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O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

Human Resource Management in the PMO

By

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In part fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Project & Programme Management

I declare that

- (a) the material is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of the University of Limerick or any other University or Institute of Learning
- (b) where use has been made of the work of other people, it has been acknowledged and is fully referenced

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Dedication

In loving memory of Jane

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to provide an analysis of Human Resource Management policy and practice in the Project Management Office, a project orientated context that often leads in the implementation of organisational change and the development of change capability within the Irish insurance industry.

This research was in the form of a case study and draws on information gathered from 14 semi structured interviews conducted amongst project professionals who work in this PMO setting. The interviewees range from project team members to project directors and senior managers who often act in the role of project sponsor.

Human Resource Management is a core process of the firm however studies of its application in the project orientated context have been described as rudimentary in nature. What has been studied has highlighted the challenges traditional HRM theory and practice present for firms who adopt projects as their principle form of working.

This research has drawn attention to the difficulties experienced in the PMO setting in the enactment of HRM policy that is more suited to the organisations routine processes. Of particular note in this study was the need for the organisations recruitment, appraisal and reward policies to be adapted to suit the PMO setting. Roles and responsibilities in the enactment of HRM were also unclear. The study highlights the PMO workers' willingness to promote organisational core values may be associated with effective HRM.

This study lends supports to the assertions that mainstream organisational HRM policies are a challenge in the project orientated firm. The study highlights how temporary workers drawn from the organisations mainstream functions can bring further complexity to the enactment of HRM in this context.

Organisations who adopt projects as a form of working need to pay more attention to HRM in this setting ensuring HRM policies and roles and responsibilities in relation to its enactment are clearly defined. The effective enactment of HRM in this context has implications for organisations who seek to promote their core values.

This study contributes to the understanding of the challenges for HRM in the project orient setting. Future research may wish to investigate the importance of effective HRM in promoting an organisations core values and its relationship to organisational citizenship behaviour in the project orientated firm.

Executive Summary

This paper reports on the study of the effectiveness of Human Resource Management in the Project Management Office (PMO) setting within the Irish insurance sector. This is a setting in which projects as a form of working is increasingly prevalent as these companies continually focus on changing their business models. The PMO in this context provides strong governance of projects and leads in the implementation of organisational change and the development of change capability.

This research was in the form of a case study and draws on information gathered from 14 semi structured interviews involving project professionals who work in the PMO setting. The interviewees range from project team members to project directors and senior managers who often perform the role of the project sponsor.

The literature concerning HRM in the project orientated firm draws from general management, human resource management and project management theory. Studies of HRM in the project orientated setting are regarded as rudimentary. The literature defines the project orientated firm as having various organisational forms including subsystems of companies however project orientation is a key aspect of the firm's strategy. The importance of the strategic alignment of HRM with organisational strategies is also highlighted as is the critical nature of its effectiveness in terms of organisational success. Scholars argue however that HRM theory is shaped by Taylorian models of management and that new forms of work organisation such as projects is challenging traditional HRM theory and practice. This is evident from early studies of HRM in project settings which identified the elementary nature of its application. Where HRM was seen to be enacted researchers concluded that different forms of HRM are needed in this context.

The core areas of HRM, i.e. selection, appraisal, development and reward are seen as relevant in project orientated firms and a focus of research studies. The literature also identified release from the project, organisational learning, the ethical treatment of employees, the design of HRM structures, roles & responsibilities and organisational citizenship behaviour as relevant to the study of HRM in the project orientated setting.

Analysis of the data gathered from the 14 semi structured interviews lends supports to the assertions that mainstream organisational HRM policies are a challenge in this project orientated setting. Of particular note in this study was the following:

- Mainstream organisational policy can constrain recruitment of project workers in some situations and difficulties have been identified with appraisal of employees due to line managers not seeking project manager input.

- The mix of project professionals who are working alongside workers drawn from other functions in the organisation can lead to tensions when workers perceive they are being treated differently in terms of matters such as appraisal and reward. For instance the use of the normal distribution curve in evaluating employee performance can lead to employees being ranked against their peers in their “function of origin” rather than against their fellow project team members. Different reward structures that arise from project workers being drawn from different parts of the business may also lead to tensions amongst project workers.
- The findings in this report highlight the limited engagement between the HR function and the PMO in the enactment of HRM. This may be explained to some extent by a lack of confidence PMO practitioners have in the HR understanding of project forms of working. Notwithstanding this respondents in this study have identified a need for greater input by the HR function in managing ethical issues that can arise for workers in the PMO, to address issues that emerge with the application of mainstream HRM policy in this context and to define roles and responsibilities for HRM in this project orientated setting so as to ensure its effective enactment.
- Organisations who seek to promote their core values and nurture organisational citizenship behaviour amongst employees in the PMO may wish to pay greater attention to the enactment of HRM in this context

This research has the following limitations:

- The study focussed on the individual as opposed to their organisation and whilst many of the respondents are senior employees their views and experiences may not be fully representative of their organisational context.
- The study considers the perspective of the project professional and the senior managers who work with them. The study did not engage with HR professionals and so their perspective is not represented in this research.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	I
Dedication.....	II
Abstract.....	III
Executive Summary.....	IV
Table of Contents.....	VI
List of Figures and Tables.....	VIII
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Research Aim	1
1.2 Rationale for thesis	2
1.3 Context.....	2
1.4 Structure of this thesis.....	3
Chapter 2 Literature Review	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Project orientation of the firm.....	4
2.3 HRM definition and strategic alignment.....	5
2.4 An overview of HRM research in the project organisation.....	6
2.4.1 Introduction	6
2.4.2 The challenges for HRM in the project orientated firm.....	6
2.4.3 Core areas of HRM.....	7
2.4.4 Other aspects of HRM relevant to the project orientated firm.....	9
2.5 Summary of the literature review.....	12
2.6 Research question.....	12
Chapter 3 Research Design	13
3.1 Introduction	13
3.2 Research Philosophy	13
3.3 Design and Data Collection	13
3.4 Protocols	16
3.5 Research Ethics Approval.....	16
Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Findings.....	17
4.1 Introduction	17
4.2 Data analysis	17

4.2.1 Areas of HRM	17
4.2.2 Release from the project and organisational learning	22
4.2.3 Ethical treatment of project employees	23
4.2.4 Roles and responsibilities.....	24
4.2.5 Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).....	27
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions.....	29
5.1 Introduction	29
5.2 Summary and discussion of key findings	29
5.2.1 Key areas of HRM.....	29
5.2.2 Ethical treatment of employees.....	31
5.2.3 Roles and Responsibilities.....	32
5.2.4 Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).....	32
5.3 Limitations of this study.....	33
5.4 Conclusion and recommendations	33
5.4.1 Academic recommendation.....	33
5.4.2 Practitioner recommendations.....	33
Appendix 1 – Bibliography	35
Appendix 2 – Text of email to respondents:.....	38
Appendix 3	40

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Forms of project orientation	Page 5
Table 1: themes of literature review	Page 12
Table 2: profiles of respondents	Page 14

Chapter 1 Introduction

Our fast paced global environment has led to an increasing prevalence in projects as a form of working in all industries. The financial services sector in Ireland is no different. In this sector many companies trade as PLCs, all operate in a heavily regulated environment and are focussed on shareholder value, cost efficiency and face strong competition in their markets. Whilst their primary processes are routine many have developed strong capability in changing their business models and continually seek to improve performance through change initiatives. This has led to an increased level of project activity that extends well beyond their IT functions where project working has been more traditional. Many companies have established PMO type functions to provide strong governance of projects and lead in the development of change capability. These PMO functions can be described as project led (Hobday, 2000) a consequence of which is that their relationship with their parent organisation is often viewed in a matrix type structure. In this matrix structure programme and senior managers enjoy equal status with functional management in the parent organisation.

The increased project intensity in this context has also led to changes in work practice as more internal staff become involved in working in these PMOs where they are subject to a different management paradigm, have to work in new ways and can find themselves working temporary teams with people they don't know some of whom may be contracted professionals. The situation is further complicated when in these contexts some line managers who retain their HRM responsibility for employees who work in the PMO have no involvement in the day to day running of it.

The increased form of project working in the PMO has implications for the HRM policies that govern the entire organisation in so far as they are applied to this project orientated work situation. As a contribution to the study of HRM in these project intensive contexts this research aims to investigate the enactment of HRM within the PMO. The research will also explore the relationship between the policies enacted and the performance of projects. The practical benefits of answering this question may draw out the HRM issues for these project intense contexts and may present opportunities for strengthening their HRM governance. It may also lead to suggestions of different forms of HRM being applied.

1.1 Research Aim

The purpose of this research is to examine the HRM policies and the manner in which they are enacted in the PMO functions within the Irish Financial Services industry and in particular the

Insurance sector. The study will focus on the areas of HRM that have been identified in the literature as relevant to the context, the roles and responsibilities of the various actors involved in the enactment of HRM and how organisation citizenship behaviour (OCB) is nurtured in the PMO setting.

This researcher would like to understand the PMO and the projects it undertakes arising from its application of HRM policy and practice.

1.2 Rationale for thesis

(Clarke and Colling 2003) argue that project forms of working bring together highly skilled workers and is something very different from task based involvement systems. According to (Turner et al 2008) however HRM theory is mainly shaped by mainstream Taylorian models of management, a point not lost amongst HRM scholars who acknowledge that new forms of work organisation and structure and increasing attention to empowerment and flexible working is challenging traditional HRM theory and practice, (Mullins 2009) and leaves us in the midst of learning how best to manage employees in this changing environment, (Wong 2007).

As discussed in the introduction the insurance sector in Ireland is one setting in which project as a form of working is increasingly prevalent as these companies continually focus on changing their business models. Empowerment and flexible working is now prevalent amongst some workers in this context. Project teams are often a mix of individuals drawn from functions where process is routine who work alongside experienced project workers some of whom are contracted staff and others full-time employees of the PMO.

The integration of workers familiar with routine process with change professionals who are permanently employed in a project orientated settings present an interesting setting in which to consider the effectiveness of HRM policy and practice. Understanding the situation will contribute to our learning about HRM in project orientated contexts. This is consistent with the views of (Packendorff 1995) who when writing about project management theory asserted that:

“the common denominators for developing theory are that different types of project will require different theories, extensive empirical fieldwork is required in order to build these theories, and a diversity of theories and perspectives will enhance our understanding.....”.

(Packendorff 1995, p.329)

1.3 Context

This study focusses on the unit level by considering the real life experiences of the individuals who work in project orientated settings within the insurance sector. The roles of project sponsor, project director, programme and project manager and team members are seen as the key roles in this respect.

1.4 Structure of this thesis

This thesis is presented in 5 chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study and sets out the aim of the research and rationale for carrying out the study. The context of the study is also explained.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature concerning temporary organisations and HRM in the project orientated context. At the end of this chapter the research question is presented.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the design of this primary research and the reasons for adopting the approach taken. The data collection techniques are explained and a profile of the study participants is provided. Finally, the protocols that have been implemented for this study are explained.

Chapter 4 outlines the results of the data collection in the form of a cross case analysis of the most salient points made by the respondents in respect of the themes identified in the literature review in chapter 2.

Chapter 5 presents a synthesis of the data with the secondary research presented in chapter 2. The limitations of the research are explained and finally recommendations for practitioners and academics are put forward.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review considers HRM in the project orientated firm and draws from HRM, general management and project management literature. It begins with an overview of the project orientated firm highlighting its characteristics and the different levels of project orientation. A definition of HRM is then provided together an analysis of its alignment to the firm's strategy. The review will then consider studies of HRM in projects and the changing emphasis towards the project orientated context. Challenges for HRM in the project orientated firm are then explored. The review then focusses on what has been written about the core areas of HRM in project orientated firms and seeks to identify other key themes that dominate the discussion.

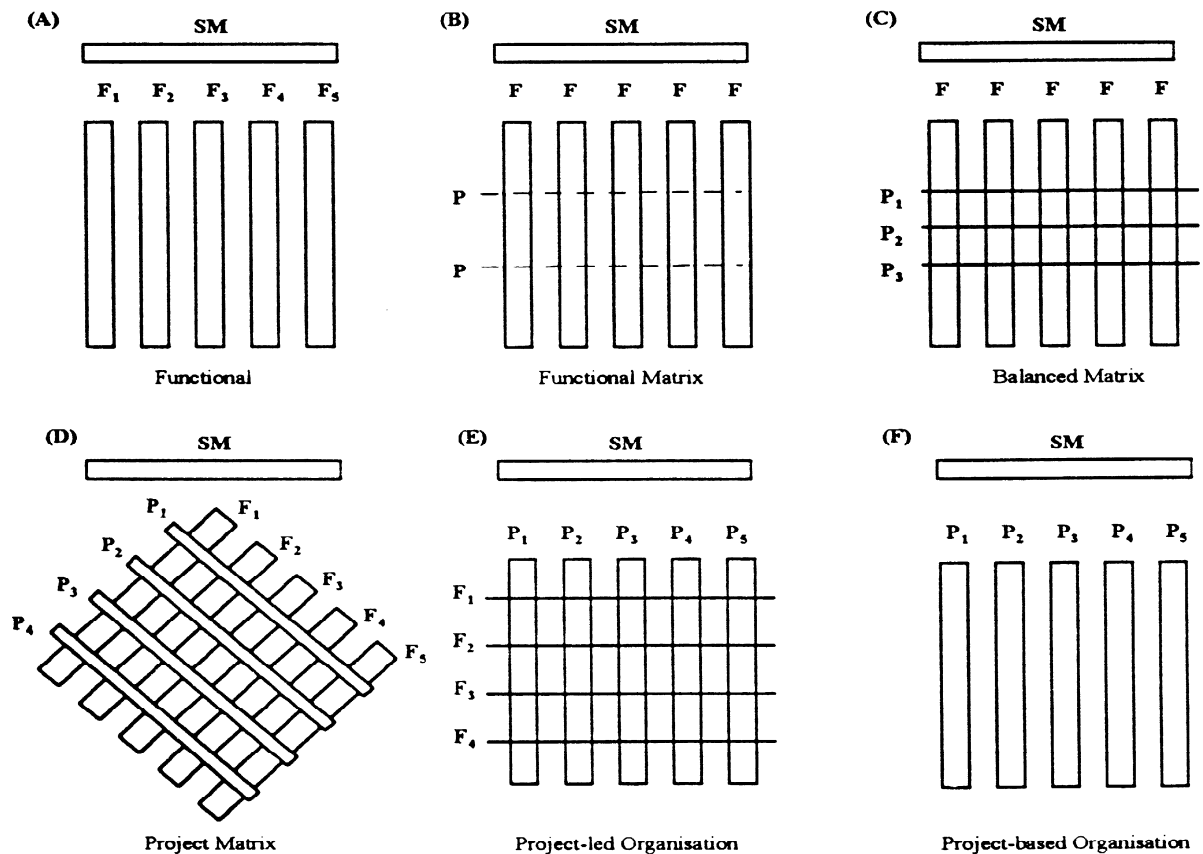
2.2 Project orientation of the firm.

The extent to which a firm is orientated towards projects as a form of working is an important consideration in understanding the alignment of the firms HRM strategy The concept of project orientation embraces the perspectives of projects as temporary organisations, (Packendorff 1995), (Lundin & Söderlund 1995) and the project at the firm level or as (Engwall 2003) describes it the project's organisational scope. Project orientation then is defined as the degree to which organisations resource, empower and support projects. (Lampell & Jha 2007). Project orientated companies can be companies or subsystems of companies such as divisions, business units or profit centres and have the following characteristics

- Management by projects is an explicit organisational strategy
- Projects and programmes are used as temporary organisations
- networks of projects , chains of projects and project portfolios are objects of consideration for the management
- project management , program management and portfolio management are specific business processes
- know how , provision and assurance takes place in expert pools
- project management competence is ensured by a project management office and a project portfolio group
- a new management paradigm is applied that is characterised by teamwork , process orientation and empowerment.

(Gareis 2006, p. 18-4)

Project orientation has also been considered at the firm level. For instance (Hobday 2000) conceptualises six ideal organisational forms of which five characterise different levels of project orientation as per Fig.1 overleaf.



Key:

- * F₁ - F₅ = various functional departments of the organisation (eg Marketing, Finance, Human Resources, Engineering, Manufacturing, R&D)
- * P₁ - P₅ = major projects within the organisation (eg CoPS projects)
- * SM = senior management

Note:

- * The number of functions and projects will vary according to the organisation in question. Various permutations are used here for illustration.

Fig 1: Forms of project orientation – source: (Hobday 2000, p.877)

Hobday describes these variations in levels of project orientation as (A) functional, (B) functional matrix, (C) balanced matrix (D) Project matrix, (E) Project-led and (F) Project-based. This illustrates the level of complexity these organisational structures bring to the HRM debate.

2.3 HRM definition and strategic alignment

This thesis draws on Mullins (2009) definition of Human Resource Management as involving all management decisions and practices that directly affect or influence the people or human resources who work for an organisation. Effective HRM then is critical to the success of the organisation and therefore should be aligned to the overall organisational strategy, (Fombrum et al 1984). This

strategic alignment leads to discussions about HRM policies & practice and the design of the HRM function in terms of meeting the needs of the organisation. In literature concerned with projectised organisations the alignment of HRM with this organisational form is often the basis of discussion relating to its effectiveness, e.g. (Heumann et al 2004) & (Bredin and Söderlund 2006). The argument often focusses on the appropriateness of HRM structures and policies that are seen as designed for traditional organisation models.

2.4 An overview of HRM research in the project organisation

2.4.1 Introduction

Many researchers concerned with HRM in the project orientated firm have commented on the limited number of published writings on the subject, e.g. (Belout 1998), (Clarke and Colling 2003), (Bredin and Söderlund 2006) and (Heumann et al 2007). The following sections consider what has been written about HRM in this context drawing from project management, general management and HRM literature. The overview first focusses on the challenges for HRM in relation to projects and the emerging project orientated firm. Core areas of HRM are then considered together with other HRM practices that are seen as of relevance to the discussion. The importance of HRM roles and responsibilities is then considered. Finally the significance of organisational citizenship behaviour is considered and its prevalence in a temporary setting explored.

2.4.2 The challenges for HRM in the project orientated firm.

An early study by (Fabbi and Pettersen 1992) which considered the state of knowledge of HRM practice in project management led to the surprising discovery of the elementary nature of its application. Notwithstanding this the authors argued for different forms of HRM in projects stating:

“the incongruence between authority and responsibility within the project, jurisdictional conflicts resulting from allocation of human resources, integration of employees into new teams, the double authority that project team members can be subject to and the insecurity of the project team members’ careers.

(Fabbi and Pettersen, 1992, p.81)

Another study of HRM at the project level was that of (Pinto and Prescott 1988) whose finding in relation to the non-impact of the personnel factor on project success drew the attention of (Belout, 1998). His review of their research recommended that future studies in this area should clarify the construct validity of the personnel factor and consider the effects of organisational structure and project lifecycle. In a more recent study (Belout & Gauvreau 2004) having acted on these recommendations reported that the personnel factor is only a marginal variable in project success. The surprising result left the authors wondering if:

“HRM in the context of project management has specific characteristics that make its role, social responsibility and operation different from the so-called traditional HRM”

(Belout & Gauvreau 2004, p.1)

This conclusion gave further support to the notion that different forms of HRM are needed in this context. One of the shortcomings identified by (Packendorff 1995) in the developing theory of project management is its focus on project orientation. The author argued that:

“a change in the metaphor from project to temporary organization means that traditional concepts of project management such as planning or structure become less important, at least as objective entities beyond the perceived reality of organizational actors. What is to be studied, in fact, is temporary organizing processes, i.e. the deliberate social interaction occurring between people working together to accomplish a certain, inter-subjectively determined task”..

(Packendorff 1995, pp327-328)

(Turner et al 2008) drawing from their previous studies of HRM in project orientated firms argued that these organisational forms have different requirements for HRM pointing to the following features which influence the nature of employment within them:

- Temporary work process
- Dynamic work environment
- Uncertain requirements
- Specific management paradigm
- Project portfolio resource and role demands
- Wellbeing of employees
- Providing employee development

A more recent study by (Asquin et al 2010) drew attention to the risks of excessive involvement and commitment, destabilising professional identities and of increasingly precarious corporate careers. In HRM studies (Bredin and Söderlund 2006) have taken the perspective that project intensive firms present challenges for HRM practice. Their study of two R&D firms identifies challenges relating to HRM content (competence development, career paths & performance evaluation) and to the structures of the HRM department. In a separate but overlapping report on the study of 4 project intensive firms the authors present a framework for the analysis of competence, trust, change and people challenges by the HRM function in project intensive firms, (Söderlund & Bredin 2006) however according to (Bredin, 2008) change is not a HRM area that is specific to the project orientated context.

2.4.3 Core areas of HRM.

Studies of HRM in the project orientated firm often focus on core areas of the practice. The seminal work of (Fombrun, et al., 1984) suggests these core areas are: selection, appraisal, development &

rewards and point to their association with performance both from the individual and organisation perspective. The following section summarises what has been written in the literature about these core areas in the context of the project orientated firm.

2.4.3.1 Selection

For the most part studies relating to the selection of people for projects focus on the allocation of the firms internal resources. For instance a study by (Engwall and Jerbrant 2003) considered this in a multi project environment and reported the importance of organisations needing to address deeply embedded features so as to manage issues they encounter with the allocation of these resources. (Turner et al 2008) also studied the practice of recruiting resource from the permanent organisation to the project context and observed that selection of candidates for project assignments was dependent on the availability of resource, matching competency to the project needs and the development of the individual. In some contexts selecting teams for long term project work was a competitive process however in other instances factors such as employee terms and conditions imposed limitations on the duration of these temporary assignment. In selecting teams one of their case studies considered balancing the resources on the team between task and people orientation. (e Silva and Costa 2013) addressed the efficiency of the allocation of human resources in information system projects by conceptualising decision models as a method of efficient allocation of people. Not all researchers consider selection of resource to be relevant to the analysis of HRM in project orientated firms however. For instance in considering PBOs (the extreme form of project organisation both (Whitley 2006) and (Bredin 2008) take the perspective that managing human resource flows is a characteristic of this organisational form rather than a challenge.

2.4.3.2 Appraisal and reward

Appraisal and reward has been considered in all forms of project orientated companies. (Clarke and Collinge 2003) report from their study of two engineering type project led organisations that the capacity of HR practitioners to develop the effectiveness of the appraisal and reward systems was limited due to the dominance of project management practice. (Turner et al 2008) report that in project orientated companies appraisals occurs in the line and often it is the case that line managers have failed to take input from the project manager in relation to the performance of the employee in the project. Whilst the authors agree with appraisals occurring in the line they propose a 360 degree feedback appraisal system for performance in the project and place greater emphasis on the role of the project manager in completing performance reviews. (Bredin, 2008) similarly focusses on the participation of the project manager and the line manager's responsibility to actively seek inputs

to the employee's appraisal. The employee is also seen as an important participant in this HRM process.

The attention paid to reward systems in the project management literature is often limited to discussion on incentives for project performance such as gain sharing as suggested by (Turner et al 2008). Annual bonus payments based on the individual's performance in project assignments is also considered. Mainstream HRM theory however draws attention to the complexity of reward systems for team based working. For instance (Kerrin & Oliver 2002) report that traditional individual reward systems may not be effective for team based activities. Reward systems are also seen to have implications for trust among project employees (Maurer 2010).

2.4.3.3 Development of the project employee.

Development of the project worker is considered in the literature from both the individual project perspective and the longer term development of the employee in the project orientated firm. (Turner et al 2008) suggest reasons for development of personnel in the project relate to having competencies to undertake project tasks, to understand the project brief and to be able to use the project outputs. The authors agree that individual project learning is not a basis for a career. Both (Midler 1995) and (Hobday 2000) whose case studies concerned project orientated firms highlight concerns about the continuity of staff training and development in these contexts. In this respect (Turner et al 2008) propose that employee development needs should be based on the organisations medium term needs and focussed on likely future project assignments. The role of both the employee as an "active players in managing the relation to their organisational context" (Bredin 2008, p.92) and the line manager have also been considered. According to (Bredin 2008) a greater emphasis on line managers' responsibility to develop competencies in their teams and the development of appropriate career paths in project orientated firms can address the challenges of long term employee development in the project orientated context.

2.4.4 Other aspects of HRM relevant to the project orientated firm

Other aspects of HRM that have been highlighted in the literature as relevant to the project orientated firm are discussed below.

2.4.4.1 Release from the project and organisational learning

In the literature release from the project is seen as having an impact on the employee as well as organisational learning. In terms of release of the employee the issues seem to focus on how and when their next project assignment takes place. This has been considered by (Turner et al 2008) who report various practices amongst employers depending on whether the employee is returning to a

line role or awaiting a further project assignment. Returning to the line does not appear to have presented issues in their study however for the project worker the next assignment may be dependent on the effectiveness of organisational planning systems in the timing of the next assignment.

Knowledge management and organisational capability is a key HRM activity (Minbaeva, 2005) and in a project context can influence long term project success, (Popaitoon and Siengthai, 2013). Nevertheless in organisational literature research on project-based learning has consistently highlighted the problems involved in attempting to capture and share knowledge and learning across projects. (Bresnen et al 2004).

(Bredin, 2008) points to these challenges emerging in project orientated organisations because of the need to maintain a flexible workforce. In addressing these challenges the author conceptualises a framework which focusses on the organisational capability to manage the relationship between people and their organisational context. In this framework people management systems improve people capability when it is integrated with strategic, functional, and project capabilities.

2.4.4.2 Ethical treatment of employees

Early studies that consider the work-life balance of the project worker include Packendorff 2002 who points to the increased responsibility workers take in achieving stability in this work environment. The ethical treatment of employees including addressing issues such as work-life balance in project orientated firms was considered by Turner et al (2008). Their study reveals that the dynamic work environment often contributed to employees having to work remotely, spend long periods of time away from home and the business unit and working long hours were issues of concern. (Zika-Viktorsson, et al 2006) has considered the psychosocial aspects of work overload in multi-project settings due to multiple role demands. The authors highlight the lack of rest between project assignments, time pressures and a lack of routines as contributing to project overload. (Bredin 2008) highlights similar issues of work intensity in her case studies and looks to her proposal to change the emphasis of the role of line managers to being more "HR orientated" and for these:

"competence managers of project workers to constrain the work intensity for ambitious and 'popular' project workers, and to support them in finding work-life balance".

(Bredin, 2008, p.105)

2.4.4.3 Roles and responsibilities in the project orientated companies

The effectiveness of roles and responsibilities in the enactment of HRM are seen to be problematic in all forms of project orientated firms. Sometimes this focusses on the role of the HR function:

“ The challenge for HR practitioners who operate in a project management environment is to devise and effectively communicate methods and policies that enable and support established management systems to become more effective”.

(Clarke and Colling, 2003, p.190.)

A subsequent longitudinal study on a developing project orientated firm (Heumann, 2010) reported on how a more enlightened HRM approach can contribute to its development when HR professionals understand project forms of working however. (Bredin and Söderlund, 2006) consider the wider aspects of responsibility for HRM arguing that it is not only the responsibility of the HRM department. (Bredin, 2008) focussed on the need for HR emphasis on line managers in project orientated firms so as to address issues of employee well-being and career planning. The role of the employee in project based firms was also considered describing them as “potentially active players in managing the relation to their organisational context”, (Bredin, 2008, p.92). In a more recent paper (Bredin and Söderlund, 2011) have considered the different levels of engagement by the HR function in the operational management of HRM depending on the configuration of the project orientated setting as being either inter-functional or intra-functional. In contexts studied by (Turner et al 2008) the dominant role of line management was sometimes seen to lead to problems with the way performance appraisals were conducted when the inputs of the project managers were not sought.

2.4.4.4 Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

The notion that there is a difference between the in-role behaviours of the project worker and organisational citizenship behaviour may be a difficult concept for those who argue that the ideal project worker is competent, knowledgeable and flexible team worker, (Bredin 2008). Studies of OCB however point to the relationship employees have with their employing organisation as critical to influencing OCB, (Coyle-Shapiro et al 2004). Higher levels of OCB which can positively influence an employee’s performance have been linked with the enactment of HRM policies (Purcell et al 2004) although these policies may differ amongst occupational groups. This study also highlights the higher levels of organisational commitment that are associated with contexts where organisational values are stronger. A study by (Braun et al 2013) has considered OCB in temporary settings. Their study amongst project managers and workers revealed that not only did these behaviours support the project goals of meeting time, cost and quality objectives it also had positive implications for how networks evolve to contribute to future projects in the organisation. Consequently the authors point to the 3 HRM practices of recruitment and selection, training and development and appraisal of performance as important

2.5 Summary of the literature review

The literature concerning HRM in the project orientated firm draws from general management, human resource management and project management theory.

The literature highlights that project orientation can exist in various organisational forms and may comprise of companies or subsystems of companies. The strategic alignment of HRM to project orientated firms leads to consideration of the design of policies and HRM structures that are appropriate to this organisational form.

Studies of HRM in projects and project orientated firms reveal that the characteristics of this form of working challenge traditional HRM policies and practice. Areas of HRM that are seen as relevant in project orientated firms and requiring attention are:

- Selection and recruitment
- Appraisal and reward
- Development of the employee
- Release from the project and organisational learning

The ethical treatment of employees who are exposed to work overload and work-life balance was also prevalent in some studies. The design of HRM structures and the roles & responsibilities of the various actors need to be considered for effective implementation of HRM in the project orientated firm. There is an increased responsibility for the employee to manage their career in this employment context.

Finally organisational citizenship behaviour has been seen to support projects and exploiting this has implications for the selection of employees, training & development and appraisals of employees in temporary organisations.

2.6 Research question

The analysis of the literature invites the following research question for the context of this study:

What are the HRM processes that govern the context in which the participants in this study work, how are they implemented and what implications does this have for HRM in this context and for the performance of the projects it manages?

This is an all-embracing question whose construct emerges from the analysis of the themes discussed in the literature.

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This section of the report outlines the philosophy and approach that underpins this research. The research design and data collection is also explained together with background information on the research respondents and the protocols that were implemented during the study.

3.2 Research Philosophy

This exploratory research adopts a social constructive approach to understanding the social phenomena in this context. The approach evidences an interpretivist philosophy which allows the researcher to explore the different interpretations respondents may place on the situation. This interpretative perspective is appropriate for this study of HRM in a business context. (Saunders et al 2009) The interpretivist philosophy lends itself to the inductive approach in developing theory. This allows for formulation of theory using the data gathered during the project.

3.3 Design and Data Collection

Consistent with the interpretivist philosophy this research design is based on gathering data through semi structured interviews. This is a qualitative approach to gathering data and is appropriate to an exploratory study as it allows the researcher to probe and build on the respondents' answers, (Saunders et al 2009)

The research design draws from the key themes identified in the literature review. These are summarised in the following table:

Theme of literature review	Authors	Research Question
The challenges for HRM and the case for different forms of HRM for the project orientated firm.	Heumann et al (2004) Turner et al (2008) Bredin (2008)	What are the challenges for the enactment of HRM in this context and do they support the call for different forms of HRM
The structure of HRM departments and the roles and responsibilities in the enactment of HRM policy and practice	Turner et al (2008) Bredin (2008) Heumann (2010) Bredin & Söderlund	Are roles and responsibilities for the enactment of HRM in this context appropriately assigned

Theme of literature review	Authors	Research Question
	(2011)	
Organisational citizenship behaviour can prevail in temporary work settings and is conditioned by the enactment of HRM policy	Coyle-Shapiro et al (2004) Purcell et al (2004) Braun et al (2013)	Is OCB recognised in this setting and if so how supported by HRM policy and practice.

Table 1: key elements of literature review

Drawing from the above the following theme questions were identified in preparation for the interviews:

- The type of HRM policies that govern their project context and specifically if any of these policies have been tailored to accommodate the project organisation strategy. Respondents will be prompted with a list of HRM policy types that have been identified in the literature as relevant to the project context and invited to propose any additional HR policies that they view as relevant.
- Issues relating to the ethical treatment of project workers will be explored and particular emphasis placed on how these issues were managed. To that extent the researcher will seek to understand if the ethical issues that arose had implications for organisational HRM policy.
- The role of the HR business partner, project manager, project employee and line manager in the implementation of the HRM policy will be explored This aspect of the interview will seek to understand the level of interplay between these actors in project forms of working.
- A discussion on organisational citizenship behaviour will seek to understand its prevalence in the PMO and how this relates to the enactment of HRM in this setting
- Throughout the interviews the interviewer will seek to understand from respondents if the enactment of HRM policy had implications for the projects that they were involved with.

The respondents are a community of professionals comprising of project sponsors, programme directors, programme/project managers and project team members and are personally known to the researcher. All work or have until recently worked in project orientated contexts with different levels of maturity. These contexts are situated in the financial services sector (insurance) and some of the respondents have for worked for more than one firm in this context.

This study considers HRM policy and its enactment through the lens of these individuals and seeks to take account of their personal experiences and perspectives. It focusses on the individual as opposed to the view of the firm and therefore provides a rich setting for this study.

This researcher has considered the risks of bias and reliability of data derived from the semi structured interview approach, (Easterby-Smith et al 2008). All respondents are known to the researcher. This has contributed to the building of trust during the interview process and so enhanced the exploration of events uncovered in the discussions.

The following table provides a profile of each of the individuals who have contributed to this study.

ID	Role	Profile
TA	Project team member	Has a mainstream functional role in the organisation and has taken secondments to project work on a part-time basis over a period of 12 years to 2012.
TB	Project Team member	Holds a mainstream functional role and has taken part-time and full-time project role assignments over the past 12 years. Also manages other employees who have taken temporary secondments to projects.
TC	Project team member	Employed in a project orientated function as a business analyst since 2008. Has taken long assignments in transformational programmes and is currently employed in a project orientated function.
TD	Project team member	Employed in a project orientated function as a business analyst since 2006. Has taken long assignments in transformational programmes and is currently employed in a project orientated function.
PE	Project Manager	Currently between roles, has worked in project manager role since 2008 including international project settings as an employee in a project orientated function.
PF	Project Manager	Employed as a project manager role since 2008 in a project orientated department. Has taken long term project assignments and has experience in international project settings.
PG	Programme Manager	Has 15 years' experience as a programme manager and has established and led a PMO function.
PH	Programme Manager	Has 7 years' experience working as a project and programme manager employed in a project orientated function. Has had long term project assignments and worked on international projects. Full time in project orientated department.
PI	Programme Manager	Has 12 years' experience working as a project programme manager employed in a project orientated function. Has had long term project assignments, worked on international projects and managed transformational change programmes.

ID	Role	Profile
DJ	Dir/Head of PMO	Employed in a project orientated function for 15 years and currently leading a project orientated function and programmes of change.
DK	Programme Director	Employed in a project orientated function for 20 years and currently leading a project orientated function and programmes of change.
DL	Programme Director	Employed in a project orientated functions for 13 years and currently leading a project orientated function and programmes of change
SM	Sponsor	Senior management in functional role and has acted in the role of business owner of transformation programmes and other major change initiatives for 3 yrs.
SN	Sponsor	Senior management in functional role and has acted in the role of business owner of transformation programmes and other major change initiatives for 20 yrs

Table 2: Profile of respondents.

Each respondent chose the interview setting. Recorded face to face interviews took place across a range of settings in Cork, Galway and Dublin. Interviews lasted between 35minutes and 1 hour in duration. All recorded interviews have been transcribed.

3.4 Protocols

Each of the respondents who took part in an interview received an email providing a briefing of the project and confirmation of the research ethics approval for the study. Key contact information relating to the study was provided to respondents. All participants were assured of their anonymity and the security of data associated with the interview. The text of this email is contained within appendix 2. All data has been securely stored and encrypted. Data security has been enabled by Symantec® and BitLocker®.

3.5 Research Ethics Approval

This research has the approval of the Kenny Business School Research Ethics Committee. Approval was granted on May 14th 2014 and communicated to the researcher by Michelle Cunningham of the Kenny Business School Research Office on May 16th 2014.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

The results of the interviews that have taken place are described in this chapter. First, the areas of HRM identified in the literature as relevant are considered. This is followed by analysis of the discussions relating to the ethical treatment of employees, roles & responsibilities in the enactment of HRM and organisation citizenship behaviour.

4.2 Data analysis

The data analysis reports the most salient and contrasting views elicited from the respondents on the topics covered during the 14 interviews. These and other exemplary quotes are summarised in Appendix 3.

4.2.1 Areas of HRM

4.2.1.1 Recruitment and selection

The respondents reveal that the resourcing of project teams draws from the following sources:

- Assignment of project personnel from within the PMO by programme managers or project directors.
- Secondment of resources from other functions in the parent organisation.
- The recruitment of external temporary workers by the PMO.

There does not appear to be any concern about how the PMO staff member is assigned and work allocation is monitored through software planning tools. In response to questions about the effectiveness of the assignment process one of the project team members (TC) commented:

“there is discussion on each assignment as to the likely commitment from me and after this discussion that the assignment is set up on the planning tool so this works well especially when people are looking for me to take on more assignments as the additional commitment required of me is considered”.

The temporary assignment of personnel who ordinarily work in other functions is not always straight forward and differences in the practice of assigning individuals can occur. In some contexts recruitment and selection is subject to organisational policy, the roles must be advertised and a competitive process to select candidates may occur. One programme manager (PH) described the effect of this arrangement as

“slowing us down to some extent because of the internal selection and recruitment process that has to be undertaken”.

In other contexts candidates for these roles are usually selected by the line manager or sometimes a more senior manager such as a project sponsor. The role can either be part-time or full-time. On this approach to selecting candidates for projects one of the sponsors (SM) commented that

“projects are seen as a development opportunity for employees however it can cause issues in the organisation for those who are not considered and for those who are repeatedly assigned to what is sometimes difficult project work”.

Other issues identified with this method of choosing candidates was commented on by a project manager (PE) who said

“I often found that we did not get the best people. I think some of the people nominated by the operations managers were not performing in their roles within the organisation. This is one thing that stays firmly in my mind.”

This problem has also been recognised by project sponsor (SM) commenting that

“we need to get away from this subjective view of individual capability and towards having behavioural and competency profiles for the individuals we want to see working in projects”. “This also helps us to identify the right people and removes a dependency on line managers making the right selection of individuals for the project”.

Project sponsor (SN) outlined how they profile employees for assignment to teams in larger projects.

The recruitment of external temporary workers relates primarily to specialists in IT and project management and is usually led by the programme managers and line managers in the PMO function or the project directors. In seeking to fill these specialist skills there is a clear preference for procuring these from agencies, consultancy firms or through supplier partnership arrangements. As one project director (DJ) said of IT roles

“I think it is fair to say that selection and recruitment in the IT world is very different from how it is in the remainder of the organisation and this is very much dictated by how the market works”

Generally speaking the selection of candidates from this pool of resource entails interviews and on selection of the right candidate contracts with the supplier are put in place. The style and approach to interviewing these candidates is described by project director (DK)

“we had specific policies tailored to suit the recruitment and selection of people to the project and I would have been very involved in the selection process... I styled questions myself.... I think I had achieved a level whereby I had a set of questions I was always comfortable using in any interview situation when recruiting for project managers”.

However programme manager (PI) outlined a recent experience where some tension did arise with the recruitment of a contractor when resistance was encountered with the HRM function.

“I had approval to procure somebody through a contract and that funding included the cost of meeting agency fees but because the process in the organisation is to advertise the role directly I had to go through this route with the result that I encountered a delay in getting the resource that I needed. In the end I had to go to the agency anyway and pay their costs but there is an inbred approach to trying to reduce cost in the HR function in relation to recruitment and this is hard to shift”.

4.2.1.2 Appraisal and reward

All respondents agreed that the appraisal and reward processes draw for the parent organisation policy. Different perspectives emerge amongst the respondents on the effectiveness of the system depending on the role they perform in their project assignments. Two of the respondents (TA & TB) who work in mainstream functions in their organisations say the objective and appraisal system is sufficiently flexible to account for both their project and normal role objectives. In terms of completing performance appraisals they both view this as the role of their line manager and expect the project manager to input to this, (TB):

“as you are reporting to a different person, that person (the project manager) may need to be spoken to as part of your performance appraisal especially as the line manager may not have had direct exposure to your work on the project”.

In the same discussion amongst team members who are permanent workers in a PMO (TC & TD) they highlighted a system that has been modified for project working. Both employees have a people and task manager. As one might expect the task manager assigns the work and from the earlier discussion this seems to work well. The people manager is responsible for objective setting and performance reviews. The system is designed to support feedback from project customers however it is the responsibility of the employee to illicit this feedback. Both respondents have expressed dissatisfaction with the people and task manager arrangement. This is summed up by one of the respondents (TD) as follows:

“my people manager has no idea what I do”.

In similar discussions amongst project and programme managers their perspective on objective setting and performance evaluation is that it is the role of the line manager to set objectives and conduct appraisals. One programme manager’s (PI) description of his context was

“there is a quite traditional structure in this company and most people would see their line manager as having the primary role in the implementation of HRM policy”.

In responding to questions about how appraisals are conducted in this situation this programme manager commented:

“this is where things get complicated in the project environment because we have internal staff who have a line manager that is not involved in the project implementation”.

Another programme manager (PH) observed that

“it is entirely at the discretion of the line manager to seek feedback from the project. Even for the person who's been evaluated they can only hope that their line manager will take feedback from the project on their performance”.

These issues are supported by one of the sponsor’s observations, (SM):

“this is an issue that is quite contentious for us at the moment. Line managers are responsible for doing appraisals and there is no process in place for them to consider the work undertaken by employees that were assigned to projects, especially when these individuals have not even engaged with the line manager whilst working in the project”.

It appears that when the line manager is part of the PMO or when the programme manager is the line manager the issue does not arise, e.g. (PG) who has line manager responsibility for PMO staff.

A point that emerged in discussions with all respondents was the existence of the expected normal distribution curve that should emerge within the organisation following the annual performance appraisal process. This is a requirement in many of the respondents’ contexts where each function is required to deliver a distribution curve. For PMO type functions this is no different however as one project director (DK) pointed out in relation to project workers on secondments to projects

“it was possible for people who worked on a program to be subject to a curve because of the function that they normally resided in and the programme had no control over this, this meant that people

who worked in projects were ranked against their peers in the functional organisation as opposed to being ranked against other change capability personnel”.

In speaking about reward structures one project manager (PE) reported how sometimes reward structures for people drawn from other functional areas of the organisation can be more favourable to others:

“Some of these people received rewards well in excess of what might have been given to others on the project and this has created something of an imbalance in the project”.

Both sponsors agreed that additional remuneration for project work was given in “exceptional circumstances where people who are seconded to a project may be placed a higher grade”. In another context sponsor (SN) explained in relation to a transformation programme that is currently in place

“that is very much the case for the senior people on this project who have specific objectives and their reward structure is related to this”.

When speaking about the permanent project staff working in the same programme he said

“It will be different for the IT people who work in this project as they always work in a projectised model. Their objectives and reward structures are no different for this project as for any other”.

Another programme manager (PI) when talking of the situation in a transformational programme that he is managing believed that the organisational remuneration structure

“needs to be tweaked some more particularly so for the IT people where the market is buoyant and people can move around quite easily because we do not have a retention bonus for these people”.

4.2.1.3 Development of the project employee

From discussion with the respondents it is clear that development of people in the project orientated context relate to two categories of employee, those who are seconded from their mainstream functional roles to project teams and those who are employees in the project orientated function. Not all employees are seconded to project teams for the sake of their development however, some are assigned because their technical skills are needed although respondent (PI) pointed out these skills do not always include skills in working in project orientated ways:

“there was an assumption that business people could very quickly get up to speed in terms of the processes associated with working in this program and that has not proven to be accurate”.

Project sponsor (SM) outlined a strategy for employee learning as:

“the project is the means of a person's development and it may not necessarily be about developing specific skill sets, it can be very unstructured and be as general as developing”.

Of such situations programme manager (PH) commented:

“in this context there is little opportunity for developing people when they are on projects and therefore only those who are appropriately skilled should be selected”

In some contexts as reported by one of the programme managers (PG) project work was linked to career progression:

“if you are looking to join management in this organisation you have to have both the project and the operational skills”

In developing the permanent employees of the project orientated function one project manager (PF) pointed to

“currently having a very healthy budget for training and development”.

In another context a project director (DJ) outlined how the PMO function leverages both organisationally established training and specific training relating to the context

“for instance some of the team leaders have been through the management development programme and additionally we do our own training because we are projectised we style our training on developing the professions”.

Another director (DK) however reflected a situation often quoted in literature:

“I honestly cannot think of any time when we have allowed somebody to take time out to develop skills and (referring to an emerging PMO organisation) this did not even happen in my most recent context”

4.2.2 Release from the project and organisational learning

Release from the project and knowledge management was discussed with all respondents and different perspectives present depending on the category of employee.

The formality of releasing resources that have been seconded to project teams varies considerably depending on the length of the assignment. Reasons for release are fully explained by one sponsor (SM):

“It can be because the project is at an end, or because a person is needed back in the organisation and that demand is greater than the demand coming from the project or because the person is not performing”.

The release from long term assignments in projects can be problematic if the person’s role has been backfilled or no longer exists. None of the respondents have experienced this however one of the sponsors (SN) who is currently engaged with a large transformation type project commented:

“One situation that comes to mind is where people who have been assigned to projects have had their organisational roll back filled. So they have an expectation coming off the project that they will return to their pre-existing role and in a lot of cases that does not happen and so you can lose your best people very quickly if you do not have a plan in place and a career path”.

In managing the release of permanent employees of the project orientated function it seems that with the current levels of change and the way these functions flex resource demand by using contract staff the core permanent resource team do not experience periods of time on the bench in between project assignments as indicated by one team member (TC):

“at the moment there is plenty of change going and we have had a significant reduction in the number of change resources in our team in last few years”.

The release of contract resource has had implications for organisational learning however as pointed out by one programme manager: (PH):

“we miss the opportunity of harnessing knowledge from external expertise because we do not cost this into projects”.

4.2.3 Ethical treatment of project employees

The discussion with respondents in relation to the ethical treatment of employees is prompted by issues raised in the literature such as work-life balance. One sponsor (SN) commented

“we do need to have individuals who are prepared to go the extra half mile. The risk is that you create a high dependency on a small group of people and you risk burnout. Here we look to the project manager to ensure that he/she understands where the pressure points are and we don't have a situation where people are not allowed to take their holidays or days off than they need to take.”

A project manager (PF) in speaking about another context commented that:

“giving time in lieu also helps however it is tightly controlled and is not adequate especially for some of the projects where we are having to work late evenings and weekends. We have had to implement a workaround to give extra time in lieu and keep the records off the system and that is not satisfactory”

In speaking about work-life balance issues programme manager (PI) commented that sometimes for the senior people it can be:

“a mental health issue the environment that we are working is highly pressurised, there are high expectations from the business and to some extent they are unreasonable”.

Project director (DK) described it similarly as

“we all have had to go over the cliff because of some need”.

Not all respondents view the matter as problematic and point to the importance of the role of the project manager in managing ethical issues:

“I expect my project managers to be open, tough but fair”.

Programme Manager (PG) reported little concern for work – life balance issues describing his context as having evolved to work

“very much hand in glove with the rest of the organisation”

However he acknowledged the work involved longer hours and sometimes especially for his role considerably more travel away from home than anyone else in the organisation.

The unsuitability of the organisations travel policy was raised by (PF) who complained that:

“whilst there is an expense policy that will allow me to recover this expenditure it is unfair that I have to upfront these costs....it is unfair to the individual who engages in all this travel and works the long hours”.

4.2.4 Roles and responsibilities

Whilst the preceding paragraphs have included some discussion on roles and responsibilities this section pulls together the salient comments that emerged from the interviews in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the line manager, project manager and the HR function in the operation of the PMO

4.2.4.1 The Line manager

The role of the line manager has featured prominently in the discussions on selection, appraisal and development of employees working in the PMO. In this context however there are two different categories of line manager. The first is the line manager who is working in the PMO and has HRM responsibility for the permanent workers there. Project director (DJ) in commenting on some aspects of their roles

“the line managers for each of the disciplines are responsible for the interview and selection process” and in relation to conducting the appraisal and it does not seem to cause issues and works quite well”.

The team members TC & TD who both work as fulltime employees in a PMO reported having both a task manager and a people manager but have expressed dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of this as highlighted earlier in this report. In other contexts the programme manager can assume a line manager responsibility: (PG)

“I would look at the individuals who I thought needed training and development and seek to allocate to them project work that I felt would help develop them”.

The second category of line manager is those who have HRM responsibility for staff in the organisation and who are temporarily assigned to the PMO. These managers are sometimes remote to the PMO setting. In sections 4.2.1.1 & 4.2.1.2 the role of these line managers in the selection of candidates for project assignment and appraisal of their performance received much criticism from respondents due to their ineffectiveness.

4.2.4.2 The Project Manager

From discussion with respondents different perspectives are taken with regard to the level of HRM responsibility that attaches to the role of the project manager. The team members who have taken temporary assignments to projects see that HRM is very much the domain of the line manager but have an expectation that the project manager is inputting to the appraisal process as reported in section 4.1.1.2. A similar view was expressed by sponsor (SM) who when speaking of the HRM responsibility of the project manager stated

“the line manager doesn't have the view of things from the project perspective and so the project manager has the more critical role however by no means have I seen any formalisation of a HRM role for the project manager”.

One PMO director commented when asked of the project managers HRM responsibility

“it is doing the estimates and identifying the resource roles for the project and referring to the PMO line managers in relation to other HRM activity”.

Another project director (DK) rated her trust in a project manager to effectively implement HRM policy as

“about 50% to 60% at best because project managers are activity driven and do not appreciate the refineries of HR”.

Contrasting views have also been put forward by others such as Sponsor (SN)

“I think our project managers are very clued in and fully understand human resource management policy. This is expected of them.”

Another project director (DL) commented that

“I see project managers as managing people, communication and stakeholders. I do overemphasise the time they need to spend working with people, the time they need to spend communicating downwards and across the project. This is my way of working in projects”

4.2.4.3 The HR function

In discussion with respondents in relation to the role of the HR function in PMOs some contrasting views have been expressed. One project director (DL) quite bluntly said when asked if there was an increased role for HR in the PMO said

“I would hate to see it because their primary responsibility is in the area of recruitment and selection and they tend not to understand the needs of the project and especially IT”.

Another project director (DJ) spoke of the limited role the HR function can play in dealing with situations,

“HR have had very little involvement in the running of the PMO at this stage. They will however have a role in the training of employees in the use of a new back-office system we are introducing”.

In contrast project director (DK) said

“I think it is very relevant for a larger program where you have people who have been displaced from any 12 to 24 months. I do think you need HR specific supports around these people, they are a special case because they have in trust, come out of their roles for the good of the project and of the company and I absolutely agree and would like to see this happen”.

Further on in the same discussion (DK) in discussing the management of ethical issues said of a HR partner role in a PMO setting:

“I think your HR business partner is much more tuned into situations like burnout, personal issues or even pointing out the arduous nature of the project plan which they may view as ethically and morally wrong”

Programme manager (PH) was also supportive of a HR role in the PMO:

“I think you need to have a human resource partnership arrangement in place to support the projects”.

4.2.5 Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

The discussion on OCB focussed initially on gaining an understanding of the respondents' perspective on how OCB is facilitated in the PMO setting. In this respect some of the respondents immediately pointed to their organisational core values as facilitating OCB. For instance (SM), a project sponsor said

“I think that demonstrating our core values in projects drives organisational citizenship behaviour”.

Importantly however she was of the opinion that presently organisations core values were not being demonstrated in some of the projects that she was working with and this had only become apparent to her as we were discussing it. Furthermore (SM) acknowledged that in relation to HRM in the PMO

“ there is no discussion or thought put into this unlike how it is implemented in the mainstream organisation”

Project director (DK) also commented on OCB:

“When I think of my current context I think that we have done a lot of work on our brand values and I would say that my teams behaviours are driven by these brand values”.

An alternative perspective was taken by (DL):

“I think these behaviours are attributed to the culture of the project as opposed to the culture of the organisation”

Programme Manager (PI) reported the deterioration of OCB behaviours during the implementation of a transformational programme although it was not clear how this came about. In exploring the link between the enactment of HRM and OCB many respondents agreed that recruitment and selection is important in nurturing OCB in project orientated contexts, e.g. (PH)

“I would suppose that this goes back to recruitment and selection and I would say that you would look for these behaviours in people's that you are recruiting into projects”.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesises the key themes of HRM in the project orientated firm as discussed in the literature review with the principle findings of this research as described in chapter 4. The limitations of this study are then explained. Finally the conclusions drawn from this study are outlined in the form of recommendations for both academics and practitioners.

5.2 Summary and discussion of key findings

As with previous chapters this discussion first considers the core areas of HRM, then release from the project & organisational learning, the ethical treatment of workers in the PMO setting, the roles & responsibilities in the enactment of HRM in PMOs and finally organisational citizenship behaviour.

5.2.1 Key areas of HRM

5.2.1.1 Recruitment and selection

The selection of project workers as reported in the context of this study focusses on the selection of employees from functions within the parent organisation, the assignment of permanent employees in the PMO to project work and the recruitment of external temporary workers for project assignments. This study did not consider the recruitment of permanent roles to the PMO.

Assignment of resources from other functions to project work can be problematic. It has been reported that sometimes the people put forward are chosen because they are not performing in their line role or that they are not sufficiently skilled in project forms of working. Some assignments can be constrained by HR policy which requires that the roles are advertised internally within the organisation and a competitive process for selection takes place. Whilst two programme managers who encountered this argued that this process slows down project activity the approach can however eliminate candidates who have poor work performance records and therefore it should be considered. The permanent PMO employees are assigned to projects on the basis of their competency. Planning tools have been used to manage supply and demand and this demonstrates how issues of prioritisation and selection raised by (Engwalla and Jerbrantb 2003) can be addressed in a multi project setting. It is reported that sometimes external recruitment of project workers is constrained by organisational HRM policy also. (Turner et al 2008) has considered this however they are supportive of traditional methods for recruiting temporary workers in this situation whereas the findings in this study context suggest that it can lead to inefficiencies such as delays in starting projects especially if the HR function adheres strictly to its standard practice.

5.2.1.2 Appraisal and reward

In this study the appraisal and reward systems are reported as models that are drawn from the parent organisational systems. Issues of appraisals being conducted by line managers without seeking the input from project managers has presented in some contexts. There is general agreement that the project manager feedback should be sought and this is consistent with the (Turner et al 2008) and (Bredin, 2008) who point to the interplay that needs to occur between project managers, line managers and the employee in conducting appraisals. One issue that has emerged amongst the respondents is the problem of the normal distribution curve affecting performance evaluations of project teams resulting in project workers not always being ranked against other project team members but instead against their colleagues within the functions they normally reside in. Whilst this problem has not been specifically identified in the literature it is clear from this study that the practice is representative of mainstream HRM policy.

The inequality that may arise from having different reward structures amongst people working in projects may have implications for the effectiveness of some project teams (Kerrin & Oliver, 2002) and the trust within them (Maurer, 2010)

5.2.1.3 Development of the employee

The development of employees is reported to take different perspectives depending on the project worker. For project workers who are assigned from the line projects are seen as a development opportunity that links to their career development however it was noted in this study that sometimes the temporary project worker drawn from the parent organisation is not skilled in project ways of working. This suggests that some formal training should be a pre-requisite to their assignment to project work. For the project workers who are permanently employed in the PMO the respondents report of employee development plans that are consistent with models of addressing competency challenges as outlined by both (Turner et al 2008) and (Bredin 2008).

5.2.1.4 Release from the project and organisational learning

The respondents report that with the current levels of demand for project work the permanent project employees are not experiencing waiting periods pending their next assignment. Releasing employees whose primary role is within another department is an area of concern when their role has already been backfilled. Where this has arisen it is being addressed by line managers by ensuring career planning for these individuals. This correlates with (Bredin's 2008) assertion of the responsibilities of the line manager in this respect. It is also clear from this study that issues of organisational learning are being considered when addressing the need for career paths for employees however it seems that the loss of knowledge when temporary workers leave the

organisation as reported by one programme manager is not being supported by HRM policy, a key HR activity, (Minbaeva, 2005).

5.2.1.5 Key areas of HRM – conclusion

This study context lends supports to the assertions that mainstream organisational HRM policies are a challenge in the project orientated setting. The study reveals how mainstream organisational policy can constrain recruitment of project workers. Problems have presented in the appraising of employees performance due to line managers not seeking project manager input. These issues are consistent with has already been highlighted in the literature. The inappropriate application of the normal distribution curve in evaluating employee performance is an additional problem not highlighted in the literature. This is also true of the assignment of poor performing workers to projects by line managers. Different reward structures have sometimes been applied to project workers on the same team. All three issues emerge because there are project workers drawn from functions within the parent organisation working alongside permanent employees in the PMO. Whilst these differences may be irrelevant to small projects the same is not true of large transformational type work assignments when project team members are working alongside one another for lengthy periods of time. These differences strengthen the call for attention to be paid to the appropriate application of HRM policy and governance in this project orientated setting.

5.2.2 Ethical treatment of employees

None of the respondents in this study have been able to point to an organisational HRM strategy for managing the ethical issues that may arise in project forms of working. This study reveals however that the issues that arise in the PMO context relate primarily to work-life balance due to peaking work load. (Turner et al 2008) report that companies are not very good at managing this. In the PMO context it seems to fall to the project manager or line manager to address. Differing views emerge amongst respondents however as to the level of empowerment the project manager has in this situation and their competency in HRM has been challenged by some. Work-life balance issues can also impact the project manager and in this study the situation of the programme manager has been revealed. The problem typifies the life form consequences of project working highlighted by (Packendorff 2002). The notion that the project worker has increased responsibility for HRM (Bredin 2008) seems highly relevant to this situation and suggests that all project workers in this context need to take conscious actions so as to achieve stability. A supporting role by the HR function could help this situation. This has been suggested by some of the respondents. This however is not seen as a strategic role but rather an operational support role that supports the interplay between the

employee, the project manager and the line manager and is discussed in the next section which deals with roles and responsibilities for HRM in the PMO.

5.2.3 Roles and Responsibilities

This study reveals that the line manager plays a key role in the enactment of HRM however in situations where the line manager is remote from the PMO setting it seems there may be a greater need for the project manager to step in. As already discussed in the previous section some of the respondents in this study have expressed concern about their competency in this respect however. It seems nevertheless that the people orientation of the project manager is an important consideration in the PMO setting and should be considered a key competency in the assignment of project managers within the PMO.

The role of the HR function or business partner has received attention in the literature and is seen as supporting the project orientated firm, (Bredin 2008), (Heumann et al 2010) and (Bredin and Söderlund 2011). This contrasts with the absence of HRM engagement by the PMOs in which the respondents in this study work. HR functions are engaged on a limited basis and sometimes avoided. There is also a suggestion of a lack of capability within the HR function to support this project orientated setting however some respondents have identified a need for their input. Examples of this revealed in chapter 4 include the management of ethical issues. The degree to which the HR function can contribute to the operational management of HRM has been considered by (Bredin & Söderlund 2011). In the intra functional project configuration the HR support is seen as integrated and collaborative and seems an appropriate level of support for this PMO context in view of the lack of formal structure of HRM currently.

5.2.4 Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

The discussion on OCB highlighted contexts with strong organisational values. In these contexts the respondents suggest that organisational values facilitate OCB and this is supported by the literature, (Purcell et al, 2004) Many respondents suggested that recruitment and selection was an important HRM activity in facilitating OCB however the assumption appears to be that once people who demonstrate these behaviours are recruited then that is the end of the matter!. Programme manager (PI) however reported witnessing deterioration in OCB amongst team members in his programme.

With the exception of recruitment and selection there was little appreciation amongst respondents as to the extent to which OCB is facilitated by HRM. The literature shows that the relevant HRM policies differ amongst occupational groups (Purcell et al 2004) however in temporary settings

recruitment and selection, development of the employee and appraisal of performance are seen as important, (Braun et al,2013). One of the respondents (SM) indicated that core values are not being demonstrated in some projects being run by the PMO and HRM is not formalised in this context. This PMO may therefore see improvement in employees' commitment to the organisational by paying more attention to HRM. This is supported by the literature, (Purcell et al, 2004).

5.3 Limitations of this study

This research has the following limitations:

The study focussed on the individual as opposed to their organisation and whilst many of the respondents are senior employees their views and experiences may not be fully representative of their organisational context.

The study considers the perspective of the project professional and the senior managers who work with them. The study did not engage with HR professionals or line managers outside of the PMO and so their perspective is not represented in this research.

5.4 Conclusion and recommendations

This thesis concludes with the following recommendations for both academics and practitioners.

5.4.1 Academic recommendation

1. This study calls for further investigations into the importance of effective HRM in promoting organisational core values and its relationship to organisational citizenship behaviour in the project orientated firm.

5.4.2 Practitioner recommendations

1. Organisations who seek to promote their core values and nurture organisational citizenship behaviour amongst employees in the PMO may wish to pay more attention to the enactment of HRM in this context
2. The HRM roles of the line manager, project manager and HR function need to be more clearly defined for the PMO setting. Project and HR professionals need to be more engaged so as to improve the understanding of temporary organisations and projects as a form of working.

3. The use of mainstream HRM policy in the PMO needs to be considered and aspects of the policies that are creating tensions in the PMO addressed. This should include supporting all workers in addressing the work-life balance issues that they encounter.

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Appendix 2 – Text of email to respondents:

Dear,

Many thanks for agreeing to participate in this study of Human Resource Management (HRM) in the project context. I have chosen this subject for my thesis which is part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Project and Programme Management at the University of Limerick.

Background

Research on HRM in projects has been described by some academics as rudimentary but significantly there are many calls amongst this community for HRM policies to be specifically designed to suit the needs of the project context. This can of course vary depending on the size and duration of the project. The main reasons put forward to support the argument for project specific HRM policies are the temporariness of projects, the conflicting roles that can emerge between project management and line management in the delivery of human resource policy and practice within the project and the risk of work-life imbalance affecting the project personnel.

None of the research has considered in any significant way the effects human resource management can have on the performance of the project, e.g. considering what policies support higher levels of commitment from project personnel. This contrasts with the wealth of study in mainstream human resource literature which has linked the implementation of human resource management with performance in the mainstream organisational context.

Purpose of my research

My research aims to draw from the wealth of experience within a project management community to understand their perspectives on human resource management in projects. In particular I wish to focus on the kinds of policies that this community see as relevant to the project context they are familiar with (policies will be suggested to them during the discussion), to review with them the roles and responsibilities relating to the enactment of these policies (what are the responsibilities of the project manager, line manager, project specialist and HR business partner) and finally to explore any relationships that exist between the enactment of policy and the success of the project.

Research Method

The discussion is in the form of a 1 to 1 semi structured interview which will be recorded by Dictaphone. This allows for the free flow of information during the session and for the researcher to transcribe the details of the conversation at a later time. The discussion may take between 45mins and 1 hour to complete. This research is exploratory and seeks to develop theory inductively by drawing from the data gathered during the interviews.

Ethics

A transcript of the recorded conversation can be made available to the participant if required. Respondents can choose to withdraw from participation in the study without giving a reason. All research material including the recorded interviews will be kept confidential and stored securely. The names of the interviewees and the organisations they are associated with will not be identified in my report.

This research has the approval of the Kemmy Business School Research Ethics Committee, University of Limerick. Approval was granted on May 14th 2014.

Contacts

Participants are entitled to complete confidentiality in terms of their participation and personal details. Participants may contact any of the following if they have any concerns relating to this research.

Name	Role	Contact details	
David Kelly	Researcher	12177709@studentmail.ul.ie	086 108 4985
Catriona Burke	Supervisor	Catriona.burke@ul.ie	061 202 965
Michelle Cunningham	KBS Research Ethics Committee	michelle.cunningham@ul.ie	061 202 627

This interview is scheduled for:

Best regards

David

Appendix 3 Exemplary quotes

The exemplary quotes are summarised in accordance with the HRM themes identified as relevant to this study.

Recruitment & selection

"There is discussion on each assignment as to the likely commitment from me and after this discussion that the assignment is set up on the planning tool so this works well especially when people are looking for me to take on more assignments as the additional commitment required of me is considered". (TC)

"slowing us down to some extent because of the internal selection and recruitment process that has to be undertaken". (PH)

"projects are seen as a development opportunity for employees however it can cause issues in the organisation for those who are not considered and for those who are repeatedly assigned to what is sometimes difficult project work". (SM)

"I often found that we did not get the best people. I think some of the people nominated by the operations managers were not performing in their roles within the organisation. This is one thing that stays firmly in my mind." (PE)

"we need to get away from this subjective view of individual capability and towards having behavioural and competency profiles for the individuals we want to see working in projects". "This also helps us to identify the right people and removes a dependency on line managers making the right selection of individuals for the project". (SM)

"I think it is fair to say that selection and recruitment in the IT world is very different from how it is in the remainder of the organisation and this is very much dictated by how the market works" (DJ)

"we had specific policies tailored to suit the recruitment and selection of people to the project and I would have been very involved in the selection process... I styled questions myself.... I think I had achieved a level whereby I had a set of questions I was always comfortable using in any interview situation when recruiting for project managers". (DK)

Recruitment & selection

"I had approval to procure somebody through a contract and that funding included the cost of meeting agency fees but because the process in the organisation is to advertise the role directly I had to go through this route with the result that I encountered a delay in getting the resource that I needed. In the end I had to go to the agency anyway and pay their costs but there is an inbred approach to trying to reduce cost in the HR function in relation to recruitment and this is hard to shift".(PI)

It should involve the line manager and HR, there should be a consideration of the required skills and required knowledge for the job but not necessarily all the skills provided there is support for the individual. (TA)

Generally speaking the recruitment of projects in relation to the internal component which concerns the staff that are working in the organisation they would be selected based on the natural fit, skills and knowledge and HR would not be involved (SN)

Appraisal & Reward

"As you are reporting to a different person, that person (the project manager) may need to be spoken to as part of your performance appraisal especially as the line manager may not have had direct exposure to your work on the project". (TB)

"My people manager has no idea what I do.. if you consider my whole experience yesterday and the level of distraction that it has caused me now and which I am fighting so that I can get on what my job you can see the direct connection between the way this appraisal policy has been implemented and my attitude (TD)

"We have a formal review process in place and I am using a standard method of appraising individuals. This is the main organisational appraisal process and feeds into the annualised salary and bonus process" (PF)

"We have designs and specific appraisal process for the people who are working full-time on projects, those who work part-time in projects will use the normal organisational appraisal process.

Appraisal & Reward

So for somebody who is assigned full-time to a project there may be very specific objectives set for that person. These people were not be rewarded if they is objectives are not achieved and the centre around quality, budget and timeliness” (SN)

“There is a quite traditional structure in this company and most people would see their line manager is having the primary role in the implementation of HRM policy this is where things get complicated in the project environment because we have internal staff who have a line manager that is not involved in the project implementation”.(PI)

“It is entirely at the discretion of the line manager to seek feedback from the project. Even for the person who's been evaluated they can only hope that their line manager will take feedback from the project on their performance”. (PH)

“This is an issue that is quite contentious for us at the moment. Line managers are responsible for doing appraisals and there is no process in place for them to consider the work undertaken by employees that were assigned to projects, especially when these individuals have not even engaged with the line manager whilst working in the project”. (SM)

“It was possible for people who worked on a program to be subject to a curve because of the function that they normally resided in and the programme had no control over this, this meant that people who worked in projects were ranked against their peers in the functional organisation as opposed to being ranked against other change capability personnel”.(DK)

“Some of these people received rewards well in excess of what might have been given to others on the project and this has created something of an imbalance in the project”. (PE)

“That is very much the case for the senior people on this project who have specific objectives and their reward structure is related to this, it will be different for the IT people who work in this project as they always work in a projectised model. Their objectives and reward structures are no different for this project as for any other”.(SN)

“We did have some special awards to give away for achievements in projects however we did have to

Appraisal & Reward

take account of what happened elsewhere in the organisation because we had people who work in other parts of the business who worked equally as hard in their roles. So this model we had making rewards to people who performed exceptionally well in projects was mirrored across the organisation” (PG)

“Needs to be tweaked some more particularly so for the IT people where the market is buoyant and people can move around quite easily because we do not have a retention bonus for these people”. (PI)

“The project normally draws from the organisation’s reward model. The project would not deviate from this. It does raise the question about the adequacy of the reward” (DL)

Development of the employee

“There was an assumption that business people could very quickly get up to speed in terms of the processes associated with working in this program and that has not proven to be accurate”. (PI)

“The project is the means of a person's development and it may not necessarily be about developing specific skill sets, it can be very unstructured and be as general as developing” (SM)

“In this context there is little opportunity for developing people when they are on projects and therefore only those who are appropriately skilled should be selected” (PH)

“If you are looking to join management in this organisation you have to have both the project and the operational skills” (PG)

“Currently having a very healthy budget for training and development” (PF)

“For instance some of the team leaders have been through the management development programme and additionally we do our own training because we are projectised we style our training on developing the professions”. (DJ)

Development of the employee

I see these personal development plan as part of organisational strategy and project sponsors to align themselves with organisational strategy and accommodate this kind of development of people as they work on projects. Having said that we will always want the project objectives to dominate the employees objectives for the year (DL)

"I honestly cannot think of any time when we have allowed somebody to take time out to develop skills and (referring to an emerging PMO organisation) this did not even happen in my most recent context" (DK)

Release from the project & organisational learning

"It can be because the project is at an end, or because a person is needed back in the organisation and that demand is greater than the demand coming from the project or because the person is not performing". (SM)

"One situation that comes to mind is where people who have been assigned to projects have had their organisational roll back filled. So they have an expectation coming off the project that they will return to their pre-existing role and in a lot of cases that does not happen and so you can lose your best people very quickly if you do not have a plan in place and a career path". (SN)

"at the moment there is plenty of change going and we have had a significant reduction in the number of change resources in our team in last few years". (TC)

"we miss the opportunity of harnessing knowledge from external expertise because we do not cost this into projects" (PH)

I would have been involved in projects, now to be honest a lot of these projects were about getting a particular task done there may not have been a need for knowledge transfer so obviously that's fine. On other projects I have had instances of where people have left projects early, they might have been contractors and so forth and the knowledge went with them and this affected the project outputs". (TB)

Release from the project & organisational learning

"There is a plan which I can largely shaped myself and I can build on the skills that I need to work in this project context or if I choose to build on skills suitable to other functional areas in the organisation I can do so. There is also provision for me to do professional training in project management for instance should I wish to do so" (TD)

Ethical treatment of workers

"We do need to have individuals who are prepared to go the extra half mile. The risk is that you create a high dependency on a small group of people and you risk burnout. Here we look to the project manager to ensure that he/she understands where the pressure points are and we don't have a situation where people are not allowed to take their holidays or days off than they need to take." (SN)

"I think your HR business partner is much more tuned into situations like burnout, personal issues or even pointing out the arduous nature of the project plan which they may view as ethically and morally wrong' '(DK)

"I have seen huge stress placed on people who have been put into these contexts in this way. These people have been put into projects without support for the benefit of any specific policies and procedures. I think it's very important that there is absolute policy and procedure laid down these situations". (TA)

"Giving time in lieu also helps however it is tightly controlled and is not adequate especially for some of the projects where we are having to work late evenings and weekends. We have had to implement a workaround to give extra time in lieu and keep the records off the system and that is not satisfactory" (PF)

"A mental health issue the environment that we are working is highly pressurised, there are high expectations from the business and to some extent they are unreasonable". (PI)

Ethical treatment of workers

"We all have had to go over the cliff because of some need". (DK)

"I expect my project managers to be open, tough but fair" (in addressing issues of work – life balance) . (DL)

"Very much hand in glove with the rest of the organisation" (the 9 to 5 PMO) (PG)

"Whilst there is an expense policy that will allow me to recover this expenditure it is unfair that I have to upfront these costs....it is unfair to the individual who engages in all this travel and works the long hours". (PF)

Roles & responsibilities

The line manager

"The line managers for each of the disciplines are responsible for the interview and selection process" and in relation to conducting the appraisal and it does not seem to cause issues and works quite well". (DJ)

"I would look at the individuals who I thought needed training and development and seek to allocate to them project work that I felt would help develop them". (PG in speaking about his role as a line manager)

"The line manager doesn't have the view of things from the project perspective and so the project manager has the more critical role however by no means have I seen any formalisation of a HRM role for the project manager".

The project manager

'It is doing the estimates and identifying the resource roles for the project and referring to the PMO line managers in relation to other HRM activity" in speaking about the HRM role of the project manager (DJ)

"About 50% to 60% at best because project managers are activity driven and do not appreciate the refineries of HR". (in commenting on the HRM capability of the project manager) (DK)

Roles & responsibilities

"I think our project managers are very clued in and fully understand human resource management policy. This is expected of them." (SN)

"I think there should be, I suppose I am thinking of a couple of instances in the fairly big projects where obviously the focus was on delivery but there may have been a loss of sight of what was happening to the individual.(in speaking about the HRM focus of the project manager) (TB)

"I see project managers as managing people, communication and stakeholders. I do overemphasise the time they need to spend working with people, the time they need to spend communicating downwards and across the project. This is my way of working in projects"(DL)

The HR function

"I would hate to see it because their primary responsibility is in the area of recruitment and selection and they tend not to understand the needs of the project and especially IT".. but to be honest I would not be encouraging HR involvement in any project. I do not see any need for HR to be involved in a project knowledge do I see any benefit in having them involved. I find them to be a hindrance"(DL)

"HR have had very little involvement in the running of the PMO at this stage. They will however have a role in the training of employees in the use of a new back-office system we are introducing".

We had some very particular issues with behaviours that gave rise to problems and I would say it was everybody but the HR function that helped address the issues. They had nothing to offer.(PE)

"I don't think human resource management are even relevant in the context of what I do" (TD)

"I think it is very relevant for a larger programs where you have people who have been displaced from any 12 to 24 months. I do think you need HR specific supports around these people, they are a special case because they have in trust, come out of their roles for the good of the project and of the company and I absolutely agree and would like to see this happen". (DK)

"I think you need to have a human resource partnership arrangement in place to support the projects". (PH)

Organisational citizenship behaviour

"I have seen these behaviours of people in projects and so I would conclude that eliciting this behaviour is not exclusive to how human resource management is implemented. For instance, in the project I have been engaged with there has been an absence of human resource management policy but not an absence of organisational citizenship behaviour it's been down to the leadership of the project and the vision created for the project. (TA)

"I think a project manager can drive these behaviours through the leadership approach they take. There are some people however that you cannot create that in. However if people have that inclination the project manager should put to maintain it". (PE)

I suppose if it is a project that most people believe in and accept that it has to be delivered then I think you would get most of those behaviours (TB)

"I think that demonstrating our core values in projects drives organisational citizenship behaviour". (SM)

"When I think of my current context I think that we have done a lot of work on our brand values and I would say that my teams behaviours are driven by these brand values". (DK)

"I think these behaviours are attributed to the culture of the project as opposed to the culture of the organisation" (DL)

"I think people behave differently depending on the phase of the program that we are in, the levels of responsibility they have and work that they are accountable for" (PI)

"I would suppose that this goes back to recruitment and selection and I would say that you would look for these behaviours in people's that you are recruiting into projects". (PH)