

# THE ENACTMENT OF E-HRM IN A HEALTHCARE CONTEXT

*Results of a qualitative study at Medisch Spectrum Twente*

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s0102938

27 May 2010



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## PREFACE

This report is the result of research on the subject e-HRM. It is the finishing touch on the study business administration I did at the University of Twente in Enschede. I choose the master track Human Resource Management because the behaviour of people in organizations always interested me. With e-HRM I was able to combine the human aspect with the growing influence of information technology. This makes it an interesting combination. With this research more insights are gathered on e-HRM and knowledge is expanded. The context is a healthcare organization in which I worked for several summers. During the last summer I noticed the implementation of e-HRM and the interesting behaviour of people in the organization. I was pleased to see it was possible to do my research within the healthcare organization MST. Looking back at the research I learned a lot about human resource management in practice and the way organizations work. With the master thesis I feel that the knowledge I gathered during my study is put into practice.

More people are involved in the research and this report and I could not have done it without them. I would like to take the opportunity to thank them for their effort.

First I would like to thank my academic supervisors Tanya Bondarouk and Huub Ruël. I especially want to thank Tanya Bondarouk for her effort in this research. She was always very enthusiastic and supportive. Her enthusiasm and knowledge on the subject was an inspiration for me to look further in e-HRM. I have experienced the cooperation as pleasant and motivating.

Secondly I want to thank my supervisor at Medisch Spectrum Twente, Gerrit van der Kolk, for giving me the opportunity to practice the research at MST and by providing information in various ways. I would also like to thank everybody at MST who cooperated with the research through interviews or conversations.

Thirdly I would like to thank family and friends who have been supportive during my master thesis. Special thanks to my parents who always have been there for me and supported me in everything I did. Further thanks to Thomas who supported me and cheered me up when it was necessary. I received useful feedback from him on my thesis. Also thanks to Tom for thinking along and having a critical look on the report. Further thanks to everybody who was involved.



Moniek Engbersen

Enschede, 27 may 2010

## MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) is a fast developing phenomenon in the HRM field. E-HRM is the (planning, implementation and) application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities. In this study HRM intranet is the information technology implemented within the HRM department of the healthcare organization MST. Medisch Spectrum Twente (MST), is a general hospital with core business of taking care of the residents health in the region by offering specialist medical care. The state of knowledge in the literature about HRM and e-HRM in a healthcare context is not sufficient enough. The research problem therefore regards a gap in information about e-HRM in healthcare organizations.

The goal of the research is to advance understanding of the special features of e-HRM implementation in MST. Furthermore we want to provide insight in what kind of influences e-HRM has on the HRM department and the organization with its HR activities. Therefore the research question is: *What are the changes in the HR activities brought about by HRM intranet of MST and in what way do users enact HRM intranet functionalities?*

Before starting the empirical part of the research a theoretical framework is developed. The framework created an interesting perspective for researching HRM intranet within MST. The perspective is derived from the structuration theory of Orlikowski (1991). The perspective emphasizes the interaction between the main stakeholders of e-HRM: information technology, human agents and the organizational context. The result is a dynamic movement in which the stakeholders are interacting and influencing each other.

To exercise the perspective within MST we performed an explorative study on HRM intranet. It is a qualitative study in which fifteen semi-structured interviews with HR professionals, line managers and employees form the dominant technique to collect data. Further exploration is done by document review, observations in meetings, casual conversations and the observations on intranet.

The findings show a dynamic movement of HR professionals, line managers and employees with HRM intranet in the healthcare environment. HRM intranet, according to the HRM department, is meant for line managers and the employees to support the HR activities. At MST the usage of HRM intranet is low. The HR professionals and line managers use HRM intranet sporadically for information purposes. The employees make little or no use of HRM intranet. A plausible explanation for the low usage of the employees is that there is no need. We noticed that employees are not involved in HR activities in the way the HRM department expected. When there are HR activities practiced, the process has to go by the line manager who decides the further progress. Furthermore the employees do not know what to expect from the HRM department and wherefore it can be used. The interaction between the employee and line manager is considered to be sufficient. The contact between the line manager and the HR professional is sufficient as well. Although the line managers and HR professionals feel that contact is sufficient between them, the line managers feel that the HRM department as a whole could achieve more within the organization. The HR professionals in their turn additionally feel that the HRM department can achieve more. With this in sight the professionals are enthusiastic about the increase of policy making. In all the interaction between the different stakeholders, the environment of the interaction is playing a role in the dynamic movement. It is playing a role by supporting subcultures, a 'wait-and-see' culture, low commitment to MST as a whole and being a large, complex organization.

The overall conclusion of the research is that there are no changes in the HR activities brought about by HRM intranet within MST and the enactment of e-HRM in healthcare has not succeeded. We conclude that the line managers enact in the way of supporting the HR activities with information. The employees of MST do not use it. The HR professionals use HRM intranet sporadic. Therefore HRM intranet in MST is not enacted as intended by the HRM department.



In our research some limitations occurred. At the time of the research HRM intranet was just implemented which can have consequences for the findings. Furthermore the research population is partly based upon the interpretation of HR professionals and line managers on the research since they choose the participants for the interviews. Building further on the limitation of time we suggest further research with several measurement points so the movement of e-HRM in healthcare can be explored. For the HRM department more research is necessary on the implementation of HRM intranet and on the interaction between employee and HRM department.

We conclude our research with the challenges we found and recommendations for these challenges:

Challenges	Examples
<b>The employee does not know what to expect from the HRM department.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The employees do not know what the HRM department is for.</li> <li>- The location of HRM is not clear to all employees.</li> <li>- The employees see the HRM department as having an administrative function.</li> <li>-The HRM department is still called "Personeelszaken" by some people.</li> </ul>
<b>The HRM department does not know what the employees want regarding e-HRM.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The employees are not asked about their opinion on HRM and HRM intranet.</li> <li>- The users are not involved in the implementation process of HRM intranet.</li> </ul>
<b>The position of the HRM department within MST is viewed as weak.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The department is underdeveloped in their policy making.</li> <li>- The value of the HRM department is not always acknowledged.</li> </ul>
<b>Within MST and projects a joint focus is missing.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are subcultures with various powers and forces.</li> <li>- In the project intranet a lot of different parties are involved with different interests.</li> <li>- The goals of projects are not for everyone the same.</li> <li>- The employees have a low commitment to MST.</li> </ul>
<b>MST is a large and complex organization.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MST has 4000 employees and several hierarchical layers.</li> <li>- The decision making process is slow as approval is needed from different parties.</li> <li>- Within MST a 'wait-and-see' culture dominates.</li> </ul>

Recommendations derived from the challenges:

- Improve the relationship of the HRM department with the employees
- Involve users in implementing information technology
- Expand expertise HRM department
- Create a joint focus in projects
- Structure the implementation of the HR portal
- Provide clear communication
- Measure the usage

With this research we provided an understanding of the special features of e-HRM implementation in MST. Furthermore an insight is created in what kind of influences e-HRM has on the HRM department and the organization with its HR activities.



## MANAGEMENT SAMENVATTING

Electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) is een snel ontwikkelend fenomeen in het HRM-veld. E-HRM is de (planning, uitvoering en) de toepassing van informatietechnologie voor zowel het netwerken als de ondersteuning van ten minste twee individuele of collectieve actoren in hun gedeelde uitvoering van HR-activiteiten. In deze studie is HRM intranet de informatie-technologie die is geïmplementeerd binnen de HRM-afdeling van de gezondheidszorg instelling MST. Medisch Spectrum Twente (MST), is een algemeen ziekenhuis met als core-business het aanbieden van medisch-specialistische zorg aan de bewoners in de regio ter bevordering van de gezondheid. Er is niet genoeg kennis in de literatuur over HRM en e-HRM in deze context. De probleemstelling betreft dus een kloof in informatie over e-HRM in de gezondheidszorg.

Het doel van het onderzoek is om inzicht te krijgen in de specifieke kenmerken van de e-HRM implementatie in MST. Verder willen we inzicht verschaffen in wat voor soort invloeden e-HRM heeft op de HRM-afdeling en de organisatie met haar HR-activiteiten. Daarom is de vraagstelling: *Wat zijn de veranderingen in de HR-activiteiten als gevolg van HRM intranet van MST en op welke manier brengen de gebruikers de HRM intranet functionaliteiten ten uitvoer?*

Voor het empirische deel van het onderzoek is er een theoretisch kader ontwikkeld. Het kader heeft een interessant perspectief gecreëerd voor het onderzoek naar HRM intranet binnen MST. Het perspectief is afgeleid van de structurerings theorie van Orlikowski (1991). Het benadrukt de wisselwerking tussen de belangrijkste stakeholders van e-HRM: informatietechnologie, menselijke actoren en de organisatorische context. Het resultaat is een dynamische beweging, met interactie en invloeden tussen de belanghebbenden.

Voor het toepassen van het perspectief binnen MST voerden we een exploratief onderzoek uit naar HRM-intranet. Het is een kwalitatief onderzoek waarin vijftien semi-gestructureerde interviews met HR-professionals, teamhoofden en medewerkers de dominante techniek vormt om gegevens te verzamelen. Verder is onderzoek gedaan door middel van documenten review, observaties bij bijeenkomsten, gesprekken en de observatie van intranet.

De bevindingen tonen een dynamische beweging aan van HR-professionals, teamhoofden en medewerkers met HRM intranet binnen de gezondheidszorg. HRM intranet is volgens de HRM-afdeling bedoeld voor teamhoofden en de medewerkers om HR-activiteiten te ondersteunen. Binnen MST is het gebruik van HRM intranet is niet optimaal. De HR-professionals en teamhoofden gebruiken HRM intranet sporadisch voor het opzoeken van informatie. De medewerkers maken weinig tot geen gebruik maken van HRM-intranet. Een plausibele verklaring voor het geringe gebruik van de medewerkers is dat er geen behoefte is. We hebben gemerkt dat medewerkers niet betrokken zijn bij de HR-activiteiten in de manier waarop de HRM-afdeling verwacht. Als er HR-activiteiten worden uitgeoefend, gaat de medewerker naar het teamhoofd en die beslist de verdere voortgang. Verder weten de medewerkers niet wat ze moeten verwachten van de HRM-afdeling en waarom het gebruikt kan worden. De interactie tussen de medewerker en het teamhoofd wordt voldoende geacht. Het contact tussen het teamhoofd en de HR-professional is ook voldoende. Hoewel de teamhoofden en HR-professionals vinden dat er voldoende contact is tussen hen, zijn de teamhoofden van mening dat de HRM-afdeling als geheel meer zou kunnen bereiken binnen de organisatie. De HR-professionals hebben bovendien ook het gevoel dat de HRM-afdeling meer kan bereiken. Met dit in gedachte zijn de professionals enthousiast over de opkomst van beleidsvorming op de afdeling. In alle interactie tussen de verschillende belanghebbenden speelt de omgeving een rol in de dynamische beweging. Het speelt een rol door het behouden van subculturen, een 'wait-and-see' cultuur en de lage betrokkenheid bij MST als geheel. Daarnaast is het een grote, complexe organisatie.

De conclusie van het onderzoek is dat er geen veranderingen in de HR-activiteiten zijn als gevolg van HRM intranet binnen MST. We concluderen dat de teamhoofden HRM intranet gebruiken voor de ondersteuning van



de HR-activiteiten met informatie. De medewerkers van MST gebruiken HRM intranet weinig tot niet. De professionals gebruiken HRM intranet sporadisch. Daarom is e-HRM binnen MST niet uitgevoerd zoals bedoeld is door de HRM afdeling.

In ons onderzoek zijn we een aantal beperkingen tegengekomen. Op het moment van het onderzoek was HRM intranet net geïmplementeerd, wat consequenties kan hebben voor de bevindingen. Daarnaast is de onderzoekspopulatie gedeeltelijk gebaseerd op de interpretatie van HR-professionals en teamhoofden op het onderzoek, omdat zij de deelnemers kozen voor de interviews. Verder bouwend op de beperking van het moment raden we meer onderzoek aan op verschillende punten in de tijd. Op die manier kan de beweging van e-HRM in de gezondheidszorg verder worden verkend. Voor de HRM-afdeling is meer onderzoek nodig naar de uitvoering van HRM-intranet en naar de interactie tussen de medewerker en HRM-afdeling. We sluiten het onderzoek af met de uitdagingen die we hebben gevonden en aanbevelingen voor deze uitdagingen:

Uitdagingen	Voorbeelden
<b>De medewerker weet niet wat hij of zij moet verwachten van de HRM-afdeling.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- De medewerkers weten niet waar de HRM-afdeling voor is.</li> <li>- De locatie van HRM is niet duidelijk voor alle medewerkers.</li> <li>- De medewerkers zien de HRM-afdeling als een administratieve functie.</li> <li>- De HRM-afdeling wordt nog steeds 'Personeelzaken' genoemd door sommige mensen.</li> </ul>
<b>De HRM-afdeling weet niet wat de medewerkers willen met betrekking tot e-HRM.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- De medewerkers zijn niet gevraagd om hun mening over HRM en HRM-intranet.</li> <li>- De gebruikers zijn niet betrokken bij het implementatieproces van HRM intranet.</li> </ul>
<b>De positie van de HRM-afdeling binnen MST wordt gezien als zwak.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- De afdeling loopt achter met beleidsvorming</li> <li>- De waarde van de HRM-afdeling wordt niet altijd erkend.</li> </ul>
<b>Binnen MST en de projecten mist een gezamenlijke focus.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Er zijn subculturen met diverse machten en krachten.</li> <li>- In het project intranet zijn veel verschillende partijen betrokken met verschillende belangen.</li> <li>- De doelstellingen van projecten zijn niet voor iedereen hetzelfde.</li> <li>- De medewerkers hebben een lage betrokkenheid bij MST.</li> </ul>
<b>MST is een grote en complexe organisatie.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MST heeft 4000 medewerkers en verschillende hiërarchische lagen.</li> <li>- De besluitvorming is traag omdat er goedkeuring nodig is van verschillende partijen.</li> <li>- Binnen MST heerst er een 'wait-and-see' cultuur.</li> </ul>

Aanbevelingen naar aanleiding van de uitdagingen:

- Verbeter de relatie van de HRM-afdeling met de medewerkers
- Betrek gebruikers bij de implementatie van informatietechnologie
- Breidt de expertise van HRM-afdeling uit
- Creëer een gezamenlijke focus in projecten
- Structureer de implementatie van het HR-portaal
- Zorg voor heldere communicatie
- Meet het gebruik

Met dit onderzoek hebben we een goed inzicht gekregen in de kenmerken van de e-HRM implementatie in MST. Verder is er een inzicht gecreëerd in de invloed die e-HRM heeft op de HRM-afdeling en de organisatie met haar HR-activiteiten.



*'Tools create a structure to work with but we fall into  
the trap of not seeing beyond it.'*

(Orlikowski, 1992)





# CONTENT

Preface .....	3
Management Summary.....	4
Management Samenvatting.....	6
List of words.....	11
List of figures.....	11
List of tables.....	11
1 Introduction.....	12
1.1 Introduction.....	12
1.2 Research setting and Research problem .....	13
1.3 Research goal and Research question .....	14
1.4 Relevance of the research .....	14
1.5 Outline of the thesis .....	15
2 Theoretical Framework .....	16
2.1 E-HRM: Definitions and Types .....	16
2.2 The Role of Information Technology .....	18
2.3 The Role of Human Agents .....	23
2.4 Organizational Context: Healthcare Organization.....	24
2.5 Towards a Research Model .....	27
3 Research Methodology .....	28
3.1 Case study approach.....	28
3.2 Data Collection and Sampling.....	28
3.2.1 Interviews.....	28
3.2.2 Documents, Observations in Meetings and Intranet scan .....	30
3.3 Data analysis.....	31
4 Findings .....	32
4.1 The role of Information Technology .....	32
4.1.1 The intentions of HRM Intranet .....	32
4.1.2 The enactment of HRM Intranet .....	33
4.1.3 Structuration of HRM Intranet .....	40
4.2 The role of Human Agents with HR activities .....	41
4.2.1 The intentions of Human Agents with HR activities .....	41
4.2.2 The enactment of Human Agents with HR activities.....	42
4.2.3 Structuring Human Agents with HR activities .....	47
4.3 The role of Organizational Context.....	47
4.3.1 The intentions of Healthcare Organization .....	47
4.3.2 The enactment of Healthcare Organization .....	48
4.3.3 Structuring Organizational Context: Healthcare Organization.....	50
4.4 Interaction between IT, Human Agents and the Organizational Context: e-HRM .....	50
5 Discussion .....	53



5.1	Discussing the theoretical framework .....	53
5.2	Discussing the concepts.....	53
5.2.1	Information Technology .....	53
5.2.2	Human Agents/HR activities.....	54
5.2.3	Organizational Context.....	55
5.3	Limitations .....	56
5.4	Suggestions for further research .....	57
6	Conclusions and recommendations .....	58
6.1	Conclusions.....	58
6.2	Recommendations.....	60
	References .....	63
	Appendix .....	66
	A: Organogram Medisch Spectrum Twente .....	66
	B: Interview Protocol .....	67
	C: Interview Protocol Dutch Version .....	71
	D: Printscreens Intranet.....	75



## LIST OF WORDS

<i>HRM</i>	Human Resource Management
<i>E-HRM</i>	Electronic Human Resource Management
<i>IT</i>	Information Technology
<i>HR practices</i>	With HR practices is meant the traditional HR fields like HR planning, Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance evaluation, Rewarding and Remuneration, Career development, Employer-Employee relations, and Sickness Policies
<i>HR function</i>	The organization of the HR practices
<i>HR activities</i>	Activities that are carried out to perform HR practices
<i>MST</i>	Medisch Spectrum Twente
<i>ECM</i>	Enterprise Content Management system
<i>DMS</i>	Document Management System
<i>VSZ</i>	Vereniging Samenwerkende Ziekenhuizen

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1 <i>Structurational Model of Technology (Orlikowski, 1991)</i> .....	19
Figure 2-2 <i>Practice Orientation of the Structurational Perspective on Technology (Orlikowski, 2000)</i> .....	21
Figure 2-3 <i>The Research Model</i> .....	27
Figure 4-1 <i>Structuration HRM intranet: Intention vs. Enactment</i> .....	40
Figure 4-2 <i>Structuration Human Agents with HR activities: Intention vs. Enactment</i> .....	47
Figure 4-3 <i>Structuration e-HRM of MST</i> .....	51

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1 <i>Pressures and goals of e-HRM</i> .....	17
Table 2-2 <i>Types of e-HRM</i> .....	18
Table 3-1 <i>An overview of interviewees</i> .....	29
Table 6-1 <i>Table of challenges</i> .....	60



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) is a fast developing phenomenon in the HRM field. We noticed that it is a rather broad field where questions are still unanswered or where ideas have no scientific ground. Some of these questions have to deal with the influence of information technology (IT) on the HR function and the consequences that emerge in its relationship. The two main types of integration of IT in HRM are, HRIS and e-HRM.

The first type is the HR Information Systems (HRIS) that is directed at the HR department itself. The focus is on the automation of HR services, like an automated payroll administration. HRIS is mainly focused on reaching administrative efficiency and improving the decision making process (Lengnick-Hall, and Moritz, 2003).

The second type of integration of IT in HRM has a focus on the technological support of information on HR services for the people outside the department, also referred to as electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004).

In this study the information technology that is implemented within the HRM department is e-HRM which is the focus of this study. The implementation and application of electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) is boosted the last decades by the rapid development of the Internet (Strohmeier, 2007). It is a movement that has grown the last years within the field of Human Resource Management as information technology (IT) has become more important in daily HR practices of organizations (like recruiting and selection). Many studies have revealed that the introduction of e-HRM has influence on employees in organizations and their work processes (Lengnick-Hall, and Moritz, 2003), (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004), (Strohmeier, 2007)). E-HRM is defined as 'the (planning, implementation and) application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individuals or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities' (Strohmeier, 2007, p.20).

Our research concerns the implementation of e-HRM within a healthcare organization. There are three main reasons for the choice of a healthcare organization.

Firstly, healthcare organizations are shown to be late adopters of e-HRM due to the complexity of governance, technological, and workforce structures (Evers, 2009); (Bondarouk, Ter Horst, & Engbers, 2009)). With regards to the information-intensity, hospitals are spending less budget on IT than other organization with the same intensity. A reason for this could be that the core business of a hospital is taking care of the health of people. Therefore IT becomes a side issue. A new balance has to be found to deal with technology, as the role of IT is changing within a hospital. It makes a healthcare organization an interesting subject to research.

Secondly, a healthcare organization is a service organization where different kind of groups of people are involved to provide the service of taking care of patients. These groups have particular influences on the processes within the organization and thus upon the adoption of an information system.

Thirdly, a regional (large) hospital with e-HRM implementation volunteered to support the research, allowing exploration on intentions and practice. The hospital provides a good environment to gather opinions and perceptions about e-HRM which contributes to the quality of the research.

In order to advance theoretical understanding of the special features of e-HRM implementation in healthcare; and provide insights in what kind of influences e-HRM has on the HRM department and the organization with its HR activities, the thesis focuses on the e-HRM implementation within hospitals in the Netherlands.



## 1.2 RESEARCH SETTING AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

The hospital, Medisch Spectrum Twente (MST), is a general hospital with its core business of taking care of the residents health in the region by offering specialist medical care. It has about 4000 employees with 200 specialists taking care of 1070 beds. There are five staff departments at MST including the Human Resource Management department (Appendix A). The HRM department of MST is relocated to a remote building in the past. To provide service it keeps a so-called information point inside the main hospital building where employees can ask questions regarding HRM.

By 2012 the hospital has the ambition to implement a unified personnel information system, an HR portal, with an employee self-service (ESS) and a management self-service (MSS). MST already made a small step towards an e-HRM system, by launching the project 'Enterprise Content Management system' (ECM) (August 3, 2009). The ECM project is created for the implementation of intranet "Mijn MST" and a document management system (DMS). Both sub-projects, intranet and a document collection system, have their own project team working on the development of the systems. Besides the leading project teams different groups are involved to realize the ECM project.

The intranet is used to publish diverse information, including HRM information. Till the implementation of intranet, the HRM department of MST used the MST website for HRM purposes. For example, personnel information of different medical and staff departments could and still can be found at <http://www.mst.nl/>. The information of internet is copied into the MST *intranet*. The document management system placed under the intranet portal is used for the digital collection of documents like protocols and up-dating them. Furthermore, the system has been developed to publish these documents as a support for the employees and the work processes, assist in quality improvements, and moreover to reduce costs in comparison with the traditional way of spreading protocols within the organization.

When we look for literature to search for information about information technology in relation with HRM, the subject e-HRM comes up. However when we look further to e-HRM in relation with healthcare organizations, not much prior research is found. It seems that not much research is done on e-HRM in healthcare organizations or hospitals. It is understandable as HRM is not the core business of a healthcare organization. Though, research in this area can contribute to knowledge about HR processes in healthcare as well to the implementation of information technology in a hospital. Not alone healthcare in general can benefit with research on e-HRM. In addition MST can benefit from more research in the future since MST is implementing information technology. To better prepare for the introduction of the HR portal at MST, there is a need to explore the working features, needs, consequences, and possible drawbacks of the use of HRM intranet. The literature about e-HRM in healthcare can provide such information and lessons learnt from the exploration will be used in the future implementation of the HR portal. The state of knowledge in the literature about HRM and e-HRM in a healthcare context is not sufficient enough to learn lessons from and to apply those lessons specific within a healthcare organization and within MST. The research problem regards therefore a gap in information about e-HRM in healthcare organizations. The gap needs to be filled with information about the HRM department, how the people in the organization are handling the movement of information technology, e-HRM, and what these changes mean for the HRM department especially in healthcare.

The implementation of e-HRM will learn the organization how their employees are dealing with certain issues and can interact on the skills of the employees in the future with comparable cases. The organization will learn how people need to deal with technology and to find the balance in the hospital between information systems and people. This research represents in addition an extension on the topic e-HRM as it provides insights in e-HRM within healthcare. With the research the gap in research about e-HRM in a healthcare organization is hopefully made somewhat smaller.



### 1.3 RESEARCH GOAL AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Information technology can have a positive influence. However it can have a negative influence when implementation of a system is not thought over. Cooperation between information technology and people is not easy and therefore real thought should be put in this relationship. The information technology within HRM, e-HRM, can support HR processes. When there is not found a right balance it can achieve the opposite. If we want to find out how people in a healthcare organization are handling the implementation of information technology, the influences and changes have to be researched. Within MST the information technology that is implemented and can cause movements in processes and interactions, is HRM intranet. The interactions related to the e-HRM system gives information about the movement of information technology within the HRM department of MST. E-HRM is a relatively new concept. Thus the study is meant to make a contribution on e-HRM by examining how HRM intranet is adopted and how work in the HRM department changes as a consequence. In addition the enactment of HRM intranet by the users becomes clear as the users reveal insights on HRM intranet in practice. The transition towards e-HRM is inevitable but complex since various issues are involved. It is interesting to find out what kind of effect the technology has on the HR tasks and how the users in the organization feel about the change. These aspects are all interrelated on the dynamic of the movement which is the focus of the research.

The goal of the research is to advance understanding of the special features of e-HRM implementation in MST. In addition we want to provide insight in what kind of influences e-HRM has on the HRM department and the organization with its HR activities. The previous mentioned can be formulated into the following research question:

*What are the changes in the HR activities brought about by HRM intranet of MST and in what way do users enact HRM intranet functionalities?*

Based upon the research question the research is divided into a theoretical and empirical stage. By exploring MST guided by the research question, more insights are gathered on e-HRM in a healthcare organization.

### 1.4 RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

"IT projects are widely recognized as unstable and contradictory organizational developments that demand a range of technical and social changes" (Bondarouk and Ruël, 2008, p.153). IT interacts with different stakeholders within an organization and is not an autonomous factor. The influence of the internet in all aspects of life is growing and the direction of the growth is changing. The internet is used for communication, home recreation, organizational processes, here in particular the HRM department. The HR processes become more digitalized and that has consequences for the HR staff, HR professionals and the employees. The research investigates what the consequences are and contributes to the social relevance of current developments.

In addition there is the scientific relevance of the developments. This is an innovative, lasting and substantial development in HRM with new phenomena and major changes (Strohmeier, 2007). It is important to gain insight in the different processes and relations. More research will allow the knowledge on the developments to be expanded and used in the implementation of e-HRM. The research contributes to new areas of research with the relevant variables of the developments put in another context. E-HRM in a healthcare organization is such an area. By doing research in a healthcare organization more knowledge is gathered about the implementation of information technology in an HRM department of a hospital. A healthcare organization deals differently with IT than other organizations as healthcare organizations are late adopters of e-HRM due to the complexity of governance, technological, and workforce structures ((Evers, 2009); (Bondarouk, Ter Horst, & Engbers, 2009)). For the organizations it is not their core business and the movement of the employees differs in context. They try to find to right balance in adjusting to organizational change on technology.



Due to the complexity of governance, technological, and workforce structures many subcultures are involved in the implementation of IT. A healthcare organization contains different groups of people providing different services which all have the focus on the patient. This demands a right balance between technology and the employees to make it work in an organization.

In summary, with research in a healthcare organization better predictions can be made about the development of these kinds of organizations and the predictions can be used for acting upon changes in the organization. Furthermore the knowledge on e-HRM in healthcare organization is extended.

## 1.5 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The end product of this study is a report of a qualitative study on e-HRM at Medisch Spectrum Twente that explains the changes in the HR tasks resulting from the implementation of HRM intranet and the way users enact HRM functionalities. The report contains a theoretical perspective and empirical explanation of the e-HRM implementation in MST. The results are insights on the special features of e-HRM implementation in MST. In addition we provide insights in what kind of influences e-HRM has on the HRM department and the organization with its HR activities.

We structured the report as follows to get a clear representation of the research: The introduction in chapter 1 outlines the nature of the study which is important to understand the research question and the steps that are made in the research.

Before the empirical stage of the research was started a theoretical framework (chapter 2) was made on the literature found on the subject. This phase will serve as base for the research. The focus in the theoretical framework is on the structurational model of Orlikowski (1991) where technology is seen as part of a dynamic model together with human actors and institutional properties. Fitting the model onto e-HRM, the research model is the result which is leading in the empirical part of the research paper.

Prior to the empirical part a method is explained about how the empirical stage of the research is tackled. In this methodology part, which can be found in chapter 3, the choices of method are explained and the data collection method is outlined.

After having done the practical side of the research, analyses are done on the data to gather information about the subject. The results are presented in chapter 4.

Then the findings are discussed to provide a scientific view on the situation taking into account the discussion points that were raised during the research (chapter 5).

The research finishes with an overall conclusion of this qualitative study on e-HRM. Based upon the findings recommendations are translated into a guideline for MST to implement e-HRM further into the organization (chapter 6).

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 E-HRM: DEFINITIONS AND TYPES

There are several perspectives on the influence of information technology in Human Resource Management. The influence of IT is growing as it becomes more important in daily practices of organizations. Furthermore it is boosted by the rapid development of internet. Information Technology in HRM is used to support HR practices for people outside the HRM department (e-HRM). With HR practices is meant the traditional HR fields like HR planning, Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance evaluation, Rewarding and Remuneration, Career development, Employer-Employee relations, and Sickness Policies (Van Riemsdijk, Bondarouk, & Knol, 2006).

The concept e-HRM, in full electronic Human Resource Management, is widely used today however it is not an exclusive term. In the literature several synonyms are used: virtual HR(M) (Lepak, and Snell, 1998), HR intranet, web-based HR, computer-based HRM systems, e-HR (Lengnick-Hall, and Moritz, 2003) and HR portals (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004). The term e-HRM will be used during the research paper. But what is e-HRM? In literature the following can be found:

‘It is a network-based structure built on partnerships and typically mediated by information technologies to help the organization acquire, develop, and deploy intellectual capital’ (Lepak, and Snell, 1998,p.216).

‘Conducting business transactions by using the internet (...) along with other technologies for the delivery of human resource services’ (Lengnick-Hall, and Moritz, 2003, p.365).

‘E-HRM is a way of implementing HR strategies, policies, and practices in organizations through a conscious and directed support of and/or with the full use of web-technology-based channels’ (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004, p.16).

16

These definitions display the variables that are involved in the concept e-HRM. However these definitions do not represent all the involved stakeholders in e-HRM to make it a complete definition. To explain e-HRM and understand the big picture all the involved stakeholders should be represented in the definition. A recent definition of Strohmeier (2007) explains how organizations see e-HRM nowadays. This definition therefore represents the one used in this study:

*‘E-HRM is the (planning, implementation and) application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities’ (Strohmeier 2007, p.20).*

This definition describes the position of e-HRM in the organization and most important stakeholders that are involved well: information technology, human agents, and the organizational context in which the activities are performed. Together they form the movement of e-HRM.

Why do organizations decide to use the approach of e-HRM? Different authors have discussed the goals that are fundamental to the use of IT in HRM. In general it can be seen as a result of the pressure on the HRM department as organizations try to achieve a competitive advantage (Lepak, and Snell, 1998). Lepak and Snell (1998) who looked at it in more detail, refer to the four pressures of e-HRM.

The first pressure is the pressure of focusing on strategic questions by the HRM department. The second pressure is the need for the HRM department to become flexible in terms of policy making and





practices. Third is the pressure of cost as the department should work more efficiently and reduce costs. The last pressure is the focus on improving service delivery towards management and employees.

More authors describe the goals and these pressures in various ways. Three main pressures for e-HRM are returning in the literature which corresponds with three types of goals mentioned by Ruël, Bondarouk and Looise (2004).

The first goal is focused on improving the strategic orientation of HRM. The role of HRM is pushed towards a role of a strategic partner that can add value to the organization (Lawler III, & Morhman, 2003). The second goal can be defined as means to achieve cost reduction and efficiency gains. The time consumed by a process can be reduced and paperwork can be avoided by the use of technology (Lengnick-Hall, and Moritz, 2003). The third goal is to improve client service and facilitate management and employees. To provide service to managers and employees is still seen as the predominant role of the HR function (Lepak, and Snell, 1998). Ruël, Bondarouk and Looise (2004) add a fourth goal to incorporate the globalization of organizations. E-HRM can be used to globalize the organization with the associated HR policies and practices.

The consultancy firm Watson Wyatt Worldwide conducts an annual study in the United States where the results in 2002 are in line with the first three objectives mentioned above. The results show that companies invest in e-HRM for improving the strategic role, reducing administrative HR work and improving employees' satisfaction with HRM services. Summarizing the pressures and goals of e-HRM we created table 1:

Pressures e-HRM	Goals e-HRM
Focus on strategic question by the HRM department.	Improving strategic orientation of HRM.
Becoming flexible in terms of policy making and practices as HRM department.	To achieve cost reduction and efficiency gains.
The HRM department should work more efficiently and reduce cost.	Client service improvement and facilitating management and employees.
Improving service delivery towards management and employees.	To globalize the organization with the associated HR policies and practices.

Table 2-1 Pressures and goals of e-HRM

If different objectives are underlying the use of e-HRM different types of e-HRM seem inevitable. According to Lengnick et al. (2003) e-HRM has developed through three major stages: information, automation and transformation. These stages are quite similar to the distinction made by Wright and Dyer (2003); transactional, traditional and transformation HRM. These stages can be matched to the three forms of Lepak and Snell (1998), namely operational, relational and transformational HRM.

Information, the first stage of Lengnick et al. (2003) concerns the publishing of information, where intranets are the medium for primary information delivery. As a form of one-way communication the organization publishes information. The information is published in generic content and following, with a personalized content on intranet. This form is mainly operational (Lepak and Snell, 1998) as it concerns the basic HR activities in the administrative area (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004). The benefits of this are the elimination of expensive printing costs, easier access to information and changes that are quickly made.

The second stage involves the automation of processes. Automation involves transactions, workflow and also supply chain integration. It is more elaborated than the information form. Automation uses extranets, different application programs and electronics. The automation process can be matched to a relational/tactical level (Lepak and Snell, 1998). It is where the focus is on supporting the HR practices like recruiting or performance management, and not on administrative processes (Lepak and Snell, 1998).



Transformation, the last stage that Lengnick et al. (2003) distinguish, is the highest level. More specifically it involves the transformation of the HR function (Lepak and Snell, 1998). The focus moves from operational towards a more strategic one. It creates the opportunity for the HR function to partake in the intellectual capital, social capital and the flow of knowledge. In the end the whole movement is for the HR function an opportunity to improve service delivery. An organization is influenced by several factors, like accessibility and number of HR professionals and IT specialists. Which type of e-HRM to implement in the organization depends on these factors. When implementing one of these forms it is important to convince decision makers that benefits are greater than costs. Reasons are e-HRM is time-consuming and expensive for most organizations (Lengnick-Hall, M.L., and Moritz, S., 2003). We created table 2 to summarize the types of e-HRM.

<i>Lepak and Snell (1998)</i>	<i>Lengnick et al. (2003)</i>
Operational	Information
Relational	Automation
Transformational	Transformation

Table 2-2 *Types of e-HRM*

Building further on what is described above, important to stress are the main stakeholders of e-HRM: Information Technology, Human Agents, and the Organizational Context. These stakeholders are the building blocks for the research model in this study. After we gave a definition, the goals and different types of e-HRM were identified. In summary the main goals of e-HRM are strategic orientation, cost reduction and efficiency gains, and client service improvement. Related are the types of e-HRM where information, automation, and transformation are linked to operational, relational, and transformational HRM. Anticipating on these goals and types it allows an analysis of the reason of movements of e-HRM within an organization. In addition, it enables better analysis of the expectations towards the human agents in the organizational context. This knowledge allows changes related to e-HRM to be detected. In exploration of the changes the enactment of e-HRM in the organization becomes clear when human agents describe the interaction with IT. The value of e-HRM in the organization can be determined so “the goals that drive parties, stakeholders, and individuals will set a framework for the real e-HRM applications and approaches to be implemented” (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004).

In the following paragraphs we will elaborate further on the main stakeholders of e-HRM: Information Technology, Human Agents, and the Organizational Context. These stakeholders are the building blocks for the research model in this study.

## 2.2 THE ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Within e-HRM IT is used to support HR practices for people outside the HRM department. In this paragraph we consider the role of information technology and bring a perspective using different literature on information technology.

Employees in an organization use IT as a tool to perform their tasks (Bouwman, Den Hooff, van den., Wijngaert, van de., en Dijk, van., 2005). The way technology is implemented, used and accepted depends on several factors. In order to describe the use and acceptance of information technology in an organization different stakeholders and the interaction between these stakeholders are important. The interactions between the stakeholders of e-HRM determine the position of the stakeholders. Thus it is important to research the stakeholders and their relationship to get a complete representation of the movement e-HRM. To understand this better we will first discuss the structuration of information technology.



We first discuss the structuration theory. This theory has a focus on the actual interaction between the stakeholders in an organization. The theory will allow us to explore the influence of information technology in an organization. The approach is based on the concept of structuration framed by Giddens (1979, 1984). Structuration is seen as a ‘social process that involves the reciprocal interaction of human actors and structural features of organizations’ (Orlikowski, 1992). Giddens proposes the duality of structure, which means that structures can be both the medium and the outcome of the interaction. Duality explains the social phenomena. It refers to the role of human actions and also involves the effects of institutional properties. The term ‘structure’ is actually abstract since it depends on the situation and the context it is in. Giddens (1979, 1984) did not apply his theory to information technology. For that reason no match is made between structures and technologies.

Where Giddens stops applying his theory on different levels, Orlikowski (1991) continues with the concept of structuring technology. This structural model of technology includes objective and subjective characteristics of IT applications. The context in which these characteristics are shaped is presented (Bouwman, Den Hooff, van den., Wijngaert, van de., en Dijk, van., 2005). The concept of Orlikowski (1991) has two principles: duality of technology and interpretive flexibility of technology.

The first principle is the duality of technology. Technology is a product of human action and also an instrument for humans to accomplish their tasks. On the one hand the technology has a subjective side as it is a product of human action constructed in a given social context. On the other hand the technology becomes institutionalized and forms an objective structural property of the organization.

The second principle of the model is the interpretive flexibility of technology. It means that the interaction between technology and the organization is dependent. The interaction depends on the different actors, the characteristics of the instruments and the characteristics of the context implemented in its development and use. The different parties that are involved cannot be seen as an autonomous factor. They are influenced by each other and therefore should be considered together in the process of implementing technology.

In figure 2-1 is the model of Orlikowski (1991). We observe that institutional properties, technology, and human agents interact with each other in a certain context and can be considered as a dynamic movement.

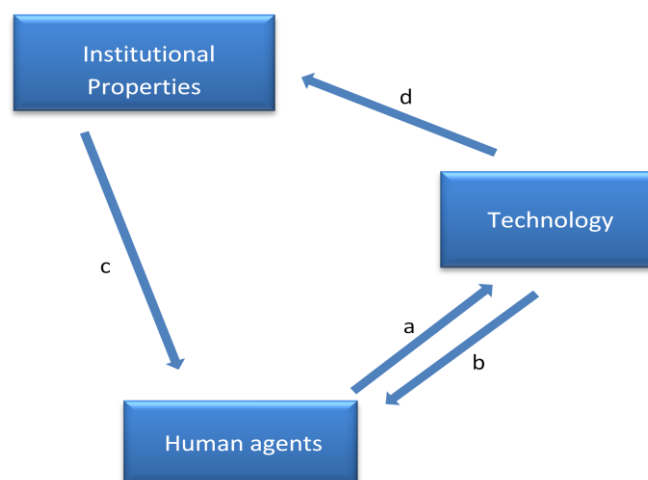


Figure 2-1 *Structurational Model of Technology (Orlikowski, 1991)*

The arrows represent the four key influences in the interaction between technology and organizations.

- Arrow 'a' represents that IT is the outcome of human action, as it is developed and being used by humans.
- Arrow 'b' represents that IT is also the means of other human action. Either to facilitate computer-mediated work or communication through the provision of interpretive schemes, facilities and norms.
- Arrow 'c' represents that IT is built and used within a social context that gives conditions of interaction with information technology is visualized by arrow c.
- Arrow 'd' represents the influence of the interaction of IT on the social context in which it is built and used.

The interaction of technology towards human agents (arrow 'b') facilitates (as mentioned) and at the same time constrains human action. It is done by providing three elements: interpretive schemes, facilities, and norms.

These three elements are based on the three fundamental elements of social interaction: meaning, power, and norms, which are highly interdependent (Giddens, 1976). Orlikowski (1991) explains it some more:

The first element is meaning. Meaning is created by the presence of interpretive schemes or stock of knowledge. This element thus achieves meaningful interaction. The human agents create meaning by interpretive schemes while communicating. In contrast the institutional properties define this interaction by providing organizational rules representing organizational structures of signification. It means that there are social rules that enable and constrain the communication process. So the result of interpretive schemes is meaning for the human agents and structure of signification for the social context.

The second element is facilities also called power. Facilities allow human agents to realize their intentions and accomplish their goals when power is exercised. Power enters human interaction through providing resources for the human agents to realize outcomes. The social context is influenced by developing organizational structures of domination. It means that all social systems have an asymmetry of authoritative and allocative resources. The existing structure of domination can only be modified when the asymmetry of resources is being challenged. So with resources human agents create power and the social context create a structure of domination.

The last element, norms, provides organizational conventions or rules for human agents to work with. As human agents interact with each other there is a continuous use of normative sanctions which is expressed through the cultural norms. The cultural norms play an active role in shaping the notions of legitimate behavior. The norms also establish organizational structures of legitimation in a social context. It gives a moral order by rituals, socialization practices, and tradition. So norms create a moral sanction for the human agents and at the same time provide a structure of legitimation in the social context.

These elements together provide an interaction between the parties within the structural model. The model makes clear that the stakeholders are not autonomous. They interact with each other and have influence on each other. The model is describing the interaction between the social actors and institutional properties that are dynamic. Thus the dynamic movement appears at multiple levels of analysis. The special feature about the theory is that it is a meta-theory what means that it is not about testing a specific phenomena; it is a way of thinking and can provide valuable insights when reflected on the subject e-HRM.

The structural perspective on technology of Orlikowski (1991) was enhanced by a practice-oriented approach of the interaction between people, technology and social action (Orlikowski, 2000). This practice orientation suggests that social systems expose structures that are produced and reproduced through the interaction of human agents, rather than having the constraints of shared abstractions of social structure



beforehand. It does not exclude the influence of prior human action in the structural properties. Instead there is a recreation of the structural properties by the attitude of the individuals. In the practice-orientation the interpretive schemes, facilities, and norms are returning to support the enactment of technologies-in-practice. The practical view on the structurational perspective is shown below.

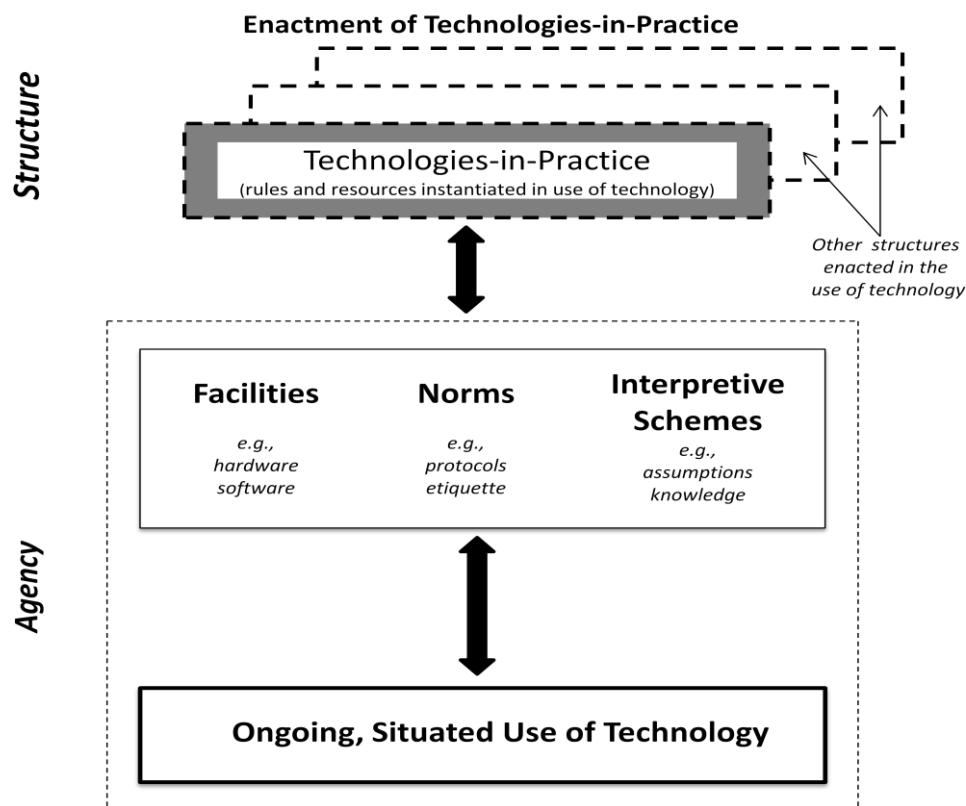


Figure 2-2 Practice Orientation of the Structurational Perspective on Technology (Orlikowski, 2000)

The practice orientation emphasizes that the interaction and people behave different with the technology in different contexts and practices. In addition the relationship between the stakeholders emerges during the interaction and is not restricted by social structures beforehand. A structurational perspective is dynamic and based on ongoing human action. It has the potential to clarify emergence and change in technologies. The practice orientation allows the perspective to respond on interactions and better explain emergence and change in both technology and their use (Orlikowski, 2000).

The change in technology and use has implications for the development of the organization. The degree depends on the organizational context, intentions and actions of human agents, and on the adaption and use of the technology (Orlikowski, 1993). A useful classification here is the incremental and radical types of innovation (Dewar, and Dutton, 1986). If an organizational change is a fundamental change revolutionary in technology, products, practices, relationships, skills, and norms it is called a radical innovation. There is no step-by-step adjustment when implementing such a change. The organization decides to implement a change as a whole. In contrast, incremental innovations are made with minor improvements or simple adjustments. These improvements are often in current technology, products, practices, relationships, skills, and norms (Dewar, and Dutton, 1986), (Orlikowski , 1993).

We are going to look in depth at changes in an organization. One important technological development is the shared information technology. A shared information technology system, like intranet, is one of the technological possibilities to implement in an organization. Two organizational elements seem relevant for the utilization of a shared information technology:



- The cognition of people about technology and their work.
- The structural properties of the organization which are the policies, norms, and reward systems (Orlikowski, 1992).

The cognitive elements are frames that individuals have and also share with others about the organization, work, and technology. If a new technology is implemented the individual tries to understand it in terms of the existing frames to accommodate to the special aspects of technology. This happens in particular when incremental changes occur. However in case of a radical change the individual will need to modify their frames significantly. How individuals react and adjust their frames in response to a new technology is varying. It is influenced by two factors:

- Amount of product information communicated: more and good communication has a positive influence on the understanding of the technology. Consequently the development of the frames of the individuals is positively influenced.
- The type and amount of training received on the product: when more and helpful training is available the individuals have a better understanding of the technology. They can adjust their frames to accept the change of technology (Orlikowski, 1992).

An adjustment of the frames is achieved more likely with incremental change than radical change. The elements are more related to small steps in innovation than radical change. The other element that seems relevant for the utilization of information technology, the structural element, contains the reward systems, policies, work practices and norms. These systems influence and are influenced by the everyday actions of organizational members. All organizational elements together interact with the organizational introduction of information technology and will have implications for the adaption, understanding and use of the technology.

Underlying the actual adaption, understanding and use of the technology, there is the acceptance of technology that is a positive factor of influence. The user acceptance can influence the actual behavior of the users of the technology (Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are fundamental determinants for the user acceptance (Legris, Ingham, and Collette, 2003) (Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance (Davis, 1989). The usefulness can be related to a number of dimensions. Dimensions like usefulness for job effectiveness and job efficiency, in addition usefulness for the job as a whole (Bouwman, Den Hooff, van den., Wijngaert, van de., en Dijk, van., 2005). Perceived ease of use means the degree to which the person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort (Davis, 1989). Integrated in the ease of use is the physical and mental effort to use it. Also integrated is the ease of learning to use the system (Bouwman, Den Hooff, van den., Wijngaert, van de. en Dijk van., 2005). With the user acceptance the adaption and use of the technology can be estimated within the organization. Furthermore it can help with the implementation process of the technology.

An important note should be made about the development of the implementation process. The adaption of organizational change with the implementation of technology is not a process that is everywhere the same. It depends on several factors in context, and is not as gradual and continuous as may appear. The process is rather discontinuous, looking at the adaption that dramatically drops after an initial burst of intensive activity. So the adaption process occurs in bursts and stops (Tyre, and Orlikowski, 1994). The dynamic movement, represented by the structural model of Orlikowski (1991), is important and should be considered in an organization. The approach provides insights in the dynamic movement and the interactions between the institutional properties, technology and the human agents in the organizational context.

So far, the relation between the human agents, technology and institutional properties has been discussed along with the related characteristics of information technology. To emphasize the dynamic movement



between these different stakeholders in an organization, the structural perspective of Orlikowski (1991) was used. With this perspective the dynamic movement of the stakeholders becomes visible and can be placed in the organizational context. This perspective has two principles, the duality of technology and the interpretive flexibility of technology. These principles show that there is interaction between the stakeholders and are interdependent when influencing each other. Being aware of the model of interrelation is useful in the research. It provides an open mind for the case study. Further the change and use of the information technology has implications for the development of the organization. When implementing information technology in incremental ways it gives the possibility to individuals to mutual adjust to the change. This process is not continuous. The adaptation process determines the acceptance and use of the technology thus the adaptation process should not be overlooked when researching the implementation of information technology. The behavior of the individual plays a role in the acceptance and adaptation of the technology. In addition the behavior is important in the interaction between the stakeholders which determines the role of information technology in the organization.

## 2.3 THE ROLE OF HUMAN AGENTS

The model of Orlikowski (1991) involves the human agents who are present in the organization as representative of the HRM department and as a user of the technology. According to Ruta (2005) the technical installation challenges can be great. He emphasizes the organization has to be aware not to overlook the human challenges associated with change during the implementation phase of an HR portal. An HR portal is often referred to as the same phenomenon as e-HRM. Ruta (2005) however sees an HR portal as a mean to achieve e-HRM. The portal is seen as an application often located on organization intranet system. The human challenges in IT projects, like an HR portal, refer mostly to the individual user aspects of IT (Bondarouk, 2004). The individual user aspects should be included to research the enactment of e-HRM by its users. The letter 'e' in e-HRM is not just a technical one but the way of thinking of the user (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004). Users of e-HRM have to adjust to the changes of the HR function by changing their mindset and accept the changes.

An HRM department exists of different groups of people with different tasks. Individual user aspects are different which means that different scenario's with e-HRM can be depicted.

The HR staff takes care of the information and administration on operational level. The HR professionals take care of the HR practices on relational level. And the HR management has an important job on transformational HRM level. The influence of information technology allows people outside the HRM department to play a more important role in HRM than they did before. Line managers and employees are examples of people outside the HRM department. E-HRM has consequences for the HRM department if line management and employees are put in a more active role in implementing HRM strategies, policies, and practices. The demand of HR professionals will be less if line management and employees pick-up and use the HRM instruments. Although the experience of the professionals is still needed the HR tasks will be achieved with a smaller workforce (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004). It is shown by a research done by Watson and Wyatt involving 649 companies of different sizes. People that are immediately affected are the administrative HRM workers. Their daily processes are being changed by the influence of IT.

IT has consequences for the face-to-face contact that HRM workers have with the employees in the organization (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004). The face-to-face interactions are being replaced with computer-based information when implementing intranet (Ruta, 2005). This can influence the trust and confidence of the employees (Francis, and Keegan, 2006). On strategic level, where transformation of the HR function takes place, the information technology is more important in the skills of the HRM professionals. The routine tasks take less time. It creates an opportunity for the HR professional to perform tasks on strategic level and to become a strategic partner (Brockbank, 1999; Ulrich 1997). The gradual shift has implications for the



competencies that define the success of HR professionals (Bell, Lee, and Yeung, 2006). The opportunities for the HR professionals are created by the potential for the HR function to take advantage of the tools created by technology. They can use it to determine how useful policies and practices are and contribute to the way strategies are carried out. Whether an HR professional is to perform the role of a strategic partner depends on the focus of the organization. If the organization is counting on human and intellectual capital for competitive advantage it is more likely to adopt this strategy (Lawler III, & Morhman, 2003). It is important to find out what kind of consequences e-HRM has on the HRM professionals as it will be the future of HRM.

As mentioned for a user of e-HRM to adjust to the changes of the HR function the mindset of the user has to change. The system acceptance is a variable that may be influenced by both the nature of e-HRM systems and the behavior of the individual. Additional variables that are affected are the information flows, the social interaction patterns and the perceived control of individuals (Stone, Stone-Romero, and Lukaszewski, 2006). The information flows are influenced by the technology. The accessibility of the information changes and the collection and disseminating of information is adjusted to workflow. Another variable is the social interaction patterns. As a result of the change in face-to-face contact, the interactions between the organizational members are changing. They are finding a way to deal with the changing behaviors in relation with the technology. The last variable is perceived control. New systems can limit freedom and therefore influence the perceived control in the organization (Stone, Stone-Romero, and Lukaszewski, 2006).

Based upon the strong relation of the three groups of human agents and the success or failure of e-HRM implementation it is assumed that these groups should be taken into account. For each group of human agents (HR professionals, line managers and employees) different challenges deal with the changes related to e-HRM. With this research these challenges experienced by the human agents and caused by implementing technology in the organization context will be further explored.

## 2.4 ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT: HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION

The thesis concerns the study of implementing e-HRM within a healthcare organization. The organizational context determines largely the institutional properties. A healthcare organization as the context of this study, is a service provider with high labor intensity (Siddiqui, and Kleiner, 1998).

We reviewed the literature and four issues appeared that play a role within a healthcare organization:

- The first issue encountered is a healthcare organization maintains different subcultures. A healthcare organization does not only consist of individuals. Different departments, teams, tasks flows, systems and cultural meanings are involved (Carrol, and Edmondson, 2002). These factors make the existence of different subcultures inevitable. It can affect the cooperation in an organization, and important to this research, the interaction with information technology. Subcultures 'may share a common orientation and similar espoused values, but there may also be disparate subcultures that clash or maintain an uneasy symbiosis' (Scott, Mannion, Davies, and Marshall, 2003, p. 113). According to Davies, Nutley, and Mannion (2000) in health care, rivalry and competition between subcultures is a key feature of the overall organizational culture. Clearly, diverse groups that are present in a healthcare organization are influencing the organization as a whole. Gerardi (2005) distinguishes three different professional subcultures within healthcare. They develop in relative isolation, up to a point where they have to mingle to provide good service. Physicians, nurses and non-clinical managers are groups with their own approach and perceptions. Physicians have a reductionist, 'technical rationality' approach to work while nurses have a holistic, patient-centered approach. Managers support hierarchical models for managing clinical work processes which are conflicting with the perceptions of physicians and nurses. The mixture of perceptions in a hospital has influence on levels of communication and cooperation. Recent studies reveal that physicians and nurses have quite different perceptions about these levels of communication and cooperation (Gerardi, 2005). Branine (1999) and





Lane (1999) emphasize the high percentage of the professional staff which is used to high levels of autonomy within healthcare. Because of the level of autonomy it is important to align the perceptions of the different groups. If the perceptions are understood it can give insight in the behavior and attitude of each other. There should be effective working relationships across the professions, departments and facilities to reach success (Gerardi, 2005). The diverse perceptions of the subcultures are influencing the implementation of an information system within a healthcare organization. The meanings can cause a gap between the intentions and the practice at organizational level (Currie, and Brown, 1997). Different views have influence on the attitude towards an information technology as subcultures may be more or less malleable or may even be resistant to change which can cause a gap between intentions and practice (Davies, Nutley, and Mannion, 2000).

- The second issue, according to Bach (2000), is the status of health workers as public servants. The nature of a healthcare organization is statutory and making it a public service. This status prevents the disruption of health services. In this way standards of probity and professional conduct are ensured. Also this status is by tradition associated with strict regulation of work conditions and tends to be associated with levels of job security. It makes employees of a healthcare organization move a certain way in the organization and let them feel safe about the conditions of the organization.
- The third issue is organizational complexity. At a hospital, the service produced for the patient is consumed at the same time by the patient. The service cannot be stored in a hospital. Thus many employees are needed within different departments which require many procedures to guide this service. It all makes a hospital a large and complex organization (Appendix A). Some tasks performed by the employees are simple and can be done individually. Other routines require coordinated action from many with knowledge that is stored in different forms and locations (Carrol, and Edmondson, 2002). According to Siddiqui and Kleiner (1998) the labor intensity and the variety in professional practices needs to be managed. The management of the employees has to understand the HRM, environmental, and organizational factors that influence the performance of the individuals. Understanding and proper managing a good policy for the employees of the organization can be practiced. It is especially necessary because 'healthcare organizations undergo dramatic changes resulting from innovations in information systems, improved diagnostic tools and advances in treatment technology' (Narine, and Persaud, 2003, p. 179). Management can support these processes. An important factor mentioned by Currie and Brown (1997) is the support of the managers involved in the implementation process of a change. They have to be convinced of the worth of the innovation and convey this to the employees. Consequently intentions of information systems are important. Nonetheless the organization has to realize that there are different parties that have influence in practice. 'Leaders in a healthcare organization are more effective when they take broad view of the interdependencies among individuals, team, task flows, systems, and cultural meanings (Carrol, and Edmondson, 2002). When a healthcare organization wants to improve quality and safety by implementing a change it can be beneficial to consider the interdependencies.
- The fourth issue is the majority of women. In a healthcare organization women are concentrated in a number of groups; for example nursing (Bach, 2000). Women are representing a large group of part time workers with low status and pay. As it enables women to cope with family responsibilities, it is often tolerated (Branine, 1999; Lane, 1999). Organizations want to provide a balance between work and private matters. To do so a healthcare organization has work conditions with varied levels of flexibility. The large amount of women in a healthcare organization is an issue to consider when managing the organization.

Managing and implementing certain changes to achieve effectiveness and efficiency should not diminish the health care organization's primary goal, the patient satisfaction. Often changes start with great enthusiasm.



However they do not achieve the expectations present at the beginning (Ho et al., 1999). Narine and Persaud (2003) consider low satisfaction of the changes to be a result of the internal forces connected to management's inability to achieve employee commitment and to maintain it over a longer period. They present general guidelines to help a healthcare institute cope with large-scale change.

To achieve employee commitment the healthcare organization has to ensure the organization's readiness for change. After this a dissatisfaction of the present state is analyzed to view the need to change. The need to change has to be communicated through a clear vision of the proposed change. With that, participation in change is promoted. The last step is to develop a clear and consistent communication plan. Following these steps the organization should be in the good direction of trying to gain employee commitment. Healthcare managers must support employees to cope with the change while keeping the change process moving.

To maintain the commitment the organization needs to know that they are on the right track. It can be done by using feedback mechanisms to consolidate gains. After that the healthcare organization has to make sure that the change becomes a permanent part of the organizational culture (Narine, and Persaud, 2003).

In the end people deliver health care, so management of health care can be considered to be people management (Kabene, Orchard, Howard, Soriano, and Leduc, 2006). HR professionals recognize that if an organization wants to meet its challenges the development of a culture is important. Furthermore they understand how joint practices form around common interests and goals. It is important to align these practices to interests and goals of the organization (Kabene, Orchard, Howard, Soriano, and Leduc, 2006). The HRM department can play an important role in this. The literature does not show that much is known about HRM in healthcare (Rodwell and Teo, 2004; Rondeau and Wagar, 2001). It also becomes clear that research in the healthcare sector employment practices is under-developed (Bach, 2000). It evidently needs further examination and study as the relationship between human resource management and health care is complex (Kabene, Orchard, Howard, Soriano, and Leduc, 2006). In summary, more research is needed to present a more complete description of a healthcare organization. This study will make a contribution to these efforts.

Considering the above, a healthcare organization is a service organization with diverse levels to take into account. Subcultures are forming the organization which is filled with standardized processes. So a combination is made between the diversity in personnel and the institutionalization and standardization of work processes. A good balance is necessary between the diversity of personnel and organizational structures. HR professionals can monitor different processes and can give advice in managing the different groups and departments. Managers can help to stimulate this balance and the cooperation within the organization. All together the complexity brought forth by the different subcultures, departments, groups, and the interaction between various factors in a healthcare organization require a dynamic approach.



## 2.5 TOWARDS A RESEARCH MODEL

For the research model the following assumptions are made:

- E-HRM is viewed from structural perspective of Orlikowski (1991) making it a dynamic movement.
- The different stakeholders and their interaction are critical for e-HRM.
- HR processes that are carried out in the organization by the human agents are interacting with technology.
- The organizational context is healthcare which interacts with the human agents and HRM intranet.

The assumptions results in the research model presented below (figure 2-3):

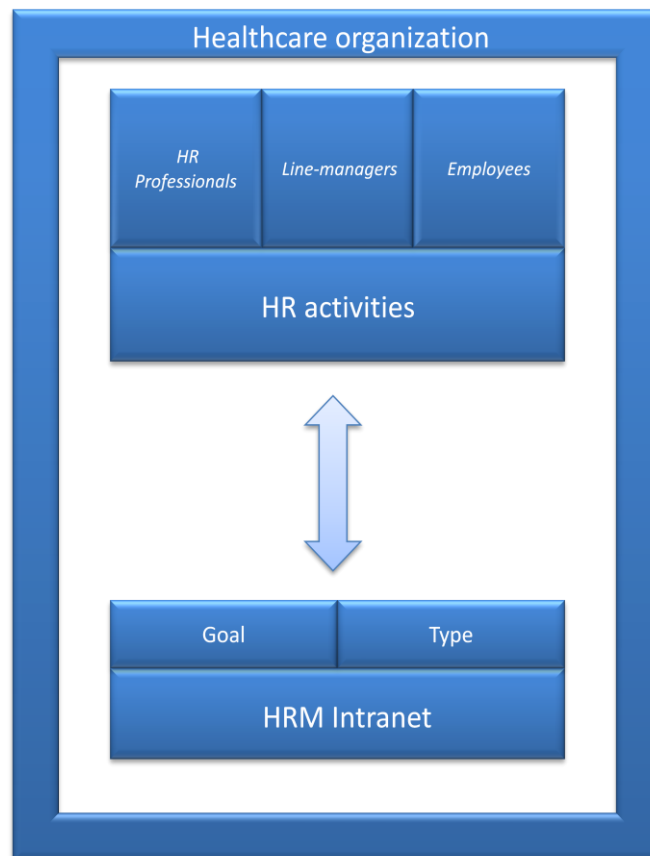


Figure 2-3 *The Research Model*

The model is representing e-HRM in the healthcare environment. Technology and the HR activities with the human actors interact with one another. As the research is about the implementation of intranet, HRM intranet is representing the technology. The HRM department conveys HR practices into the organization and different human agents are involved in HR practices. The HR professionals are guiding the practices and the organization and employees make use of them while the line managers try to manage the workflow and mediate between the employee and the HRM department. The literature mentions the changing roles of these human agents. The role of line managers and employees in HRM grows and the role of HR professional moves to a more strategic level. The research model explores the movement of the human agents in relation to the HR processes influenced by technology, and vice versa the influence of the human agents on the technology. The challenges in practice of the dynamic movement occur in the exploration of our research.

## 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

After building the research model this research proceeds with the qualitative study to find an answer on the research question: *What are the changes in the HR activities brought about by HRM intranet of MST and in what way do users enact HRM intranet functionalities?*

### 3.1 CASE STUDY APPROACH

With the research question we want to provide insights and comprehension on e-HRM in healthcare. This question calls for an exploratory study (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2007). Together with a descriptive angle it gives an outline of the situation as presented in the organization at the time of the research. A clear research strategy helps the search to answer the research question. There are different kinds of strategies that fit an explorative study. Here a 'case study' is used as there is one organization serving as unit of analysis. A case study is defined as 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real context using multiple sources of evidence' by (Robson, 2002, p.178). A case study offers a rich understanding of the research and processes being enacted (Morris, and Wood, 1992).

MST is selected as unit of analysis in this case study. Valuable information is gathered about the organization dealings with the implementation of technology in HRM. As it is not the intention here to generalize in a statistical way across multiple companies, MST is a valid unit of analysis for the case study.

Researching the changes in the HR process and the perceptions of users about the movement in MST requires a qualitative research design. The qualitative design allows in-depth information to be gathered in regards to the users of the HRM intranet and their interactions. Furthermore opinions about the usefulness, and the ease of use of the intranet are gathered. However, the in-depth information is not suitable for statistical analyses. The results are qualitative data of the research, thus the approach is qualitative for both collecting and analyzing data. The organizational context has to be incorporated into the study to understand the phenomenon e-HRM. This makes the qualitative study also a contextual study. In the case study the healthcare organization is the context of the e-HRM research. It is a study of a particular phenomenon at a particular time making the study a cross-sectional study.

### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

Multiple techniques are applied to gather data that support a case study, referred to as triangulation. Triangulation ensures that the data gives valid results. The used methods here are: semi-structured interviews, documentation review, observations in meetings, casual conversations and the observations on the intranet. Documents and observations are used to get a good insight in the current situation at MST. Semi-structured interviews are selected to gain understanding in the perception of the employees of MST. Empirical stage observations, documents analysis and informal conversations contribute to the contextual knowledge and background information. These different techniques highlight different sites of e-HRM.

#### 3.2.1 INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews are chosen as the dominant technique to collect data. This qualitative research tool provides rich and deep insights in the subject's reasoning. Semi-structured interviews also give answers to why people have a certain perception on the matter of HRM intranet (Evered & Louis, 1981). Open-ended questions were asked using the variables of the research model. The variables assist in revealing context specific understandings and motivations behind certain aspects (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Open-ended questions allow us to use the technique of probing. By means of clarifying the question and asking for more information a valid answer that meets the required criteria is the result (Emans, 2004). This occurs after evaluating the answers given by the interviewee.



Three groups of respondents are involved in the semi-structured interviews: HR professionals, line managers, and employees (Table 3-1). The focus is on the depth of information and not on the quantity. Therefore respondents are limited to 15 participants divided over the three groups. The divide of the participants is shown in the table below.


Target group	Number of interviewees/ Time interview	Reasons for selection
HR professionals	3; total of 3,5 hours	These employees are working within the HR processes and provide insights in the influence of e-HRM in their daily work.
Line managers	4; total of 5 hours and 15 minutes	Line managers are assumed to use e-HRM (future MSS) for their people management activities.
Employees	8; total of 8 hours and 5 minutes	Employees are assumed to use e-HRM (future ESS) for their personal HR-related activities.
		
Type of department Experience with IT	Service department	Medical department
Low level of experience	Building Maintenance (1 line manager & 2 employees)	Intensive Care (1 line manager & 2 employees)
High level of experience	Service desk & Application services (1 line manager & 2 employees)	Clinical Pharmacy (1 line manager & 2 employees)

Table 3-1 An overview of interviewees

HR professionals give their view on e-HRM as internal of the HRM department. They can indicate what changed in the HR practices with the implementation of e-HRM. The line managers and employees participated because they are the users of HRM intranet and interact with the HRM department and HR activities.

The sampling of the HR professionals is done by choosing three HR professionals from the department. The sampling of the line managers and employees is different than the HR professionals. It is not possible to use a type of probability sampling as a large-scale social survey does not apply in this case-study (Babbie, 2007). Nonprobability sampling is used in the form of purposive sampling. With purposive sampling a sample is selected on the basis of knowledge of the populations. Furthermore the selection is based on the knowledge of the population most useful or representative to the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2007). The entire population of the healthcare organization cannot be used as a target group. A sample is selected of the units that were observed. The purposive sampling benefits the quality of the data and the research by gathering in-depth information in the area of interest.

Per discussion with MST, four departments were chosen. In each department one line manager and two employees participated. Two departments required employees to work with computers intensively, and two departments did not require so. This is labeled as 'experience with information technology'. Another differentiation is made between service departments and medical department in order to get an all-round representation of the contribution of e-HRM within MST. This is necessary as a hospital does not only have medical departments. We wanted to make sure that not just employees who work intensively with computers in service and medical departments could give their opinion. The opportunity is also given to the employees



who not often work with a computer in service of medical department. The differentiations are presented in table 3-1.

After the target groups were defined an appointment with the interviewees was made. The purpose and the duration of the interview were explained to the interviewee. The interviews are done (when possible) in a well-known environment for the interviewees to let them feel comfortable. At the beginning of the actual interview the purpose was reiterated and the interviewee was ensured all information would be handled with care and remains confidential. This allowed the interviewees to show their real thoughts and emotions. For the HR professional, line manager and the employee predefined questions were asked as a guideline during the interviews (Appendix B). The 15 interviews lasted from 40 minutes up to 1 hour 45 minutes with a total time of 16 hours and 50 minutes. A meeting with the business manager of HRM and 'Medische Techniek & ICT' adds two more hours.

### 3.2.2 DOCUMENTS, OBSERVATIONS IN MEETINGS AND INTRANET SCAN

The documents we gathered are internal documents found on internet, intranet, or given by employees of the HRM department and the project manager of the ECM project. These documents are related to the subject of this study, the HRM department or other aspects of the organization and can be described as nonspecific, e.g. the annual plans and budgets. The purpose of the document analysis is to get familiar with the research subject and to gather information on the context of the research subject. Information was also found on the ECM project. In order to understand the complete context additional documentation was required. This documentation was collected from personnel within the organization.

The following documents are used in the analysis:

- Annual plan MST, *Kaderbrief*, 2008; 2009; 2010
- Budget MST 2009
- Annual plan HRM 2010, MST
- Progress report OR April 2009
- Progress report OR September 2009, *basisprojectplan HRM*
- Program of demands ECM- DMS, March 2006
- Functional Test plan, January 2008
- Different records of meetings HRM, October, November 2009

30

Within these documents the goal and the type of information technology is distinguished at MST.

Several meetings within the HRM department were attended. These meetings varied from operational meetings of HR to HR advice meetings. Within these meetings information is found and observations are made about the practice which not always corresponds with information from the documents. These observations eventually contribute to an overall understanding of the research subject and the context it is in. In the period October-March 17 meetings were attended amounting to approximately 20 hours.

The following meetings were attended

- Operational meetings HR Beheer
- HR advice meetings
- Meeting HR staff intranet content
- Meeting project manager ECM
- Meeting business manager HRM
- Meeting business manager Medical Technology & ICT
- Meeting CAO
- Meeting digitalizing forms HR



- Meeting introduction intranet for HR Beheer
- Meeting HRM Planning 2010
- Live demonstration MST information screens

The observations contained information about the method of working of the HRM department and its relation with the ECM project. We could choose from the meetings that were selected by the HRM department. The meetings are therefore not all directly related to the research subject. It gives insight in the work process of MST and what the perception is of people on certain issues. During the study observations were also made outside the meeting room. Casual conversations on the work floor contributed to the understanding of the culture in the organization and the way people work.

The final source of information comes forth out of the developments of and on the intranet and HRM intranet. Information about intranet and HRM intranet is gathered from documents of the ECM project or by logging in and orientating on the different sites. We followed the developments and news that appeared about and on intranet and HRM intranet.

### 3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The gathered data has to be analysis in several ways as multiple techniques of data collection were used. The interviews are tape recorded with the permission of the interviewees. In the interview notes are made and with the tape recording the interview is transcribed. Transcribing means analyzing and interpreting the data gathered in the interviews (Kvale, 1996). By transcribing the interview in a few hours after the interview valuable information is put in the transcription. For an average interview it took approximately 3,5 hours to transcribe which makes a total of 63 hours. This includes transcribing meetings with the project manager and business managers. In the transcription important segments are highlighted. When completed the transcription is sent back to the interviewee for verification. Once approved the interviews were analyzed.

The data of all the interviews is analyzed in parallel to observe similarities and differences between the interviews. We analyzed the data at two levels. The first level represents each target group and the second level represents the target groups together. At the first level the interviews of the HR professionals are compared with each other on bases of the constructs. Conclusions are drawn about the HR professionals, the line managers and the employees. At the second level the three groups are compared to present an overall conclusion of the interviews per construct. The interaction between the three constructs is analyzed.

The collected documents are used to get familiar with the research subject and to gather knowledge about the research subject. The useful information is placed in the relevant construct. The information is considered useful when it is complete and has value for the research. By placing the documents in a certain construct the information is interpreted in relation to the concept e-HRM.

The observations during the meetings, the casual conversations and intranet/HRM intranet are analyzed. Notes support the analyses during the research. The information on the intranet/HRM intranet is compared to the information from the documents and observations. This allows determining the discrepancies between the theory (what people want) and how intranet is enacted. This is used to get an idea of the progress of intranet in the organization. The valuable information is used in the constructs of this research and presented in the findings.



## 4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the empirical part of the research that we conducted within MST. The empirical element contains analyzing documents, observations, conversations and the interviews. In the analysis a distinction is made between intentions of certain relations and the practice. The distinction is displayed within the concept which eventually supports the dynamic movement within MST. We emphasize that writing down the findings of the interviews it concerns interpretations of the perceptions of other people, not reporting facts. Quotes are used to support the interpretations. The findings are presented per concept to benefit the structure of the research model.

### 4.1 THE ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

#### 4.1.1 THE INTENTIONS OF HRM INTRANET

Intranet is a part of the ECM project of MST. In the old situation MST had a content management that was fully manual, which means that news and documents are printed and spread with internal mail. The website was externally hosted and there were fast solutions to store documents on the internet. Now the DMS is used for that. The old situation means almost every department has its own method of working with documents adding up to nearly 7000 protocols. The project was initiated to establish a uniform way of working with knowledge-sharing.

The goal of the ECM project, as formulated in project documents, is to reach a situation where the process of manufacturing, management, maintenance, dissemination and provision of manuals, protocols, procedures and documents is digitally supported by a DMS environment. Furthermore, the goal is to establish a situation where intranet is available for newsletters and other information. This in a situation where the organization ensures continuity of using ECM. The last part of the formulated goal is to reach a situation where currently available manuals, protocols, procedures, and documents will be available through intranet. All employees of MST should be able to unlock and select newsletters and other documents relevant to them, for the exercise of his or her duties. When we compared it with the literature, the unity of protocols and information resembles the goals efficiency gains and cost reduction of Ruël, Bondarouk and Looise (2004). Although it is one project, the multiple factors, departments, and people involved result in various goals.

The project ECM is in control of two teams; one team is responsible for DMS and the other team for intranet. On August 3, 2009 the project was launched. Onward every employee who logs in on a computer gets the intranet as a pop-up to become familiar with the concept. On the pop-up the home page is shown with a newsflash. The behavior of the employee determines if the intranet is used for more activity or that it is clicked away to continue the daily work in other programs. To read more about the intranet and make use of other features the employee has to login with his account. There are several options presented in a print screen in Appendix D.

Everybody has an intranet profile with the same set of applications where all sorts of information can be found about the organization: news, events, media, phonebook, sources, anniversaries and of course the DMS. The profile can be personalized with information about the employee at 'mijn gegevens' and further at 'mijn MST'. There is a personal page with expense reports and the user's documents. At 'ons MST' all groups, projects and departments have a location to put their information, including the HRM. An employee can fill in its preferences to receive news from these groups besides the general MST news on the home page. For example, if a person clicks on Human Resource Management in the category list under 'mijn MST', it is added to the preferences. News concerning the category appears every time after logging in. Not all groups and departments have put their information on the intranet as it is not clear to everyone which classifications are used among the multiple overlaps present within MST.





The specifications of the information technology HRM intranet is found at 'ons MST' (see print screen 2 Appendix D). This section is particularly interesting for the HRM department and this research. The HRM intranet allows the employee to find information about the department and which advisor to contact for personal information. Furthermore, all HRM related information is obtained there and employees can find internal jobs, collective agreement information, benefits, etc. The year hour map can be tracked, expense reports can be done, and train tickets can be requested in an application. The features are opened by clicking on the subject which will appear in the same screen. When clicking on a hyperlink within the subject, a new window opens to continue. Currently there are plans for more features to provide better service to the organization and a reorganization of the division of the subjects to make it clearer.

The HRM department wants to reach the line manager and the employee with HRM intranet to support the HR activities. The intention is to do this on operational level. The HRM department wants to inform line managers and employees in the field of HRM and when possible to support with applications automating small processes; e.g. an application to expense and request train-tickets. Also several forms for line managers and employees in are present. These aspects can be translated in the goal client service improvement & facilitating management and employees (Ruël, Bondarouk and Looise, 2004) by giving information and starting the automation of small processes (Lengnick et al. 2003). In the HRM department two employees service the HRM intranet and attend meetings to benefit intranet and HRM intranet. In these meetings intranet is discussed, how the process is developing and what needs to be improved. The HRM department needs these meetings to keep the topic intranet alive in the organization and to communicate and solve problems that arise while working in the system. Without these meetings the problems wouldn't be solved. It would withhold the HRM department from making progress with intranet. After the implementation of the intranet the intranet doesn't stop developing, and therefore these meetings will have to continue.

MST has joined the association of Cooperating Hospitals (VSZ). In this cooperation six top clinical hospitals are working together to improve the quality of patient care. The HRM department is involved and has together with the VSZ a strategy. In line with HRM intranet there is going to be a selection and implementation of one joined personnel- and salary information system (HR portal). By selecting a system the six hospitals share their costs and knowledge. Managers and employees can use the system portal for their own HR business. With the individualizing of the working conditions (in general) it is a real advantage. The HR portal is planned for 2012 at MST while some hospitals are implementing the system in 2010. HRM intranet is the first step into the direction of the HR portal. The outcome of the intranet in practice will show if the intentions for the HRM intranet are fulfilled.

*Reflection:*

- *Goal intranet: Cost reduction and efficiency gains*
- *Goal HRM intranet: Client service improvement & facilitating management and employees*
- *Type HRM intranet: Information/ Automation*

#### 4.1.2 THE ENACTMENT OF HRM INTRANET

We perceived information about HRM intranet in practice in various ways. The degree in which intranet and HRM intranet is used cannot be measured statistically. The appropriate tools are not available within MST to perform these kinds of measurements. An indication about the usage could be made. The department application management system shows 700-1500 daily users. It is the daily average of people that logged on to the intranet eight months after the implementation. The average was only available during the period of the research so no valuable comparison could be made. The average was of intranet as a whole and no distinction is made for the HRM intranet. Potentially activities on the intranet could be an indication for the usage. Some offers on the intranet, like free ice creams for every department, are used. However, this could give a distorted



view as it may be the result of direct communication between departments and the employees in the departments. No additional statistical information can support our research. Therefore further information about intranet and HRM intranet is the result of documents, observations, conversations and interviews.

The first impressions about the information technology in practice appeared when we talked to various people. One of the conversations was with a project manager (02-10-2009). In the conversation the issue was raised that intranet is an additional advantage as a part of the ECM system to improve the DMS. In 1998 the first application was launched for a DMS system after which it took several years to continue the development. Program requirements were made in 2006, following a functional test plan in January 2008. From the first application in 1998, it took approximately ten years to go from demand to implementation of the ECM project. According to the project manager with the DMS certain processes within MST could be improved. The manager formulated the primary goal of the whole project as cost reduction and quality improvement of the documents. For project management it was obvious that intranet is a medium for primary information delivery to line managers and employees where one-way communication is present. For the HRM department intranet is more than a medium for one-way communication to line managers and employees. The HRM department considered it in addition to be automation. This type is not fully present although steps are made into the direction. The aforementioned train ticket requests / expense and forms for line manager and employees are examples of automated processes. These stimulate two-way communication. The organization that provides the train tickets, decided to stop the service and HRM was forced to remove this application. Employees who participated in the research revealed that expensing through HRM intranet is not adequately used by them. The reason being it is not obligated and it can be done in other ways. The automation function therefore is not achieved. When we asked about the reach of the communication, all parties agreed that the whole organization including line managers and employees are the target of the communication with intranet and HRM intranet.

The documents we found within MST contained information about the ECM project and the development of the intranet. However the part of intranet is underdeveloped since the information is about the DMS. The information we found described intranet as a web content with small pieces of information which could easily be distributed into the organization (Programma- en projectmanagement, 28-01-2008). Before the project was distributed into the organization the functional test plan of project management was performed. The test plan addressed the functional demands of the DMS and not of intranet. It could indicate the importance of intranet within the project ECM. For the HRM department HRM intranet itself is playing a bigger role than intranet for the project ECM as a whole. HRM is trying to optimize intranet for HRM information and applications for all employees (RVE Stafdienst HRM, 2009). As the test plan did not address intranet it is not strange that while working with HRM intranet malfunctions appeared. The department Public Relations is owner of the project and every adjustment has to be discussed with this department. It disrupts easy contact of HRM with HRM intranet. Because different parties are involved in the progress of intranet, meetings were scheduled to keep the project updated and improve where necessary. Two months after the implementation of the project ECM, the project meetings scheduled in the next two months were cancelled for varying reasons. It indicates that perhaps the expectations on intranet of MST of the HRM department are different from other parties involved. It indicates a discrepancy regarding the importance of the project.

We discovered additional information about the information technology in practice in conversations with the HR professionals, line managers and employees. They gave their opinion about the concepts that are central in this study. Line managers and employees were asked about the use of the information technology, their perception on the system, advantages and disadvantages, and their perception on possible improvements in the usage of the system. Despite the fact that the interviewees were asked about intranet and HRM intranet, the focus of this study is HRM intranet. The perceptions on intranet and information technology in general helped to research the usage and enactment of HRM intranet.



HR professionals represent the HRM department in MST when performing parts of their function. The question arises if HRM intranet changes anything in practicing this function and what the perception of the professionals is of information technology within the HRM department.

In conversation with the HR professionals it became clear that HRM intranet is not intensively used by the HR professionals though one professional said to search sporadic for information. When asked about the reason why the professionals do not use it, they mentioned that HRM intranet is not necessary for practicing their function. The same usage applies to intranet in general since the HR professionals gave time constraints as a reason for the low frequency of visiting intranet. Besides time constraints HR professionals ascribe the same cause for the sporadic usage of intranet. In short the nature of the intranet currently does not contribute to their function: *“Er moet een behoorlijke noodzaak achter zitten en die is er nu niet”* (HRpro\_2). All HR professionals are convinced they will be exposed to important information about HRM and their departments outside of the intranet. There is e.g. regular interaction with line managers of the relevant departments. In those situations information is exchanged about issues regarding the departments and HRM. The weekly meetings with colleagues also provide the information from the HRM department. So there is no need for the HR professional to search for information on intranet and HRM intranet. Visits to the intranet may take place when the professional wants to be informed on other subjects. Besides the need for information more factors influence the usage of the information technology. According to the HR professionals the information that is offered on intranet is not complete and therefore optimal usage can not be guaranteed: *“Het is een illussie om te denken dat als het daar op wordt gezet, het iedereen bereikt”* (HRpro\_1).

The professionals have a perception about the usage of intranet within MST: *“Het grootste gedeelte van het ziekenhuis is niet zo van even snel op de computer kijken wat er allemaal speelt”* (HRpro\_3). It was confirmed by a manager who emphasized that employees of MST are concentrating on their daily tasks and not often look beyond their horizon to expand their views. The professionals feel it is partly the responsibility of the employee to have an active information-seeking behavior on intranet and HRM intranet. On the other hand they feel that HRM should provide the service to work together in the use of information technology. So it is a development based upon motivation instead of force. A professional supports this with the following: *“Ik was heel lang van mening dat dat ook moest (stimuleren gebruik),..., moeten ze maar leren. Alleen als je een paar jaar hier rondloopt zie je genoeg mensen waarvan je denkt: Mag ik dat van zo iemand verwachten? Dat is wel een beetje dubbel dus”* (Hrpro\_3). The HR professionals are still searching for a good way to approach the employees with information technology. The professionals are stimulating the use of intranet when the professionals say they refer to the line managers with intranet and HRM intranet.

It becomes clear that HRM intranet and intranet is not playing an important role in the functions of the HR professionals. The professionals observed that the influence of HRM intranet on their daily tasks is not detectable. There is the possibility that fewer questions are asked than before by the line managers and employees to the HR professionals, because practical information can be found on HRM intranet. However significant changes after the implementation of intranet are not detected. The work of the HR professionals has not changed due to the implementation of intranet and HRM intranet. Therefore the system is not contributing to the quality of work of the professional. However the professionals did consider the accessibility of information useful: *“Je mist minder gauw informatie denk ik”* (HRpro\_1). If information technology is used the proper way, the professionals understood that accessibility of information and information distribution by means of intranet and HRM intranet was the reason of the implementation. Together with resolving ambiguity of protocols in the DMS it was the reason for implementation.



According to the HR professionals, intranet and HRM intranet information could be provided as a useful tool. It would, however, be of limited influence because the execution of their job and the related processes did not change.

## LINE MANAGERS

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The second perspective on intranet and HRM intranet came from the line managers. It provided insights of line management on e-HRM.

The usage of intranet and HRM intranet was one of the subjects in the conversations and it became clear that all the line managers use intranet at some point in their work. The main reasons to use intranet are the news items or to acquire information. They mention the usage is not optimal and can be improved as it is in its initial development stage. Intranet has to expand within the organization to expect a better utilization of the system. The utilization of the HRM intranet can be improved even more, according to them. When the line managers make use of HRM intranet, it is to keep themselves informed about collective agreements or internal jobs: *“Er zijn wel boekjes maar op intranet vind ik dat ook wel praktisch hoor”* (Lm\_1). Another line manager agrees with this: *“Je hebt ook wel een CAO boek maar het gaat net zo makkelijk op intranet”* (Lm\_3). Hence, HRM intranet is used by line managers to support the practice of their function when necessary. The line managers noticed that it depends when it is necessary: *“ligt een beetje aan wat de vraagstelling is”* (Lm\_3).

If line managers have questions regarding personal issues or questions that require explanation, the telephone is used to gather the information from the HRM department: *“Dat gaat vaak sneller”* (Lm\_2). HR related information is often personal and requires interpretation of the situation. It is why interaction between line manager and HR professional does not involve intranet: *“Platte tekst is soms toch moeilijk”* (Lm\_1). Besides explanation as a reason to pick up the telephone and call HRM, also personal interaction is itself a reason to prefer personal contact over HRM intranet: *“Ik hou toch wel een beetje van dat onderlinge contact. Of dat nou de HR functionaris is of zijn baas, of de secretaresse bij HRM”* (Lm\_4). The opinion refers further to information technology in general where decline in personal contact can be a result: *“Het is een heel mooi middel om niet meer met elkaar in contact te komen”* (Lm\_4). Within MST the HR professional and line manager have meetings every period where line manager and HR professional have contact. They discuss the progress of the department and interpretation is added to the information. The line managers feel that interaction like this is sufficient and currently does not require change.

Final, line managers use HRM intranet and intranet to gather information and perform administrative (operational) tasks only. They find it useful but the system can be improved. The design does not contribute to the user-friendliness according to some line managers. The design is not guiding the visitor through the system. Not everything can be found easily and people can get lost in their search process. The classification of the various subjects on intranet is not easy to work with: *“Ik kan niet altijd even gemakkelijk vinden wat ik wil (...) dan denk ik waar staat het onder en moet ik alles lang om het te vinden wat ik wil hebben”* (Lm\_3). So the user of intranet has to know the partitioning of the whole organization to know where to find the right information. The line manager mentioned if MST had looked deeper into the behavior of the visitor, a more conform system would be the answer. This raises the quality of finding information on intranet: *“Als je het echt goed wilt doen, moet je dus gaan kijken hoe mensen zoeken op intranet”* (Lm\_2).

It was noticed in conversations with the HR professionals that an active information-seeking behavior of the user could contribute to usage of intranet and HRM intranet. The HR professionals feel that HRM has to meet the user in the middle. The line managers feel that the use of intranet within the department is the responsibility of the employees themselves. Even so, the employees are stimulated to a certain degree by the line managers to use the intranet. The line managers are aware that usage of intranet is not instinctive and does not have the same structure everywhere. They mention that departments where employees have a fixed



workplace like the ICT department, the frequency of the use of intranet is probably higher than other departments. For some people it seems instinctive to work with information technology. Other people experience a threshold which hinders the use of information technology. Age and type of work is mentioned as contributor to the threshold: *“We zitten hier met een groep oudere vaak vrouwelijke medewerkers die meer moeite hebben met het gebruik van de computer”* (Lm\_3). It is not a firm statement that completely explains the threshold. Line managers are careful by appointing this kind of behavior. Although the term ‘click fear’ is associated with an older generation, it is still not likely to be cited in public by the interviewees.

In summary the line managers make use of the intranet and HRM intranet. Nonetheless it has to develop in the way they execute their function. An important aspect is the necessity of use. The need is not always present as line managers have contact, in which they obtain information, with the HRM department in other ways than HRM intranet.

## EMPLOYEES

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The third perspective on intranet and HRM intranet comes from the employees, representing a large group of users within MST.

During the interviews it was determined that five out of eight employees use intranet. Two employees use intranet daily. The other employees have repetitive pattern in their usage of the information technology: *“Je moet bewust gaan zoeken naar wat je wilt. Het vergt van mijzelf wel wat meer aanpassing, ik moet meer nadenken en wordt niet vanzelf door mijn gezichtsveld van: Oh ja, dat moet ook nog”* (Em\_3). Employees have to adjust their behavior from the old to the new and the usage has to increase. The employees agree with the HR professionals and line manager: *“Ik moet zeggen dat je voor veel dingetjes gauw wel de telefoon pakt.(...)Ik denk dat het ook gewoon wennen is dat je het opstart”* (Em\_5). Using intranet is something employees considered as a process of growth: *“Dat is wel iets wat ik gemerkt heb, dat moet binnen het MST nog groeien”* (Em\_1).

Besides getting used to the information technology there is no urge to use intranet. Work continues without intranet: *“Het is voor ons werk niet noodzakelijk (...) Het is voor je werkomstandigheden maar niet voor je werkinhoud”* (Em\_3). In addition information is provided through traditional media outside the intranet. According to the employees MST did not asked their opinion about their needs: *“Er wordt geen behoefte gecreëerd (...) Je moet altijd naar de behoefte van de gebruiker kijken en naar mijn idee hebben ze dat niet echt gedaan”* (Em\_2). The reason that intranet is used by those employees is mainly to stay informed about MST in the form of news and other information. In the beginning when employees of MST logged into a computer, intranet with news items appeared. If they wanted to read it, they clicked on the item and had to log in again. It depended on their curiosity whether they logged in or closed the pop-up. This changed after the interviews, intranet is presented after the login screen only requiring a single sign-on. Without the pop-up there is no trigger anymore however the threshold for logging in a second time disappeared. Curiosity or need for information is required to make people use intranet which is not the case for everybody within MST.

A determining factor that some employees refer to is their generation that has difficulties dealing with information technology compared to younger generations. A potential reason according to Em\_3 is this older generation is less creative and maybe even somewhat stiffer in using information technology and searching for information: *“Ik stop al gauw als ik twee/drie bladzijdes heb gezien en het staat daar niet op, dan denk ik van jah...ik weet niet hoe ik het anders moet omschrijven, laat maar. Als ik straks meer tijd heb dan ga ik wel weer opnieuw kijken of ik vraag hier of daar. Dan vergeet je het weer en verslonst dat”* (Em\_3).

Intranet is the portal for users to come to HRM intranet and could give implications in the usage of information technology. However the use of HRM intranet by employees is somewhat different. Only one of all interviewed employees makes sporadic use of HRM intranet, to look up information about collective



agreement: *“Als ik iets wil weten dan kijk ik eerst op intranet en als ik het daar niet kan vinden zoek ik verder”* (Em\_1). Redundancy is the main reason why the employees do not use HRM intranet. If employees have no questions about HR related issues there is no need for them to visit HRM intranet according to the interviewees. The little need for the usage of intranet is even less for HRM intranet. The employees have not direct contact with the HRM department and discuss everything related to HRM with the line manager. The employees are aware that similar information can be found on HRM intranet. This information may be brought up in conversation, however seldom applications are discussed. For example the expense report which an employee can fill in on HRM intranet is not mentioned by any employee. The findings are in line with the usage of HRM intranet. A prominent example was the secretariat of one department collects all administrative issues and processes it for the employees. It is actually a task for the employees themselves. Employees who need to report expenses will probably often request the line manager as almost none of the employees use the HRM intranet and fill in the expense report. In addition, not many interviewees mentioned they make use of other applications as it does not occur in their function. By releasing the employees from these tasks the usage of HRM intranet and contact with the HRM department is not stimulated.

Summarizing, the usage of HRM intranet is low of the employees as there is no need. If information is required the line manager is contacted.

### **SHARED OPINIONS ON E-HRM**

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When we looked at all the opinions and perceptions, there were some thoughts about e-HRM that were similar in every function. The people of MST were not always specifically talking about HRM intranet in the interviews. They were talking about the information technology in general which could have implications on the usage of HRM intranet. It provides an image of the behavior of people within MST in relation with e-HRM.

- Although the usage of HRM intranet and intranet is not optimal most employees mentioned that the system can be useful. Intranet can be useful if it is used the proper way: *“Het is voor jezelf een goed hulpmiddel om dingen terug te vinden”* (Em\_5). Usefulness does not mean that intranet contributes to a higher quality of work, a contribution only mentioned by two line managers. Also the intranet shows its use if the user wants to stay informed. *“Op zich is het hartstikke mooi, alle nieuwtjes die binnen het ziekenhuis spelen die kunnen er op gezet worden. Dan kan je op de hoogte blijven”* (Em\_5).
- A frequent mentioned advantage was the accessibility to information. Everyone within MST can access intranet at anytime and anywhere. The provision of information therefore does not depend on opening hours of certain departments and employees can decide when to consult intranet. It is possible that it is contributing to the efficiency of distributing information.
- The active information-seeking behavior which contributes to usage of information technology is often mentioned during conversations and interviews. A result that was seen by the interviewees is the growing independence of employees. The employees are supposed to rely on themselves for obtaining information. An active attitude in information-seeking is necessary to achieve this kind of independence. For those without an active behavior there are other ways to attain information. Employees of MST are reluctant in seeking information actively. This interesting behavior is confirmed by a manager of a department: *“Het vak vraagt ook bepaalde competenties en daarin zie je ook die affiniteit met techniek of niet met techniek. Maar het moeilijk laten betrekken is wel iets van het MST breed”* (BM\_2). The lack of active information-seeking behavior in MST is a disadvantage for the use of intranet. An employee satisfaction survey in MST, mentioned by a line manager, concluded that: *“Mensen zijn erg conservatief en weinig bereid om zelf iets op te zoeken”* (Lm\_4). A manager mentioned that this behavior is the result of a deeper rooted issue. Potentially this behavior of



employees is a reaction on the history of MST. Earlier changes were made in leadership and causing people to adopt a survival attitude. Therefore they tend to be passive in their behavior and are not proud of MST.

- Another aspect that was mentioned several times is the set-up of intranet. The structure of subjects and information looks disorganized. This makes it difficult to find the correct information: *“Omdat je niet precies weet waar je het precies moet zoeken (...) is het gewoon de onkunde om dingen gericht te zoeken”* (Em\_3). The user of intranet has to know the division of the organization to find the right information. The information on intranet therefore can be called supply-oriented instead of demand-oriented.
- Employees mentioned that certain information is not interesting or is obsolete. The presentation is unprofessional: *“Hier moet dat eigenlijk nog gewoonte worden om het goed te presenteren en goede informatie te leveren (...) De mensen die de informatie aanbieden zijn blijkbaar nog niet goed op de hoogte van wat je er mee kunt en hoe je dit het beste kunt presenteren”* (Em\_2).
- There is a lack of available computers at some departments. This affects employees without a fixed workplace and computer. Computers used for the intranet can be occupied by colleagues for different tasks. In short, not everyone at MST is within easy reach of e-HRM.
- Every interviewee said to be open to the expanding influence of information technology. Some people admit that it would cost effort however they all feel more or less positive about information technology.

In summary the use of HRM intranet is influenced by and interacting with several factors which makes the information technology part of a dynamic movement within MST. There is no predetermined pattern predicting to what degree information technology will be used. Some conditions like, need/urge/question, active attitude, availability of computers, and time have to be present to create an advance within the use of HRM intranet. Based upon these findings more information was gathered on the behavior of employees in MST with HRM intranet. It can help the HRM department to continue development and adjust their processes where needed. The most important findings are summarized in the reflection.

*Reflection:*

- *Goal Intranet: Cost reduction and efficiency gains*
- *Goal HRM intranet: Client service improvement & facilitating management and employees/efficiency.*
- *Type: Information*
- *HR professionals use HRM intranet sporadic and line managers use it only for information. The usage among employees is low. One employee uses HRM intranet and seven others do not use it at all stating it is not necessary. If employees have questions or need something the line manager is asked.*
- *Conditions that need to be present for usage: Need/urge/question, active information-seeking behavior, availability computer, and time.*



### 4.1.3 STRUCTURATION OF HRM INTRANET

We describe two situations related to information technology. The first situation contains intentional elements, the second situation contains the enactment of HRM intranet. When we compare the two situations there are some differences between what MST intended and how the situation is according to the HR professionals, line managers and employees. These differences are reflected in the goal and type of HRM intranet that all employees attributed.

#### 1. Intention HRM intranet



#### 2. HRM intranet in practice

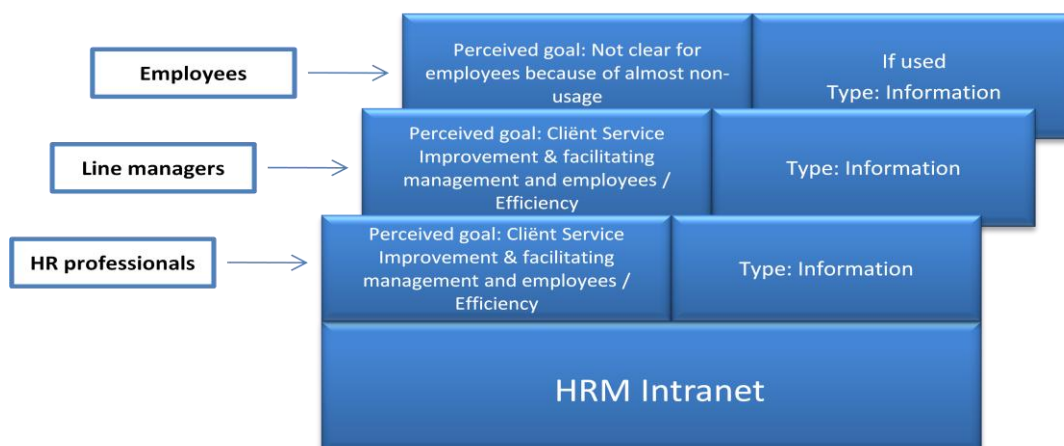


Figure 4-1 Structuration HRM intranet: Intention vs. Enactment

When we look at the figure we see instantly that the two situations are not similar, implying a discrepancy. In situation 1 there is one intention for HRM intranet which is translated in the goal Client Service improvement & facilitating management and employees, and the type Information/Automation. In situation 2 we see that HR professionals, line managers and the employees experience the goal and type differently because they have a different motivation. In addition, the HR professionals and the line managers feel HRM intranet is only used for distributing information in a more efficient way. The professionals and line managers see that it is possible for HRM intranet to support them in their job. However the step towards automation is not seen as such and the applications for automation are not used. Another difference between intention and practice is the goal which is broader in situation 2 than in situation 1. HR professionals and line managers feel that HRM intranet can support their function by providing information that is accessible at any moment. They find it useful and they consider efficient distribution of information part of the goal of HRM intranet. It is possible that it is the result of more opinions that provide a broader view on HRM intranet. For the employees no clear view on HRM intranet could be extracted, because only one employee in the research made sporadic use of HRM intranet. This unclear goal has been included into the model. The goal in situation 1 contains the facilitation of



employees. This goal is in conflict with the non-usage of the HRM intranet by employees. Therefore we can assume there is currently a discrepancy between the intentions and enactment of HRM intranet.

The findings on HRM intranet explain how HR professionals, line managers and employees interact with e-HRM. During the interviews conditions for usage of intranet and HRM intranet were repetitively mentioned. These conditions have to be present for employees to make use of intranet. It does not mean usage of the information technology is guaranteed since we do not know how these conditions are prioritized. At MST the usage of the information technology is not optimal. By stimulation of the conditions it can be improved depending in which degree. The conditions; need/urge/question, active information-seeking behavior, availability computer, and time have to be kept in mind when usage of information technology is further researched. Furthermore, these conditions are important if MST wants to implement other systems of e-HRM like an HR portal.

## 4.2 THE ROLE OF HUMAN AGENTS WITH HR ACTIVITIES

We have stated that different groups of human agents should be taken into account when a dynamic movement is present. For MST the human agents we researched were the HR professionals, line managers and employees interacting with e-HRM. We wanted to see which influence HRM intranet has on the HRM activities and how the users enact HRM functionalities. So perceptions and opinions of the human agents in relation to HR activities were collected. A good view on the situation required a comparison of the intentions with the human agents and their HR activities in practice.

### 4.2.1 THE INTENTIONS OF HUMAN AGENTS WITH HR ACTIVITIES

When we started by looking for information about the HRM department and its goals, policies, and targets, little information was found. Scarcity of documents causes difficulty in formulating what the HRM department wants and where it is heading. Some people within the HRM department confirmed that policy making is underdeveloped. The lack of policy documents potentially proved that the focus of HRM department is on handling day to day business and not on policy making. The day to day business requires the most time of everyone involved in the HRM department. Although little information was found, there were some general points which are worth mentioning.

In 'Kaderbrief 2010' MST referred to the goal being and staying an attractive employer. HRM projects can play an important role in this by the alignment of employees and organization. MST is talking about HRM projects in cooperation with the six hospitals and not specifically about the HRM department. Also the annual reports discussing the current affairs and announcing new projects give insights. The projects are relatively new because the new business manager of HRM specifically wants to reserve time for the HRM department to work on projects that are beneficial in the long term. As a result policy making has started to take shape and long term plans are made. It was not a focus of HRM for a long time. The HRM department wants to add value with HRM to the organization by shifting the focus from day-to-day business to a combination of daily tasks and policy making.

It became clear in conversations and observations that the department wants to support the line managers and employees in practicing their HR activities. The HRM department expects cooperation with line managers and employees within MST to benefit the organization. This is done by stimulating individuals in practicing HR activities. The HR professionals and line managers have meetings where they discuss current affairs of the departments. Employees are expected to be committing to HR activities because HRM intranet is set-up for the employees. The intention of MST and the HRM department therefore can be translated in a mutual interaction between HR professional, line manager, employee, with the HR activities.

On HRM intranet the HRM department offers information and services for the employees, line managers, and everyone who needs it. We noticed that the department does not introduce themselves on HRM intranet. It



implies that the department expects the employees to know them and know what the HRM department does and offers. Besides HRM intranet the department has a physical information point where employees can come with questions during opening hours. The information point is located on the bridge between the two central buildings. The HRM department itself is located outside the two central hospital buildings. A few years ago the department moved from a decentralized to centralized set-up. It means that the HR professionals sit together and the work floor is not within sight. It is beneficial for the unity within HRM. However in a conversation with the business manager of HRM another preference mentioned is to place the HR professionals into the organization again. This should allow better support to line managers and employees. MST is rebuilding in the coming years. In the new building a floor is planned for the HRM department. Until this is finished the department will remain as it is.

One long term plan of HRM is the HR portal. With the HR portal the hospital can meet the managers and employees half way in their service. MST has joined the association of Cooperating Hospitals (VSZ). With the cooperation the hospital is following the general vision of the VSZ with the associated project to get a joint focus. With VSZ the HR portal is purchased and hospitals are implementing it one by one. MST is waiting till 2012 for implementation of the information technology. Meanwhile they can observe how other hospitals are implementing it and learn from the implementation opportunities and threats. The business manager of HRM emphasized that the HR portal will support the HR activities by making operational processes more efficient. The purpose of the HR portal is to be a supportive system and not to change whole HR processes and reorganize the HRM department. How the respondents feel about the upcoming HR portal became clear in the enactment of human agents with HR activities.

#### *Reflection:*

- *MST and HRM department intents mutual interaction between HR professionals, Line managers, Employees. Furthermore all three groups should interact with HR activities.*
- *The HRM department expects that employees of MST knows what HRM does.*
- *HRM moved from decentralized to centralized structure.*

### 4.2.2 THE ENACTMENT OF HUMAN AGENTS WITH HR ACTIVITIES

A sign with "Personeelszaken" hangs outside the HRM building on a lamppost. This is what we saw when we walked from the hospital to the HRM location. There seems to be a delay in the maintenance of signs as nowadays it is called "HRM". It perhaps indicates something more and even represents the position of HRM within MST.

The position of the HRM department is analyzed by asking the human agents about their HR activities and the interaction between them. We asked the interviewees about the HR activities and the role within the organization. Each group plays a different role and has a different relationship with HRM represented in HR activities.

#### **HR PROFESSIONALS**

To get a good view of all interactions the position of the professionals is important. The professionals we spoke to, described their role as the bridge between the organization and the work floor: "*Wij zijn de verbinding naar de werkvloer toe*" (HRpro\_1). It means the HR professionals are trying to link the interests of MST and the work floor. This way they want to find an optimal situation by supporting and giving advice both to the employee and the line manager. In practice the professional has more contact with the line manager than the employee. Despite this difference, the professional is trying to reach the employee through integral management. It means more responsibility for line managers and employees. It could become difficult when entanglement of interest occurs, because different departments and people have different priorities. The professionals have to keep a good balance between those interests and priorities. The HR professionals want to connect to the



employee. However some HR professionals indicate the opposite: the majority of employees are not being communicated with. It is not possible for the nine professionals to support 4000 employees: *“Lang niet iedereen van de afdeling kent mij”* (HRpro\_3). It is possible for them though, to support the line managers and business managers to perform their HR activities as they should. Contact of the line managers and business managers with HRM is done by the relevant HR professional. Therefore the image of the HRM department within the organization is largely determined by the HR professional.

The HR professionals feel that, by taking on this role of ‘mediator’, the operational tasks are predominating in their function. The predomination of the operational tasks result in less time for the overarching issues requiring policy making. Some initiatives were taken in the past to update policy however it was never properly launched: *“Er wordt heel creatief gedacht maar dat heeft een heel kort leven en verdwijnt allemaal in de bureaula, dat blijven dode papieren. (...) Ik vind het eigenlijk frustrerend dat daar zo weinig nadruk op ligt”* (HRpro\_2). The result is that the department is not up to date with its policies. With the arrival of the new business manager the professionals feel confident that the projects for policy making will be launched. This puts HRM on track for more than just operational tasks: *“Voor mij en mijn collega’s zal dit betekenen dat wij zullen worden aangesproken op het actief bijdragen aan het vormen van beleid”* (HRpro\_2). That the HRM department is heading for more policy has positive feelings for the professionals: *“Ik zou er niet voor kiezen om dat alleen maar te doen, zo’n beleidsfunctie. Daar vind ik het op de werkvloer te leuk voor. Maar dat er een combinatie van komt vind ik wel leuk”* (HRpro\_1). The other professionals agreed and feel that a combination of operational tasks and policy will contribute to the practice of their function and will enhance the departments image within the organization.

We asked the professionals about the interaction with information technology in general. The HR professionals explained that they understand the advantages of information technology these days and see the contributions made to HRM. On the other hand the professionals sometimes feel that the information technology itself, including the computer, demands time within their daily tasks which they prefer to spend on actual tasks of their job. E-mail is the most frequent named application in the interviews. According to the professionals e-mail is used to shift tasks to another employee and adds more work. Nonetheless the professionals are positive about information technology. They emphasized that IT should be supportive and not add more work.

Another aspect what we noticed and is mentioned by the HR professionals is the location of HRM. HRM moved from a decentralized structure to centralized structure. For the line manager and the employees the difference is the distance. The professionals noticed more. When we ask what the biggest difference was, the professionals named the antenna function or “antennefunctie”: *“Voor een stukje krijg je wel minder mee van de afdeling”* (HRpro\_3). Because the professionals are not physically at the departments the signals of arising issues are not directly received. HR professionals absorb less informal information coming from their departments. Therefore it is more difficult to act on it: *“Ik mis wel die antennefunctie”* (HRpro\_1). That is why the business manager of HRM preferred decentralization of the professionals. On the other hand the antenna function can cause distraction when it is not needed. This became clear in a conversation with an HR professional. Sometimes the professionals are too involved in issues which could easily be handled without them. In the centralized scenario less important issues are solved by the managers themselves and the professionals can concentrate on other issues. Another advantage of the centralization is the unity that the HRM department can form. It is not always the case in practice: *“Wij zijn natuurlijk gewend om heel solistisch te werken en geen manager te hebben, om decentraal onder een cluster te vallen”* (HRpro\_3). It required some adjustment from the professionals and it is not something that happens overnight: *“Je merkt dat iedereen nog wel even zoekende is”* (HRpro\_3). It is not strange that the business manager prefers decentralization. It correlates with the reaction of an HR professional: *“Ik vind het voordeel van bij je collega’s zitten niet opwegen tegen het nadeel van ontzetten ver weg van je afdeling zitten”* (HRpro\_1). Considering the change in location



there are no changes noticed in approaches and the role of the HR professional according to the professionals. They mention that contact between professional, line manager, and employee did not change and distribution of the roles continued as it was. As a result no movement is noticed in approaches and roles in general according to the HR professionals.

## LINE MANAGERS

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Besides the HR professionals the line managers are involved substantially in HR activities. When we asked the line managers in what way they are involved, the line managers mentioned that a large part of their daily tasks consist of HR activities: *“Je bent met die mensen bezig en je wilt zorgen dat de randvoorwaarden zo optimaal mogelijk worden geregeld”* (Lm\_3). The HR activities contain diverse tasks including annual interviews, defaults, contracts, development, applications and support. It was good to see that all line managers were enthusiastic about doing HR activities. They feel that it is part of their job, which has been like this for many years: *“Dat vind ik een hele belangrijke maar ook een hele leuke kant van de zaak”* (Lm\_4). Line managers cannot do without these tasks since a line manager is busy with the working conditions: *“Ik vind het een wezenlijk onderdeel van je taak”* (Lm\_3). In addition the line managers are aware that they play an important role in HR activities within their department. Although they perform HR activities, they express that HR professionals should have a managing role in these processes.

According to the line managers there is an interaction between them and the HR professionals in performing the HR activities. They are also interacting with the employees in the HR activities. In performing HR activities the line managers feel that the employees are self-responsible in practicing HR activities. The employees should address the right person if they need something. One line manager said that there is stimulation of the employee to contact HRM. However when we talked to employees of that same department it seemed that all contact regarding HR activities has to go through the line manager. There are some small administrative HR tasks that can be done by the employee. Nevertheless the more demanding tasks have to be handled by the line manager. It appeared that at this department the line manager and employee do not agree on responsibility of HR activities.

Considering all the perceptions and opinions, the role and approach of the line managers has not changed. MST reorganized a few years ago. A restructuring was done changing teams, their responsibilities and the function of the line managers. Although the line managers should practice a different role in practice nothing changed. One line manager felt that less time is spent on the work floor and more management is required. This is not experienced by all line managers. It should be mentioned that the period line managers are in their function, can influence the perception on their function.

The line managers feel the interaction is in general sufficient between the line manager and the HR professionals. An important factor is the connection being made between the HR professional and line manager. Usually there is enough contact and the HR professional is easily accessible when needed. This view on HRM individuals is not similar to the view on the HRM department as a whole.

The position of HRM within MST is underdeveloped. MST is a large organization which can be inefficient in decision making. This can be noticed in the decision making of the HRM department. Some line managers feel it can have delays in the processes involved in HR activities: *“De ervaringen die er zijn met HRM, is dat het echt een staffunctie is en dit zijn vaak logge apparaten die aan vaste regels en afspraken zitten. Daar kunnen afdelingen last van hebben”* (Lm\_4). The view of the line managers on the HRM department has not changed according to them because there was no real movement noticed of the department in the past. One line manager mentioned that the HRM department is making efforts to change their position by making policy. In general no movement within the HRM department is noticed.



In summary, the perceptions show that the line managers are satisfied with the contact with the HR professional although they feel that the department itself can achieve more within the organization.

## EMPLOYEES

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The employees have a different view on the HR professionals and the HRM department. The main reason is there is no real need for HR activities according to the employees we spoke to. Therefore there is no need for contact with HR professionals or the HRM department: *“Ik heb dat nog nooit nodig gehad”* (Em\_6). The employees have no dealings with the HRM department besides sporadically an administrative question. However this depends upon department. At one department small administrative tasks like declarations are collected and processed by the secretariat of that department and not by employees themselves. Furthermore some employees see HRM as a department which does salary administration: *“Ik zie HRM op dit moment eigenlijk als een administratieve afdeling die mijn salaris regelt en financiën”* (Em\_2).

The employee has no direct contact with the HR professional, only with the line manager: *“Ik denk niet dat wij dat hebben, dat persoonlijk contact. Dat gaan zij (Teamhoofd en HR adviseur) op zich afhandelen en op moment dat het akkoord is krijgen wij dat via ons teamhoofd te horen. Dat is niet iets wat je op eigen initiatief kunt regelen met de HR adviseur”* (Em\_5). The only contact with the HR professional that is mentioned is the contact at the beginning of their job. When we asked about the opportunities for personal development the employees say it is there. These items are also discussed with the line manager. The employees feel responsible for their own development and realize that if they want something they have to point it out to the line manager: *“HRM staat er wat dat betreft ook buiten”* (Em\_2). The line manager decides how to proceed with a question of the employee and if personal development is involved the budget has to be consulted: *“Als er geen budget voor is dan houdt het op”* (Em\_2).

When we asked further questions it revealed that the employees do not know what to expect from the HRM department and what its activities are: *“Ik kom daar eigenlijk bijna nooit (...) Ik denk dat ik daar wel terecht zou kunnen maar ik zou eigenlijk niet weten waarvoor”* (Em\_3), *“Ik heb eigenlijk niet een heel duidelijk idee wat HRM nu doet. Maar dat komt ook omdat je het niet echt gebruikt”* (Em\_5). A majority of the employees could not tell where the department was located in the hospital: *“Ik zou niet eens weten waar ze hier in het gebouw zitten”* (Em\_4). Some employees could name the information point on the bridge because they pass by during their daily tasks. If the employees do not know what the department’s purpose is and what they can expect, the employees are not going to use it.

The previous two groups of interviewees emphasized that approaches and roles of HR professionals, line managers, employees and the HRM department in general have not changed. Some employees mentioned the line manager manages more than he or she did in the past. Consequently small questions are handled individually by the employee by asking colleagues or placing a call and not by asking the line manager.

## FUTURE HR PORTAL

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In the interviews we asked about the current situation and the perceptions and opinions of the HR professionals, line managers and employee. In addition we were interested in how the human agents feel about the upcoming HR portal and what they think is important when implementing such system.

The general opinion was positive assuming the system will support operational and administrative items. It should save time instead of consuming more time. Consequently HRM would be able to pay more attention to overarching issues. The HR portal can give insight into the department and processes which will support HRM. It will make the whole organization more transparent. According to some employees the system will have to deliver more than only efficiency for the organization and its management. Besides good security line managers and HR professionals raised another issue which has to be in the HR portal. In the system there has



to be clear lines in responsibilities and tasks. There has to be a clear divide in tasks and responsibilities of the HR professional versus line managers. Explicit agreements should be made to support the processes and to avoid confusion about responsibilities and performing tasks. The line managers do not want more responsibilities in HR activities. When there is no increase in HR activities for the line managers, an HR portal can be a positive support for them. Personal contact remains important according to the interviewees. Therefore the HR portal should not be a replacement of personal contact. Interesting is when we asked about a digital paycheck in the HR portal, no real consensus is discovered. A majority feels positive about it because it will reduce paper waste. However some people feel the emotional aspect of the paycheck will disappear when being made digital. An interesting contrast was that an employee working with computers wanted to hold on to the emotional aspect of paper while a service employer who does not work with computers thought it would be more efficient. It is not the same for all interviewees but we found it remarkable and worth mentioning to emphasize that behavior has no predictable structure.

*Reflection:*

- *HR professionals have operational tasks and are positive about a combination of daily tasks and policy making introduced at the HRM department.*
- *Line managers perform HR activities in their job and feel positive towards it because they consider it an essential part of their job. The contact with HR professionals is sufficient however the HRM department as a whole can achieve more within MST from the line managers' point of view.*
- *Besides small administrative tasks employees do not handle HR activities themselves. All contact with HRM goes by the line manager so there is no personal contact with the HR professional.*
- *The employee does not know what to expect from the HRM department. There is no need to contact the HRM department if the employee has no idea what the HRM department is for.*
- *Approaches and roles of the different human agents have not significantly changed within MST.*
- *An HR portal can be a positive system if it is supportive for the operational issues. A clear divide in responsibilities and tasks seems necessary according to the line managers and the professionals.*



### 4.2.3 STRUCTURING HUMAN AGENTS WITH HR ACTIVITIES

To display the intentions and practice of human agents and their HR activities the following two situations are described below.

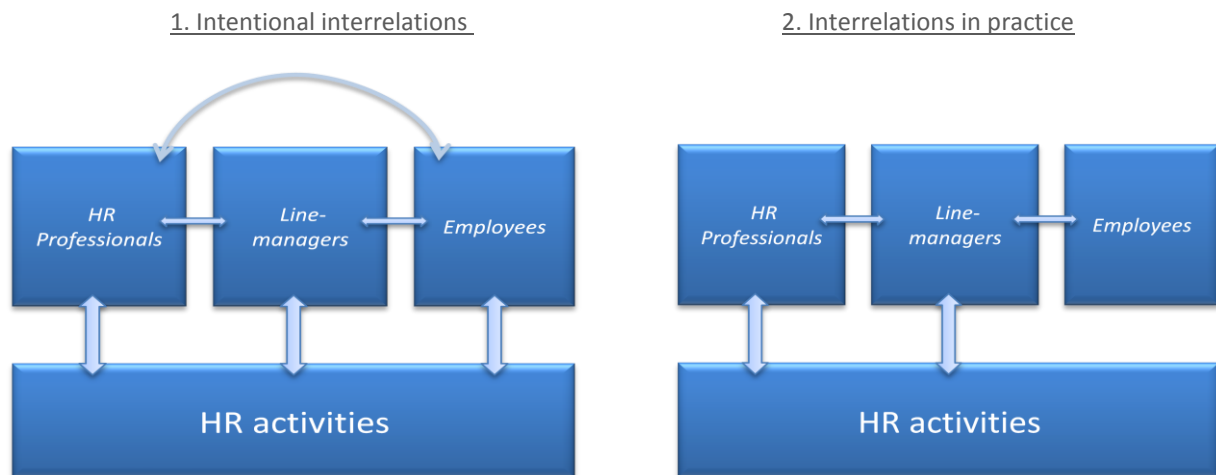


Figure 4-2 Structuration Human Agents with HR activities: Intention vs. Enactment

The intentions of MST with the human agents and their HR activities do not match with what happens in practice. The differences are reflected in the interaction of employees with the HR professionals and the HR activities. In the intentions the employees interact with the professionals and practice HR activities. In practice it seems that this interrelation is not really present and all interaction in this area is with the line manager. When we look back at paragraph 4.1 where HRM intranet is researched it is understandable why the employees do not make frequently use of HRM intranet. According to employees there is no need for them in the current set-up. The position of the HRM department within the organization can be interpreted as a position which was not intended. Obviously the signs outside the building that say “Personeelszaken” is referring to the situation in which HRM has lingered and is not just a delay in sing maintenance. The department’s image is not optimal, but by improving this image the department can add more value to MST.

## 4.3 THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

The final concept discussed is the organizational context. It is the environment where every process, movement and interaction takes place and where interactions influence each other.

### 4.3.1 THE INTENTIONS OF HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION

We mentioned earlier that a clear vision of MST for the HRM department is missing because not much information can be found about this. For MST as a whole some intentions to define a vision can be discovered. As mentioned the core business of the hospital is to promote the health of the citizens in the area. Besides the basic care MST wants to offer the service of professionals with special care in different areas to the citizens.

MST wants to offer service to the citizens. In addition MST wants to be service-minded towards the professionals of the hospital since they form the core business of the hospital. The reorganization of 2008 where result oriented teams were created serves as a good example. By creating these teams MST wants to achieve high quality and safe care, an optimal management participation of the medical staff, improving the management and supervision of employees, and a more efficient operation (Annual report, 2008). In the same annual report MST has formulated the goal to encourage competency and professionalism. They want to achieve this by offering training and development which contributes to employee satisfaction and motivation. Following this focus MST is trying to be a “Top Employer”. MST wants to attract talent and keep them committed to the hospital. In cooperation with VSZ the goal is to achieve the status of a top employer. The cooperation between the six hospitals requires more attention from other items as well. Quality of care, safety

and hospitality are involved by working together and exchanging knowledge. The six hospitals share knowledge, talent and skills. Reason for this is innovations and improved treatment techniques in one hospital quickly will reach other hospitals. Through collaboration in purchasing, personnel, automation and building management, costs are saved and more money is saved for the core business: healthcare.

*Reflection:*

- *The core business is to provide healthcare*
- *Another goal of MST is to become a more attractive employer*

#### 4.3.2 THE ENACTMENT OF HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION

The HRM department of MST noticed certain recognized assumptions are made about hospitals in the literature.

The size of the organization which has influence on the decision making processes was noticed. A larger organization requires plans and proposals of departments to be discussed in different groups. A potentially extensive period of time prevents efficient handling of projects and their movement. It is logical that decisions cannot be made without consulting the parties involved. However small issues will slow down achieving a larger goal. This is not only exemplary for the HRM department. Everywhere in the hospital the decision making process is slowed down since plans, proposals and projects need permission everywhere in the line. When working with other hospitals the size of the organization creates opportunities. On the other hand complexity restrains decision making.

The large organization can provide some kind of anonymity for the individuals as well as the departments. It is something we noticed when talking to different people and by reviewing processes in the organization. The departments isolated within the organization where cooperation should be predominant. They find themselves a key player in the organization. Mutual understanding is not optimal which prevents a joint focus being realized. Little subcultures are created in the form of departments and have their own way of performing tasks and carrying out their work. For the employees of the different departments the subculture can have influence on the perception of the rest of the organization.

48

#### HR PROFESSIONALS, LINE MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

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It was difficult for some people to appoint typical aspects of the organization. Therefore the findings show a view on MST seen by the three groups together.

We just mentioned subcultures and the individualistic behavior of the departments within MST. Additionally the low level of commitment of employees with MST seems striking. According to an HR professional the department is important. Nevertheless employees do not often feel themselves a MST'er: "*Je moet je kunnen identificeren met het MST en men identificeert zich hier met de eigen afdeling*" (HRpro\_2). Some employees feel this way as well: "*Ik heb geen idee dat ik onderdeel ben van het ziekenhuis, zover had ik niet gedacht*" (Em\_6). An employee, who works at MST for many years, feels a MST'er. It is something that has grown over the years. He noticed the younger generation does not feel as a MST'er: "*Daar moeten we wel aan werken en gaat niet vanzelf, dat is het nadeel van zo'n grote organisatie met diverse locaties*" (Em\_1). According to Em\_7 it is obvious that employees are more involved with the departments than MST. Em\_7 therefore does not need information about MST. Indeed it is more likely that involvement with the department is higher than with MST as a whole but should not exclude the other. Stimulation of the involvement with MST as a whole can benefit the organization and the departments in it.

As said the level of commitment is in addition to the subcultures that partially overlap each other: "*In tegenstelling tot hele zakelijke bedrijven denk ik dat hier veel verschillende culturen leven die langs elkaar heen*"





*lopen en door elkaar heen lopen*" (Lm\_3). Within the subcultures the powers and forces are diverse. It is why people are not looking in the same direction and have a joint focus. *"De machten en krachten zijn divers"*(Em\_1). *"Er zit geen organisatie zo gecompliceerd in elkaar als een ziekenhuis waar verschillende belangen spelen en waar met name ook verschillende machten spelen"* (Lm\_4). Resulting from this is the diversity in directions and goals of the various departments and people.

Together with the subcultures and its effects another issue was raised during the conversations. The active information-seeking behavior of employees in MST is being questioned. A employee satisfaction survey of MST has shown an active behavior is missing: *"Mensen zijn erg conservatief en weinig bereid om zelf iets op te zoeken"* (Lm\_4). As we mentioned before in the concept information technology, a manager believes that the reason for this originates in the history of MST. Exchanges are made in leadership and that is why people have adopted a survival behavior. This survival behavior and the lack of an active information-seeking behavior resulted in a 'wait-and-see' culture within MST.

And there is more. MST is considered to be conservative with the wait-and-see culture. It results in maintaining old methods and working with paper according to an employee: *"Dit is makkelijker, dat hebben ze altijd zo gedaan (...) Het gevoel van papier moet ergens een beetje worden losgelaten"* (Em\_2). The commitment of employees with MST is influencing this behavior. Probably there are more factors of influence. The majority of women could have influence. They have to find a balance between work and private matters. Often their job has no priority which reflects on the interest towards extra activities in addition to the daily tasks: *"Misschien wel slecht maar ik wil voor mijn plezier werken maar al wat ze daar omheen doen vind ik wel goed"* (Em\_6). The majority of the employees in MST is female and work part time. The HRM department noticed that this group is growing and is becomes older. The department is aware of the movement and is trying to incorporate the issue in their policy making.

This diversity of the staff within MST asks for a certain approach from the HRM department: *"De drijfveren van de medewerkers zijn anders en dat maakt ook dat je anders met die medewerkers omgaat en andere soorten gesprekken hebt"* (Hrpro\_3). HRM is currently not in the position where they want to be at. However it is not only up to the HRM department to change this. The organizational context has its influences according to the HR professionals: *"De zorginstelling heeft heel erg de nadruk op bepaalde dingen gehad waarbij professionalisering van HRM eigenlijk nooit aandacht heeft gehad. Bij commercieel of detachering bedrijf is dat natuurlijk de core business en zij zijn gewoon al heel veel verder met heel veel dingen"* (Hrpro\_3). Another professional comments on the focus of MST: *"Het verschil met HRM en elders in het ziekenhuis is dat binnen het ziekenhuis hoopopgeleide professionals werken die ook deze eisen kunnen stellen voor verbetering, vooral betreft de medische disciplines"* (HRpro\_2). It is logical that the focus of a hospital is on the care of patients and the related departments. Nonetheless HRM can add more value to its processes if there is a focus on the HRM department. The HRM department can work on the issues discussed here and overlook the organization. They contribute with their knowledge to achieve a joint focus for MST as a whole.

*Reflection:*

- *MST is a large organization where power and forces are various. Consequently decision making is slowed down.*
- *Within MST the different departments do not have a joint focus as they are subcultures with their own values and manners.*
- *Commitment of the employees to MST is low as employees are identifying themselves with the department and not with the organization.*
- *MST is considered to be a conservative organization where a 'wait-and-see' culture dominates.*
- *The healthcare organization does not focus on an HRM department.*



### 4.3.3 STRUCTURING ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT: HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION

The organizational context is created by interaction of the different actors within MST. Within the organizational context issues are closely interrelated. When we look at the intentions of MST for the organizational context not enough information is found. The general goals that are found are “providing good healthcare” and “wanting to be an attractive ‘top’ employer”. In practice more information is gathered about the organizational context. We experienced that the people in the organization find it difficult to discuss certain issues since they do not want to offend someone, e.g. making assumptions about older generations. Moreover some issues became part of the organization and are considered a habit. It is why employees do not mention issues. However, for an outsider it is not that obvious.

When we look at the situation it seems that more issues are involved. The environment is not simple to move around in because influences like subcultures and a 'wait-and-see' culture prevent this. More factors of influence are the size and complexity of MST with low commitment of the employees. These are issues to take into account when describing the dynamic movement and when implementing new information technology. Behavior of people within MST can be explained some more with this research. The HRM department can act on it and especially can act on it with HRM intranet.

## 4.4 INTERACTION BETWEEN IT, HUMAN AGENTS AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT: E-HRM

We presented the three concepts information technology, human agents and the organization context all individually in the findings. We noticed earlier in the thesis and again in the findings that the concepts cannot be treated individually and have to be reviewed in the context of each other. The findings are overlapping and there is an interaction between all three. There are influences that appear in the interaction. Together with the influences and the interaction between IT, Human Agents and the Organizational Context there is a dynamic movement.

The practice orientation is created by summarizing the findings based upon the opinions and perceptions of the managers, HR professionals, line managers, employees, and observations that are made during the research period. An insight is created of the practical situation at MST based upon the observations, opinions and perceptions. The practical situation considers the interaction with HRM intranet. We noticed that the usage of HRM intranet is important in exploring the enactment of HRM intranet and its influences on the HR tasks. The findings are translated into figure 4-3.



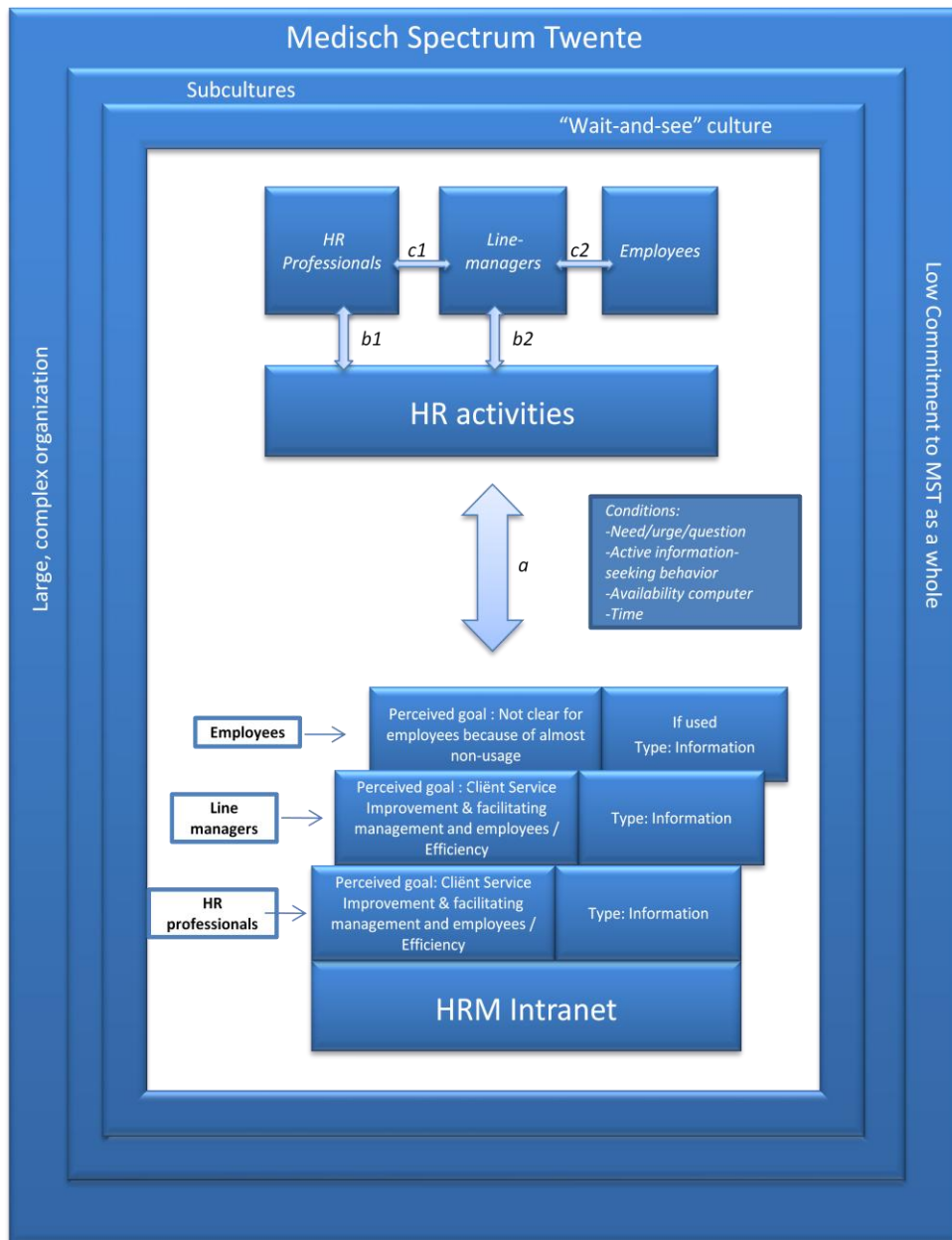


Figure 4-3 Structuration e-HRM of MST

In the figure the usage of HRM intranet is playing an important role. At MST the usage of HRM intranet is not optimal. The HR professionals and line managers use HRM intranet sporadically to look up information. HRM intranet is meant for line managers and the employees. However for the employees HRM intranet is not a well-known system. As a result the perceptions on the HRM intranet goal and type do not match with the different groups of interviewees. A plausible explanation for the low usage of the employees is that there is no need. We noticed that employees are not involved in HR activities in the way the HRM department expected. There is more to say about the interaction of employees with the HRM department. The employees do not know what to expect from the HRM department and what its purpose is. So when employees have questions, they turn to the line managers. The interaction between the employee and line manager is considered to be sufficient. The contact between the line manager and the HR professional is sufficient as well. Although the line managers and HR professionals feel that contact is sufficient between them, the line managers feel that the HRM department as a whole could achieve more within the organization. The HR professionals also feel that the HRM department can achieve more. Therefore professionals are enthusiastic about the increase of policy

making. In all the interactions between the different stakeholders the environment of the interaction is playing a role in the dynamic movement. It is playing a role by supporting subcultures, a 'wait-and-see' culture, low commitment to MST as a whole and being a large, complex organization. The conditions the users need for usage of e-HRM are involved in the dynamic movement. During the research it did not become clear how the conditions are prioritized. The interactions between the stakeholders did become clear and represent the dynamic movement as described above. To make it more clearly the relations are displayed in arrows.

- Arrow 'a' represents the interaction between the human agents and the HR activities with HRM intranet. In the research it is mostly the interaction of HR professionals and line managers interacting with HRM intranet when performing their HR activities.
- Arrow 'b1' represents the interaction between HR professionals and the HR activities. The professionals practice HR activities that are mostly operational tasks. The department is trying to change the interaction into a combination of daily activities and policy making.
- Arrow 'b2' represents the interaction between line managers and HR activities within MST. The line managers enjoy this and consider it to be part of their job.
- Arrow 'c1' represent the interrelation between line managers and HR professionals. The line managers consult the professionals and the professionals support the line managers in their activities. Line managers and HR professionals feel that this contact is sufficient.
- The last arrow is 'c2'. Employees and line managers interact with each other on HR activities. The employees perform no HR activities except small administrative tasks. The employee has to consult the line manager if the employee wants to do anything regarding HR activities. So almost all contact regarding HRM goes through the line manager. The line manager responds to it and is trying to support the employee with his or her knowledge and experience.

All the interactions tell us about the behavior of human agents and their HR activities with the information technology HRM intranet within the healthcare organization MST. We see a dynamic movement with influences and dependencies which makes it an interesting research.



## 5 DISCUSSION

In order to answer the research question we investigated HRM intranet at MST. By means of the case study possible changes in HR activities brought by HRM intranet are considered. Further investigation in the case revealed the way user enact HRM intranet functionalities. A theoretical framework is created to support the empirical part. In this process, theory and practice appeared to have both similarities and differences. Before an overall conclusion is given, we described these interesting considerations in the discussion.

### 5.1 DISCUSSING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We used the structurational model of technology of Orlikowski (1991). In this model structuration is seen as a 'social process that involves the reciprocal interaction of human actors and structural features of organizations'. We assume the institutional properties, technology and human agents interact with each other and therefore there is a dynamic movement. The structuration in theory is rather abstract and the findings of this research specify the structuration in practice. As the structuration model of technology is very abstract it gives us the opportunity to look at the case study with an open mind. There are no specific relations and interactions in the model set that influence our line of reasoning in the research. A disadvantage could be that the research becomes very broad. The advantage would be more information and insights which are useful in this research. So the open mind towards relations and possible results gives a fresh look on the subject e-HRM.

Considering the findings it seems that the structuration is more complex than Orlikowski (1991) described. With the practice orientation of Orlikowski (2000) a perspective is given where more factors are involved. This new perspective is a useful approach for our research since structure is created through the interactions. At MST these interactions apply. However it is difficult to grasp the essence since time has influence. In our research we did not involve the aspect time because it is a cross-sectional study. Orlikowski also did not involve the aspect time although it is considered necessary. It seems that the history of MST created a reason for the human agents to act as they do nowadays and time influenced here. Additionally time is a factor human agents may need to adjust their behavior. Interviewees at MST mentioned time as a period of adjustment to get used to the changes. The time factor therefore seems rather important to consider in the model.

When discussing the structurational model of technology there are some disadvantages. However, the benefits dominate. The model was very useful in this research for its open mind and the focus on interactions. The model did not concentrate on the effects of the interactions but on the interaction itself which makes the dynamic movement within MST visible. The model is useful for future implementations. Because the interaction and enactment is shown MST can learn from this. For example, the behavior of the employees with HRM intranet contains knowledge which the HRM department can use in implementing the HR portal. The open mind brought us unexpected and valuable information on e-HRM in a healthcare context.

### 5.2 DISCUSSING THE CONCEPTS

There are more discussion points when we reflect on the literature. We present them by using the three concepts of the research: information technology, human agents and organizational context.

#### 5.2.1 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

To describe the changes brought by HRM intranet we had to know the meaning of the information technology. The definition of e-HRM we used in the research is appearing to connect with the HRM intranet in practice. We used the definition of Strohmeier (2007), where e-HRM is explained as "the (planning, implementation and) application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities" (Strohmeier 2007, p.20). Indeed, in practice the information technology is used for networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities.

Nonetheless, in practice the planning is not detailed and the goal and type description of HRM intranet are not extensively thought out. As a result HRM intranet is supportive but not supportive for the actors intended by MST. E-HRM is meant to support HR services for the people outside the HRM department (Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise, 2004). At MST the largest group outside the HRM department is not supported. The employees, the largest group, do not make use of the information technology. Bouwman, Den Hooff van den, Wijngaert van de, en Dijk van (2005) mention that employees in an organization use IT to perform their tasks. The employees in MST have no interest and feel no need for HRM intranet so it is not used in performing tasks. HRM intranet has reach outside the HRM department. However we can say that the largest group of people outside the department is not reached, which is confirmed by Orlikowski (2000). She emphasizes that users choose to use technologies in ways unanticipated by designers and inventors. When users choose to use the technology the users also choose how to interact with the technology. This can happen deliberately, or inadvertently, at least not anticipated by the developers (Orlikowski, 2000).

The literature on actual behavior of the users of technology presumes the behavior is influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Legris, Ingham, and Colletette, 2003), (Davis, 1989). This is also the case within MST. The interviewees mention that when there is no need for them to use the system or the functionality is low, there will be no usage. The perceived ease of use is in addition mentioned as an influence on the actual usage. Although both factors are of influence, within MST there should be a nuance. Both factors are not of similar influence and not the only influence. The line managers who use HRM intranet find it useful, though sometimes difficult to use. The degree of difficulty will influence the convenience of using the system yet it does not determine if the system is used within MST. Furthermore other conditions are found within MST that can influence the actual behavior. An example is the working conditions like the availability of computers. Moreover e-HRM is a dynamic movement so perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use can be of influence however it is not the only influence.

Another point of discussion is the moment of research. Tyre and Orlikowski (1994) mention the adaption process occurs in bursts and stops. The process is discontinuous, the adaption dramatically drops after an initial burst of intensive activity. We can not test if the process at MST is really discontinuous. For that we would have to test several times over a period of time. Still we can question if the process is discontinuous. In all the conversations and observations we did not notice the wave of discontinuity. The adaption process rather seems a process which has to grow. The human agents adopt when they are adjusted to the situation. It is unrealistic to think that the adaption is a straight line. However it is realistic to question the degree of bursts and stops of the adaption process in MST. If the process would be discontinuous then we can not make any statements about the bursts or stops that took place. At another point in time another situation may be the result. Perhaps this research took place in a stop, and in a burst a more positive result would be achieved.

### 5.2.2 HUMAN AGENTS/HR ACTIVITIES

The literature on HR professionals state that the tasks of the professionals concern HR practices on relational level. Other literature states that HR management has an important role at transformational level. Within MST, the HR professionals do not agree with this statement. The professionals feel that they work on operational tasks and policy making within the HRM department is lacking. This policy making is developing and the professionals are enthusiastic about that. Perhaps the HRM department of MST will develop more into the levels of the literature. Nevertheless, at this moment the HRM department of MST is not as developed as the literature claims HRM departments are in organizations. A possible explanation is that in the past the focus of MST did not include HRM. Therefore, the support for the department is relatively low. If the department wants to develop it should be supported by the organization. To achieve that level the possibilities of an HRM department in an organization must be visible. When the organization considers the department as a staff department without opportunities at higher level there will be no development. The policy making within HRM department will develop it and could add more value to the organization.



Another point of discussion is the interaction between the human agents. According to Ruël, Bondarouk, and Looise (2004) information technology has consequences for the face-to-face contact that HRM workers have with the employees in the organization. The face-to-face interactions are being replaced with computer-based information when implementing intranet (Ruta, 2005). For MST this statement is partly true. Line managers and HR professionals indicate that asking small questions face-to-face are avoided by looking them up on HRM intranet. Nevertheless, the face-to-face contact that the line manager and employee have with the HRM department has not changed with the implementation of HRM intranet. A possible explanation is the line manager's need for HR related information with the interpretation of the professional. Information is better explained to line managers by face-to-face contact. The employee has no contact with the HR professional since all HR related contacts are handled by the line manager. Maybe when HRM intranet is used more, face-to-face contact will be less. The assumed change in social interaction patterns of Stone, Stone-Romero, and Lukaszewski, (2006) in addition is not noticed. The members of the MST say nothing has changed in the relation between one another. It is possible that more usage of e-HRM will change the view of employees within MST.

We mentioned that human agents influence the processes related to e-HRM. Orlikowski (2000) confirms that human agents change the technologies-in-practice. The human agents can change it as the human agents experience changes themselves. It concerns changes in awareness, knowledge, power, motivations, time, circumstance, and the technology. These changes occur in the same way as all social structures change. The research at MST indeed recognizes the important role of the human agents in the technologies-in-practice. Without considering the role of the human agents in e-HRM no complete description can be given of e-HRM.

### 5.2.3 ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

In our research the institutional properties, technology and human agents interact with each other and therefore it is a dynamic movement (Orlikowski, 1991). Within MST we noticed that there is a conservative attitude which results in a 'wait-and-see' culture. Not in every context the dynamic movement can have the same pace. We feel that a dynamic movement should be divided into different degrees. It would give a more specific description how an organization is moving. When the organization understands the degree of dynamic movement it can adjust the implementation of changes.

In the theoretical framework we discussed the four issues of a healthcare organization. One of them was the organizational complexity. MST is a large and complex organization which delays decision making. MST is trying to be a flat organization with result oriented teams. However the organization remains large and complex for which good management is needed. Fehse (2002) researched the organizational politics within these complex organizations. She distinguishes different types of power bases. For example the authority power is assigned to people within the bureaucratic system who operate in major hierarchical functions. Within MST the authority power is indeed in control at the top of the line. Another distinguished power base is the functional expertise power. Fehse (2002) refers to expertise in supportive and related procedures which can be found in staff and service departments. According to the theory the power of HRM would be located here. There is knowledge and expertise at the HRM department of MST. Yet the HRM department has to recognize it as a power. Despite the knowledge and expertise of the department MST is too large and bureaucratic to really appreciate the value of the HRM department. Politics and hierarchical structure manage the hospital and hold back the knowledge and expertise in other areas besides medical.

In addition to formal power structures, the informal organizational structures should be included in understanding the political process within a healthcare organization (Fehse, 2002). An organizational culture is such informal organizational structure. It is matching with another issue we found in the literature about healthcare. There are different departments, teams, tasks flows, systems and cultural meaning involved (Carrol, and Edmondson, 2002). It results in different subcultures in a healthcare organization (Scott, T. Mannion, R. Davies, H. and Marshall, M., 2003). We noticed during the observations and conversations that



MST has subcultures. The different departments and functions are having their own culture which does not result in commitment to the organization as a whole. To get the subcultures to cooperate it is important there is a joint focus. Unfortunately the results of this study show that this focus is not present which emphasizes the importance of taking subcultures into account.

Two other issues were discussed in the literature of healthcare organizations. Bach (2000) names the status of health workers as public servants and the majority of women in the health sector. The status of public servants is associated with strict regulation of working conditions and high levels of job security. Within MST some interviewees mentioned that MST is a good organization to work in. It did not become clear if they were talking about working conditions or job security since it was not the focus of the interviews. The other issue is the majority of women. They represent a large group of part time workers and the average age of this group is increasing. Perhaps in time the group will grow and will be less flexible to learn or adjust. Yet there is no active policy for it. It is difficult to make policy for this since MST doesn't refer to it as a problem although it may have consequences in the future. Out of the observations and conversations it became clear that older women and often part time workers do their job and have less interest in extra activities or contributing to the development of the organization. We noticed that it is a sensitive subject among people since they do not want to discriminate on gender and age. We feel that acknowledgment of this issue can help practicing HR activities.

The literature and findings are providing similarities and differences. The similarities are mainly based on interfaces between literature and practice. Obviously the context is providing specific influences which will be different in another context. The differences are not always explained because knowledge about certain processes is missing. Further research can fill up the questions that remain.

### 5.3 LIMITATIONS

Before we will suggest further research into the subject we discuss limitations that occurred within the research. There are some conditions that can place restrictions on the possibilities of the research and the conclusions that are drawn.

The first limitation is the time of the research. The research took place half a year after the implementation of HRM intranet. It means intranet and HRM intranet were just implemented. There is a possibility that the consequences of the implementation were not noticeable at the time of the research. Perhaps more results were found if we had done the research after the project had more time to integrate into the organization.

The second limitation is the research population. We made use of purposive sampling to choose a sample. Four departments were chosen to conduct a line manager and two employees from. The limitation here is that the HR professional approached a line manager within the chosen department. The line managers in their turn approached two employees to cooperate with the research. The HR professionals and line managers choose the next person based on their knowledge on the subject. They were guided based on their own interpretation on the situation. The respondents that cooperated in the research may be chosen on different interpretations than that of the researcher. By providing information about the research we tried to minimize this limitation.

Another limitation is the absence of statistical support. The findings show the usage of intranet and HRM intranet of the three groups of interviewees resulting from the interviews. We named the number 700-1500 logins per day. The number says something about the amount of logs in at a certain point in the research. There is no comparison with other numbers or points in time since MST did not keep any record. Further no difference is made in persons who log in more than once a day. In addition no distinctions were made between departments or functions. So numbers have been found within MST however they give no statistical support.





The context of this research is a healthcare organization. The case study is specific for MST. The similarities between literature and practice make it possible that other healthcare organizations represent the same kind of dynamic movement. However if the context changes, the interactions change and with that the dynamic movement changes. A limitation of the research is that the results cannot be generalized into another context or organization. Although this is not the purpose of this study we want to emphasize the scope of the study. The limitations have to be taken into account when reading the study. They have been minimized as far as possible. Additional reduction was not considered an option with the time and resources available.

## 5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are still unanswered questions on the subject e-HRM.

An issue within MST that requires more research is the need of the employee for the HRM department. This research points out that employees do not use HRM intranet since they don't need it. So, does it need to be stimulated? Yes or no? And if so, how can the usage of HRM intranet be stimulated? What does the HRM department have to offer to the employee to benefit the relationship between employee and HRM? There are more answers to find and interesting subjects to research.

In this research we asked the interviewees about their opinion on the HR portal that will be implemented in 2012 in MST. Future research about the HR portal and the implementation process could contribute to the knowledge on changes within MST. We know the opinions of the employees now and are curious about the perceptions of the employees when the HR portal is implemented. With more research on other IT in HRM the knowledge on e-HRM in healthcare is expanding.

In the discussion and limitations the issue regarding the time at which the research was performed was mentioned. The research has been done shortly after the implementation and only one measurement was carried out. To provide more information about the movement of e-HRM within the organization a longitudinal study should be done containing several time periods. With more research at different points in time, the outcomes can be compared with previous outcomes. The comparison can provide insights in how the organization is dealing with e-HRM.

Further research at different moments will also provide insight on the question if the adaption process on information technology is discontinuous. We mentioned that it is uncertain if the research is done in a burst or a stop of adaption, when we assume that it indeed is discontinuous. With further research with containing several measurement points more information can be gathered about the adaption process of e-HRM.

Considering that the research is done in healthcare, it is interesting to discover differences with other organizational context. The implementation of e-HRM in a healthcare organization makes it specific. Future research could focus on e-HRM in other contexts. Is it really that different? And what factors are making the difference? Such questions are left behind and can be solved when more research is done.

Not alone the limitations in time and context leave questions unanswered. Also the behavior of people within MST does. Subcultures are interesting and probably have a larger influence than anticipated. For example, how are subcultures influencing each other? And in what way can the subcultures gain a joint focus? Can subcultures be managed and if so, can HRM play a role in this? In what way are e-HRM and subcultures related? Can e-HRM bring subcultures together or will e-HRM bring them further apart? More aspects besides subcultures raise questions. We found the conditions which have to be present in order for the employee to use intranet. The findings show that the conditions are present nevertheless we did not find out in which order. Do they all conditions have similar influence or is there an order? How are they influencing the interactions and each other? Are there more conditions for an employee that influences the usage of an information technology? A suggestion for future research contains the behavior of the employee in relation with IT.



## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study was to advance understanding of the special features of e-HRM implementation in MST. Furthermore we wanted to provide insight in what kind of influences e-HRM has on the HRM department and the organization with its HR activities. The research question is formulated using the objective of the study:

*What are the changes in the HR activities brought about by HRM intranet of MST and in what way do users enact HRM intranet functionalities?*

We succeeded in our exploration at MST to provide understanding and insights on e-HRM. The findings of the research are the result of observations, conversations, documents, and interviews. The findings present an exploration on the subject e-HRM in which relations are made and conclusions are drawn. We acknowledge that not every finding can be explained in terms of e-HRM and that questions remain. However with this research we made a step further in the knowledge of e-HRM.

### 6.1 CONCLUSIONS

In our research we used the term e-HRM. We defined it as the (planning, implementation and) application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities (Strohmeier, 2007). There are three stakeholders in the definition of e-HRM which were investigated since they form e-HRM. The stakeholders represent the three concepts information technology, human agents, and organizational context. Orlikowski (1991) used the interaction between the three concepts that emphasize the dynamic movement in an organization when information technology is implemented. Her approach is used in the research to explore the interactions of e-HRM in MST.

Within MST the information technology we researched is HRM intranet. The human agents are HR professionals, line managers and employees. The organizational context is the healthcare organization MST. We found interactions between these stakeholders and tried to describe their relation in order to give an insight in the dynamic movement of MST. The main conclusion of the research is that HRM intranet brought no changes in HR activities within MST and that HRM intranet is not enacted by its users as intended by the HRM department. Therefore the enactment of e-HRM in this healthcare context has not succeeded. The main conclusion comes forth out of the multiple conclusions from the concepts:

- In the first concept information technology we made several conclusions about the HRM intranet and its implementation in MST. There are different users of intranet and HRM intranet. The three groups have a different perspective which results in a discrepancy in goal and type description of HRM intranet. A reason for this is the usage of HRM intranet. The HR professionals use HRM intranet sporadic because the professionals already know the information that is present. The line managers use the system for information purposes. The usage among employees is low considering the fact that one of the eight respondents used HRM intranet. The purpose of HRM intranet is to support the line managers as well as the employees in their HR activities. We can conclude that line managers are partially supported with information in their HR activities. The employees hardly make use of HRM intranet and are not supported in using the HRM intranet. The research made clear that the employees do not need HRM intranet and therefore do not use it. When the employee has questions regarding HRM he or she searches for answers in other ways than by using HRM intranet. Besides the need, question or urge that has to be present for the usage of HRM intranet the respondents mentioned conditions. These conditions have to be present in the organization for them to use information technology. There has to be an active information-seeking behavior, computers must be available and there has to be time to use the system. The opinions and perceptions result in different goals of HRM intranet. The professionals and line managers feel that it can contribute to client service improvement and partly contributes



to efficiency. For the employees it is not explicit what the goal is and also the type is not recognized. The professionals and line managers consider HRM intranet as the type 'information'. The HRM department preferred the type 'information and automation' because they provided applications to automate some processes. We found a discrepancy in intentions and enactment of the information technology. Concluding, HRM intranet is not used the way the HRM department intended it to be.

- Why employees do not find HRM intranet necessary is explained in the concept human agents with HR activities. The interactions between human agents and the HR activities give a good insight in the position of HRM in MST. The research showed that HR professionals perform operational tasks and have no policy making in their tasks. The policy making that recently was introduced at the HRM department was well received. The professionals are positive about a combination of operational tasks and policy making. HR professionals have in their job more contact with line managers than with employees. The line managers feel that the contact with the professional is sufficient. The line managers at MST perform some HR activities. They feel positive about that because it is an essential part of their job. The employees in this research on the other hand do not practice HR activities besides small administrative tasks. There is no personal contact with the HR professional. For these reasons the employees do not use HRM intranet. In addition the employee does not know what to expect from the HRM department. They see the HRM department mainly having an administrative function and do not know what the department has to offer. The view of the line managers on the HRM department indicates that the HRM department has to undertake several steps. The line managers feel that the HRM department as a whole can achieve more and can add more value to the organization. To support this and help the development of HRM, MST has to bring a focus on the HRM department.
- In the interviews the HR professionals, line managers and employees discussed not only the HRM department. They considered the interactions between them and the other human agents. They agreed upon the fact that approaches and roles of the different human agents have not significantly changed within MST. The interactions that exist nowadays therefore have probably been done the same way for a long time. Moreover there is no change noticed with the implementation of HRM intranet. Whether it will change in the future with the implementation of the HR portal is the question. The respondents feel the HR portal can be a positive system if it supports the operational issues. A clear divide in responsibilities and tasks seems necessary according to the line managers and the professionals. In conclusion, the HR professionals, line managers and employees have different ways of interacting with each other and with HR activities.
- The previous concept partially included the characteristics we found within the healthcare organization MST. MST is a large organization where the structure of power and forces are various. These factors ensure that decision making process within the hospital is slowed down. Besides diverse powers MST has different departments and functions which do not have a joint focus because the departments have different subcultures with their own values and manners. These subcultures influence the commitment of employees with the departments and the organization as a whole. We noticed that the commitment of the employees to MST is not great as employees are identifying themselves with the department and not with the organization. In addition the people within MST have a 'wait-and-see' attitude. Together with the commitment it makes that the employees are not interested in what happens outside their daily tasks. HRM is



usually not part of the daily tasks and lies therefore outside the field of interest of the employees. In conclusion, the healthcare organization MST is up till now not a stimulating environment for the use of e-HRM.

The conclusion on the three concepts brings us back to the research question. The overall conclusion of the research is that there are no changes in the HR activities brought about by HRM intranet within MST because of the lack of support to the HR activities. The second part of the research questions concerns the enactment of HRM intranet by its users. We conclude the line managers enact in the way of supporting the HR activities with information. The employees of MST do not use HRM intranet. The HR professionals use HRM intranet sporadic. Therefore the enactment of e-HRM in healthcare context has not succeeded as intended by the HRM department. We observed that the movement of e-HRM in MST is a dynamic movement. The research gave a description of the situation of one point within this dynamic movement. In the movement various challenges in the interaction of stakeholders appeared for MST. The challenges are summarized in the table below:

Challenges	Examples
<b>The employee does not know what to expect from the HRM department.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The employees do not know what the HRM department is for.</li> <li>- The location of HRM is not clear to all employees.</li> <li>- The employees see the HRM department as having an administrative function.</li> <li>-The HRM department is still called “Personeelszaken” by some people.</li> </ul>
<b>The HRM department does not know what the employees want regarding e-HRM.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The employees are not asked about their opinion on HRM and HRM intranet.</li> <li>- The users are not involved in the implementation process of HRM intranet.</li> </ul>
<b>The position of the HRM department within MST is viewed as weak.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The department is underdeveloped in their policy making.</li> <li>- The value of the HRM department is not always acknowledged.</li> </ul>
<b>Within MST and projects a joint focus is missing.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are subcultures with various powers and forces.</li> <li>- In the project intranet a lot of different parties are involved with different interests.</li> <li>- The goals of projects are not for everyone the same.</li> <li>- The employees have a low commitment to MST.</li> </ul>
<b>MST is a large and complex organization.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MST has 4000 employees and several hierarchical layers.</li> <li>- The decision making process is slow as approval is needed from different parties.</li> <li>- Within MST a ‘wait-and-see’ culture dominates.</li> </ul>

Table 6-1 *Table of challenges*

There are possibilities for MST and the HRM department to stimulate the dynamic movement in the future and fight the challenges. For this we gave some recommendations.

## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The HRM department made a first attempt to implement e-HRM within MST. In the attempt there are points of success and points that were less successful. Altogether the HRM department can learn from these points and use the knowledge in future projects.

One point of success is the introduction of policy making within the HRM department. The HRM department has to capitalize on the enthusiasm of the HR professionals to combine operational tasks and policy making. The initiative of the business manager to start policy making projects contributes to performing HRM on another level. The business manager and HR professionals see the options of HRM and the value it can add to the organization. When the HRM department as a whole would follow this direction we predict a growth in practicing HRM.



Another point is the share of HR activities line managers perform in their job. The line managers consider the HR activities part of their job. They enjoy creating a good working environment for the employees. The HR professionals cannot establish a relationship with every employee. Therefore the position of the line manager can be used. The line managers can transfer their enthusiasm concerning the HR activities and e-HRM to the employees. The HRM department should instruct the line managers in this.

In addition there are some challenges for the HRM department that we mentioned in the previous paragraph. From these challenges we derived recommendations for action.

- 1. Improve the relationship of the HRM department with the employees.** The employees indicated that they do not know what to expect from the HRM department. A majority does not know where it is located and what the tasks are of the department. The employees see the HRM department often as an administrative section of the organization. This is not the purpose of an HRM department and the department should make that clear to the employees. If employees understand what HRM is for and more contact between the two parties will be established, a better interaction can be the result. Perhaps more appreciation from the organization towards the HRM department will help to develop the HRM department and add more value to the organization and its employees. In addition there will be a better understanding for HRM intranet since employees have better expectations in a better relationship. For the HR portal it will create a better starting point as the employees have better understanding what HRM is doing and where it is going.
- 2. Involve users in implementing information technology.** We researched the implementation of HRM intranet. Striking was the fact that nowhere in the process the users are asked for their opinion. HRM intranet is meant for the line managers and employees. The HRM department can't know what users want if they do not talk with the users. The department has to involve the users when implementing a system. Otherwise unnecessary adjustments take extra time and effort. Put mechanisms for feedback and demonstrate that the comments of users are processed. An example is to involve the users in creating the system and in the evaluation. If it is done the department knows what the users want and furthermore the users have a reason to use HRM intranet. By involving the users more can be achieved in a more efficient way. Go into the organization and talk with people. The 'wait-and-see' behavior has to be taken into account when involving the users.
- 3. Expand expertise HRM department.** The position of the HRM department in MST is viewed as weak. The HRM department has knowledge and expertise however it is not acknowledged by the organization. HRM can add more value to the organization than they do now. A part of this action is to continue policy making. The department can reach above operational level with policy making. Another recommendation is to expand expertise and add value to the organization. The HR portal is an example for this. With more knowledge and expertise on e-HRM the implementation of the HR portal can contribute to more value of the HRM department. The HRM department is cooperating with different experts on various subjects from different departments. If the HRM department has the knowledge 'at home' the department can work more efficient and add value as a department and not as a cross-sectional project team with different interests. Show MST HRM is more than 'Personeelzaken' which they are often referred to. Perhaps with this the HRM department creates a need for the employees to get more involved in HR activities.
- 4. Create a joint focus in projects.** Within MST there is no joint focus. There are subcultures. The influence of these cultures is visible in the cooperation and the decision making processes of the hospital. We cannot expect the HRM department to create the joint focus for MST as a whole. Though



the department can create a joint focus for the ECM project. For the project intranet different people are involved from different departments who have their own interest in the project. HRM suffers from this in continuing the project. One party should try to bring the focus of the different groups together and create one goal. For the project there are various goals which unintended effects. To benefit the project a joint focus with agreements must be created. Moreover a joint focus will benefit the HR portal. Before implementing the HR portal the different parties involved have to have a joint focus to make the project a success.

5. **Structure the implementation of the HR portal.** Building on a joint focus for the HR portal more recommendations can be made. The HR portal is purchased with five other hospitals. There are hospitals who already are implementing the HR portal. When MST wants to implement the portal in 2012 there is already an idea what the effect is of such a portal in a hospital. However the HRM department should keep in mind that MST has a particular context in which interactions can be different from other hospitals. Therefore the implementation process can not be copied flawlessly. The implementation process should be thought over and should be structured. All stakeholders within MST should be considered and the stakeholders should be made clear what the process entails. The department has to spend time in explaining the goal and advantage of such a system. Not just for the organization as a whole. Moreover the users of portal have to understand what it is and why MST is implementing it. The users have to see the advantage for them to use the portal and then they will use it. This is a step the department can not think to causal about because it is the base of the success of the portal. Continue on with a clear divide in tasks and responsibilities while keeping the joint focus. The users of intranet mentioned conditions that have to be present for them to use the information technology. For the implementation at MST the conditions have to be present. The process of implementing e-HRM is a dynamic movement. Our advice is to treat it like a dynamic movement and do not enhance a push strategy to implement the HR portal.
6. **Provide clear communication.** In all these processes clear communication is so important. MST is a large and complex organization. Clear communication between project members will support the cooperation. Clear communication to users about the progress is important. For example communicating about the project HR portal on HRM intranet, while HRM intranet is not used properly, is not effective. An advice is here to do research about how the employees in MST can and want to be reached. With results from this research MST can communicate with their personnel and they make sure everyone can be up to date.
7. **Measure the usage.** To determine the value of the HRM intranet methods of measurement have to be incorporated. Over a longer period of time the value can be determined more objectively, strategies can be developed accordingly and resources can be dedicated as required. Relative simple methods of measurement would be:
  - Determine the usage per application / section of the intranet over time by requests made.
  - Determine the usage per location, statistics could be provided in which departments improvement need to be made or why similar departments in other hospitals use the HRM intranet more or less.
  - Allow user ratings, contributions and comments.



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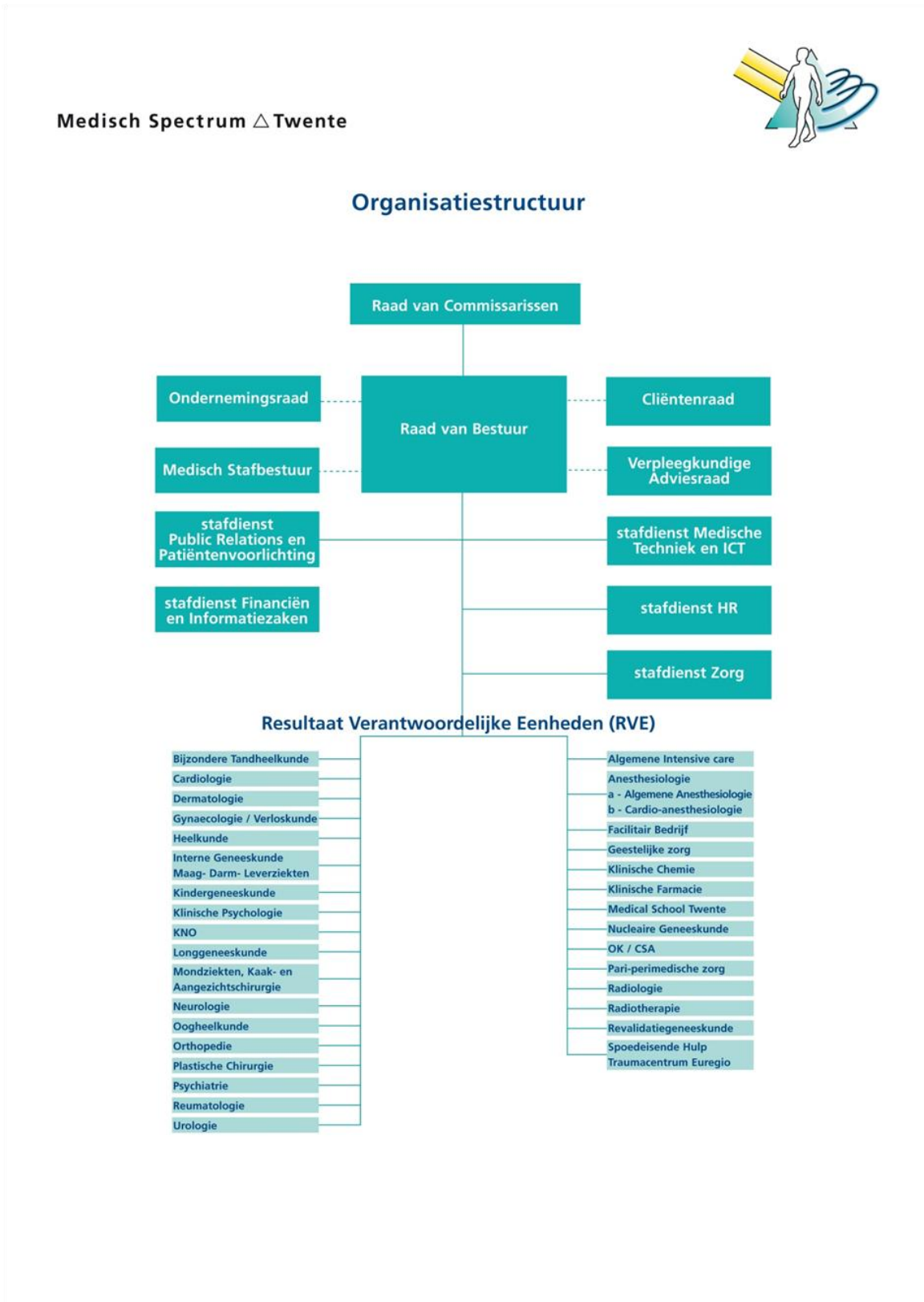


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# APPENDIX

## A: ORGANOGRAM MEDISCH SPECTRUM TWENTE



Bron: <http://www.mst.nl/onzeorganisatie/organogram.pdf> consulted on 12-11-2009



## B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Medisch Spectrum Twente

Date/Time:

Interviewee: Name and identification code

Email:

Interviewer: Moniek Engbersen

#### INTRODUCTION

This interview is held to gather data for the master thesis of the study Business Administration track HRM. The subject of this master thesis is electronic HRM. The interview is to gain insight in the influence of information technology, in this case HRM intranet, on the HRM department and the organization and to explore the understandings of the perceptions of three groups (HR professionals, line managers and employees) about changes in the HR function. The personal opinion and expressions of the interviewee are important in this interview.

In this interview the role of information technology is discussed. First the concepts will be introduced and then with open-ended questions as bases, there will be a conversation about the concept. Because the HR professionals, line managers and employees are involved in this process and have an opinion about this, the interviewee is selected.

E-HRM contains different stakeholders such as the technology HRM intranet, the human actors in relation with HR activities and the healthcare organization. In this interview there will be asked about the opinion of the interviewee concerning these concepts. The interview is recorded on tape for practical reasons only and will not be spread. The approximate time for the interview will be one hour.

The procedures, transcript, and analysis of the interview are handled with care. Because real understanding is important in this interview, a transcript will be send for verification. This transcript will not be provided towards MST. After the interviews the information is used for research oriented purposes.

#### BASIC INFORMATION

First basis information about the interviewee is needed.

- *Could you introduce yourself?*

Make sure the following is answered:

Function

Educational background

Job tasks, activities, and responsibilities

Experience working for the company

Experience working for the department/group

#### CONCEPTS HR PROFESSIONAL

These concepts are explained here with raw variables and possible interview questions.

##### 1. The role of Information Technology: HRM intranet



In this concept questions are asked to get insights in the interaction between the HR professional and the technology.

- *Do you use the intranet, the DMS and specific the HRM features? (When? How? Why?)*
- *What are the reasons for implementing the DMS and intranet? (to see if they know why MST is busy with implementing this information technology)*
- *Do you find the intranet, DMS and specific the HRM features useful? In what way?*
- *Is intranet and the DMS contributing to the quality of your work?*
- *Are there advantages/disadvantages to HRM intranet? Can you name them?*
- *Can the use of HRM intranet in MST be improved? In what way?*

## **2. The role of Human agents/ HR activities**

In this concept questions are asked to get an understanding of the role of the HR professional within the HRM department and its mindset on change and the acceptance of change.

- *How would you describe your role as an HR professional with HR activities within the organization?*
- *Which of these HR activities rely on technology?*
- *Are there any changes in your work noticed with the implementation of HRM intranet?*
- *How do you handle the influence of technology in your HR tasks?*
- *Are there changes in the interaction between you, the line manager and the employee?*
- *How do you see your role as HR professional performing HR activities with the implementation of the coming HR portal?*

## **3. Organizational context**

In this concept questions are asked to understand the feelings on the dynamic movement of technology, human agents and HR activities within the organization.

- *Do you see any changes in the role of the HRM department within MST throughout the years?*
- *Do you have any ideas about the development of HRM and the role of the HR professionals within MST? How should it look according to you?*
- *What do you find important in an HR portal?*
- *What is so special in a hospital and at MST in e-HRM usage?*

# CONCEPTS LINE MANAGER

These concepts are explained here with raw variables and possible interview questions.

## **1. The role of Information Technology: HRM intranet**

In this concept questions are asked to get insights in the interaction between the line manager and the technology.

- *Do you use the intranet, the DMS and specific the HRM features? (When? How? Why?)*
- *What are the reasons for implementing the DMS and intranet? (To see if they know why MST is busy with implementing this information technology?)*
- *Do you find the intranet, DMS and specific the HRM features useful? In what way?*
- *Is intranet and the DMS contributing to the quality of your work?*
- *Are there advantages/disadvantages to HRM intranet? Can you name them?*
- *Can the use of HRM intranet in MST be improved? In what way?*



## 2. The role of Human agents / HR activities

In this concept questions are asked to get an understanding of the role of the line manager within the organization in relation to HR tasks and its mindset on change and the acceptance of change.

- *What kind of HR activities are performed by you? (Why? How?)*
- *What do you think of the involvement of line managers in human resource management?*
- *Do you see any advantages/disadvantages about the involvement of line managers in HR tasks?*
- *Does HRM intranet influence the way you perform HR related tasks?*
- *How do you handle the influence of technology in your daily work and in your HR tasks?*
- *Are there changes in the interaction between you, the HR professional and the employee?*

## 3. Organizational context

In this concept questions are asked to understand the feelings on the dynamic movement of technology, human agents and HR activities within the organization.

- *Do you see any changes in the role of the line manager within MST regarding HR tasks?*
- *Do you see any changes in the role of the HRM department within MST?*
- *What do you think about the fact that IT is used for HRM purposes at MST?*
- *What do you find important in an HR portal of MST?*
- *What is so special in a hospital and at MST in e-HRM usage?*

## CONCEPTS EMPLOYEE

These concepts are explained here with raw variables and possible interview questions.

### 1. The role of Information Technology: HRM intranet

In this concept questions are asked to get insights in the interaction between the employee and the technology.

- *Do you use the intranet, the DMS and specific the HRM features? (When? How? Why?)*
- *What are the reasons for implementing the DMS and intranet? (to see if they know why MST is busy with implementing this information technology)*
- *Do you find the intranet, DMS and specific the HRM features useful? In what way?*
- *Is intranet and the DMS contributing to the quality of your work?*
- *Are there advantages/disadvantages to HRM intranet? Can you name them?*
- *Can the use of HRM intranet in MST be improved? In what way?*

### 2. The role of Human agents / HR activities

In this concept questions are asked to get an understanding of the role of the employee within the organization in relation to HR tasks and its mindset on change and the acceptance of change.

- *What kind of HR activities are increasingly self-employed by you? (Why? How?)*
- *What do you think of the involvement of employees in human resource management?*
- *Do you see any advantages/disadvantages about the involvement of employees in HR tasks?*
- *Does HRM intranet influence the way you perform HR related tasks?*
- *How do you handle the influence of technology in your daily work and in your HR tasks?*
- *Are there changes in the interaction between you, the line manager and the HR professional?*



### 3. Organizational context

In this concept questions are asked to understand the feelings on the dynamic movement of technology, human agents and HR activities within the organization.

- *Do you see any changes in the role of the employee within MST?*
- *Do you see any changes in the role of the HRM department within MST?*
- *What do you think about the fact that IT is used for HRM purposes at MST?*
- *What do you find important in an HR portal of MST?*
- *What is so special in a hospital and at MST in e-HRM usage?*

### CLOSURE OF THE INTERVIEW

Thanks for giving your opinion about the concepts.

- *Any comments?*

Round off



## C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL DUTCH VERSION

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Medisch Spectrum Twente

Datum / Tijd:

Geïnterviewde: Naam en identificatiecode

E-mail:

Interviewer: Moniek Engbersen

#### INLEIDING

Dit interview wordt gehouden om informatie te verzamelen voor de masterthesis van de studie Business Administration track HRM. Het onderwerp van deze masterthesis is de elektronische HRM (e-HRM). Het interview wordt gehouden om inzicht te krijgen in de invloed van informatietechnologie, in dit geval HRM intranet, op de HRM-afdeling en de organisatie en om de perceptie van drie groepen te verkennen (HR-professionals, teamhoofden en medewerkers) over de veranderingen in de HR-functie. De persoonlijke mening en uitingen van de geïnterviewde zijn erg belangrijk in dit interview.

In dit interview wordt de rol van informatietechnologie besproken. Eerst zullen de concepten worden aangedragen en vervolgens met open vragen als basis, zal er een gesprek over het concept volgen. Omdat de HR-professionals, teamhoofden en medewerkers zeer betrokken zijn bij dit proces en een mening hebben over het onderwerp, is de geïnterviewde geselecteerd.

E-HRM bevat verschillende concepten, zoals de technologie HRM intranet, de menselijke actoren in verband met HR-activiteiten en de organisatie MST. In dit interview zal er gevraagd naar de mening van de geïnterviewde over deze concepten. Het interview wordt opgenomen op een voice-recorder om praktische redenen en zal alleen gebruikt worden voor onderzoek gerichte doeleinden. Anonimiteit wordt hierbij gewaarborgd. De geschatte tijd voor het gesprek is een uur.

De procedure, de transcriptie en analyse van het interview zal met zorg worden behandeld. Omdat de perceptie begrijpen erg belangrijk is in dit interview, zal een transcriptie worden gestuurd ter verificatie. Dit zal ook alleen gebruikt worden voor onderzoek gerichte doeleinden.

#### BASISINFORMATIE

Eerst is basis informatie over de geïnterviewde nodig.

- *Kan je jezelf introduceren?*

Controleer of het volgende wordt beantwoord:

Functie

Opleidingsachtergrond

Taken, activiteiten en verantwoordelijkheden

Ervaring met werken voor het bedrijf

Ervaring werken op de afdeling / groep



## CONCEPTEN HR PROFESSIONAL

De concepten worden hier uitgelegd met ruwe variabelen en mogelijke interviewvragen.

### 1. De rol van Informatie Technologie: HRM intranet

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om inzicht te krijgen in de interactie tussen de HR-professional en de technologie.

- *Maakt u gebruik van intranet, het DBS en specifieke HRM-Intranet? (Wanneer? Hoe? Waarom?)*
- *Wat zijn de redenen voor de invoering van het DBS en intranet? (om te zien of de persoon weet waarom MST bezig is met de uitvoering van deze informatie-technologie)*
- *Vindt u intranet, DBS en de specifieke kenmerken van HRM- intranet nuttig? Op welke manier?*
- *Draagt intranet en het DBS bij aan de kwaliteit van uw werk?*
- *Zijn er voordelen / nadelen van HRM intranet? Kunt u ze benoemen?*
- *Kan het gebruik van HRM intranet in MST worden verbeterd? Op welke manier?*

### 2. De rol van de Human Actor / HR-activiteiten

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om een goed begrip te krijgen van de rol van de HR-professional binnen de HRM-afdeling en zijn/haar denkwijze over veranderingen en de acceptatie van veranderingen.

- *Hoe zou u uw rol als HR-professional met HR-activiteiten omschrijven binnen de organisatie?*
- *Welke van deze HR-activiteiten vertrouwen op technologie?*
- *Heeft u veranderingen in uw werk gemerkt door de invoering van HRM intranet?*
- *Hoe gaat u om met de invloed van technologie in uw HR-activiteiten?*
- *Zijn er veranderingen in de interactie tussen u, het teamhoofd en de medewerker?*
- *Hoe ziet u uw rol als HR-professional met HR-taken in (de implementatie van) het komende HR-portaal?*

72

### 3. Organisationele context

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om de gevoelens te begrijpen over interactie tussen de technologie, de human actors en HR-activiteiten binnen de organisatie.

- *Ziet u veranderingen in de rol van de HRM-afdeling binnen MST door de jaren heen?*
- *Heeft u ideeën over de ontwikkeling van HRM en de rol van de HR-professionals binnen MST? Hoe moet het er volgens u uitzien?*
- *Wat vindt u belangrijk in een HR-portaal van MST?*
- *Wat is er zo bijzonder aan het e-HRM gebruik in een ziekenhuis en MST?*





## CONCEPTEN TEAMHOOFD

De concepten worden hier uitgelegd met ruwe variabelen en mogelijke interviewvragen.

### 1. De rol van Informatie Technologie: HRM intranet

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om inzicht te krijgen in de interactie tussen het teamhoofd en de technologie.

- *Maakt u gebruik van intranet, het DBS en specifieke HRM-Intranet? (Wanneer? Hoe? Waarom?)*
- *Wat zijn de redenen voor de invoering van het DBS en intranet? (om te zien of de persoon weet waarom MST bezig is met de uitvoering van deze informatie-technologie)*
- *Vindt u intranet, DBS en de specifieke kenmerken van HRM- intranet nuttig? Op welke manier?*
- *Draagt intranet en het DBS bij aan de kwaliteit van uw werk?*
- *Zijn er voordelen / nadelen van HRM intranet? Kunt u ze benoemen?*
- *Kan het gebruik van HRM intranet in MST worden verbeterd? Op welke manier?*

### 2. De rol van de Human Actor / HR-activiteiten

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om een goed begrip te krijgen van de rol van het teamhoofd binnen de organisatie m.b.t HR taken en haar denkwijze over veranderingen en de acceptatie van veranderingen.

- *Welke HR-activiteiten worden door u verricht? (Waarom? Hoe?)*
- *Wat vindt u van de betrokkenheid van teamhoofden in HRM?*
- *Ziet u voordelen / nadelen in de betrokkenheid van teamhoofden in HR-taken?*
- *Heeft HRM intranet invloed op de manier waarop u uw HR-gerelateerde taken uitvoert?*
- *Hoe gaat u om met de invloed van de technologie in uw dagelijkse werk en in uw HR-taken?*
- *Zijn er veranderingen in de interactie tussen u, de HR-professional en de medewerker?*

73

### 3. Organisationele context

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om de gevoelens te begrijpen over interactie tussen de technologie, de human agents en HR-activiteiten binnen de organisatie.

- *Ziet u veranderingen in de rol van het teamhoofd binnen MST met betrekking tot HR-taken?*
- *Ziet u veranderingen in de rol van de HRM-afdeling binnen MST?*
- *Wat denkt u over het feit dat IT wordt gebruikt voor HRM doeleinden binnen MST?*
- *Wat vindt u belangrijk in een HR portaal van MST? (uitleggen dat er een HR portaal wordt verwacht, waarschijnlijk niet op de hoogte van het plan)*
- *Wat is er zo bijzonder aan het e-HRM gebruik in een ziekenhuis en MST?*



## CONCEPTEN MEDEWERKER

De concepten worden hier uitgelegd met ruwe variabelen en mogelijke interviewvragen.

### 1. De rol van Informatie Technologie: HRM intranet

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om inzicht te krijgen in de interactie tussen de medewerker en de technologie.

- *Maakt u gebruik van intranet, het DBS en specifieke HRM-Intranet? (Wanneer? Hoe? Waarom?)*
- *Wat zijn de redenen voor de invoering van het DBS en intranet? (om te zien of de persoon weet waarom MST bezig is met de uitvoering van deze informatie-technologie)*
- *Vindt u intranet, DBS en de specifieke kenmerken van HRM- intranet nuttig? Op welke manier?*
- *Draagt intranet en het DBS bij aan de kwaliteit van uw werk?*
- *Zijn er voordelen / nadelen van HRM intranet? Kunt u ze benoemen?*
- *Kan het gebruik van HRM intranet in MST worden verbeterd? Op welke manier?*

### 2. De rol van de Human Actor / HR-activiteiten

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om een goed begrip te krijgen van de rol van de medewerker binnen de organisatie m.b.t HR taken en haar denkwijze over veranderingen en de acceptatie van veranderingen.

- *Welke HR-activiteiten worden steeds meer zelfstandig door u uitgevoerd? (Waarom? Hoe?)*
- *Wat vindt u van de betrokkenheid van de medewerkers in HRM?*
- *Ziet u voordelen / nadelen over de betrokkenheid van medewerkers bij HR-taken?*
- *Heeft HRM intranet invloed op de manier waarop u uw HR-gerelateerde taken uitvoert?*
- *Hoe gaat u om met de invloed van technologie in uw dagelijkse werk en in uw HR-taken?*
- *Zijn er veranderingen in de interactie tussen u, het teamhoofd en de HR-professional?*

74

### 3. Organisationele context

In dit concept worden vragen gesteld om de gevoelens te begrijpen over interactie tussen de technologie, de human agents en HR-activiteiten binnen de organisatie.

- *Ziet u veranderingen in de rol van de medewerker binnen MST?*
- *Ziet u veranderingen in de rol van de HRM-afdeling binnen MST?*
- *Wat denkt u over het feit dat IT wordt gebruikt voor HRM doeleinden binnen MST?*
- *Wat vindt u belangrijk in een HR portaal van MST? (uitleggen dat er een HR portaal wordt verwacht, waarschijnlijk niet op de hoogte van het plan)*
- *Wat is er zo bijzonder aan het e-HRM gebruik in een ziekenhuis en MST?*

## AFSLUITING VAN INTERVIEW

Bedankt voor je mening over de concepten.

- Eventuele opmerkingen?

Afronden



# D: PRINTSCREENS INTRANET

## 1.Homepage Intranet after logging in

The screenshot shows the 'mijn MST' intranet homepage. The browser title is 'Mijn MST - Windows Internet Explorer'. The address bar shows the URL: [http://mijnmst.zmst.loc/portal/mst/home/!ut/p/c5/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8vBz9CP0os3gXd0cPE3MfAwP\\_ME9zAyM\\_y5AgFw9HY063A30\\_j\\_zcWP2CbEdfALcqeNgl/dl3/d3/L2](http://mijnmst.zmst.loc/portal/mst/home/!ut/p/c5/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8vBz9CP0os3gXd0cPE3MfAwP_ME9zAyM_y5AgFw9HY063A30_j_zcWP2CbEdfALcqeNgl/dl3/d3/L2). The page has a green header with navigation links: 'M Engbersen | Mijn Gegevens | Help | Afmelden'. The main content area is titled 'mijn MST Medisch Spectrum Twente is mijn ziekenhuis'. Below the header, there are several widgets:

- MST Nieuws:** A news article titled 'Griepdemie' dated 04/11/2009, with the text 'Alle informatie en laatste nieuws griepdemie Bericht voor alle MST medewerkers die nog niet zijn gevaccineerd voor de Influenza A H1N1 Lees verder'. Below it are several news items with dates and titles like 'Uitbereiding diensten Gastenservice', 'Kerstonbijt 2009', 'Jaarlijkse onderwijsverkiezingen', 'Kinderopvang m.i.v. 7 december voorlopig gesloten', and 'Afdelingscores en foto's taartuitreiking te bekijken op intranetgedeelte Excellente Zorg'.
- Condolance Register:** A widget with a search bar and a list of entries, including one for 'Miranda Overbeek-van der Meulen overleden' dated 27/11/2009.
- Telefoonboek:** A widget with a search bar and a 'Zoeken' button.
- Griepdemie:** A widget with a photo of a person and the text 'Nieuwe Influenza A (H1N1) Informatie over de nieuwe influenza.'
- Evenementen:** A widget with a 'Naar agenda' button.
- Formulieren:** A widget with a list of forms, including 'Gele kaart infectiepreventie', 'Ongevallen registratie medewerkers Medisch Spectrum Twente', and 'Declaratieformulier'.
- MST & Media:** A widget with a list of media items, including 'Vaccinatie voor alle medewerkers Medisch Spectrum Twente' and 'Onderwijs op afstand voor langdurig zieke kinderen in Medisch Spectrum Twente'.
- Kwaliteitsdocumenten:** A widget with a list of documents, including 'Onlangs gepubliceerde documenten', 'Adalimumab', 'Abatacept medisch', and 'Allopurinol'.

The bottom of the page shows the browser status bar with 'Lokaal intranet' and '100%' zoom.

75

Bron: <http://mijnmst.zmst.loc> consulted on 01-12-2009



## 2. Page Human Resource Management after clicking on 'ons MST' and 'HRM'

M Engbersen | Mijn Gegevens | Help | Afmelden

mijn MST  
Medisch Spectrum Twente is mijn ziekenhuis

home | mijn mst | ons mst | samenwerken | faciliteiten | documenten

**HRM**

- > Nieuws
- > Prikbord
- > Fotoalbums
- > Vraag en antwoord
- > Forums
- > Blog
- > Diversen
- > HRM info
- > CAO/INZ
- > Interne vacatures
- > MKA
- > Collectieve verzekeringen
- > PGGM/PIZW
- > Bestellen treinkaartjes
- > BIG-herregistratie
- > Mobiliteit/therplaatsing
- > FWG

**Welkom bij HRM**

Hartelijk welkom bij de Stafdienst Human Resources Management (HRM)!

Op dit onderdeel van het intranet vindt u veel informatie die voor u van belang kan zijn:

- informatie over diverse arbeidsvoorwaarden en procedures
- allerlei te downloaden formulieren
- antwoorden op veel gestelde vragen
- diverse handige links

Hebt u opmerkingen of tips waarmee we u en uw collega's nog beter van dienst kunnen zijn? Geef deze dan door via: [infohr@mst.nl](mailto:infohr@mst.nl)

**Nieuws**

- 23/11/2009 [Wijze van aanmelden en wijzigen voor IZZ is veranderd.](#)  
U kunt vanaf 1 januari 2010 geen gebruik meer maken van Diginet!!
- 23/11/2009 [Waar vind ik de dienst Arbo en Milieu?](#)  
In verband met de vaccinaties wordt regelmatig de vraag gesteld waar deze afdeling te vinden is!

Lokaal intranet 100%

76

Bron: <http://mijnmst.zmst.loc> consulted on 01-12-2009

