.

4.3 Sample Frame

I have decided to conduct seven interviews from different areas of the organisation. I will interview two senior managers, two middle managers, one junior manager and two trade union officials who represent the staff within the Land Registry. This will allow for an in-depth examination of the issues and control the possibility of bias from different areas of the organisation. The interview respondents had to fill the following requirements:

- hold knowledge about the detail structures and functions of the Human Resource unit within the organisation;

- in a position to respond to questions about the role of the Human Resource unit in both a operational and strategic level; and

- be aware of the development and implementation issues arising out of the SMI/DBG process.

4.4 Documentary Evidence

Content analysis of documentary evidence is a particularly useful research tool, both as primary methodology, or supplement to other methods. The use of documentary evidence has a number of advantages, such as

- it is not reactive as it can not be altered by examining it;

- it can cover longer time spans than other research methodologies;

- it is an enormous savings of resources, in particular time and money.

Having considered these features of documentary research and the aims of my study, it was decided that the most relevant sources of documentary evidence were:

Statements of Strategy and Business Plan 2002-2005. This documents set outs the Departments goals and high level objectives, the priorities and strategies to be pursed in achieving them and how they will be measured. Therefore an analysis of statements of strategy should provide useful data relating to how the Land Registry;

- define or interprets human resource management;

- the level of strategic importance being accorded to human resource; and

■   the statements of intent as to how the organisation will use their human resources to achieve stated goals.

Annual Progress Reports, an analysis of the data available in the annual reports provides material information on what is happening in the organisation. The data from these sources provide information on the strategic importance being accorded to human resources issues and the extent to which high-level goals are being translated into action.

4.5 A Research Framework

An analysis of the SMI/DBG reform and to facilitate the development of a research framework I have decided to use a holistic view of the strategic approach to HRM described by Humpherys and Worth-Bulter in an Institute of Public Administration discussion paper (1999) (see appendix 3). To support the research framework I have used Brockbanks Strategic Human Resource Management Framework (1999) to guide the development of questioning, (see appendix 1 for interview questions). Humpherys and Worh-Bulter (1999) holistic view of SHRM is broken into three sections:

1. Strategic HR planning
2. Proactive HR management
3. Active Enabling
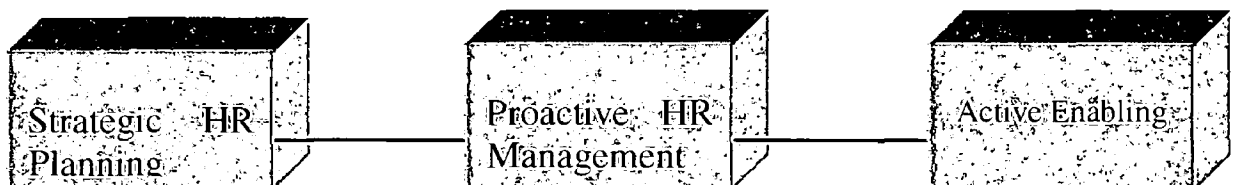
Each of these areas are inter-linked and it is important to define and understand the types of issues covered by each of them, not least because they provide the framework for the research questions and analysis.

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Strategic HR planning

Strategic management can be defined as a total business approach to strategy formulation and implementation which encapsulates all of the complexities in which an organisation functions (Smith 1994). It is a continuous, reflexive, a comprehensive approach to management with an emphasis on effective change, leaderships and staff involvement. Some of the key features of strategic management, according to Smith (1994) are:

- a long-term focus but also attention to the present;

- a major role for top management;

- a shared vision that is communicated throughout the organisation; and

- continuous monitoring with focus on strategic objectives for long-term capability.

From a HRM perspective, Smith (1994) suggests that the structures and process required to support strategic management include systems for promotion, and recruitment that reinforces the qualities required in the long-term to deliver strategy successfully. Thus from the SMI /DBG perspective, the approach to the HRM needs of the Land Registry should flow from the overall vision of the service and support the immediate and long-term needs of the organisation.

Proactive HR management

SMI /DBG recognises the needs for a more proactive approach to HRM, 'to enable the creation of a results driven civil service'. The more proactive approach to HRM, involves strengthening of departmental management, with devolution of responsibility and accountability for HRM to line mangers, to include performance management and staff development. Line mangers that have devolved accountability and responsibility will be involved in all aspects of the HRM, including matching skills and competencies to the needs of the organisation.

Active Enabling

In order to achieve the HRM objectives of the organisation, the Land Registry needs to prepared for change. The active enabling requires a proactive approach to the management of change. While strategic HR planning and proactive HR management enable organisations to achieve their objectives, there is also a requirement for leadership to support the change. In addition, the professionalisation of the HR function needs to be present to support the strategic planning and line managers in their role

4.6 Summary

In summary, I believe that the research methodology approach undertaken for this research provides the most appropriate means, within constraints referred, for determining whether or not my hypotheses fits my research outcomes.. This sets the appropriate context for the next chapter, which analyses the research findings.

5 Research Results and Findings

Chapter Objectives

This chapter presents

- the results of data derived from core interviews with management and union/staff representatives in the Land Registry;

- the results of the content analysis of the Land Registry's Statement of Strategy and the Annual Progress Report; and

- a summary of the main research results and findings.

5.1 Findings of Research Interviews

The structure of the interview questions were broken down into three sections based on the research framework discussed in the methodology chapter.

Results Section 1. Strategic HR Planning

The purpose of this section was to get the respondents to answer straightforward questions on the strategic human resource planning process in the Land Registry.

Question 1 examines whether the organisation has a vision, how this vision is translated into organisation business strategy and how the organisation communicates this vision to its staff. Participants in the interviews all commented that the Land Registry's vision is to 'safe guard the legal, social and economic fabric of property ownership', this is stated in the organisations Statement of Strategy 2002-2005. Diarmuid Clancy, Director of Operations believes that the vision is a direct result of SMI/DBG process, which commenced in the mid 1990's. The Land Registry's vision is translated into the business strategy at senior management level, and this cascades down the organisation through the business planning process at different levels of the organisation. The Land Registry communicates this vision to its staff by a number of methods such as published documentation, formal and informal team meetings, the partnership process and the use of the intranet within the organisation. John Power, a Staff Officer in the Land Registry, agreed with the vision of the organisation but believed that the Land Registry need to

improve on the communication of this vision to the lower levels of the management and staff.

Question 2 examines whether the organisation has a human resource strategy and how this strategy relates to the business and strategic planning process. The response to this question is mixed. Fran Leahy, Human Resource Manager, stated that the Land Registry has a HR strategy but pointed out that the HR strategy is not published. Other senior management indicated that the organisation's HR strategy is still a work in progress but considered that there was a clear direction for the HR function. Staff representatives indicated that they were not aware of any HR strategy within the Land Registry and were unsure of the direction that the HR unit were taking. All interviewees agreed that the HR function is represented at senior level, and is involved in the business and strategic planning process.

Question 3 examines how the organisation determines their present and future recruitment needs, and in particular if they recruit as an organisational unit. Interviewees all stated that the Land Registry does not recruit as an organisational unit. In particular, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) controls the recruitment process for the civil service and this body processes all recruitment for the Land Registry. Interviewees indicated that the organisation submit manpower requirements based on present needs, project intake and future planning to the CSC and the Department of Finance who then decide on staffing quotas for all the civil service. The view was expressed by respondents that the CSC has improved in developing the recruitment process in terms of selection of staff, but considered that in order to create an integrated approach there is a need for the civil service to devolve the recruitment and selection process to the organisational level. Fran Leahy pointed out that a new model for public service recruitment underpinned by new legislation is currently being developed which will provide greater flexibility for the Land Registry.

Question 4 determines whether the organisation has a clear definition of competencies and capabilities. Interviewees indicated that they do have clear definitions of competencies and capabilities. However, this is developed and controlled by the CSC

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in the recruitment and promotion process. Typically in the case of external recruitment and inter-departmental promotion competitions, the central selection process is used to select candidates who are then placed on panels in order of merit. Traditionally, the prevailing selection devices used by the CSC were written examinations followed by interviews. Advances have been made in recent years with the introduction off psychometric tests and competency-based selection interviewing.

Questions 5 and 6 examine the promotional criteria and the approach of career management/succession planning within the organisation. Interviewees expressed a mixed response in the area of promotion and succession planning. Although there was general agreement that promotional criteria is driven by a combination of culture, ability and results at management level, some respondents felt that there was still a lack of competitive selection, in particular where internal politics and seniority in terms of length of service could influence the decision making. Ernan Tobin, a union official from the Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union (IMPACT), commented that he believes promotion is based on 60% seniority and 40% on competence in terms of ability and results in the Land Registry. Paul Brent, Senior Mapping Advisor felt that the organisation has moved on from a promotion system based on seniority and that the introduction of Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) increases the likelihood that promotion will be based on ability and individual results. A view expressed by all interviewees is that the Land Registry has an approach to career management/succession planning that differs from what existed prior to SMI/DGB. Diarmuid Clancy commented that the Land Registry now has a more structured approach and tries to put particular emphasis on development in areas such as general management and people development. He added that the Land Registry has a policy of job rotation and joint working units. John Power expressed concern that the new approach is not reaching the lower levels of the organisation and that he is not witnessing any change. Paul McSweeney, Assistant General Secretary in the Civil Public and Services Union (CPSU) also expressed concern that there maybe an over reliance on PMDS and that career management and succession planning is not fully integrated as a HR process.

Question 7, interviewees were asked to indicate how the HR strategy could be improved within the organisation. A wide-ranging number of ideas were suggested to improve the HR strategy, and these can be summarised as follows,

- the completion of a published document setting out a clear and concise HR strategy for the Land Registry;

- improved communication throughout all levels of the organisation entailing the direction and purpose of the HR strategy in the Land Registry;

- the inclusion of a specific policy in relation to the organisation's partnership process and the industrial relations approach;

- the integration of technology in the HR function, such as specific HR IT support systems;

- increased involvement of key stakeholders in the development of important HR processes; and

- a continuous assessment and analysis of important and new HR trends or ideas to ensure the HR function can support the organisations future business needs.

Section 2. Proactive Human Resource Management

This section further explores the integration of strategic HRM in the Land Registry by asking interviews to answer a number of questions on the organisations approach to proactive HRM.

In questions 8 and 9, respondents were asked whether the organisation has a policy or plan to devolve responsibility and accountability for HRM issues to line mangers and in particular have they established any incentives for line managers to the take on this responsibility. Question 9 in particular inquires what type of training and development is

provided for line managers to deal with HRM issues effectively. Several interviewees indicated that line managers have taken on a number of administrative tasks that previously the HR unit would have performed such as attendance, sickness and annual leave records. Fran Leahy commented that line mangers are increasingly being empowered to take on the responsibility and accountability, in particular she pointed toward PMDS as an example, where line manager have the autonomy to control and guide the process at the lower levels. There was however suggestions that the HR unit still has control over many simple processes, in particular from the Dublin offices, such as local trade union negotiations and disciplinary procedures. Interviewees pointed out that no monetary incentives are provided to take on new responsibilities, but that the autonomy and decision-making power motivated managers to undertake their new roles. Line managers attend workshops and training programmes, and are provided with a line manager's guidebook to deal with day-to-day issues. It was suggested by a number of interviewees that the organisation must to look to improve the training of managers in a more proactive approach, in particular to deal with areas such as: finance, industrial relations and issues of a personal and sensitive nature.

Question 10 and 11 examine how the organisation measures the performance of their staff and how this is linked to the business objectives. Interviewees stated that PMDS is the central method for measuring the performance of staff in the organisation. The process is performed informally on a monthly basis at team and individual level. PMDS is directly linked to the business and strategic goals of the organisation, as guidelines on the process cascade down from the organisational level and business units to individual level. There was however concern by a number of interviewees that the system is not fully understood by junior management and staff, and is subjective in nature. There was agreement between interviewees that the process is visible, timely and can be easily compared between business units.

Question 12, respondents were asked to indicate if a reward system based on performance of staff is in place and whether this is balanced between results and behaviours. Interviewees stated that there is no reward system based on the performance of staff; in particular all interviewees commented that pay is not linked to performance. Paul McSweeny stated that there are very few opportunities for managers to reward those

who do a good job. There was however an indication that the Land Registry is trying to introduce non-financial rewards by linking results to promotions, training development opportunities and through merit awards. Ray Duffy, Senior Operations Manager in the Land Registry's Waterford Office commented that the organisation is increasingly using feedback sessions to give recognition to staff. Eman Tobin, however felt that that this was limited to certain grades and management positions.

Question 13, asks how the organisation identifies the development needs of staff and what training particularly focuses on. All interviewees stated that PMDS is used as the development tool for all employees in the organisation, from senior to junior level. Diarmuid Clancy, in particular identified the line manager as the principal contributors to this process due to their level of involvement in the PMDS process, an example is provided where management facilitate identification meetings with staff and management to identify the organisational and individual development needs. Eman Tobin however stated that the PMDS process has alienated a number of technical grades where the development process has not been ongoing. Several interviewees commented that training in the Land Registry is very diverse as there are many specialised roles in the organisation, but that it is a continuous process based on organisational and individual needs. John Power, in contrast felt that the training and development process is largely based on centralised ideas from Dublin, which did not always coincide with the needs of the business units.

Section 3. Active Enabling

This section further explores the integration of strategic HRM in the Land Registry by asking interviews to answer a number of questions on the ability of the HR function to support and sustain change in the Land Registry

Questions 14 to 15. Respondents were asked to indicate how they prepared for and sustain change in the organisation. Respondents were also asked how leadership is used and developed in the organisation to help change happen. Interviewees indicated that initially the Land Registry was not prepared for change, change was forced on the organisation and they had no option but to adapt to the ongoing change. The Land

Registry has had to adjust because of the introduction of new technology, political and policy pressures, demographic and social change. Interviewees indicated that the Land Registry is now aware that the organisation is in constant change and must be able to facilitate and sustain this change. Diarmuid Clancy commented that the organisation is doing this through the partnership process, communication, structural and cultural change. There was a mixed response to the use of leadership in the Land Registry. Several interviewees felt that the organisation was sufficiently developing and using leadership to make change happen, through consultation, partnership and pushing leadership down to the line managers through empowerment. However some respondents felt that the style of leadership in the organisation was dictatorial and submissive, a lack of training was highlighted as a reason for this.

Question 16 asks respondents to indicate if the structure of the organisation has changed and if the Land Registry has developed any new approaches to working. Interviewees indicated that the structure of the Land Registry has changed due to the introduction of technology and decentralisation. Technology has changed the way in which work is performed in the organisation; in particular it has transformed the way in which technical roles are performed. Decentralisation to Waterford allowed the organisation to introduce and change job roles, and establish cross-functional teams within the management structure. Fran Leahy stated these changes were introduced to allow the organisation become more proactive to the needs of its customers.

Question 17 examined what interviewees consider the HR function spend most of their time on and how they view the role of the HR function within the organisation. Several interviewees indicated that they considered that the HR unit spends most of the time on operational activities such as administration and co-ordination of training courses. A number of respondents' commented that most of the HR unit resources are used up negotiating and resolving people issues with the Trade Unions. Fran Leahy stated that there are 18 personnel working in the HR unit in the Land Registry, and that 15 of these would be involved in administrative activities only. Paul McSweeny commented that in his view the administrative issues take up most of the HR unit's time; but that a small number of personnel in the HR unit would implement and develop new HR practices and processes at a strategic level. Several interviewees view the role of HR

as a partner to support and facilitate the organisational strategy. However, both John Power and Eman Tobin commented that role of HR has changed very little and that many junior staff view the HR unit still as the personnel function that follow instructions from senior management.

Question 18 examined whether respondents considered that there is support from the top management for a strategic approach to HR within the organisation. All interviewees were in agreement and felt that there is support from top management for a strategic approach to HRM. Fran Leahy stated that the HR unit is represented at the senior level, as it is a member of the management committee in the Land Registry. Diarmuid Clancy commentated that policy decisions made at senior level take in account HR issues. Paul Brent stated that it is a necessity for top management to support a strategic approach to HRM. Paul McSweeny commented that senior management would view strategic HRM as fitting in with the vision of the organisation. However Eman Tobin commented that senior management in other civil service departments or agencies display more support for a strategic approach to HRM.

Question 19 asked respondents what skills and knowledge they believed are required for an effective HR function within the organisation, and in particular are these present in the Land Registry. Interviewees identified a number of skills and competencies that they believed are required for an effective implementation of HR in the organisation. These can be summarised as follows:

- the ability to make difficult decisions that may adversely affect numerous stakeholders;

- excellent working knowledge of legislation and in particular employment law;

- experience in the implementation of HR processes, in particular at a strategic level;

- experience in a unionised environment and an ability to negotiate and deal with industrial relations issues; and

- a specific HR and IR qualifications to balance the organisational and individual needs.

Several interviewees indicated that the skills and competencies required for an effective HR function are not present throughout the organisation. Although interviewees agreed that the HR unit is staffed by experienced and competent personnel, it was felt by a number respondents that there is a lack of understandings and awareness of strategic issues. It was considered that there is a need to increase and develop the strategic input of the HR unit throughout the organisation.

Question 20, asks respondents to indicate what factors are hindering the successful integration of strategic HR within the organisation. A range of issues were identified and these can be summarised as follows,

- the HR function does not possess adequate decision making power at senior board level;

- internal politics and power struggles between Trade Unions is slowing down implementation of strategic practises;

- centralisation of the HR function and in particular influence from outside Departments can create limited flexibility; and

- a lack of shared vision in the organisation where staff have not fully bought into change.

5.2 Content Analysis of Documentary Data

The Land Registry's Statement of Strategy 2002-2005 sets out a number of objectives to be achieved on a short and long term basis. One particular objective, 'to create a flexible and responsive organisation' sets out the specific human resource strategies for the organisation.

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These include:

- recruit, develop and retain competent staff appropriate to and supportive of the Land Registry's current and future needs;

- develop staff and competencies in quality customer service delivery and achievement, drive and commitment in line with the implementation of the Performance Management Development System (PMDS);

- develop and integrate human resource policy taking into account organisational needs and incorporating the Human Resource Management agenda under SMI;

- develop personnel and management policies at all levels within the Land Registry's conducive to encourage high performance and rewarding excellence; and

- implement change through Partnership Programmes.

The Annual Progress Report for 2002 set out the progress of the Land Registry to create a flexible and responsive organisation. This report indicted progress in the areas of promotion, training and development and the use of technology. There were 78 promotions in the organisation in 2002 and only 17 of these were based on competitive selection. The report indicates movement towards merit-based promotion yet there was only agreement with one out of three of the Trade Unions. The Training and Development unit provided 3,471 training days for the Land Registry. This included induction training and customer service training for new staff. The Annual Progress Report for 2003 is unpublished and cannot be assessed for the purpose of this dissertation.

5.3 Summary of Research Results and Findings

This chapter presents the results of data derived from core interviews with management and union/staff representatives in the Land Registry. Respondents were posed twenty identical questions based on a research framework discussed in the methodology chapter (see C4 pg27-29). This chapter also illustrates results of the content analysis of the Land Registry's Statement of Strategy 2002-2005 and the Annual Progress Report 2002. A published version of the Annual Progress Report 2003 for the Land Registry is unavailable for analysis for this dissertation. An analysis and discussion of the research results and finding will take place in the next chapter.

6 Discussion and Analysis of Research Results and Findings

Chapter Objectives

This chapter presents

- a discussion and an analysis of results and findings from Chapter 5 Research Results and Findings; and

- a summary of a discussion and analysis.

6.1 Strategic HR Planning

Strategic management is a total business approach to strategy formulation and implementation which encapsulates all of the complexities in which an organisation functions. It is a continuous, reflexive and comprehensive approach that takes into account the external environment but also the internal practices and processes. From a HRM perspective, Smith (1994) suggests that the structures and process required to support strategic management include systems for promotion, and recruitment that reinforces the qualities required in the long-term to deliver strategy successfully.

Integrating HR to Business Strategies

A key feature of integrating strategic HR is the linkage between HRM and the business strategy of the organisation. Guest (1987) identified integration as an external and internal fit:

- integration of HRM policies with business strategy (external fit);

- integration of a set of complementary HRM policies (internal fit);

The Land Registry's business strategy stems from the organisations vision 'to safeguard the legal, social and economic fabric of property ownership'. To achieve this a number of strategies were set out in its Statements of Strategy 2002-2005. From a HR perspective the Land Registry's objective is to 'create a flexible and responsive organisation'. To accomplish this a number of strategies were to be implemented (see C5

pg 38-39). The stated strategies set a clear direction for human resource management within the Land Registry as a central theme to the strategic goals of the organisation. The strategies to accomplish the objective are positive to the extent that they refer to a number of the components parts of a HR strategy such as performance management and development, change management, and the introduction of competencies. Nevertheless a crucial element of linking HR to the business strategy is the development and publication of a policy document setting out specific HR strategies for the organisation. The development of a policy document setting out HR strategies would:

- support the development and implementation of business strategy;

- improve clarity and awareness on the direction of the HR function;

- set out a framework for future development of the HR function to support business strategy;

- facilitate continuous monitoring and assessment of the HR function; and

- provide the HR function with credibility and authority.

However, the Land Registry does not possess a policy document setting out the organisations HR strategy. Admittedly, there is an indication that a policy document is in the development stage and may be published late 2004, early 2005. Nevertheless, the Land Registry's Statement of Strategy was published in 2002, yet a specific strategy for the HR unit still does not exist.

A particular strategy in the Statement of Strategy 'to develop and integrate a human resource policy taking into account organisational needs and incorporating the Human Resource agenda under SMI' sets out the intention of the Land Registry to integrate HR practices and policies internally. However, from a review of the Annual Report 2002, there is no indication that this has been achieved. The analysis of internal integration between particular HR practices will be discussed further in this chapter.

The linking of HRM with business strategy may be particularly problematic in a public sector context, in which the strategy making process is complicated by a range of factors including multiple stakeholders, short-term political pressures and centralised structures and process. For example in the case of the Land Registry's strategic objective to 'create a flexible and responsive organisation', HRM policies may focus on recruiting staff with particular competencies. However if the existing structure is rigid and centralised whereby the Land Registry has no control over recruitment, the achievement of a flexible and responsive organisation may be difficult to achieve.

The HR implications of business strategy should be identified at senior level during the process of strategy formulation and not after it. The role that the head of HR is enabled to exercise in securing the commitment of top management to the value of according HR issues high priority at this stage is critical. Staff resourcing and skills issues both affect and are affected by business strategy. It is important that line managers and HR staff are consulted in the formulation process, to ensure support, ownership and a greater understanding of HR's added value to the implementation of business strategy.

Recruitment and Selection

The Land Registry does not recruit as an organisational unit. The CSC on behalf of the Land Registry undertakes external recruitment and selection competitions. Staffing complements are set by the Department of Finance and in some cases may change as a result of discussions between the Land Registry/Finance and civil service trade unions. The CSC also develops the competencies and capabilities for grades and roles in all civil service departments. The Land Registry has minimal input in to this process whereby they submit manpower requirements based on present and future needs. However, a key strategy of the Land Registry according to the Statement of Strategy is '*to recruit, develop and retain competent staff appropriate to and supportive of the Registries current and future needs*'. Yet the Land Registry has little control or power in the decision making process of recruitment and selection and determination of competencies. The CSC in recent years has improved the turn around times for the provision of staff to departments, and has also developed more sophisticated selection techniques with the introduction of psychometric test and competency based interviewing. Nevertheless, a

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key feature of a strategic approach to HRM is the integration of recruitment and selection polices to ensure that the business needs are met in terms of manpower resources and intellectual capital. However the HR unit in the Land Registry does not have the ability to match people to jobs. A new model for public service recruitment underpinned by new legislation is currently being developed and this will allow the Land Registry to introduce greater flexibility in departmental recruitment and selection policies.

Promotion and Succession Planning/Career Management

Central to a strategic approach to HRM is a promotion system based on matching the right person with the right job; this means that method of advancing staff must be based on the ability and competence of the individual. Traditionally the Civil Service promoted staff on their length and seniority of service. This had a number of advantages such that staff obtained experience in many roles on the way up the promotional ladder, and co-operation between workers is generally not hindered by competition from subjectively determined promotions. The disadvantages, for example where staff may not have the ability or competence to perform certain jobs, an inability to attract or retain ambitious workers as they are unwilling to wait their turn for higher level positions, and the fairness and transparency issues outweigh any advantages seniority based promotions may have. There is evidence that the Land Registry has moved towards a greater proportion of promotions on merit. This was provided for in the Sustaining Progress agreement, which linked benchmarking, and general round payments to agreement on a higher proportion of merit based promotions. The introduction of PMDS, which measures performance of staff against a number of indicators and the increase in the use of competitive-based interviewing will improve the capacity of the Land Registry's management to match the right person to the right job. The introduction of merit-based promotions has a number of advantages for the Land Registry, for example motivated and ambitious staff can be rewarded for outstanding performance, a performance culture is fostered and staff job-related abilities can be better matched with jobs to be filled within the organisation. When developing an integrated promotion system it is necessary to incorporate an approach to succession planning to ensure that the individual being promoted has the right abilities and competence. Succession planning is the examination of the skills and abilities of your staff and the development of these skills for future leadership roles. It is

an opportunity to examine the skills, abilities, and personality types that will succeed in a job and then identify the individuals that would best fit the mode. This type of planning allows the organisation to handle the many unpredictable events that occur in business. It provides the opportunity to take a skills inventory, become aware to the elements of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses and can ensure that the right people are in place to accomplish the organisations goals. The Land Registry's approach to succession planning is limited. The development needs of the organisation and individual is identified through PMDS, added to this is a policy of job rotation in the Land Registry. However succession planning involves an integrated approach to identify and provide the organisation's future leaders with the skills and abilities to perform effectively in any new role. To ensure the Land Registry has the capabilities to grow and be successful in the future, a structured methodology is necessary to ensure that the appropriate capability is in place to deliver success in the future. Conger and Fulmer (2003) identify five rules for a successful approach to succession planning.

1. Focus on development; integrate succession planning with leadership development to ensure that you know what skills future leaders need as well as how they can learn them.

2. Identify linchpin positions; determine which positions are essential to the organisation long-term health.

3. Make it transparent; open feedback to the individual on their performance and position on potential ladder.

4. Measure progress regularly; development is a long-term process, so its important to know whether the right people are moving at the right pace into the right jobs at the right time.

5. Flexibility; succession management systems are effective only when they respond to users' needs and when tools and process are easy to use and provide reliable and current information.

6.2 Proactive HR Management

SMI/DBG recognises the needs for a more proactive approach to HRM, 'to enable the creation of a results driven civil service'. The more proactive approach to HRM, involves strengthening of departmental management, with devolution of responsibility and accountability for HRM to line mangers, to include performance management and staff development.

Devolution to Line Managers

Successful integration of Strategic HRM requires the devolution of accountability and responsibility of HRM from the HR specialist to the line managers, it is argued '*if human resources really are so critical for the business managers, then HRM is too important to be left to operational personnel specialists*', (Storey 1995). DBG in particular highlighted the need for personnel units to reorient their activities and focus on a more strategic/developmental approach and devolve responsibility for day-to-day HR issues to line manager. The HRMWG (1997) stated that the evolving role for line managers should encapsulate activities such as training and development, recruitment and selection, and performance management. The Land Registry has started to devolve responsibility for day-today activities from the HR unit whereby line mangers perform daily administrative activities, such as attendance and annual leave records. There is, however, evidence that the Land Registry has gone further and involved line managers in more complex roles set out by the HRMWG, such as the management of performance and people development. This, although performed under PMDS, shows that the Land Registry is prepared to allow the line managers manage their people to some extent, thereby enabling managers to have greater influence and involvement with their staff. However, best practise suggests that there are three key requirements for the devolution of HRM to line management. Firstly, the training and development of managers to equip them with the appropriate skills and knowledge to deal with HRM issues. There is

evidence to show in the interviews that line management are not attaining the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with HRM issues effectively. Best practise points towards the provision of incentives for managers to take on responsibility for HRM issues. The Land Registry does not provide any incentives for line management to undertake new responsibility; it is widely believed in the organisation that this is a part of the line managers' role. Although this may be true, modern motivational theory points towards a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to motivate people to perform and repeat certain behaviours. Finally, an ethos whereby the HRM activities are visibly valued by senior management is essential. Although senior management support HRM activities in the Land Registry, they are not providing the necessary resources in training or investing in rewarding line management to perform HRM activities effectively.

Management of Performance/Results

Essential to effective implementation of proactive HRM is a strategic and integrated performance management process that sustains success in the organisation by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of individual contributors and teams. Performance management is strategic whereby it is concerned with the boarder issues facing a business to function effectively in its environment; integrated by linking or aligning the business and individual objectives to core competencies; linking different aspects of human resource management, such as development and reward, so as to achieve a coherent approach to the management of people. The Land Registry measures the performance of their employees through PMDS. The Land Registry has linked PMDS to the organisational needs by setting guidelines on performance indicators, which cascade down from the business strategy developed by senior management. These are reviewed on an ongoing basis, informally in management and team meetings, whereby feedback is circulated back to the individual and teams. PMDS performs two formal reviews per year and line management completes this process. Although this is devolving responsibility to line management to manage their own people, an opportunity for subjectivity and bias is greater for activities that cannot be measured easily. PMDS is integrated with other HR practices to the extent that development needs are clarified and provided where possible through training. If implemented properly PMDS can offer the following benefits:

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- better training and development;
- general opportunity for individuals to develop;
- job satisfaction;
- facilitate change;
- may lead to a clearer sense of direction;
- a more inclusive strategic planning process;
- help increase efficiency and reduce costs;
- sharing and influencing goals and objectives;
- honest and objective feedback which could lead to heightened morale;
- better clarity of role and work organisation.

PMDS is not about detailed measurement, but about agreeing important objectives and goals, removing inhibitors and ensuring that people have the necessary training and development to make things happen. PMDS is seen as a way of getting everyone involved in the achievement of common goals and strategic objectives during this critical period. However, a number of potential disadvantages can be highlighted:

- impossibility of measuring performance for many aspects of work;
- use of inappropriate, de-motivating measures;
- future potential misuse of the information produced in the process;
- likely imposition of top down targets - the tread mill effect;
- lack of transparency and fairness;
- may limit co-operation and flexibility;
- may be applied inconsistently;
- might stifle creativity by becoming rule bound;
- scapegoating of managers if things go wrong;
- undue pressure may be put on vulnerable groups.

Performance management is a process focused on acquiring and maintaining certain preferred behaviours while extinguishing those that are undesirable. Its underlying characteristics and primary subject matter is a person's behaviour. To make the organisation more efficient and effective by increasing staff productivity and enhancing

staff satisfaction. Finally, linking employee behaviour to prompting mechanisms that appear to evoke the behaviour. However, PMDS underlying principle is that the staff development aspects of the system should be prioritised, in doing so performance may not be managed correctly.

Training and Development

All forms of training and development, whether formal or on the job, are important as a means of enhancing the competencies and skills of staff, but also as a means of motivating staff and encouraging commitment. However, training and development in the Land Registry is predominantly conducted by the Civil Service Centre for Management and Organisational Development (COMD). Although external training is not unusual in many different sectors including the private sector, it may still have a number of negative implications for the Land Registry:

- Depending on the course, the overall cost could prove quite expensive;

- As there is no real way to know the abilities of the trainer and their subject knowledge of external training courses, there is no guarantee that sufficient skills of knowledge will be transferred or valued;

- Many courses do not have a system of assessment or standardisation of learning, so there is no set yardstick that can be guarantee that learning has been achieved to a specified standard;

- Sending employees to a training programme for one or two days would mean loss of production within the organisation;

- As sending employees on a course can prove to be a positive experience for the employee; alternatively, it can also act as an act of disapproval for the current standard of an employee's performance and the need to be trained to improve their work; and

- As most external training courses have a standardised content, this would mean that the content might not directly relate to the employees work situation, as the content would be so broad.

However, there is indication that the Land Registry are attempting to integrate the training and development process to the business needs of the organisation. Firstly, the Annual Progress Report 2002 stated that all staff are provided with customer service training, this is particularly important in such a service driven department. Altogether the Land Registry completed 3,471 training days in 2002; certain private sector firms of a similar size would struggle to achieve the same rate of days. Across the civil service spending on training and development was to increase to 4% of payroll, this is set out in Sustaining Progress. The Land Registry have committed 4% of payroll to training and development for all staff, this is verified by the Land Registry's progress report through Sustaining Progress whereby this was achieved in October 2003. For individuals to meet their full potential within an organisation, training and development must focus on the strengths and development needs of the individual concerned. It must match individuals to their roles in the organisation, through an on-going process of assessment to meet the needs of organisational and individual change.

Reward

A central component of SHRM frameworks such as *Human Resource Management: A General Managers Perspective* (Beer et al., 1984) and *Strategic Human Resource Management* (Fombrun et al., 1984) is reward. Reward is used by organisations for a number of reasons, such as:

- to motivate people to perform better or to develop their skills and competencies;

- to deliver the message that performance and competence is important; and

- it can be fair and equitable to reward people differently according to their performance, competence and contribution.

The Land Registry like all civil service organisations does not reward staff with financial or non-financial compensation of any kind. In particular, no reward-based system exists in the Land Registry. Although the organisation is limited by central policy in relation to areas such as pay and grading, it does not mean that some type of reward system could not exist in the Land Registry. There is, however, evidence that the Land Registry is trying to introduce some types of formal intrinsic reward based on merit through job enrichment and promotions. Based on a basic process model of motivation referred to as the Expectancy Theory, if employees are to be motivated, they must perceive that difference in actual performance will result in difference in rewards or outcomes. Unless organisations reward systems can provide sufficient flexibility in the ways in which people are rewarded and this is followed through, the link between high performance and obtaining goals will be undermined, for example, in a public sector context where rewards can be based on seniority rather than actual performance. Environmental Theories of motivation also indicate that behaviours must be reinforced all most immediately to ensure a physiological connection is made between behaviour and reward. However, in a public sector where decision-making and approval in a large beaucratic structures can be slow, it is difficult to accept that behaviours will be reinforced immediately on an ongoing basis in the Land Registry.

6.3 Active Enabling

In order for the Land Registry to achieve its HRM objective, it needs to be prepared for and sustain change. The active enabling requires a proactive approach to the management of change. While strategic HR planning and proactive HR management enable organisations to achieve their objectives, there is also a requirement for leadership to support the change. In addition, the professionalisation of the HR function needs to be present to support the strategic planning, and the HR function must have the power to influence and make decisions.

Professionalising the HR Function

Best practise suggests that HR departments can play a valuable role in developing strategic HRM policies that add value to the organisation. The development of such

policies requires that HR staff are proficient in a range of HRM activities such as human resource planning and performance management, but also have the ability to implement such polices. This indicates that HR personnel require both skills and knowledge but also active support of top management for the development of a strategic approach to HRM. Marchington and Wilkinson (1997) identify three core skills required by HR personnel:

- they should be capable of formulating HRM policy and procedural frameworks to ensure adherence to cooperate policy at all levels of responsibility;

- they should provide expert advice and guidance on HRM matters; and

- they should be able to undertake responsibility for the training of line managers in relation to their responsibilities for HRM.

The Land Registry is equipped with a number of competent and experienced staff in the HR unit. However, there is indication from the interviews that there is lack of understanding and awareness for the strategic issues in the organisation; in particular a lack of exposure to the private sector for personnel in the HR unit could be identified as a reason for this deficiency. Ulrich suggests that the most challenging task for senior managers in driving forward a 'new mandate for HR' is to improve the quality of the HR stafhf itself. Ulrich argues, 'when more is expected of HR staff itself, a higher quality of HR professional must be found' (1998). He argues that unless the required expertise exists, HR cannot expand its role, nor can it can be respected.

There is a significant support for a strategic approach to HRM in the Land Registry. This is demonstrated whereby the HR unit is represented at the senior management level as a member of the management committee of the organisation and whereby management decisions take into account HR issues. However, it was indicated from the interviews that the HR unit has very little resources and decision-making power. The Land Registry also provides for a strategic approach to HRM through its Statement of Strategy, whereby one of its core strategies is to 'develop and integrate human resource polices taking into account equality legislation, organisational needs and incorporating the Human Resource

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Management agenda under Strategic Management Initiative'. However, the Annual Progress Report 2002 for the Land Registry provides little evidence of an integrated approach to HRM. Unless support is translated into giving access to business information, financial resources and decision-making power, it is likely that the HR function will remain marginalised.

Change management and Leadership

Although it was indicted that Land Registry found it difficult to adjust and predict change, the organisation has learned that change is ongoing and must embrace reform. The need for change emanated from external and internal forces of change such as the boom in the property market and decentralisation. In order to achieve a more effective use of human resources, the Land Registry identified in their Statement of Strategy the need for greater flexibility and new ways of working. The Land Registry has adapted to this change through a number of reforms. For example, the organisation introduced new and difficult technology in a number of technical and specialised areas. It has developed cross-functional teams and working units to create mobility and flexibility in its management structure. Although, the Land Registry has successfully achieved these changes through a partnership process whereby there has been improved openness, transparency and communication, the political decision of decentralisation has greatly helped the organisation in its developments. To ensure successful reform in particular continuous change an organisation requires visible leadership. Leadership is required at all levels of the organisation in times of change. Leadership can enable transformation through:

- establishing a sense of urgency;

- creating powerful coalitions;

- creating a vision;
- improving communication;

- systematically planning and creating short-term wins; and

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- anchoring change in the organisation's culture.

The transformation of the Land Registry in the last number of years indicates that leadership is present in the organisation. However, there is a concern that it may be more directorial than participative. Added to this there is lack of references to leadership in any of Land Registry's Statement of Strategies and Annual Progress Reports.

Decentralisation of HR

A central concern of DBG was the need for a modernisation in HRM, through an incremental but concerted process of devolving authority from the Department of Finance. Nevertheless, there has been little progress in decentralisation for specific HR practises in the Land Registry. The Department of Finance controls policy decisions in the areas such as recruitment, pay and grading. A concern for the Land Registry is the inflexibilities in the current pay system whereby it can hinder the department's ability to deploy resources flexibly to meet strategic priorities and business needs. In relation to other HR policies, such as promotions and terms and conditions of employment, the HR unit in the Land Registry acknowledge that progress has been made in decentralising to line departments. However, there is an indication that further decentralisation will take place to HR line units through new legalisation and best practise. The Department of Finance envisages a new role as one of setting board parameters in relation to key areas such as recruitment, performance management and disciplinary procedures, and acting as an advisor if difficult cases arise. It also sees itself as facilitating the change process, however its ability to be a facilitator may be hampered by its continued involvement in ongoing issues for departments such as staffing, grading, recruitment and discipline. Until such time that all HR activities are decentralised form the centre, there will be limits to the extent to which the Land Registry can develop a strategically integrated policies and practices.

6.4 Summary

From the discussion and analysis for the main research results and finding, there is clear evidence to support the following:

- The Land Registry has a number of strategies in the Statement of Strategy 2002-2005. These set a clear direction for human resource management function within the organisation. These strategies are encouraging to the extent that they refer to a number of elements of a HR strategy such as performance management and development, change management, and the introduction of competencies. Nevertheless of a published policy setting out specific HR strategies for the Land Registry does not exist. The development, publication and circulation of a written HR Strategy represents an important way of documenting how HR objectives can be aligned with objectives contained in the Land Registry's Statement of Strategy and business plans.

- The Land Registry has little control or power in the decision making process of recruitment and selection and determination of competencies. The CSC on behalf of the Land Registry undertakes external recruitment and selection competitions. Staffing complements are set by the Department of Finance and in some cases may change as a result of discussions between the Land Registry/Finance and civil service trade unions. This limits the capacity of the Land Registry to recruit and attract competent staff that meets the organisations business requirements.

- The Land Registry has made a number of steps to integrate a promotion system based on merit. This has been achieved through the use of PMDS and an increase of competitive based selection. However this was provided for in the Sustaining Progress agreement, which linked benchmarking, and general round payments to agreement on a higher proportion of merit based promotions.

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- The Land Registry is aware that there is greater need for an approach to succession planning through management and leadership development. However there is no evidence to support that a policy of practices exists in the Land Registry for a structured methodology to succession planning other that the use of PMDS as a development system.

- The Land Registry has started to devolve responsibility for day-today activities from the HR unit whereby line mangers perform daily administrative activities, such as attendance and annual leave records. There is evidence that the Land Registry has gone further and involved line managers in more complex roles set out by the HRMWG, such as the management of performance and people development through the use of PMDS. Although senior management support HRM activities in the Land Registry, the necessary resources in training or an investment in rewards for the line management to perform HRM activities effectively are inadequate.

- The Land Registry measures the performance of their employees through PMDS. However, PMDS underlying principle is that the staff development aspects of the system should be prioritised, in doing so performance may not be managed correctly.

- Training and development in the Land Registry is predominantly conducted externally by the COMD. Although external training is not unusual in many different sectors including the private sector, it may still have a number of negative implications for the Land Registry. There is an indication that the Land Registry are attempting to integrate the training and development process to the business needs of the organisation through an increase in the training budget, and the introduction of customer service training classes for all new inductees.

- The Land Registry does not reward staff with financial or non-financial compensation. If employees are to be motivated, they must perceive that difference in actual performance will result in difference in rewards or outcomes. This can be achieved through a set of flexible extrinsic and intrinsic rewards.

- The Land Registry is equipped with a number of competent and experienced staff in the HR unit. However, there is an indication from the interviews that there is lack of understanding and awareness for the strategic issues in the organisation; in particular a lack of exposure to the private sector for personnel in the HR unit could be identified as a reason for this deficiency. There is a significant support for a strategic approach to HRM in the Land Registry. This is demonstrated whereby the HR unit is represented at the senior management level as a member of the management committee of the organisation and whereby management decisions take into account HR issues

- The Land Registry has experienced change emanated from external and internal forces. The Land Registry has responded to the change by implementing greater flexibility and new ways of working trough the use of technology and diverse management structures. To sustain change requires visible leadership, however evidence from the interviews and secondary documentation indicates that the Land Registry use of leadership is insufficient.

- There has been little progress in decentralisation from the Department of Finance for specific HR practises in the Land Registry. A concern for the Land Registry is the inflexibilities in the current pay system whereby it can hinder the department's ability to deploy resources flexibly to meet strategic priorities and business needs. However, there is an indication that further decentralisation will take place to HR line units through new legalisation and best practise in the near future

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter Objectives

This Chapter,

- sums up a final conclusion based on research results and findings; and
- makes a number of recommendations for the Land Registry.

7.1 Conclusion

The historical development of HRM has evolved from a series of fragmented personnel practises to a holistic or process view of HRM, at the heart of which is the development of people focused strategies to generate organisational capability to drive strategic goals. The models discussed provided a view of HRM, which is integrated into the strategic and business planning process of an organisation. While each model may differ in terms of the approach of HRM as a management tool, they all share an underlying holistic and strategic view of HRM. The main response to these, while questioning the scope and level to which a strategic approach is taking place, share the view that decisions on HR are strategically important to the business.

Rising public demand for a more effective and efficient civil service in Ireland required the government to respond. This ongoing change in Ireland coincided with an unexpected wave of international state-centre reforms, generally termed New Public Management Theory (NPM), which initiated trends that swept around the world in the 1990's. These included privatisation, deregulation, and reorganisation to encourage competition among departments, the use of 'customer' as a metaphor for describing users of government services and an emphasis on performance management. The intent of these actions was to improve government efficiency. The government responded with two policy documents, Strategic Management Initiative and Delivering Better Government in the mid 1990's. These two policy documents set vision and agenda for change with significant emphasis on developing greater strategic capacity on departments to help the government facilitate economic and social development. It proposed reforms consistent with matching the skills of individuals with the needs of departments, and the creation of a more flexible workforce. DBG in particular outlined reforms to the existing personnel function, such as moving from being mainly administrative in nature to taking

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on more of a development and strategic role, and from central regulation and control of the HR function to devolution of autonomy and responsibility to departmental managers. It required each department to develop a HRM strategy linked to the overall strategy for the organisation. However in a public service context the integration of a strategic approach to HRM may be problematic. A range of factors including conflicting objectives, multiple stakeholders, short-term political pressures and existing structures complicates the strategy-making process. The strong role of the Departments of Finance may constrain the autonomy of line departments whereby individual departments will be unable to implement distinct policies based on business needs. However, decentralisation of policies such as pay bargaining can create problems, in which changes agreed in one department may create discontent in another. Finally, the structure of a large bureaucratic organisation such as in the pubic sector, in which there is often a centralised personnel function, may also reduce the ability of line managers to take the responsibility for HRM as envisaged through SMI/DBG.

The Land Registry is a section of the Irish Civil Service and thus is a part of a hierarchical organisation with common administrative grading and pay structures across thirty Departments and Offices. The Land Registry is a multi-disciplined organisation with a staff of approximately 600, comprising legal, technical and administrative personnel. The launch of the SMI in 1994 set the agenda for change in the Land Registry with a focus on developing strategic capability to implement government policy and facilitate long-term economic and social development. The policy document DBG in 1996 sought to develop this capability further by setting out the vision and road map for change. The extent to which the Land Registry have integrated a strategic approach was examined under a research framework constructed from an analysis of the SMI/DBG reforms, a holistic view of the strategic approach to HRM described by Humpherys and Worth-Bulter and Brockbanks Strategic Human Resource Management Framework (1999) to guide the development of questioning.

The result and finding of the research indicate that the level of integration of a strategic approach to HRM is low in the Land Registry. Aside from the absence of a specific written HR policy, the evidence shows that recruitment, promotion selection, performance management and training are not sufficiently integrated and aligned to the business needs. The Land Registry has a clear direction for human resource management

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function within the organisation. The Land Registry has a number of strategies that are encouraging to the extent that they refer to a number of elements of a HR strategy such as performance management and development, change management, and the introduction of competencies. Nevertheless of a published policy setting out specific HR strategies for the Land Registry does not exist. The development, publication and circulation of a written HR Strategy represents an important way of documenting how HR objectives can be aligned with objectives contained in the Land Registry's Statement of Strategy and business plans. The HR Strategy represents a key method of ensuring that the HR objectives are linked to the business objectives across the Land Registry.

The Land Registry has little control or power in the decision making process of recruitment and selection and determination of competencies. The CSC on behalf of the Land Registry undertakes external recruitment and many promotion competitions. Staffing complements are set by the Department of Finance and in some cases may change as a result of discussions between the Land Registry/Finance and civil service trade unions. This limits the capacity of the Land Registry to recruit and attract competent staff that meets the organisations business requirements.

Through the use of PMDS and an increase of competitive based selection the Land Registry has made a number of steps to integrate a promotion system based on merit. However this was provided for in the Sustaining Progress agreement, which linked benchmarking, and general round payments to agreement on a higher proportion of merit based promotions. It is not fully integrated to the extent that it supports or complements other HR practises such as performance management and training and development.

Good strategic HR policy would require fully competitive promotion systems and promotion on seniority which it is clear will still be part of their promotion system is not compatible with this. It is also evident that the PMDS system is not currently integrated with promotion, performance/under performance and the award of annual increments. While the Sustaining Progress agreement indicates that this is planned over 2004/2005 it's absence currently is an impediment to the achievements of Land Registry's objectives.

There is no evidence to support that a policy of practices exists in the Land Registry for a structured methodology to succession planning. Developing a culture in which career progression and development of staff is prioritised represents an important

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retention and motivation mechanism. It is an opportunity to examine the skills, abilities, and personality types that will succeed in a job and then identify the individuals that would best fit the mode. This type of planning allows the organisation to handle the many unpredictable events that occur in business. It provides the opportunity to take a skills inventory, become aware to the elements of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses and can ensure that the right people are in place to accomplish the organisations goals.

The Land Registry has successfully devolved responsibility for various day-today activities from the HR units as envisaged in DBG. There is evidence that the Land Registry has gone further and involved line managers in more complex roles, such as the management of performance and people development through the use of PMDS. Devolving responsibility and autonomy to line managers is essential in order to enhance the management and development of staff. Considerable investment is required in training and development of management to achieve necessary cultural and practical change.

The Land Registry measures the performance of their employees through PMDS, a performance management system designed specifically for the Irish Civil Service. However, PMDS does appear to place too much emphasis on the staff development aspects of the system and in doing so performance may not be managed correctly.

Training and development in the Land Registry is predominantly conducted externally by the COMD. Although external training is not unusual in many different sectors including the private sector, it may still have a number of negative implications for the Land Registry. There is an indication that the Land Registry are attempting to integrate the training and development process to the business needs of the organisation through an increase in the training budget, and the introduction of customer service training classes for all new inductees.

The Land Registry does not reward staff with financial or non-financial compensation. If employees are to be motivated, they must perceive that difference in actual performance will result in difference in rewards or outcomes. This can be achieved through a set of flexible extrinsic and intrinsic rewards.

While Land Registry do not have sufficient flexibility where a common pay and grading system effectively controlled by the Department of Finance applies, nonetheless

there are opportunities in the area of merit awards and non pay rewards that they have not sought to use.

The Land Registry is equipped with a number of competent and experienced staff in the HR unit. However, there is an indication from the interviews that there is lack of understanding and awareness for the strategic issues in the organisation; in particular a lack of exposure to the private sector for personnel in the HR unit could be identified as a reason for this deficiency. There is a significant support for a strategic approach to HRM in the Land Registry. This is demonstrated whereby the HR unit is represented at the senior management level as a member of the management committee of the organisation and whereby management decisions take into account HR issues

The Land Registry has experienced change emanated from external and internal forces. The Land Registry has responded to the change by implementing greater flexibility and new ways of working through the use of technology and diverse management structures. To sustain change requires visible leadership, however evidence for the interviews and secondary documentation indicates that the Land Registry use of leadership is insufficient. These indicated that leadership was not as prominent and visible as it could be and that the style of leadership was not inclusive.

There has been little progress in decentralisation from the Department of Finance for specific HR practises in the Land Registry. A concern for the Land Registry is the inflexibilities in the current pay system whereby it can hinder the department's ability to deploy resources flexibly to meet strategic priorities and business needs. However, there is an indication that further decentralisation will take place to HR line units through new legalisation and best practise in the near future.

The Sustaining Progress agreement provides for major change in the areas of performance/dismissal and recruitment. Following the enactment of legislation – dismissal will become the responsibility of the Head of Department/Office in place of the current arrangement where dismissal for all Civil Servants is by Government only. Legislation will also allow Departments to carry out their own recruitment under licence from the Civil Service Commission. Both of these will allow Land Registry to better align their HR strategy to business needs.

Overall, the findings highlight that limited progress has been made in achieving a strategic approach to HRM as set out SMI/DBG and SHRM literature reviewed in this

research paper. At the same time, progress has been made by the Land Registry in developing a more proactive approach to HRM through positive policies and practices such as training and development and devolution of responsibilities to the line managers. However, the Land Registry like all civil service departments must adhere to centralised policy. This is creating a lack of flexibility to recruit and retain competent staff and deal with under-performance. There is evidence among those interviewed for a considerable level of continuing commitment to change. Change is a normal and an ongoing aspect of business, but one most people find difficult. HR can play an important role in the Land Registry by facilitating change through monitoring and addressing resistance to change and ensuring that people issues are considered in the business planning process. Within the Irish Civil Service, an often repeated criticism of SMI/DBG is that it has lead to reform fatigue. It is therefore important that the HR unit in the Land Registry identify, support and communicate the case for civil service reform and modernisation.

7.2 Recommendations

Based on the literature review and the analysis of my research findings, a number of key recommendations can be made to facilitate the development of a strategic approach to HRM in the Land Registry:

1. The land Registry needs to complete the development and publication of specific HR Strategy for the organisation. A departmental HR Strategy, together with the organisations business plan, represents important ways of setting out commitments in respect to the development of appropriate HR policies and procedures.

2. Formal systems need to put in place to ensure the ongoing and effective monitoring of the implementation of HR strategies. This involves putting in place measurable indicators and targets against HR objectives.

3. Subject to the Land Registry adhering to a code of practise governing recruitment I believe that the Land Registry should have discretion to recruit directly from the labour market. The move towards devolved recruitment should allow the Land Registry to develop a more flexible and adaptable work force.

4. There is a need for the Land Registry to develop an imaginative system for rewarding performance. An integrated reward system based on · the development and implementation of a reward-based system using both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators is recommended. A reward system will help the Land Registry to motivate staff to perform better or to develop their skills and competencies. It will deliver the message that performance and competence is important and it can be a fair and equitable to reward people differently according to their performance, competence and contribution.

5. The PMDS system needs to be fully utilised to underpin promotion systems, the award of increments on salary scales, and individual performance/under performance. At present management in the Land Registry have few tools with which to manage

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problems relating to under-performance and persistent non-performance. To strengthen their role in managing performance problems I believe that all new appointments in the Land Registry should be placed on one-year probationary contracts. It is essential that method for a rigorous and formal assessment of performance be in place to facilitate the management of performance.

6. Considerable investment on the training and development of line management is required to ensure an HRM issues are dealt with effectively. This will also assist in facilitating future cultural and practical change.

7. Leadership and managerial capacity has been identified as a critical enabler of change. The Land Registry needs to develop further management and leadership programmes. This can be facilitated through PMDS but also a policy of inter-department and private sector transfers.

8. An assessment of the PMDS system as an effective method of measuring performance is required. The PMDS places too much emphasises on the development needs of staff and in doing so the performance management aspect of PMDS may not be supervised correctly.

9. The Land Registry needs to introduce 100% fully competitive promotion systems based on the abilities and results of staff. An effective promotion policy can be a very important strategy to build towards defined skill base in the Land Registry. Added to this is the need to develop an integrated approach to career management and succession planning. An integrated approach to succession planning could identify and provide the Lang Registry's future leaders with the skills and abilities to perform effectively.

10. Further decentralisation of the HR function from the Departments of Finance is required. The Land Registry must be able to deal with issues and make decisions relating to pay, grading and recruitment. Until such time the Land Registry's ability

to deploy resources flexibly to meet strategic priorities and business needs will be inadequate.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire for Research Interviews

Section 1. Strategic Human Resource Planning

Q1. Does your organisation have a vision? How did you translate this vision into a business/organisational strategy and communicate it to your staff.

Q2. Do you have a human resource strategy and how does this relate to your business and strategic planning.

Q3. How do you determine your present and future recruitment needs, do you recruit as an organisational unit?

Q4. Do you have clear definitions of competencies and capabilities that the organisation requires to succeed? Do you use these definitions in your screening process, for example competency-based interviewing techniques?

Q5. What are your promotional criteria and is it based on cultural, technical or results?
   * Past or present * Performance or fit * Competence or politics * Visible or cloaked

Q6. What is your approach to career management and how has this differed with the introduction of SMI/DBG?

Q7. In your opinion, how can the HR strategy be improved in your organisation?

Section 2. Proactive Human Resource Management

Q8. Do you have a policy or plan to develop responsibility and accountability of HRM to line managers and have you established any incentives for line managers to take the responsibility for HRM issues?

Q9. What type of training and development for managers do you provide or believe is required if line managers are to deal with HRM issues effectively?

Q10. Do you measure the performance of your staff and how is the performance management system linked to your business objectives?

Q11. Is the performance management system visible, timely, controlled, understood easily and can it be compared?

Q12. Do you have a reward system based on the performance of employees and are results balanced with behaviours? Is the reward system visible, timely, revisable and durable?

Q13. How do you identify your development needs of staff and what does your training focus on, content or process?

Section 3. Active Enabling

Q14. How has the organisation prepared for change and how do you sustain the change?

Q15. How do you use leadership to make change happen and do you develop leadership as part of the management strategy?

Q16. How has the structure of the organisation changed and have you developed new approaches to working?

Q17. What does the HR function within your organisation spend the most time on and how do you view the role of the HR function within your organisation?
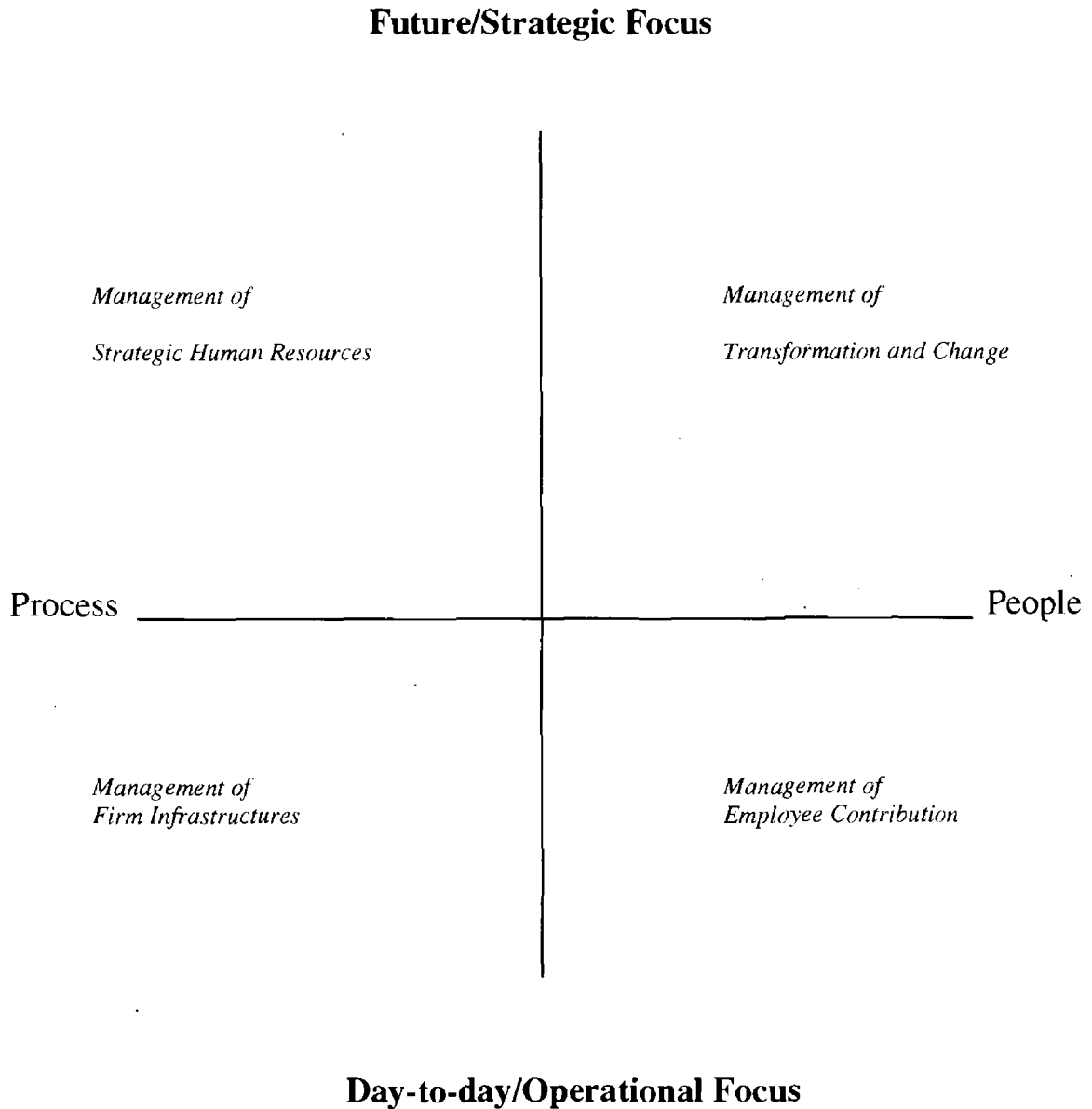
Q18. Do you believe that there is support from the top management for a strategic approach to HR within your organisation?

Q19. What skills and knowledge do you believe are required for an effective HR function within your organisation, and are these present?

Q20.What factors hinder the successful integration of strategic HR within your organisation?

Appendix 2

Ulrich's, 1996: Multiple –Role Model Framework for HRM

Future/Strategic Focus

Management of

Strategic Human Resources

Management of

Transformation and Change

Process _____|_____ People

Management of
Firm Infrastructures

Management of
Employee Contribution

Day-to-day/Operational Focus

Appendix 3

A strategic, holistic framework for effective HRM

Strategic HR Planning	Proactive HR Management	Active Enabling

Global Objectives	Devolving Accountability	Strengthening Leadership

Function Specific Objectives	Managing for Results	Developing Line Management

Imminent &Future

Needs of the service

Personnel Development/ Training

Promotion

Deployment

No Change

Proffessionalising HR

Recruitment & Selection

Partnership

Deployment ↔ Development

Flexible Working

Part-time
Job-share
Annualised

Team Woking
Multi-skilling

Contract

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