"The Feasibility of Devolving HR Functions to Line Managers in the
Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform"

By Martina Colville

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National College of Ireland
Mayor Street, IFSC, Dublin 1

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Authorship Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in whole or in part for assessment for any academic purpose other than in fulfilment for that stated above.

Signed: _Martina Colville_

Date: _18/07/08_

Student Number: 03282988

Acknowledgements

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The Feasibility of Devolving HR Functions to Line Managers in the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform

Abstract

Research issue In 2006 the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform published its Human Resource Management Strategy. In Section 8.3 of the Strategy one of the key objectives is to "Devolve the relevant HR functions to line managers in a structured, supportive and planned way and in consultation with Partnership". There was, however, no exploration of the issues around devolving HR functions in the civil service in general and no research conducted into the capacity and capability of line managers to take on the functions in DJELR in particular. The perception was that line managers were too busy with their operational responsibilities to take on what they would see as additional responsibilities relating to their staff and that they were not adequately trained or knowledgeable enough to fulfil "a HR role" effectively.

This dissertation examines the feasibility of devolving HR functions to line managers in DJELR and attempts to ascertain if the capacity and capability exists within this group to take on HR functions.

Design/methodology/approach A quantitative methodological approach in the form of an online self-completing questionnaire was taken, focusing on the middle line management group in DJELR.

Findings The capacity exists within the middle line management group in DJELR to take on HR functions but the research raises issues about the capability of the group in relation to undertaking those functions successfully.

Practical Implications The research informs the decision about devolving HR functions to line managers and suggests that it is feasible to devolve HR functions to line managers as they have the capacity to take on the functions. However, particular issues, notably in the area of training, need to be addressed prior to implementation as the capability does not exist within the group currently to knowledgeably and consistently carry out HR functions.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1   HRM Integration and Devolvement

A vast pool of literature relating to human resource management (HRM) with numerous
theories and suggested models for the HRM function has evolved over the last two decades.
The difficulty for the Human Resource (HR) practitioner quite often is to identify the key
issues and to adopt the best practice HRM model for their own particular organisation.
Emerging from the HRM debate in the literature is the importance given to the integration
of HRM into the business and corporate strategy and devolvement of HRM to line
managers instead of being led solely by personnel specialists (Guest 1987; Brewster &
Larsen 1992; Schuler 1992; Budhwar & Sparrow 1997; Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b;
Morley et al 2006).

1.2   HRM Reform in the Civil Service

The challenge for the civil service and individual departments within that service is to
adopt an HRM model which best fits its business and its structure. It has been argued by
some (Tompkins 2002) that Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) cannot
simply be transferred to the public sector without tailoring its design and implementation to
the unique characteristics of the public sector organisation. To date the civil service as a
whole has not critically examined the best HRM model to implement but rather has taken
bits and pieces of the HR agenda and implemented them haphazardly in different
departments and offices. An example of this piecemeal approach is the devolving of HR
functions to line managers. *Delivering Better Government* (1996) identified the need for
personnel units to "re-orientate their activities and focus to take a more strategic and
developmental approach". In practice this would imply a range of changes including *inter
alia* the devolution from HR units of responsibility for day-to-day personnel matters to line
managers. In practice, over ten years later, civil service departments have implemented
HRM reform in an inconsistent manner and while a small number have implemented, for
example, devolution of HR some functions to line managers, the majority have not.

1.3   HRM Reform in DJELR

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (DJELR) has as a stated objective in
its *Human Resource Management Strategy* (2006) to "Devolve the relevant HR functions to
line managers in a structured, supportive and planned way and in consultation with
Partnership". Despite this Strategy being published in 2006 no action has been taken to
implement the objective to date.

1.4   Purpose of Dissertation

It could be argued that this inaction may actually be a good thing in this case because it
gives an opportunity at this juncture to explore the issues involved prior to implementation.
Historically, one of the weaknesses in the civil service generally and in DJELR in
particular, is that initiatives are implemented without first researching and evaluating the

proposal. The evidence should be gathered to enable a decision to be made as to whether it is feasible or sensible to implement particular policies or procedures.

This dissertation will examine the feasibility of devolving HR functions to line managers in DJELR and ascertain if the capacity and capability exists within the line manager grouping to take on HR functions. The perception is that line managers are too busy with their Divisional responsibilities to take on what they would see as additional responsibilities relating to their staff and that they are not adequately trained or knowledgeable enough to fulfil "a HR role" effectively. According to Renwick (2003) "a structural hole may arise if organisations adopt a "devolved" HR approach – as people management is not completed properly either by the line or HR". The purpose of the research is to try to identify if there is the potential for that structural hole to appear in DJELR by devolving HR functions. More specifically, a number of hypotheses will be posed and tested in researching the feasibility of devolving HR functions to line managers:

Hypothesis one: Line managers do not have the time and are not willing to take on HR functions.
Hypothesis two: Line managers do not have a good knowledge of HR policies and procedures.
Hypothesis three: Devolving HR to line managers will increase their knowledge of HR issues.
Hypothesis four: Devolving HR to line managers will speed up response times to issues raised by staff.

1.5   Research Respondent Group

The research will focus on the three grades in DJELR that would be principally responsible for devolved HR, were it to happen; the Higher Executive Officer (HEO), Administrative Officer (AO) and the Assistant Principal Officer (APO) grades. This is the middle management grouping in DJELR with greatest responsibility for management of staff. The APO is the most senior of the three grades with HEO junior to both AO and APO. The AO grade is a graduate recruitment grade and by virtue of this can be less experienced than those in the HEO grade.

1.6   Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review in Chapter 2 will examine the broad HRM agenda and in particular how HRM has evolved in the civil service and DJELR context. It will look specifically at HR integration and the issue of HR devolvement with a particular focus on the research relating to line managers and their involvement with HR. The focus of the literature review will then narrow to the issue of line management capacity and capability in relation to taking on HR functions arising from devolvement of HR. The review will attempt to identify any gaps in the research particularly in the specific context of the public and civil services.

1.7   Research Methodology

The research method will be quantitative and will be outlined in detail in Chapter 3 but will be based on a self-completion questionnaire. Ideally, the quantitative research would be supported by a qualitative element but the limitations of time, resource constraints and lack of experience in qualitative methodologies will not support this approach. However, this could be done at a later date and, in fact, the structure of the qualitative element might be better informed on foot of the findings of the quantitative piece of work.

1.8   Analysis of Results and Recommendations

Chapter 4 will focus on the results of the research, analysing the information particularly in relation to the hypotheses that have been postulated and with a view to informing the recommendations which will be set out in Chapter 5. The recommendations will include the implications for policy and practice in DJELR.

1.9   Limitations and Further Areas of Research

The research for this study is site specific in that it focuses on DJELR only. However, the survey could be replicated across other Departments in the civil service. The research also omitted the technical and professional grouping and focused on the administrative middle line management group. It would be worth while surveying this group to see if their attitude to HR devolvement would be similar to the administrative grades.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

As identified in Chapter 1, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine the feasibility of devolving HR functions to line managers in DJELR, by examining if the capacity and capability exists within the group, to take on the additional HR functions. The civil service modernisation agenda has, at its core, reform of HRM. The majority of Departments make reference in their Statements of Strategy to the importance of SHRM and set out in Action Plans and Business Plans their proposals for modernising human resource management practice and "integrating" HRM into the business of the Department. Arising out of this modernising agenda is the specific objective: devolution of HRM functions.

This chapter will examine the literature relating to the broad HRM agenda and in particular how HRM has evolved in the civil service and DJELR context. It will look specifically at HR integration and the issue of HR devolvement with a particular focus on the research relating to line managers and their involvement with HR. The focus of the literature review will then narrow to the issue of line management capacity and capability in relation to taking on HR functions arising from devolvement of HR and will look at the research which might or might not support the hypotheses postulated for this piece of research. The review will attempt to identify any gaps in the research particularly in the specific context of the public and civil services.

2.2   Personnel Management to HRM

The last three decades have seen the evolution of HRM as the preferred approach to people management and a move away from personnel practice. Storey (2001) defines HRM as "a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques". The emphasis in HRM is on human capital, the staff in organisations.

Although it has been suggested by some authors that HRM may be no more than old-style personnel management with a new name (Gunnigle & Flood 1990; Lawton & Rose 1994, p. 114; Legge 1995), there are key features of HRM which distinguish it from personnel management. Storey (2001) suggested that HRM compared to the traditional personnel management entails "a more integrated involvement with the formulation of business strategies; greater co-ordination in the approach to devising people policies" He also suggested that it is "more proactive" and involves "a higher priority for people management policies than in the past". According to Guest and Hoque (1994) "the key is strategic integration" and they expanded on this further by noting that "the personnel strategy must fit the business strategy, the personnel policies must be fully integrated with each other and the values of line managers must be sufficiently integrated or aligned with the personnel policy and practice" They concluded that where these elements were achieved "there is growing evidence that a distinctive set of human resource practices results in superior performance". This debate led Purcell (2001) to conclude that "integration with strategy is

central to all models of HRM and virtually all authors are agreed that this is the distinctive feature of HRM compared with personnel".

While there appears from the literature to be a consensus that HRM involves a more integrated approach to people management what is less clear is the model that defines HRM. Morley et al (2006) suggest that there "is an increasing proliferation of HR approaches at enterprise level with no convergence to any single model of HR types". This makes sense in the context of different organisations, operating in different industries and contexts with different constraints and demands. There is an argument that the experience of HRM in the public sector is different to that in the private sector and while there is not a huge body of research in the area of the public sector there has been some work done over the last number of years and this research will be explored further throughout this dissertation.

2.3   HRM and the Public Service

Government departments and agencies do not operate in competitive markets and thus do not develop business strategies in the same sense that their private sector counterparts do. They also do not enjoy the same level of autonomy that private sector organisations do to alter their personnel practices or to provide performance incentives to employees. Matheson (2003, p. 30) suggested in a paper for the OECD on modernising public sector employment that, "the fundamental purpose of the public sector is government, not management. Government requires that a great deal of attention be paid to fundamental values like fairness, equity, justice and social cohesion to maintain confidence in the governmental and political system as a whole and managerial considerations while important must be considered secondary".

In Chapter 1, reference was made to Tompkins (2002) as he argued that SHRM cannot simply be transferred to the public sector without tailoring its design and implementation to the unique characteristics of the public sector organisation. This seems to fit with Morley and colleagues assertion that there are different HR models for different enterprises (Morley et al 2006). Shelley and Grey (2006) stated that "it is implicit that modernisation of working practices and people management practices in the context of public management reform means a move towards HRM". This and the views of other authors such as Brown (2004) and Farnham (2004) led Harrow (2004) to conclude that, if an appropriate modernisation context exists, HRM can lead to the realisation of values such as "modernisation...competition and improvement...quality...benchmarking and best practice....innovation...consumerism...evidence-based provision and practice" and "accountability and openness". The consensus appears to be, therefore, that modernisation of the public service effectively drives a HRM agenda while HRM effectively equips staff and organisations to deal with modernisation. Brown (2004), speaking of the experience in Queensland, stated that "The adoption of HRM paralleled the extensive public sector managerial restructuring and reform programme".

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2.4 HRM and the Irish Civil Service

While the Irish civil service has not experienced the radical restructuring experienced by the public service in the UK or in Australia, countries in which restructuring was a key driver of the HR agenda in the public service, it has been involved in a programme of modernisation for just over ten years.

The civil modernisation programme began with *Delivering Better Government* (1996) which, amongst other things, identified the need for personnel units to "re-orientate their activities and focus to take a more strategic and developmental approach". *The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (2000) and *Sustaining Progress* (2003), the national partnership agreements, both identified the importance of integrated HRM in the delivery of public service modernisation.

Despite these drivers, however, O' Riordan (2004) argued that moving from policy to implementation has proven to be an ongoing challenge in the HR area. She noted that, PA Consulting, in their review of the civil service modernisation programme in 2002 (PA Consulting Group 2002) concluded that while policy initiatives have been developed, the general perception across departments/offices is that the fundamental changes anticipated in *Delivering Better Government* (1996) have not as yet taken place and that "many managers are still concerned at what they consider to be their lack of effective connection with the HR agenda......moving from policy to implementation remains problematic". O' Riordan (2004) suggested that there is a range of options available to departments that wish to develop a more strategic approach to HRM. This could include giving line managers greater responsibility with regard to staff management reviews, through provision of training, through conducting skills audits and through succession planning. Yet it remains that, with only a few exceptions, these options have not yet been explored.

The exceptions in the civil service are departments such as Social & Family Affairs (SFA), Enterprise Trade & Employment and the Revenue Commissioners. These Departments have attempted to move from policy to implementation in the HR area, including devolving some of the HR functions to their line managers. However, even these Departments have limited the extent to which HR functions have been devolved. While they have devolved more responsibility than other Departments it still revolves around approval of various leave options etc. whereas the people management issues have not been devolved. The Revenue Commissioners have assigned a task group to look at devolving HR functions to line managers but have not done any research to see if their line management has the capacity and capability to take on those functions. Neither has a review been done by any of the Departments in relation to the success or otherwise of the partial devolvement undertaken so far.

2.5 HRM and DJELR

In the context of the civil service, DJELR is considered to be a medium Department with circa 2,300 staff employed directly. This figure does not include staff of An Garda Siochana or the Irish Prison Service. DJELR has as its core function to maintain and enhance community, security and equality for the people of Ireland. However, arising out

of and in addition to this core function it has a large number of agencies and offices operating under its" remit with loosely aligned but separate aims and roles to the main Department. For example, the National Disability Authority, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, the Equality Authority, the Data Protection Commissioner, the staffing of tribunals such as Morris and Barr to name but some of the twenty one different offices and agencies.

Unlike some of the other big Departments mentioned above, such as Revenue and SFA, it is only now that DJELR is moving from policy to implementation in relation to HR. The Department published its first *Human Resource Management Strategy* in April 2006 a full ten years after *Delivering Better Government* (1996). In both the *Statement of Strategy 2005 to 2007* (2005) for the Department and in its *Human Resource Management Strategy* (2006) DJELR has identified devolution of HR functions to line managers as one of the key steps in the move to SHRM.

2.6   Line management participation in HRM

According to Brewster and Larsen (1992) integration can be defined as "the degree to which HRM issues are considered part of the formulation of the business strategy" and devolvement is defined as "the degree to which HRM practices involve and give responsibility to line managers rather than personnel specialists". As far back as 1984, Fombrum and colleagues argued that "any attempt to re-design the role of human resource management function requires the line's participation since most of the activities of selection, appraisal, reward and development are prerogatives of the line organisation" (Fombrum, Tichy & Devanna 1984). In relation to devolvement, it was later suggested by Andersen and colleagues that line managers would then have "direct and frequent contact with employees and a capacity to understand, motivate, control and respond quickly to employees" (Andersen, Cooper & Jiuhua Zhu 2005). When Andersen and colleagues referred to devolvement, they were referring to delegation of HR practices such as performance assessment, recruitment and selection and training of employees. But they also postulated that devolvement would enable line managers to assist HR managers in understanding "front-line business problems" and would "increase the ability of HR managers to contribute ideas for change at a corporate level", points previously noted by authors such as Mohrman and Lawler (1998, p. 443-4) and Ulrich (1998, p. 125-6). Jackson and Schuler described it quite well (2000, p. 25) when they referred to line managers as adopting a "partnership approach" in a "HR triad" between employees and the HR department.

In spite of the views described by the authors above, very little attention has been paid to the impact of changing these responsibilities upon the roles, functions and lives of line managers and to assessing if devolvement actually works in practice. McConville (2006) stated that "an extensive trawl through numerous literature sources has shown that with only a few exceptions.....the lack of research attention paid to this matter is almost embarrassing". This led her to explore this issue amongst line managers in public services. She found that line managers welcomed the involvement in HRM which was in contrast to many previous studies, mostly in the private sector (Rowley 1999). However, she also found that devolvement of HRM adds to an already substantial workload for line managers

and this ended up becoming a source of strain. Line managers noted that they did not feel that they had received adequate training, they did not feel ownership of their decisions and they were not truly integrated at a strategic level within the organisation.

A key concern and the subject of much debate is how to strike the balance of responsibilities for the management of people between the HR department and line managers. As noted earlier, advocates of devolvement believe that certain positive effects will follow including greater flexibility and timeliness in decision making and improved line-staff relations. In contrast, authors such as Thornhill and Saunders (1998) argued that the absence of a designated HR specialist role would actually result in quite a negative consequence. To add further complexity, authors such as Currie and Procter (2001) and Jackson and Schuler (2000) have suggested that rather than a devolvement of responsibilities, what in fact is needed is a "partnership" or "triad".

Larsen and Brewster (2003) found that in the experience of many organisations across Europe where devolvement had occurred, it is not long before the HR departments find it necessary to start monitoring the line managers' actions and line managers start asking for HR specialists to help with "exceptional" cases. The authors noted that before long "what was meant to be devolvement of authority begins to look rather like the previous pattern". They found that many European organisations are still centralised in many aspects of HRM, with the most common pattern being the sharing of responsibilities between HR specialists and line managers.

A review of the literature to this juncture in relation to line participation in HRM suggests that there are mixed views as to whether their participation produces successful outcomes or not. This suggests, still further, that any proposal to devolve should be well thought through and planned. In that context, exploration of the capacity and the capability of line management in DJELR to carry out HR functions is a good starting point in that process.

Understanding who, in an organisation, the term line management refers to is also important in addressing the research issue and this is explored more fully in this section.

2.6.1 Line management and middle line management

McConville and Holden (1999, p. 408) and McConville (2006, p. 639) suggest that "In organisations with traditional hierarchical structures it is a simple matter to identify the most senior managers as those who define missions and formulate strategy. Likewise, those who control the daily detail of working practices on the shop floor can be recognised as first-line managers whatever their title". They noted that middle managers are often difficult to distinguish, as "the boundaries between levels of hierarchy are often blurred". Similarly, Della-Rocca (1992) suggested that middle managers "hold a vicarious position on behalf of senior managers, playing a co-ordinating role, but with procedurally limited autonomy". Indeed, the expression "middle manager" evolves from what Kanter and Stein (1979) referred to as their "middleness" and "from their position in the organisation hierarchy". These authors described "the time scale and scope of decision making processes" for middle managers as "neither strategic nor routine". Dopson and colleagues (1992) went as far as to say that "middle management is a place where nobody really wants

to be ......being either a staging post on the road from supervisor to executive or an equally undesirable cul-de-sac for those whose careers will progress no further".

2.6.2   Line management in the civil service

The civil service operates a traditional hierarchical structure, readily recognisable to all staff. O' Riordan (2004) defined a line manager as any civil servant with staff management responsibilities. This definition would cover any grade from Staff Officer to Secretary General. For the purposes of this study the focus will be on middle line management with staff responsibilities, the Higher Executive Officer (HEO), Administrative Officer (AO) and Assistant Principal Officer (APO) grades.

The descriptors of middle managers in section 2.6.1 describe almost perfectly the position of HEOs, AOs and APOs in the civil service generally and DJELR in particular. McConville (2006, p. 639) further defined the middle manager as being "...part of a clear chain of management and involved in the delivery of an end service, being responsible for at least two subordinate levels within the hierarchy, and with at least one supervisor between them and the organisational executive". The middle management grades identified in DJELR who will be the target group for this study satisfy the terms of this definition.

McConville and Holden (1999) suggest that the notion of "devolved responsibility" is not new because middle managers have always had responsibility for "people management" because they have always been accountable for the work of their subordinates (Hales 1986; Poole 1976). However, it could be argued, certainly in the context of the civil service, that the focus for middle managers has been on the outputs (either policy or operational) of their subordinates and not on the employee relations aspect of their role. It could also be argued that the organisation of HR in departments up to now has not leant itself to middle managers taking responsibility for their staff. "Traditionally in the civil service, central HR units have been principally responsible for all employee relations issues including most aspects of personnel administration" (O' Riordan 2004, p. 36). Where devolvement has occurred, in the majority of Departments it has been a small number of administrative aspects of the HR function which have been devolved (e.g. annual leave, flexi time). In DJELR only these particular elements of the administrative functions in HR have been devolved. Other administrative functions around approvals of carers leave, parental leave etc. are still centralised in the HR Division. Devolution of people management functions is more complex. Devolution anticipates that "...line managers would have more formal responsibilities in respect to significant one-on-one management issues such as probation, underperformance, granting/deferring of increments, managing absenteeism, work sharing and local discipline matters" (O' Riordan 2004 p. 37). Currently in DJELR, line managers input in to these processes but the final approval rests with HR. In many cases, this allows line management to abdicate responsibility. Line managers have, for example, indicated to staff members during the probation process that they are suitable for permanent employment but have separately indicated to HR that they are unsuitable and sought to have HR make the decision regarding termination of employment.

One key area of HR that has been devolved to middle line management across the civil service and DJELR is the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

This is the performance management system for the civil service. Renwick (2002, p. 263) noted that "In the operation of performance management systems, a weak link has often been the involvement of line managers in them". Redman (2001) noted that performance appraisal "is often done poorly by line managers......but the line see themselves as good at it"). Redman further suggested that performance management is their "most disliked managerial activity" (Redman 2001, pp. 71-2). Others noted the need to "kick" or "flog" managers into doing performance management properly (Guest & King 2001, p. 26). These findings are supported by a recent audit and evaluation of the implementation of PMDS for 2007 in DJELR which revealed that only 65% of staff had completed the Annual Review and Performance Rating element of PMDS last year. This, despite the fact, that staff increments would not be paid unless the Rating had been completed.

The approach of middle line management to their responsibilities in relation to PMDS in DJELR has the potential to undermine confidence in the ability of the group to undertake other HR functions, such as grievance and discipline, successfully.

In the area of absence management, a certain amount of responsibility rests with line managers in DJELR but like some of the organisations identified by Dunn and Wilkinson (2002, p.245) the approach is *ad hoc* with unclear HR and line responsibilities, producing "a case of muddling through" (Renwick 2002). In the area of managing long-term sickness and disability, Cunningham and James (2001, pp. 20-21) noted "limits occurring....due to line stubbornness in not wanting to attend training programmes on it; the line arguing that insufficient training was provided for them; low line skill levels in it; the line handling some cases without specialist (HR) help; and the line supervising "punitive sanctions" connected to it". In DJELR, line managers would prefer that HR deal with long term sick absence and disability and in the most cynical of cases by moving the problem elsewhere. Interestingly, the line managers do not want to input when consideration is being given to terminating the employment preferring not to be associated with the ultimate decision.

2.6.3 Summary

The literature review points to a number of issues which require consideration. These include the extent to which middle line management in DJELR feel they have the capacity and capability to take on HR functions or do they as McConville and Holden (1999) suggest see themselves as "the filling in the sandwich" as HR work is "dumped" on them *via* devolution. There is also the question of the level of knowledge of HR procedures in the line management group and does it feel it has sufficient training in the HR area. Does the line management group in DJELR want to be proactive in HRM or does it feel that people management issues should be an issue for HR?

This study attempts to address the gap in the literature as it relates to devolvement of HR functions to line managers in DJELR and to respond to the questions raised above following the literature review. The methodology for the study is outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3   Research Methodology

3.1   Aims and Objectives

The aim of the research is to establish if the capacity and capability exists within the middle line management in DJELR to undertake HR functions.

The following hypotheses will be tested:

Hypothesis one: Line managers do not have the time and are not willing to take on HR functions.

Hypothesis two: Line managers do not have a good knowledge of HR policies and procedures.

Hypothesis three: Devolving HR to line managers will increase their knowledge of HR issues.

Hypothesis four: Devolving HR to line managers will speed up response times to issues raised by staff.

In addition the research will attempt to expose any potential issues that need to be addressed in DJELR in the context of the broader HR agenda.

3.2   Choice of Methodology

In order to fully explore the issues outlined thus far, it would be most ideal to conduct a research study using a mixed methods approach and incorporating a self-completion questionnaire and some semi-structured interviews targeted at a smaller subset. After careful consideration of the time constraints, the resources available and the experience gap of the author in qualitative design and analysis, a decision was made to restrict this study to a self-completion questionnaire. It was felt that this was the most feasible approach and was one that would also prove convenient for respondents. While acknowledging that this approach has the limitations of producing associations rather than findings from which causal inferences can be made and does not allow the flexibility of probing certain responses, it was felt that the results would still add considerably to the dearth of research evidence in this area and might well better inform subsequent and much needed further exploration on this important topic.

3.3   Respondent Group

This research study is aimed at a very distinct cohort of staff in DJELR, namely line managers. Furthermore, within this potential respondent group of 450, there are three distinct sub-categories of line managers, namely AOs (n=28), HEOs (n=212) and APOs (n=165). This group operates across the Justice sector including the offices and agencies under the remit of DJELR. These include, as identified earlier, offices such as the Equality Tribunal, Equality Authority, Data Protection Commissioner and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. These agencies while operating as "independent" agencies are staffed by the Department and ultimate responsibility for the staff lies with DJELR. Some of these staff are involved in policy and formulation of legislation, others are involved in operational

areas particularly on the immigration side of the Department while others find themselves with an EU or international dimension to their role. All grades, however, have a role in the supervision and management of staff and they have a specific role in the implementation of performance management which is specified in each line manager's role profile form. The entire group of 450 was targeted as this was feasible in the context of the study design and would maximise the response rate.

At the outset it was acknowledged that there was a possibility that the research might be limited by the willingness of the middle management group to participate in this research. There can be reluctance amongst this group to expose themselves or their divisions to what might be perceived as weaknesses in their own particular management. Assurance regarding confidentiality was therefore a key factor for consideration in engaging this group and this is referred to later.

3.4   Data Collection Instrument

A self-completion questionnaire was designed for issue to the respondent group. From the literature review, there was no pre-existing validated questionnaire that could be used or adapted for the purpose of this study. The questionnaire was broken into four sections. Section 1 had only four questions which captured the grade of the respondent followed by three open questions to capture information on the length of time the respondents had served in the grade, the number of staff that report to the respondent currently and the largest number of staff that the respondent has supervised in any grade, current or previous. The remaining three sections consisted of a series of closed questions or "*statements*" with responses listed horizontally on a Likert Scale with a four-point response: [strongly agree/ agree/disagree/strongly disagree]. The respondents were not given a neutral option as experience of previous surveys in DJELR is that the neutral option is quite often used as a fallback without much thought to the question. Respondents were asked to tick a box and only one answer could be ticked per question. Similar questions were asked in slightly different ways to assess consistency in responses and in framing the questions long questions, ambiguous terms and double-barrelled questions were avoided.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the questionnaire each have a series of statements which are linked to each other but the sections are also related. In Section 2 the statements relate to the respondents own management, how they deal with issues, how confident they are about dealing with HR type issues, their knowledge of HR devolvement and whether they think it is a good idea etc. In Section 3, the statements revolve around the respondents' knowledge of HR policies, codes and procedures, their awareness of the various policies and their confidence around implementing HR processes and procedures. In Section 4, the statements revolve around the HR function and in particular, the respondent's relationship with HR, communication with HR and whether HR should be a specialist function.

The purpose in structuring the questionnaire in this way was to try to get a complete picture from respondents about how they see their role and in particular how they perceive their capabilities and capacities in their line management role. The structure of the questionnaire would also throw up possible contradictions, if there were any, between the perception and the reality of how line managers carry out HR functions.

Particular statements were formulated with a view to the direct link with a particular hypothesis. For example, Section 2, *statement 13*, asks the respondent to state whether they agree or disagree that "I have time to deal with HR issues in my current role". I have suggested in hypothesis one that *"Line managers do not have the time and are not willing to take on HR functions"*. Likewise, Section 2, *statement 19*, asks the respondent whether they agree or disagree that "Devolving HR to line managers would speed up response times to issues raised by staff". This relates directly to hypothesis four which suggests that devolving will lead to speedier response times.

In addition to linking directly with the hypotheses the questionnaire was also developed with a view to seeing if the line management experience in DJELR reflects research done around HR devolvement by other researchers in the public and private sector. For example, would the line management response in DJELR to the statement in Section 2 "Devolving HR out just means HR unloading out to me" reflect Mc Conville and Holden's (1999) finding that the line in the NHS were having HR work "dumped" on them.

The questionnaire was kept simple, clear and easy to complete and therefore did not require complicated instructions. A sample of the questionnaire in a Microsoft Word version is at Appendix I. The questionnaire took less than ten minutes to complete and simplicity and timeliness were considered as important factors in maximising responses.

A note was issued with the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the survey and the reasons for seeking the input of middle line management. The respondent group was advised about the confidentiality of the process and that no information would be given to any third party. A copy of the note issued is at Appendix II.

In order to further maximise the potential response rate the participants were advised that they would be entered in a draw to win a book token to the value of €100. Survey participation rates in the Department are notoriously low and it was felt that this was a legitimate way to encourage response rates. There were no ethical issues arising from the incentive.

3.5   Pilot-Testing of Questionnaire

In order to pre-test the questionnaire a small sample representative of the target respondent population was selected - two HEOs and one APO. They completed the questionnaire separately and were specifically asked to time how long it took them to complete the questionnaire and also to identify any contradictions or difficulties with the wording of the questions. Having completed the questionnaire each provided feedback. None of the three respondents had difficulty with the wording of the questions and all commented that the sections and questions flowed well. They completed the questionnaire in less than the ten minutes predicted (five, six and seven minutes respectively). One of the pilot group, however, did point out that the grade of Administrative Officer had not been included so a subsequent amendment was made to include that grade as part of the respondent group for the wider survey.

3.6   Distribution of Questionnaire

In order to distribute the questionnaire effectively to the target group and to maximise the simplicity of completion the option to distribute the questionnaire electronically was chosen. In conjunction with the Department's IT Division the questionnaire was put on a survey database in Lotus Notes sitting on the Department's Citrix server. The respondent group received an explanatory note about the survey by email which had a link to the questionnaire. On completion of the questionnaire by a respondent it was then saved to the database. Access to the database was limited to the author to protect the confidentiality of the participants and their responses.

As a number of the Department's offices and agencies do not have their IT infrastructure on the Department's Citrix server but have their own discrete systems some respondents (approximately 70 out of the total 450) did not have access to the questionnaire *via* the electronic link. Instead, they were given access to a Microsoft Word version of the questionnaire which they could complete manually and return by internal post at no cost to themselves.

Following completion of the survey, a copy of the 84 questionnaires completed on the database was recorded onto CD before the responses were deleted from the system by IT. This CD is at Appendix III as supporting documentation. It should be noted that the database can only be opened on Lotus Notes. 21 questionnaires were completed manually and received by post and these have been held by the author as supporting material also.

3.7   Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel was used to input and analyse the responses from both the electronic and manual questionnaires. The data was assessed by grade, section and by question or *statement*. Bar charts were used to illustrate some of the key themes eminating from the responses to questions.

Chapter 4   Analysis of Results

4.1   Response Rate

The questionnaire was circulated to the HEOs, AOs and APOs, a sample of 405. In total 105 people responded to the request to complete the survey, 84 responses received *via* the database and 21 responses received hardcopy. Five responses returned were not usable in that they were incorrectly completed or not completed at all. Of the total sample of 405, 17 people were classified as "non-responses" for analysis purposes in that they would not have been in a position to respond because they were either (1) absent on maternity leave (2) on long term sick leave (3) seconded to the Department of Foreign Affairs on missions abroad. Table 1 summarises the response rate characteristics for the entire group and when broken down by grade.

Table 1: Response rate characteristics of respondent group as a whole and by grade

	HEO	AO	APO	Total Group
Potential Number of Respondents	212	28	165	405
Actual Number of Responses	43	10	52	105
Invalid/Unusable Responses	3	0	2	5
Number of "non-responses"	14	0	3	17
Response Rate %	*20*	*36*	*31*	*26*

The percentage response rate in each case was calculated as:

$$\frac{\text{The number of usable responses}}{\text{Total number minus "non-responses}} \quad x \quad \frac{100}{1}$$

While a response rate for the entire group of 26%, might be considered on the low side, it was higher than the author might have anticipated as previous experience with surveys in DJELR have resulted in very low response rates. For example, the most recent Climate Survey conducted by the Organisation Development Unit resulted in a response rate of 18%. Also, based on the hypotheses to be tested, it was still felt that enough information could be yielded from the responses received, particularly in looking at the group as a whole, to generate useful inferences.

The group that yielded the lowest response rate above is the HEO grouping. The majority of the 70 respondents in the agencies and offices "offline" that were issued the questionnaire for manual completion are HEOs and perhaps this impacted on the lower response rate for this grade. Another reason for the lower response rate in this group may be that quite a number of this group are relatively inexperienced and may not have felt

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confident about completing the questionnaire or may not have wanted to expose their lack of experience. It may be that they felt they were not familiar enough with HR or its' role and the relationship of HR to themselves or they may just have felt that they did not have time.

4.2   Analysis of Section 1 of Questionnaire

As stated previously Section 1 included three open questions requiring information on the length of time the respondents have served in the grade, the number of staff that report to the respondent currently and the largest number of staff that the respondent has supervised in previous or the current grade. Table 2 sets out the responses received.

Table 2: Line Management Service Length and Experience

	HEO	AO	APO
Average Length of Time Serving in Current Grade	5	5	6
Average Number of Staff Reporting Currently	6	2	9
Average of Largest Number of Staff Managed past or present	9	3	14

When developing the survey it was postulated that it would be interesting to examine if there were different responses to the questions based on the varying lengths of service or experience of supervising staff. When analysing the data, it is clear that the majority of the respondent group had similar lengths of service in their particular grade and there were too few respondents with long service to be able to make any valid arguments or conclusions about differences in responses based on length of service in a particular grade. To some extent this is not surprising given the growth in the civil service in the last five to eight years which resulted in more promotions and staff moving into higher grades quicker than would have been the case in the past. The average number of staff reporting to the various grades was as expected, increasing from HEO to APO, and only a small number reporting to the AOs. The latter represent a graduate recruitment grade and these tend to be recruited specifically for their "policy" input skills. This results in them not usually having many staff reporting in to them.

Overall, this analysis allowed one to be reasonably confident in analysing the respondent group as a whole - in that they have similar lengths of service in their current grades, all have staff reporting in to them in varying numbers but all should be in a position to answer the questions posed throughout the questionnaire based on experience.

4.3   Analysis of Section 2 of Questionnaire

As stated previously the purpose of Section 2 was to elicit information from respondents about their own management, how they deal with issues, how confident they are about dealing with HR type issues, their knowledge of HR devolvement and whether they think it

is a good idea. While it is not possible to discuss every response to every statement for every group in detail, some key representative results will be highlighted and discussed. Detailed results for each question per grade and in total are provided in table format. From time to time, some respondents omitted to answer a question and for this reason the total response number is not always 100 and this is depicted in bar charts as "other".

Table 3: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 1-4)

Statement 1; I'm very familiar with my role and job requirements
Statement 2; I have a good knowledge of the work of DJELR
Statement 3; I work with my staff to achieve key targets
Statement 4; I never have difficulties with any of my staff

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
1	AO	5	3	2	0	
	HEO	19	20	1	0	
	APO	23	25	2	0	
	TOTAL	**47**	**48**	**5**	**0**	**100**
2	AO	3	4	3	0	
	HEO	4	25	11	0	
	APO	6	33	11	0	
	TOTAL	**13**	**62**	**25**	**0**	**100**
3	AO	5	5	0	0	
	HEO	20	17	2	0	
	APO	19	30	1	0	
	TOTAL	**44**	**52**	**4**	**0**	**100**
4	AO	2	2	5	1	
	HEO	4	12	19	4	
	APO	2	9	33	5	
	TOTAL	**8**	**23**	**57**	**10**	**98**

The responses to Statements 1 and 2 would suggest that the middle line management group is confident in relation to their own role with all except five respondents agreeing that they are familiar with their own role and job requirements and 75% suggesting that they have a good knowledge of DJELR. Statements 3 and 4 tell us that these line managers work closely with their staff and line managers generally anticipate that staff difficulties will arise from time to time.

The responses to Statement 1 are illustrated in a bar chart in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Statement 1 (Section 2)

Human Resources Survey 2008
Section 2: Statement 1

Total = 100

☒ HEO
☐ AO
▣ AP
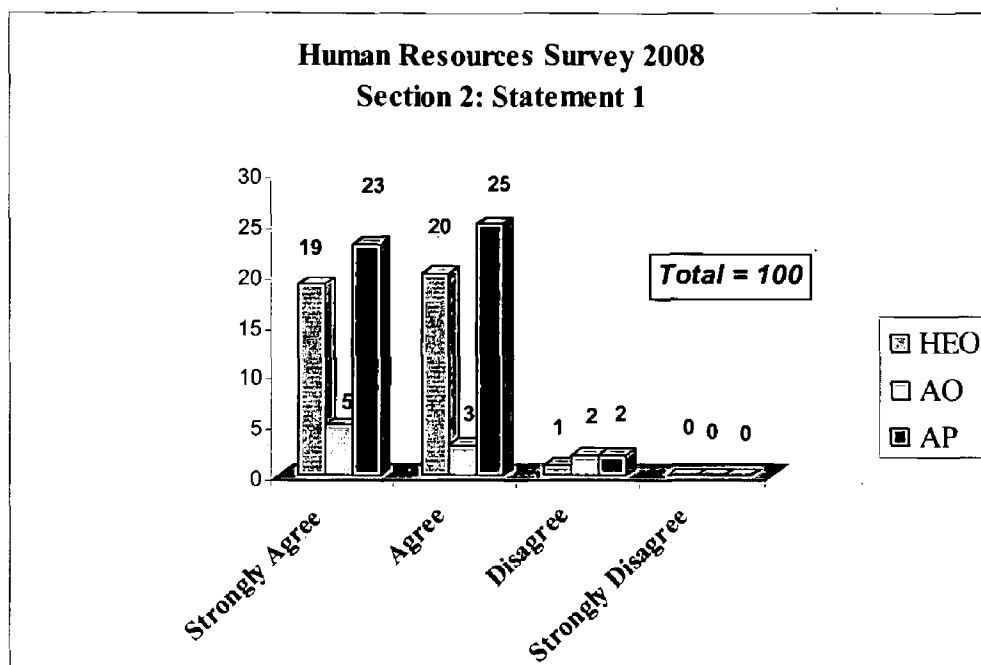
Table 4: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 5-6)

Statement 5; I am comfortable dealing with issues that arise e.g. attendance issues
Statement 6; I am very familiar with HR policies and procedures

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
5	AO	1	5	4	0	
	HEO	4	27	8	0	
	APO	11	30	9	0	
	TOTAL	16	62	21	0	99
6	AO	2	5	3	0	
	HEO	4	20	16	0	
	APO	2	24	24	0	
	TOTAL	6	49	43	0	98

The responses to these statements suggest that the group feels comfortable dealing with issues such as attendance with their staff although there is mixed opinion on whether they are familiar enough with HR policies and procedures.

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Table 5: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 7-10)

Statement 7; I do not have time to deal with staff issues
Statement 8; I think staff should leave their issues at home
Statement 9; I think staff issues should be dealt with directly by HR
Statement 10; I have no difficulty dealing with issues without HR input

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
7	AO	0	0	8	2	
	HEO	1	8	22	8	
	APO	1	8	30	11	
	TOTAL	2	16	60	21	99
8	AO	0	3	4	3	
	HEO	1	10	19	10	
	APO	1	17	25	7	
	TOTAL	2	30	48	20	100
9	AO	0	1	8	1	
	HEO	0	10	29	1	
	APO	3	5	39	1	
	TOTAL	3	16	76	3	98
10	AO	1	3	5	1	
	HEO	1	25	10	2	
	APO	5	19	25	1	
	TOTAL	7	47	40	4	98

Line managers do not expect that staff should simply leave their issues at home, the majority suggest that they have time to deal with these issues and it should not simply be a matter for HR.

However, the group is split in relation to whether they feel confident in dealing with issues without HR input, with HEOs being the more likely group to be confident in dealing with these issues without HR input. This is illustrated in a bar chart in Figure 2.

Figure 2; Statement 10 (Section 2)

Human Resources Survey 2008
Section 2: Statement 10

Total = 100

☐ HEO
☐ AO
☐ AP
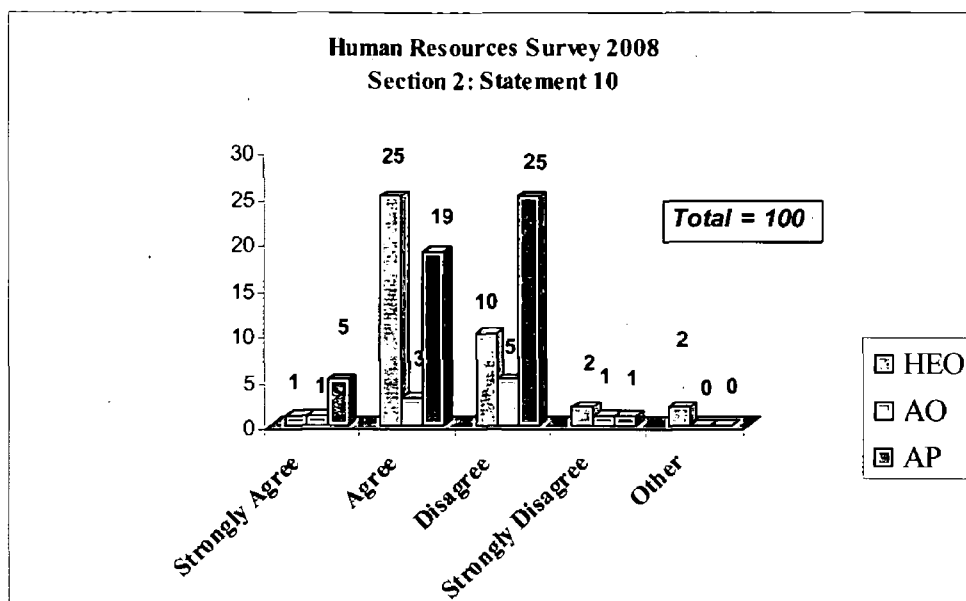
Table 6: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 11-12)

Statement 11; I understand what is meant by devolving HR functions
Statement 12; I think devolving HR functions is a good idea

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
11	AO	1	8	1	0	
	HEO	4	31	4	1	
	APO	8	32	9	1	
	TOTAL	13	71	14	2	100
12	AO	1	8	1	0	
	HEO	5	19	14	0	
	APO	6	26	15	3	
	TOTAL	12	53	30	3	98

The vast majority of the group were confident that they understood what was meant by "devolving" HR functions and that devolving HR functions is a good idea. There are however, over 30% of respondents who do not seem to think that devolvement is a good idea and this may be linked in some way to the responses to Statement 10 where they indicated that they would not be happy to deal with issues without HR input or linked to the issue of training which is addressed later in this section.

Table 7: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 13-16)

Statement 13; I have the time to deal with HR issues in my current role
Statement 14; Having more control on HR issues would be good for my staff and for me
Statement 15; I would like more input into issues affecting my staff
Statement 16; Devolving HR just means HR unloading to me

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
13	AO	2	6	2	0	
	HEO	5	18	14	3	
	APO	0	34	14	2	
	TOTAL	7	58	30	5	100
14	AO	2	5	1	0	
	HEO	4	20	15	0	
	APO	1	31	17	1	
	TOTAL	7	56	33	1	97
15	AO	0	8	1	0	
	HEO	7	21	11	0	
	APO	1	36	13	0	
	TOTAL	8	65	25	0	98
16	AO	0	1	6	3	
	HEO	1	16	18	4	
	APO	3	13	32	2	
	TOTAL	4	30	56	9	99

Interestingly and contrary to the hypotheses posed and to the findings of other researchers the group agrees with the statement that they have time to deal with HR issues in their current role. This is in agreement with the responses for Statement 7. 68% of APOs, 58% of HEOs and 80% of AOs indicated that they have time. This was an unexpected finding and indicates that the middle line management group believes it has the capacity to take on HR functions (Figure 3). Studies in other organisations, albeit in the UK, found that the line managers did not have the capacity to take on HR, at least, not without causing strain or that the HR element of the role might not be done well. Renwick (2002) in a study of three different organisations found that "The line have many duties, and lack time to do HR work well" while McConville (2006) suggested that "devolvement of HRM adds to an already substantial workload for line managers and this ended up becoming a source of strain".

All three grades appear willing to take on HR functions, again contrary to hypothesis one. However, these findings are in agreement with the findings of other researchers. Renwick (2002) noted that "The line are keen to take part on doing HR work" and "Line managers are relatively happy doing some HR work". In keeping with the results this, the responses

to Statements 16 suggests that the vast majority of line managers do not view the devolvement of HR as the HR function merely unloading onto the line. 55% of HEOs, 68% of APOs and 90% of AOs do not agree that devolving HR just means HR unloading out to them. Again, this is contrary to what was anticipated at the start of this investigation.

Figure 3; Statement 13 (Section 2)

Human Resources Survey 2008
Section 2: Statement 13
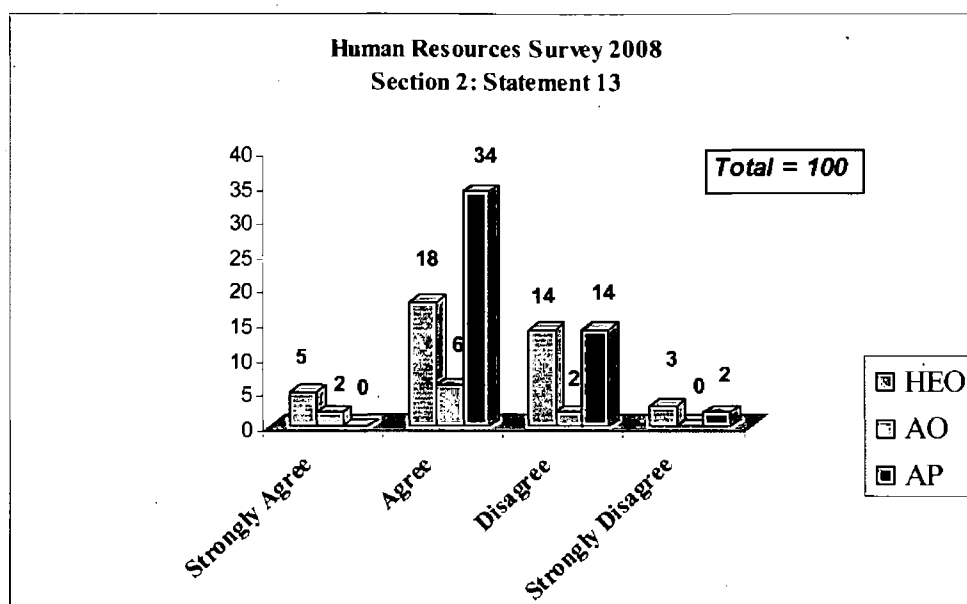
Table 8: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 17-18)

Statement 17; I have been given management training to help fulfil my role
Statement 18; I have had no specific training on HR policies and procedures

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
17	AO	0	3	3	4	
	HEO	1	14	20	4	
	APO	6	17	22	5	
	TOTAL	7	34	45	13	99
18	AO	5	2	3	0	
	HEO	10	21	8	1	
	APO	5	30	13	2	
	TOTAL	20	53	24	3	100

In relation to training the response from the three grades in relation to Statements 17 and 18 was broadly similar. 70% of both HEOs and AOs disagreed with the statement that "I have been given management training to help me fulfil my role" with 54% of APOs disagreeing

with the statement. The vast majority of the group, 70% and above agreed that they "have had no specific training on HR policies and procedures".

Table 9: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 19-21)

Statement 19; Devolving HR to line managers would speed up response times to issues raised by staff
Statement 20; My staff would be happy if I were responsible for HR functions in our area
Statement 21; I would be happy that my own line manger would handle HR issues well

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
19	AO	1	8	1	0	
	HEO	4	21	11	2	
	APO	4	34	10	2	
	TOTAL	9	63	22	4	98
20	AO	0	7	2	0	
	HEO	4	22	7	3	
	APO	0	33	13	0	
	TOTAL	4	62	22	3	91
21	AO	1	7	1	1	
	HEO	8	23	8	1	
	APO	6	33	10	1	
	TOTAL	15	63	19	3	100

The majority of the respondents believe that "Devolving HR to line managers would speed up response times to issues raised by staff" (Figure 4). They think that their staff would be happy with this and they would generally be happy if their line manager were to take on this role.

Figure 4; Statement 19 (Section 2)

Human Resources Survey 2008
Section 2: Statement 19

Total = 100

HEO
AO
AP
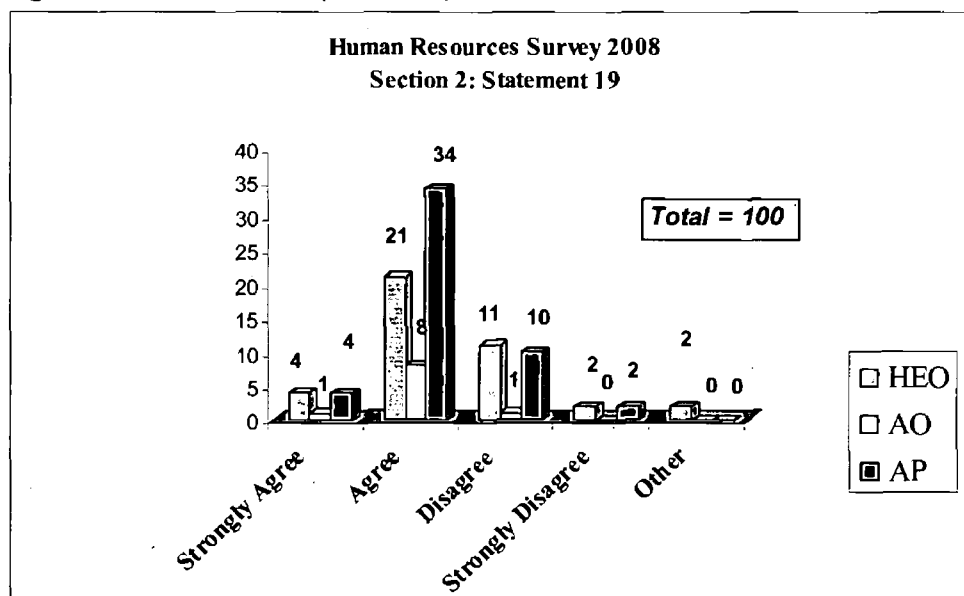
Table 10: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 22-23)

Statement 22; Devolving HR functions just means approving different types of leave e.g. force majeure, parental
Statement 23; I would be willing to make decisions say in relation to confirmation of Probation without HR

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
22	AO	0	1	7	2	
	HEO	1	4	31	4	
	APO	0	2	44	4	
	TOTAL	1	7	82	10	100
23	AO	1	5	4	0	
	HEO	4	17	13	3	
	APO	2	30	15	3	
	TOTAL	7	52	32	6	97

Table 11: Results for Section 2 of Questionnaire (Statements 24-26)

Statement 24; Devolving HR duplicates work
Statement 25; Devolving HR to agencies in DJELR has worked well
Statement 26; A centralised HR frees up staff for front line roles

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
24	AO	0	1	9	0	
	HEO	1	8	26	0	
	APO	2	12	33	1	
	TOTAL	3	21	68	1	93
25	AO	0	2	3	0	
	HEO	1	15	9	3	
	APO	1	17	20	3	
	TOTAL	2	34	32	6	74
26	AO	0	3	5	1	
	HEO	1	20	14	2	
	APO	2	26	20	0	
	TOTAL	3	49	39	3	94

From the various responses above, it would seem that line managers are clear that devolvement of HR functions means more than just approving leave. Yet again, however, when posed with a more difficult HR issue such as probation, there are over 30% of respondents that are not sure if they would be happy to address this without the input of

HR. More than half of respondents disagreed that devolvement might result in a duplication of work.

The response to Statement 25, on the issue of previous devolvement to agencies in DJELR, revealed some interesting statistics. 50% of AOs, 27.5% of HEOs and 18% of APOs either didn't answer the question or indicated that they don't know (noted to the side of the questionnaire where it was manually submitted). This may be because they have no experience of working in an office or agency within DJELR which has a devolved HR function. Of those who did answer the question only 20% of AOs agreed that it had worked well, 36% of APOs and 40% of HEOs.

4.4   Analysis of Section 3 of the Questionnaire

In relation to this section, which attempts to elicit the knowledge that the respondent group has of HR policies and procedures and to establish if there is capability in relation to HR functions amongst the group, the results are both mixed and interesting.

Statement 1; I am very familiar with the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour
Statement 2; I know the significance of the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act 2006
Statement 3; I have no knowledge of civil service disciplinary procedures

Table 12: Results for Section 3 of Questionnaire (Statements 1-3)

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
1	AO	1	5	3	1	
	HEO	0	18	21	0	
	APO	3	25	22	0	
	TOTAL	4	48	46	1	99
2	AO	0	2	8	0	
	HEO	0	10	27	2	
	APO	0	14	32	3	
	TOTAL	0	26	67	5	98
3	AO	0	2	8	0	
	HEO	0	11	26	2	
	APO	0	13	35	2	
	TOTAL	0	26	69	4	99

The group was split on whether it agreed or disagreed with Statement 1. 52.5% of HEOs did not believe that they were very familiar with the Code. APOs agreed that they were familiar with the Code but only 56% of them with the other 44% disagreeing. 60% of AOs agreed that they were familiar with the Code. This particular Code is important as it forms part of the terms and conditions of employment of civil servants and breaches of the Code

may result in disciplinary action being taken. One might have expected that the middle line management group should be very familiar with the Code. 70% of APOs, 72.5% of HEOs and 80% of AOs disagreed with Statement 2, indicating that they are not familiar with the significance of this piece of legislation. On the other hand, they disagreed with Statement 3, which would suggest that they do have some knowledge of the disciplinary procedures

Table 12: Results for Section 3 of Questionnaire (Statements 4-6)

Statement 4; I know the Civil Service Disciplinary Code was revised in 2006
Statement 5; I would be confident handling a disciplinary issue with a member of my staff
Statement 6; I have read the Disciplinary Code

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
4	AO	0	4	5	1	
	HEO	1	13	19	6	
	APO	0	18	29	2	
	TOTAL	1	35	53	9	98
5	AO	1	2	5	1	
	HEO	1	23	13	1	
	APO	1	29	18	2	
	TOTAL	3	54	36	4	97
6	AO	1	2	6	1	
	HEO	2	14	19	3	
	APO	2	23	24	0	
	TOTAL	5	39	49	4	97

The responses to Statement 4 suggests that only 26% of APOs know the Disciplinary Code was revised in 2006, with only 27.5% of HEOs and 20% of AOs aware of the fact. In response to Statement 6, only 50% of APOs have read the Disciplinary Code, 40% of HEOs and 30% of AOs. Yet 60% of APOs and HEOs agree with Statement 5 and feel confident about handling a disciplinary issue with a member of staff (Figure 5). Only 30% of AOs expressed this view.

Figure 5; Statement 5 (Section 3)

Human Resources Survey 2008
Section 3: Statement 5

Total = 100

HEO
AO
AP
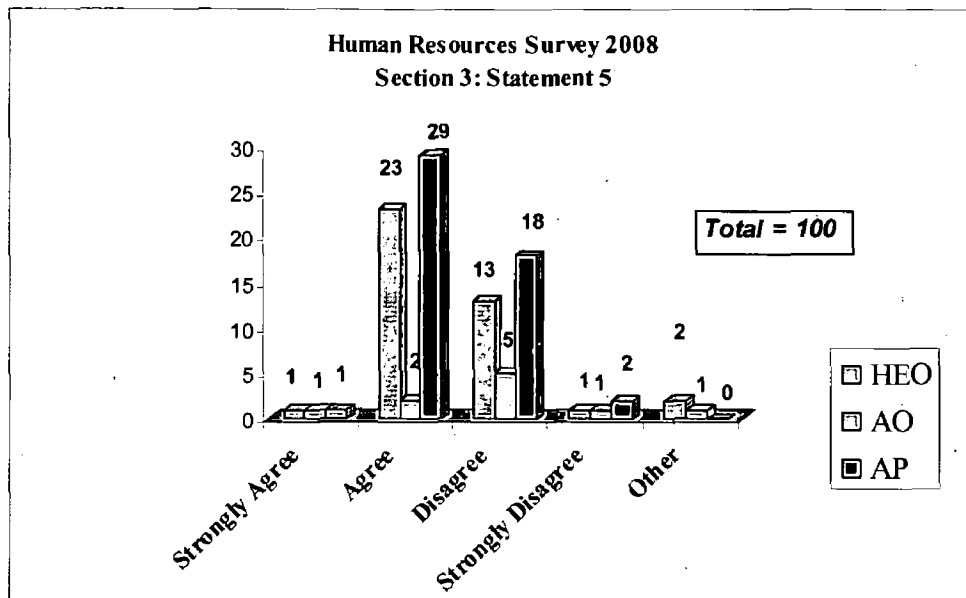
Table 13: Results for Section 3 of Questionnaire (Statements 7-10)

Statement 7; I am aware that DJELR has published a Policy on Probation
Statement 8; I have read the Probation Policy and applied it with new staff
Statement 9; I find the new assessment form for Probation more meaningful than the old
Statement 10; I have never done an assessment for a staff member on probation (new entrant)

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
7	AO	1	6	3	0	
	HEO	3	25	10	1	
	APO	0	30	16	3	
	TOTAL	**4**	**61**	**29**	**4**	**98**
8	AO	1	0	8	0	
	HEO	2	14	18	3	
	APO	0	18	28	4	
	TOTAL	**3**	**32**	**54**	**7**	**96**
9	AO	2	3	2	0	
	HEO	4	19	9	1	
	APO	2	25	14	2	
	TOTAL	**8**	**47**	**25**	**3**	**83**
10	AO	0	4	3	3	
	HEO	4	2	22	9	
	APO	2	13	28	7	
	TOTAL	**6**	**19**	**53**	**19**	**97**

Statements 7, 8, 9 and 10 are all related to knowledge of the Probation Policy and implementation of that Policy. Probation Policy is the process which assesses new entrants to the Organisation. 60% of APOs and 70% of HEOs and AOs stated that they were aware that DJELR had published a policy in relation to Probation. However, only 36% of APOs, 40% of HEOs and 10% of AOs said they read the Probation Policy and applied it with new staff. Just over half of the group, ranging 50-57%, agreed that the new assessment form for Probation is more meaningful than the old. Over 70% of APOs and HEOs have done an assessment for a new staff member on probation. Of the AOs, 60% have done an assessment.

As with the statements relating to discipline there are contradictions in the responses to Statements 8 to 10 which are somewhat concerning particularly in relation to whether the group has a sufficient level of knowledge when implementing the probation assessment process. The response to Statement 8 could suggest that well over half of the group have not read the Policy (in hindsight this statement is not worded as well as it should have been) and yet the majority of APOs and HEOs are implementing the process because 70% of them have indicated that they have done assessments for new members of staff.

Table 14: Results for Section 3 of Questionnaire (Statements 11-13)

Statement 11; I am aware that persistent and consistent underperformance can be dealt with under the Disciplinary Code
Statement 12; I have read the new Dress Code for DJELR
Statement 13; If a member of staff turned up for work dressed in appropriately I would ring HR

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
11	AO	1	6	3	0	
	HEO	1	27	8	2	
	APO	1	43	6	0	
	TOTAL	3	76	17	2	98
12	AO	1	9	0	0	
	HEO	10	26	2	1	
	APO	7	35	6	2	
	TOTAL	18	70	8	3	99
13	AO	0	0	6	4	
	HEO	1	2	25	11	
	APO	1	2	42	5	
	TOTAL	2	4	73	20	99

In response to Statement 11, "I am aware that consistent and persistent under performance can be dealt with under the Disciplinary Code" 88% of APOs, and 70% of HEOs and AOs agreed with the statement. Yet, this has only been a feature of the revised Disciplinary

Code since 2006, a Code which the group, in response to Statement 4, suggested that they were not aware had been revised and in fact had not read.

The findings of the research in this area are contradictory and suggest that while the group, in the main, believes that it is competent to carry out functions related to discipline this belief is not under pinned by the requisite level of knowledge. This would also suggest inconsistency in the way the group approaches issues. This issue is discussed in more detail at the end of this section.

Table 15: Results for Section 3 of Questionnaire (Statements 14-16)

Statement 14; I am familiar with the Civil Service Policy on bullying and harassment
Statement 15; I am confident dealing with issues around bullying and harassment
Statement 16; I feel line managers have been given sufficient training to deal with bullying and harassment

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
14	AO	1	6	2	1	
	HEO	3	28	7	1	
	APO	5	38	7	0	
	TOTAL	**9**	**72**	**16**	**2**	**99**
15	AO	1	4	4	1	
	HEO	2	16	18	2	
	APO	2	26	17	4	
	TOTAL	**5**	**46**	**39**	**7**	**97**
16	AO	0	0	4	5	
	HEO	1	7	20	10	
	APO	1	7	34	7	
	TOTAL	**2**	**14**	**58**	**22**	**96**

Statements 14, 15 and 16 relate to the difficult issue of the management of bullying and harassment. The majority of the group agreed that they are familiar with the civil service policy on bullying and harassment. 56% of APOs felt confident about dealing with issues in relation to bullying and harassment, with 45% of HEOs confident and 50% of AOs. The group strongly disagreed that they had been given sufficient training to deal with bullying and harassment; 82% of APOs, 75% of HEOs and 90% of AOs. The findings in this area are not particularly surprising given the difficult nature of the issues involved. It clearly identifies training as an issue which needs to be addressed.

Table 16: Results for Section 3 of Questionnaire (Statements 17-22)

Statement 17; I understand the linkages between performance management (PMDS) and HR policies and procedures
Statement 18; PMDS is a devolved function that works well
Statement 19; I would implement PMDS even if I was not prompted to do so by HR
Statement 20; PMDS is an example of a function that takes too much of my time
Statement 21; It is important to me that I implement PMDS with my staff
Statement 22; Managing performance is a key function for a line manager

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
17	AO	1	7	2	0	
	HEO	6	25	8	0	
	APO	2	40	7	1	
	TOTAL	9	72	17	1	99
18	AO	0	5	3	1	
	HEO	3	17	11	7	
	APO	1	26	18	5	
	TOTAL	4	48	32	13	96
19	AO	2	4	2	1	
	HEO	4	19	10	5	
	APO	0	29	18	3	
	TOTAL	6	52	30	9	97
20	AO	0	2	5	2	
	HEO	4	9	24	2	
	APO	6	9	34	1	
	TOTAL	10	20	63	5	98
21	AO	3	6	1	0	
	HEO	7	21	9	1	
	APO	7	38	4	1	
	TOTAL	17	65	14	2	98
22	AO	5	5	0	0	
	HEO	19	20	0	0	
	APO	18	31	1	0	
	TOTAL	42	56	1	0	99

Statements 17-22 focused on performance management which is a function that is fully devolved to line managers. Again the responses raised interesting contradictions. The vast majority of the group agreed that they understood the linkages between performance management (PMDS) and HR policies and procedures. However, only 54% of APOs and 50% of HEOs and AOs believe that it is an example of a devolved function that works well - this despite the fact that they are currently responsible for implementing it (Figure 6).

In addition, the group very strongly agreed that performance management is a key function for a line manager and that it is important to them to implement PMDS. However, only 58% of APOs, 57.5% of HEOs and 50% of AOs responded that they would implement PMDS if they were not prompted to do so by HR. This statistic is borne out by an evaluation of the implementation of PMDS in DJELR in 2007 by *Prospectus Consultants* (2007) on behalf of HR which indicated that only 65% of Annual Reviews for 2007 were completed. The evaluation also indicated inconsistencies in relation to how staff performance is rated by line management.

Figure 6; Statement 18 (Section 3)

Human Resources Survey 2008
Section 3: Statement 18
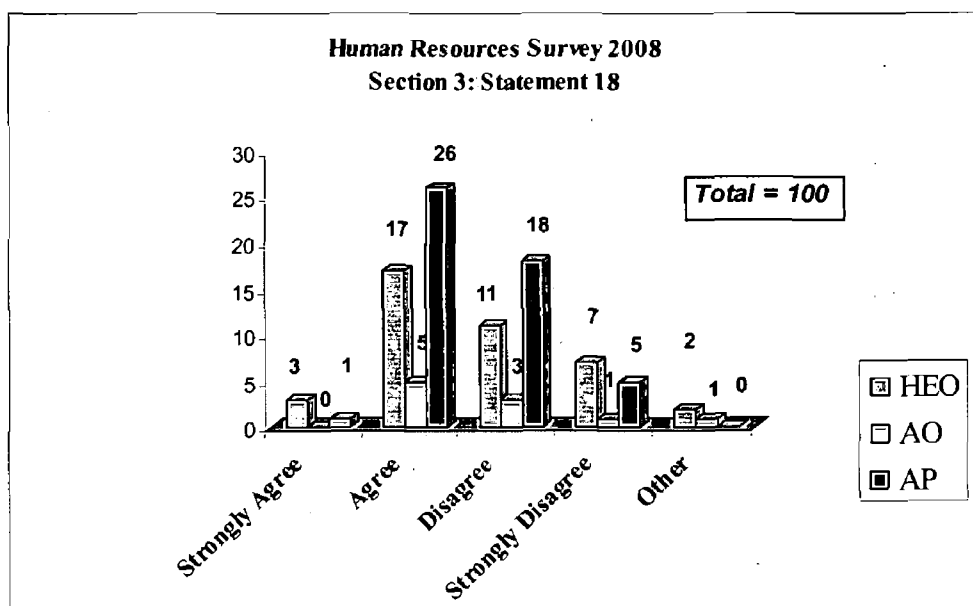
The overall purpose of Section 3 was to try to establish if the capability exists within the middle line management group in DJELR to take on HR functions by seeing if the group had a good knowledge of the existing HR policies and procedures thereby testing hypothesis two which suggested that *line managers do not have a good knowledge of HR policies and procedures*. The responses of the group to Section 3 would suggest that the assertion made in hypothesis two that they do not have a good knowledge of HR policies and procedures is correct and this would not engender confidence about the level of knowledge within the group.

4.5   Analysis of Section 4 of the Questionnaire

The purpose of this section was to try to establish the attitude of the middle line management group to HR as it currently exists in DJELR and to get a sense of their relationship with HR. In terms of the research it was felt this needed to be explored to give a fuller picture of the possibilities around devolvement.

Table 17: Results for Section 4 of Questionnaire (Statements 1-4)

Statement 1; I think dealing with HR issues would add to my own development
Statement 2; I feel confident that I would be supported when I make decisions relating to my staff
Statement 3; I would need training on HR processes and procedures if HR functions were devolved

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
1	AO	2	8	0	0	
	HEO	6	31	2	0	
	APO	7	31	11	1	
	TOTAL	15	70	13	1	99
2	AO	1	7	2	0	
	HEO	4	17	14	2	
	APO	3	27	18	2	
	TOTAL	8	51	34	4	97
3	AO	5	4	1	0	
	HEO	19	17	1	1	
	APO	16	31	2	1	
	TOTAL	40	52	4	2	98

The vast majority of the respondents, particularly HEOs and AOs, 92.5% and 100% respectively, agreed with statement one while 76% of APOs also agreed with the statement. The research seems to concur with hypothesis three that devolving HR will increase line managers' knowledge of HR issues. Again, there is a very strong consensus across the three grades that specific training in relation to HR would be required if HR were to be devolved.

Table 18: Results for Section 4 of Questionnaire (Statements 4-6)

Statement 4; I think HR should remain a centralised function
Statement 5; HR is a specialised area and staff need to be qualified to do HR work.
Statement 6; I think HR staff are good at their jobs

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
4	AO	0	2	7	1	
	HEO	8	12	14	3	
	APO	6	13	30	1	
	TOTAL	14	27	51	5	97

5	AO	1	7	2	0	
	HEO	12	16	10	0	
	APO	9	21	19	0	
	TOTAL	**22**	**44**	**31**	**0**	**97**
6	AO	2	7	0	0	
	HEO	3	30	4	0	
	APO	6	36	4	0	
	TOTAL	**11**	**73**	**8**	**0**	**92**

The group was not agreed in this area. The AO grade disagreed with statement 4 by a large majority, 80%, while the APO grouping, 62% of them, also disagreed with the statement which would suggest that both of those grades believe that the HR function should be devolved more. However, the HEO grade is split on the matter with only 50% agreeing that it should remain centralised and 42.5% disagreeing (7.5% either did not answer or stated they did not know). In relation to statement 5, 80% of AOs and 70% of HEOs agree that HR is a specialised area and that staff need to be qualified to do HR work while 64% of APOs agree with the statement. These figures are broadly the same as those for statement 12. The responses relating to centralising and specialising would suggest that while the group believes HR functions should be devolved out they do see a role for specialist HR people.

Table 19: Results for Section 4 of Questionnaire (Statements 7-9)

Statement 7; I feel supported by staff in HR when I have difficulties with staff
Statement 8; I am better at dealing with HR issues than HR staff
Statement 9; I do not know what exactly they do in HR

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
7	AO	1	7	0	0	
	HEO	6	22	4	2	
	APO	3	31	5	1	
	TOTAL	**10**	**60**	**9**	**3**	**82**
8	AO	0	0	6	2	
	HEO	0	5	26	4	
	APO	0	6	32	4	
	TOTAL	**0**	**11**	**64**	**10**	**85**
9	AO	0	3	4	2	
	HEO	1	9	23	4	
	APO	0	14	30	2	
	TOTAL	**1**	**26**	**57**	**8**	**92**

Table 20: Results for Section 4 of Questionnaire (Statements 10-13)

Statement 10; I have a good working relationship with HR
Statement 11; If I have a problem with staff I contact HR at an early stage to discuss
Statement 12; HR staff in the future should be specialists in the area not generalists
Statement 13; Devolving HR functions would reduce the number of staff working in HR

Statement	Group	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Total (n)
10	AO	1	7	1	0	
	HEO	7	26	1	2	
	APO	6	38	2	0	
	TOTAL	14	71	4	2	91
11	AO	0	4	3	1	
	HEO	2	15	17	3	
	APO	3	22	17	0	
	TOTAL	5	41	37	4	87
12	AO	1	8	1	0	
	HEO	9	17	7	3	
	APO	8	25	16	0	
	TOTAL	18	50	24	3	95
13	AO	2	5	3	0	
	HEO	0	21	15	1	
	APO	5	25	19	1	
	TOTAL	7	51	37	2	97

The responses to statements 10 and 11 again raise seeming contradictions in the approach of the middle line management group in DJELR. The vast majority of the group, over 80% across the three grades, feel they have a good working relationship with HR. However, if they have a problem with a member of staff only 42.5% of HEOs will contact HR at an early stage to discuss and 40% of AOs and 50% of APOs will contact HR at an early stage.

4.6   Summary

The purpose of the questionnaire was to elicit information which would inform the research relating to the capacity and capability of the middle line management group in DJELR to take on HR functions. In that regard, the survey provided interesting results, some of which run contrary to the hypotheses postulated at the outset and also ran contrary to some of the research which was identified in the literature review. However, some of the results concurred with a number of the hypotheses posed and with other studies carried out in this area. Most importantly, the results are informative and can be used to make inferences and to make recommendations which are set out in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5   Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1   Introduction

As stated at the end of Chapter 4 the results of this piece of research are informative and do enable a number of conclusions to be drawn about whether the middle line management group in DJELR has the capacity and the capability to undertake HR functions. On foot of the data gathered from the study, informed recommendations, including possible barriers, regarding the feasibility of devolvement can be made. These conclusions and recommendations are set out in this Chapter. In addition, the limitations of this research are discussed and the possibilities around further research are explored.

5.2   Conclusions

The findings from this piece of research would suggest that the middle line management group in DJELR does have the capacity to take on devolved HR functions. This runs contrary to Hypothesis one which suggested that line managers do not have the time to take on HR functions. As referred to earlier it also runs contrary to the findings of researchers such as Renwick (2003), McConville and Holden (1999) and McConville (2006) in relation to capacity and existing workloads as their research found that devolving HR to line managers added to their workloads and caused strain.

The findings from the research also run contrary to the second element of Hypothesis one which stated that line managers are not willing to take on HR functions. However, it concurs with the findings of the studies referred to above which suggest that there is a willingness to be involved in HR work. McConville (2006) in a study of line management in three public sector organisations found that middle line managers welcome an involvement in HR.

However, the research in DJELR also suggests that, the middle line management group does not have a good knowledge of HR policies and procedures which concurs with Hypothesis two. The group appears to have the confidence to take on issues, for example disciplinary matters relating to staff, but without being equipped with sufficient knowledge of the legislative provisions, policies or procedures associated with the process. This finding reflects the findings from Renwick's (2003) study which found that "...although the line appreciate that HR work is a specialist area, they (the line) feel that they can still "do it", and are keen to demonstrate their skills in it, whether their skills in it are imaginary or real". According to Renwick (2003) "It could be argued that they are making HR work seem mentally a simple common-sense exercise, even though their lived experience of doing it is perhaps that it is not". His view, that this "raised the notion of the line as "gifted amateurs" or "ungifted professionals" in HRM reflects the middle line managers in DJELR. The divergence between perception and reality for line management in DJELR is reflected in the area of PMDS. Clearly the responses from the group suggest that they fully accept their responsibilities in relation to performance management and it is important to them to implement it but they do not believe it works well, despite the fact that they are responsible for it, and many would not implement PMDS unless prompted to do so by HR.

The research also supports the assertion of Hypothesis three that devolving HR to line managers will increase their knowledge of HR issues and that of Hypothesis four, that devolving HR to line managers will speed up response times to issues raised by staff. This suggests that the middle line management group in DJELR see advantages, both for themselves and their staff, in undertaking HR functions which is quite positive.

Again, on a positive note, the respondents did not see the devolving of HR functions as merely unloading on to them nor did they see it as just a duplication of work. This would suggest that the group knows the implications of devolvement and there appears to be an acceptance of what would be required of them.

In addition to the conclusions related to the initial set of hypotheses a number of other conclusions can be drawn from the research. Clearly there is a significant issue relating to training for the middle line management group. The group strongly agrees that it has had no training in relation to HR policies and procedures and has also suggested that there has been limited management training for their role. The finding is not unexpected although it is frustrating, given that the experience of those responsible for training in the HR Division, is that the middle line management group in DJELR, particularly the APO grade, is the most difficult group to get to participate on courses. A different approach may therefore be required which will be discussed in the recommendations.

There was a significantly more positive response than might have been anticipated from the middle line management group to HR and the relationship of line managers with HR. This runs contrary to the findings from a climate survey carried out in the Department in 2006. Between the climate survey and this piece of research a significant restructuring of the HR Division took place with an emphasis on delivering a better service to staff and managers. This, amongst other initiatives in the HR area, may be reflected in this positive response although this might need to be tested a little more vigorously. However, it does suggest that HR should continue to work with managers in particular and continue to communicate with them in relation to staffing, issues arising etc.

The conclusion from the research is that there is capacity within the middle line management grouping in DJELR to take on HR functions. This is very positive as it allows serious consideration of the option of devolving HR functions. Up to now the perception was that the line management group were too busy to take on the functions. The conclusions from the research however, are that concerns arise in relation to the capability of the middle management group to take on those functions. This is an issue that can be addressed. The value in doing the research is that it has provided a body of evidence on specific issues which can be used to inform the recommendations set out below.

5.3   Recommendations

The conclusions drawn from the research enable an informed recommendation to be made in relation to the challenge posed by this dissertation at the outset, "The feasibility of devolving HR functions to line managers in DJELR".

Recommendation

HR functions should be devolved to the middle line management in DJELR but only on the basis of a programmed implementation which includes a number of key actions.

Key action one:

The programme for devolvement should set a date for implementation, 1 September 2009, allowing a period of twelve months for implementation.

Key action two:

A programme of training, which is mandatory, for the three middle line management grades, HEO, AO and APO to be implemented in the twelve month period prior to implementation of devolvement.

The training programme will include training in relation to existing HR policies and procedures. It will also include training on the fundamentals of the management role including assessments of management style; best practice in relation to managing issues around, for example alcohol abuse; best practice in relation to handling the disciplinary process; understanding the relationship with HR Division and the Employee Assistance Service and how to use both of those to best effect to get consistent approaches to managing staff.

Key action three:

Prior to implementation of devolvement, consultations should take place with the Revenue Commissioners, to discuss any shared research or learning that would benefit either Department prior to HR devolvement in each Department.

Key action four:

The roll out of the Human Resource Management System (HRMS) to line management to be planned and implemented, in a way that limits the potential to damage the integrity and accuracy of the data, but fully supports the line in their devolved role.

A significant investment of resources in the management of data on HRMS in DJELR has taken place over the last eighteen months. The HRMS system will be crucial in enabling line management to fulfil their functions correctly. However, managing HRMS in conjunction with line management, will be important in the context of protecting the integrity and accuracy of the data.

Key action five:

DJELR should work towards increasing the number of middle and senior managers in the HR Division who are qualified and experienced in the HR area. This would provide

expertise to deal with queries raised by line managers particularly where the issues being dealt with are complex, require knowledge of employment law or have significant impacts for staff.

The conclusions from the research study suggested that although line management welcome involvement in HRM and appear to be confident in taking on that role, they recognise the need for specialists in the HR Division.

5.4   Implications for policy and practice

The recommendation to devolve HR functions in DJELR is a significant shift for the Department. Although devolution of HR functions was stated as an objective in the Statement of Strategy 2005 to 2007 (2005) and in the Human Resource Strategy (2006) no work towards implementing the objective has taken place to date. Significantly, the piece of research undertaken for this dissertation provides a building block to move from policy to implementation as it informs the actions that need to be taken to implement devolvement.

It is important that the implementation of the key actions happens in order that the HR functions can be devolved effectively. As with all implementation programmes, the project will require an individual to head up the programme to ensure delivery of those key actions and the project milestones.

In this regard the timing of this recommendation and the suggested programme of actions is quite opportune. The economic downturn has resulted in the Government identifying the necessity for savings of 3% in government Departments and it has already been acknowledged within DJELR that this will impact on the level of recruitment and promotions. This in turn will mean that there will be spare capacity at APO level in the HR Division and this could be used to resource the delivery of the HR devolution programme.

There will be a cost associated with the additional training but this cost will not be significant. It had been intended, in any event, to run a programme of training workshops on HR policies and procedures for line managers at the end of 2008. The findings of the research add impetus to the necessity to deliver that training and emphasise particular issues that need to be added to the training e.g. understanding the role of the Employee Assistance Service and HR Division.

One of the most important issues in relation to moving from policy to practice is to build in review mechanisms. This is particularly important in relation to devolving HR functions to avoid as Renwick (2003) identified "a structural hole arising – as people management is not completed properly by the line or HR". This will mean reviewing implementation and practice of HR processes and procedures to ensure consistency and fairness in their application.

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5.5   Limitations of this study

The limitations of this study are that it does not get the input of the staff who work for and with the middle line management group, clerical officers and executive officers, who would have a view on the capability of their line managers to undertake HR functions.

Neither does the study get the views of the senior line management grouping, principal officers, who might have a different view than their middle line managers about their capacity to undertake HR functions.

However, despite these limitations, this study could be used as a building block with potential to build on the findings of this study, by doing further research which could address some of the limitations identified and this is discussed below.

5.6   Further Research

In Chapter 3, Research Methodology, it was noted that ideally, a research study using a mixed methods approach incorporating a self-completion questionnaire and some semi-structured interviews targeted at a smaller subset of the respondent group would be appropriate. However, it was recognised that given the time constraints, the resources available and the experience gap of the author in qualitative analysis and design that this was not feasible.

Following on from this research it would be valuable to do some semi-structured interviews with a number of staff who report to the middle line management group and also to get the views, through semi-structured interviews, of the senior management group to whom middle managers report. Both groups would have worthwhile insights to the capacity and capability of the middle line managers.

It would also be worthwhile exploring, with staff who work in the HR area, their experience of working with the middle line management group as their relationship will be different from the manager/jobholder one described above and again this could be explored through semi-structured interviews.

The research study could also be extended to another civil service Department, by agreement, to see if the experience there reflects the results of the survey in DJELR.

There is potential in this area, to do quite an extensive research study, but for the purposes of this dissertation it had to be limited to a manageable piece of work.

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Appendix I

Human Resources Survey

Section 1.	
Are you – HEO/AO/AP :	
How long are you serving in your current grade :	
How many staff currently report to you :	
What is the largest number of staff you have managed in any previous grade :	

	Section 2	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I'm very familiar with my role and job requirements				
2.	I have a good knowledge of the work of DJELR				
3.	I work with my staff to achieve targets				
4.	I never have difficulties with any of my staff				
5.	I am comfortable dealing with any issues that arise e.g. attendance issues				
6.	I am very familiar with HR policies and procedures				
7.	I do not have time to deal with staff issues				
8.	I think staff should leave their issues at home				
9.	I think staff issues should be dealt with directly by HR				
10.	I have no difficulty dealing with issues without HR input				
11.	I understand what is meant by "devolving" HR functions				
12.	I think devolving HR functions is a good idea				
13.	I have time to deal with HR issues in my current role				

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14.	Having more control on HR issues would be good for my staff and for me				
15.	I would like more input into issues affecting my staff				
16.	Devolving HR just means HR unloading out to me				
17.	I have been given management training to help me fulfil my role				
18.	I have had no specific training on HR policies and procedures				
19.	Devolving HR to line managers would speed up response times to issues raised by staff				
20.	My staff would be happy if I were responsible for HR functions in our area				
21.	I would be confident that my own line manager would handle HR issues well				
22.	Devolving HR functions just means approving different types of leave eg. force majeure, parental				
23.	I would be willing to make decisions say in relation to confirmation of Probation without HR				
24.	Devolving HR duplicates work				
25.	Devolving HR to agencies in DJELR has worked well				
26.	A centralised HR frees up staff for front line roles				

	Section 3	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I am very familiar with the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour				
2.	I know the significance of the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act 2005				
3.	I have no knowledge of civil service disciplinary procedures				

4.	I know that the Civil Service Disciplinary Code was revised in 2006				
5.	I would be confident handling a disciplinary issue with a member of my staff				
6.	I have read the Disciplinary Code				
7.	I am aware that DJELR has published a Policy on Probation				
8.	I have read the Probation Policy and applied it with new staff				
9.	I find the new assessment form for Probation more meaningful than the old one				
10.	I have never done an assessment for a staff member on probation (new entrant)				
11.	I am aware that consistent and persistent under performance can be dealt with under the Disciplinary Code				
12.	I have read the new Dress Code for DJELR				
13.	If a member of staff turned up for work dressed inappropriately I would ring HR				
14.	I am familiar with the Civil Service Policy on bullying and harassment				
15.	I am confident dealing with issues around bullying and harassment				
16.	I feel line managers have been given sufficient training to deal with bullying and harassment				
17.	I understand the linkages between performance management (PMDS) and HR policies and procedures				
18.	PMDS is a devolved function that works well				
19.	I would implement PMDS even if I was not prompted to do so by HR				
20.	PMDS is an example of a function that takes too much of my time				

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		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21.	It is important to me that I implement PMDS with my staff				
22.	Managing performance is a key function for a line manager				

	Section 4	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I think dealing with HR issues would add to my own development				
2.	I feel confident that I would be supported when I make decisions relating to staff				
3.	I would need training on HR processes and procedures if HR functions were devolved				
4.	I think HR should remain a centralised function				
5.	HR is a specialised area and staff need to be qualified to do HR work				
6.	I think staff in HR are good at their jobs				
7.	I feel supported by staff in HR when I have difficulties with staff				
8.	I am better at dealing with HR issues than HR staff				
9.	I do not know what exactly they do in HR				
10.	I have a good working relationship with HR				
11.	If I have a problem with staff I contact HR at an early stage to discuss				
12.	HR staff in the future should be specialists in the area not generalists				
13.	Devolving HR functions would reduce the number of staff working in HR				

Appendix II

TO: Assistant Principals, Higher Executive Officers, Administrative Officers

You will be aware that, over the last number of years as part of the civil service modernisation agenda, there has been consistent reference to devolving Human Resource (HR) functions to line managers. In the Human Resource Management Strategy, published by DJELR in 2006, it specifically refers in Section 8, to devolving particular functions to line managers.

I am currently doing a research project as part of pursuing my qualification in HR.which involves looking at what line managers think about devolving HR functions. I would like to get an insight into, amongst other things, whether you think it is a good idea or not, whether you see advantages or disadvantages, whether you are familiar with HR policies and procedures.

Your input into this research would be invaluable to me.

I would appreciate if you could take time (less than 10 minutes) to complete the attached questionnaire. All respondents who complete the questionnaire by the due date will be placed in a draw with an opportunity to win a book voucher worth €100.

The date for return of the questionnaire is **Friday 13 June 2008.**

The information provided by you remains absolutely CONFIDENTIAL. It will not, under any circumstances, be given to a third party. I am the only person with access to the records. Your record cannot be accessed by any other person.

To respond to the questionnaire please click into the database icon.

To add this database to your workspace double click on the icon .

Thank you for taking the time to read this mail.

Regards, Martina

Martina Colville
Human Resources Division
Dept. of Justice Equality & Law Reform
Pinebrook House
71-74 Harcourt Street
Dublin 2
Tel 01-6028255
Email mmcolville@justice.ie