

Arguments for practice-based studies in e-HRM Case study of HR transformation at Sandvik Corp.

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Abstract. *This paper promotes philosophical arguments for a practice based view to e-HRM, as an alternative to evidence based management, to close the gap between HRM academics and practitioners. A reflexive theorizing of HR work is proposed, encouraging diversity in epistemological and ontological assumptions to support a mindful problemization of empirical work. In my study of an HR transformation project at Sandvik Corporation I argue for a positioning of e-HRM studies towards a deeper acknowledgment of situated work practices. I also propose some contemporary discussions within organization studies and information systems research, acknowledging especially the entanglement of technology and every day practices, and ethnography as a strategy of investigation. Finally I conclude with a discussion of the contribution of this research approach to the study of e-HRM.*

Keywords: e-HRM, HR transformation, practice-based, relationality, ethnography

1 A gap to practice

In recent years ‘e-enabled HRM’ and the idea of evidence-based HRM has had significant impact upon HR professional skills and the way organizations design HR practices. Within Multi National Corporations (MNC) technological developments and the use of integrated Human Resource Information Systems (HR IS), have promoted reengineering of processes and made possible the integration, centralization and rationalization of administrative work within HR departments [35, 49]. The use of such “pull technologies”, and the mass customization of terms and conditions, have revealed a transformational potential of HR IS [33], and positive associations between technical and strategic effectiveness have also resulted in a situation where HRM is more often understood as a major competitive advantage [16].

A key driver in the rhetoric behind this development has been Ulrich’s (1997) highly influential *business-partner model*. This value-driven business model for HRM, based on research, has for more than a century figured as a benchmark for the creation of modern HRM. It is widely dispersed and discussed in businesses, and to be found as guidance in many HR transformational projects and consultancy marketing information. The basic idea of this business partner model includes the use of integrated software solutions to support and enable benchmarking of global HR processes. This gain in

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efficiency through automating information structures and often outsourcing HR administration, is supposed to “release” HR professionals into more strategic activities as ‘business partners’. Instead of being preoccupied with routine work, HR professionals are ideally released into more analytical work tasks taking on a more proactive role in the organization working with people development and change issues in line with corporate strategy. This is supposed to contribute to the organizational mutual interests of employees and share holders, and raise the professional standing of HR [86].

‘*Business* partnering makes HR accountable to the business, and expects HR to add real value. This is a shift away from traditional HR functions where purpose, priorities and successes were defined within HR’ [18]

Though, in “reality” there seems to be general disappointment in the use of these high performance work models. HR managers seem to have failed to seize the opportunities outlined by Ulrich’s ‘business partner model’. A majority of participating managers in a recent study don’t believe in the structure of this model and that one out of four also questioned it’s effectiveness [65]. There also seems to be a lack of clear definitions of the roles for HR professionals within this model [7].

From a more general point of view there seems to be large discrepancies between research findings and practitioners’ beliefs in “how it is in reality” [74]. Professionals often do not agree with research findings and this in turn leads to a general problem of getting companies to put scientific knowledge into practice, i.e. Evidence-Based Management (EBM) as companies [practitioners] often make decisions based on false beliefs that stem only from personal experiences [62, 63]. Why is this? Why do practitioners not just do as we think?

Rynes, Giluk, et.al. (2007) argue that this is because of academics inability to communicate their research findings. They suggest academics agree about evidence that supports the use of specific practices, and that intermediate HR journals should communicate this information to practitioners, but fail to do so. They claim that information distribution is the main problem; that academics are miss-interpreted and that we are not good enough at communicating our facts. Managers need information that is timely and relevant for their jobs, providing them with fresh insights and meaningful solutions that help them also within the political game. But academics miss out on this opportunity, and instead management gurus and consultants take over and fill out the “expertise gaps”, using good narratives and emotionally appealing, and efficient, marketing [31].

A second explanation is the difficulty for managers to relate to our research, and when using it they still miss out interpreting them wrong because of poor scientific understanding [70]. This is arguably because management is not a profession, like medicine, psychology, education, or law that shares a common knowledge base (Leicht and Fennell 2001; Trank and Rynes 2003; Rynes, Giluk et al. 2007). Highly structured practices, such as these, are in stark contrast to the messy and ambiguous practicing of management in contemporary organizations [95]. Managers generally don’t read scientific articles, but consult other managers to solve problems [15, 99].

A third explanation may be found in Deadrick and Gibson’s findings about interest areas. Looking at the interest groups of HR professionals and practitioners there seem to be a gap in interest areas. In a content analysis of 4300 HR related articles, in two academic and two professional journals, Deadrick and Gibson (2007) found a significant difference in the interest areas of HR professionals and HR academics and a

general lack of interest in everyday activities by HR academics. This was especially prevalent in studies of HR technology, strategic HR, managerial change efforts, and role of HR departments. In total these subjects (HR department, strategic HR and technology issues) covered 29 % of the professional articles, while just found in 7 % of the academic articles [20]. While professionals seems to be more interested in the technical and day-to-day aspects of their work, academics devoted more attention to generalizable phenomena (macro/statistical research) [20].

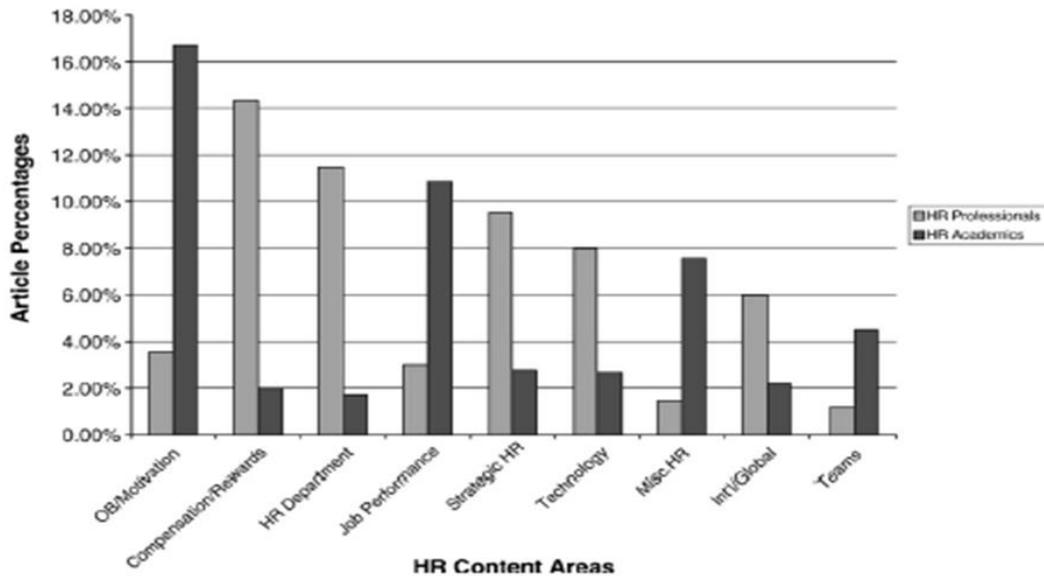


Figure 1: Largest content-area gaps, represented by percentage of articles published in HR professional and HR academic journals (1986–2005). Deadrick & Gibson 2007, p. 134

‘As long as the professed goals of HR Academic and Professional journals diverge, the espoused (and published) interests of the two groups will also diverge. As a result, the privileged knowledge of HR Professionals and Academics will differ, which will lead to knowledge gaps and, most likely, “doing” (implementation) gaps.’ [20] p.138

To sum up, I see two clear arguments for why these gaps exists, but weather this gap to practice exists because of incompatible ways of communicating what we academics know, or professional’s ability to understand academic results, one question still lingers: why are the interest areas so diverse and why are not academics focused on problems as they are experienced by those who own them?

For sure Dave Ulrich, takes his responsibility responding to the critique, and gradually developed his model [87-89], but the general gap between practitioner and HR research is more profound and complex than to be answered by some leading authors. Fact is that despite the attention paid to the strategic agenda of future HR work, there is up to 2005 still little empirical evidence yet to support the HRM-performance link and the actual enactment of HR practices and employees perception of them [11, 59]. Arguments regarding the proposed shift from transactional to more strategic work in real practices is lacking evidence [60], and studies of the impact of HRM on different stakeholders are sparse [10]. Also regarding HR IS research, little has been done to address the perceived benefits and potential barriers to the implementation and use of HR technology [9, 37,

50, 82]. Studies of the implementation of integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software, specifically, is still in its infancy [9].

a. A way forward

Arguably there seem to have been a loss in philosophical reasoning about the knowledge that EBM scholars argue we are in consensus of, and a problematic distance between practitioners and academics interest areas and understanding as a consequence of this [31]. These questions need to be deeply thought through, searching for answers that can bridge this gap. Guest (2007) firmly steer this question towards a broader understanding of what is consensus within the academic discussion. Arguably, functionalistic writers seem to assume that we have the scientific knowledge of those basic principles that should guide HR practicing. Seeing this calling for EBM from a European perspective, Guest (2007) argues the situation being a bit different in Europe. For sure, there are fairly strong national initiatives supporting the development of evidence based management in the UK (e.g. Social research council, ESRC, and additional funding to universities that can demonstrate a strategy for transfer of knowledge). Still, compared to the development in the United States, in Europe EBM may be an even more disputed territory. In the context of a strong pluralist tradition in European industrial relations, with strong trade unions sustained and even reinforced by homogeneous legislation within European Union, European critical management scholars [1, 44], have fundamentally questioned the positivist (functionalistic and rationalistic) paradigm, drawing instead on the salience of issues such as power, social structures, and social relations, acknowledging a fundamentally different understanding of what is valuable knowledge.

‘On the one hand, strategic HRM is characterized by the dominant organizational imperative for performance and productivity, which derives from an industry-based view of the firm and is informed by a rationalistic view of human action. On the other hand, HRM is concerned with meeting a more complex and often ambiguous needs and expectations of employees, the humanizing of work,...’ [57] p.185

Through inquiries into the field priorities and limits, critical scholars have produced a viable critique of rationalistic approaches, arguing that value centric and unitary solutions too many complex and emergent organizational phenomena are simplistic. Instead this critical view of HRM argues for a pluralist approach that cares for diversity and the multiplicity of managerial conduct [31]. But, this critique seems to have fallen somewhat in the shade. European scholars argue that there has been a neglect of critical perspectives within HRM research between 1995 and 2000 [41]. Compared to European management and organizations theory journals, HRM journal appear to be oriented towards a consensus perspective, while organization theory construct HRM both in a way that strives for consensus and critique of reigning paradigm.

However, there are viable examples in the contemporary HRM debate [3, 96]. Going back to the critique of the ‘business partner’ model, Francis and Keegan (2007) critically evaluate the idea of ‘e-enabled HRM’ and the key underpinning assumptions behind the business partnership (i.e. CIPD notion of the ‘thinking performer’). They argue that instead of enhancing the creative and progressive roles (strategic partner, change agent and employee champion), HR professionals seem to miss out on the classical employee facing roles that are so important to maintain the social and human capital [27]. Guest and King suggest the same interpretation, arguing HR managers seem to put heavy emphasis on the rationalizing infrastructure designed to support line management, and so they neglect paying more attention to build good relationships with

line managers and taking an explicit role in change management issues, [32]. Francis and Keegan (2006) argue that the profession needs to reflect seriously about the consequences of this framing of HR work. As business-values may be given as the only supposed contribution, this might render in a depersonalization and a lack of strategic amplification of HR professionals relationship with employees, employee well-being and the career paths of HR professionals. As soft elements cannot be measured in objective terms, and the 'high commitment' HRM practices are still shaped by a rhetoric concerning "right" attitudes and behaviours, a great cost may instead occur when losing empowerment and its potential to facilitate the incorporation of broader issues of employee well-being [27]. Arguably, there is a need for more constructive and balanced dialogue on the employee-facing role in the HR and a deeper understanding of the diversity of work practices as a basic building block in a sustainable way forward [26, 46].

Guest (2007) suggest academics need to stop thinking too much of what is "perfect information" and go back to "the roots" of what good communication is, and in particular, we need to readdress the perspective of the practitioners and reflect on what happens in organizations and understand why practitioners do not find the same value in EBM. Instead of thinking information distribution, we should be realistic about what the intermediate HR publications can do, and that we instead must see the plethora of different communication channels open to us in a modern society, including the formation of new relationship building constellations that take on more "direct" activities, such as joint forums and networks for further collaboration [71]. This work also involves our engagement in helping HR professionals education, to develop enhanced critical understanding and a capacity to conduct there own scientific inquiry and to know where to find and validate academic results and find workable solutions [68]. There is obviously a need for HR professionals to understand how power, responsibilities and critical reflection may help balance the inherent tensions in the employer contract, and it's centrality for the psychological contract between employee and organization [27, 69].

What looks to be an apparent gap between rhetoric and reality in HRM research [45] has only one way forward: we need to start again paying interest into what HR managers every day work is really like. We need way forward that once again focuses upon "real" practices, giving attention to empirical setting. We need to ask our selves if a the every day problems and challenges for HR professional and management in general (often concerned with existential affairs, relying on good relationship building and flexible solutions to resolve everyday problems) can seriously be compared with other professions, such as medicine or law, and if not, what are the negative consequences of these "hard practices" in such a "soft practice" as HRM,? These issues need to be addressed in a way that cares for the totality of human organizing. It needs to be a perspective that better conceptualize the development of the HR profession, not from what they are supposed to be, but from where HR managers are today, relating stronger to 'workers verdict' of what is valuable HR work.

The enactment of HR models occurs in 'actual' organizations and if we are to educate managers in relevant know how, we need to study practicing management's knowledge to solve the real puzzles, also reflecting on the effects of the scientific rhetoric on this reality that we try to understand [21]. We supposedly need to get closer to the problems of organizations and experience them personally, rather than describing them from the outside [21]. We need to come closer to this reality and understand lived organizations,

conducting empirical research that account for the richness in organizational ‘sensemaking’ [98]

‘...we need to be more aware of the structural and experience-based contexts of our investigation; to see more than we understand.’ [21] p.554

This needs to be done in a constructive and balanced way, not just in opposition to the functionalist paradigm, advocating a deconstructive logic, but systematically investigating the impact of HRM models on the shop floor. However, this is not to say that we shall adapt to the “marketization” of HRM research where scholars try to compete with consultants and journalists, in a consumer driven research. This could result in knowledge generations methods that loose both rigor and relevance, adopting an atheoretical language, close to what organizations already feel that they know and say [21, 75]. Rather, we need to explicitly target both HR managers and their reasons for their sticking with conventional truths and the misuse of EBM [62], and at the same time reflect upon our scientific rationale [meta-theory] and how such might lead to a “quick fix” mentality [36]. This way a critical view, need not to be in contrast to an EBM approach, but can be a complement to the critique forwarded by Guest (2007) and Lawler (2007), arguing for an ‘engaged academy’ [19]. Extended with behavioural theorizing, the functionalist perspective can readdress the weight of employee well-being and work based dynamics for the actual performance within embedded HR practices [23].

2 e-HRM at Sandvik Corp.

Answering this call for more empirical work and new types of research approaches, the aim of my doctoral thesis is to contribute with a case study of HR transformation at Sandvik Corp. Sandvik Corp. is a knowledge-based Swedish engineering group with advanced products and a world-leading position within the selected areas such as mining and construction, hard materials and industry tools. With over 40’ employees and an order intake of approx. 9 billion EURO and, the company is one of the largest companies in Sweden.

Since 2003 the corporation drives a large HR change program called CONNECT. The program was created to introduce new ways of working with HR questions on a global basis, securing efficient and common ways of working and changing focus from administrative tasks to more strategic HR work. The program consists of four corner stones being the implementation of a Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software (‘Peoplesoft’), to enable a global HR information handling, introducing global HR processes, a new HR role on both global and national level, called ‘HR advisor’ and a service centre solution, responsible for delivering effective HR administration services. Having had strong support from top management team, the program has over the last six years overcome many breakdowns and developed an experienced project management group. Focusing on all four cornerstones in each country implementation, introducing processes to streamline the organisation on a global basis, the program have had fundamental impact on the way HR is delivered at Sandvik Corp.



Figure 2: Sandvik HR transformation model; CONNECT. From Sandvik web-presentation.

a. Technology, processes and everyday routines

Initial findings of the 20 interviews conducted, and observation of CONNECT project management group, can be bracketed into two areas of concern: CONNECT project management group and the use of Peoplesoft, and the development at a production plant in Gimo, Sweden.

Historically the HR work at Sandvik has been dispersed, having uneven quality within the different business areas. The organization has been characterized by a decentralized organizational culture and varied ways of coping with HR problems and opportunities. With the help of offensive change management and internal marketing the CONNECT program management group have delivered the tools necessary to raise the general quality on HR work, but the different business areas seem to have made very different progress in their work with the CONNECT agenda, most significantly on the use of ‘Peoplesoft’ and it’s more formal routines. The system seems to be thought of as hard to handle. Line managers complain about the interface and that the system is built on the wrong philosophy, being to rigid. There seem to be significant influence from system requirements, and dependency on system architecture where much work needs to be focused on getting the basic functionality running, globally, before the more qualitative and parts can be developed. It’s arguably a communication challenge; that in order to get the value adding parts working the basic functions need to be in place; adjusting system modules to local requirements, and getting service centres working and operational reporting done by managers and employees. This seem to have affected the way CONNECT has influenced the practice, often through the connection HR professionals and technical experts on a global level. They work as a sort of ‘high competence support’, but in reality they are reasonable apart from the ongoing business of day to day HR work practices played out in the relationships between line managers and HR advisors.

‘ -As commented from a globally responsible HR advisor, all the four corner stones in the delivery model are all as important and he insists that they would not suspend the idea of a system support, just because of old routines, but for him it is a question that needs support from top management and it needs to gratify line managers and HR advisors in their everyday work [77]

As an example at the production unit, HR advisors and line managers thought they needed to take another turn in clarifying role descriptions, reasoning at all level in the business area about current situation and future expectations.

‘- We noticed that during this transformation we needed to do this more than once, because they forget and you go back on the same track. [77]

This reflective activity was conducted all over the production unit, where all involved managers had the opportunity to state their point of view and collectively make sense of the new situation, find their responsibilities and figure out the contribution of the new technology.

‘-People often miss, or choose not to tell the main reason, the most significant reason for managers not getting efficient in their work with ‘Peoplesoft’, that they don’t want to work with the system.. They think It’s much better to call someone...but It’s not inefficient to use the system. [77]

‘-I have no reason to defend ‘Peoplesoft’, but I have had great reason to see, do we do the right quality, and my conclusion is: It’s not rationally conditioned, It’s a resistance to change, and we all have the responsibility to get this working. It’s OUR responsibility to work with this change and that’s why the program management is not such a powerful instance. [77]

This constant centrality of the CONNECT program management and the use of Peoplesoft, in relation to every day work practices and organizational routines, have become a central phenomena for ongoing investigation and theorizing process. The whole HR philosophy at Sandvik, as such, and this tension between the rationalizing goals of program management, and how it is answered and interpreted by individuals and groups in the organization, in everyday work practices, will be the main mystery being described and analyzed in the study of HR work at Sandvik Corp.

3 Contribution to e-HRM

In trying to connect this study to current discussion within e-HRM, I recently got in contact with the work of Tatyana Bondarouk and Huub Ruël, who have made recent attempts to find a common conceptual umbrella of this kind of transformational process [72, 73]. Traditionally, the definition has touched upon the implementation and structuring process of technology driven HR transformations and the consequence of these organizing activities in creating HR network structures throughout the organization [83]. Ruël, Bondarouk & Van der Velde (2007) further suggest a definition of e-HRM as a complete approach for modern HRM, also including an explicit recognition of the relevance of integrated ERP systems. Bondarouk and Ruël (2009) continue this definition, arguing that we need to find a consensus in a definition covering the integration of HRM and IT, focusing also on targeted employee and managers, often being the value creating consumers of web-based technologies:

‘...an umbrella term covering all possible integration mechanisms and contents between HRM and Information Technologies aiming at creating value within and across organizations for targeted employees and management. [9]

To focus the problemization on Sandvik I have used this definition of e-HRM, and four interrelating aspects of e-HRM proposed as relevant for further elaboration: content of e-HRM, implementation of e-HRM, targeted employee and managers and e-HRM consequence. From my experiences at Sandvik Corp. this made explicit four study objects that guide the investigation:

- 1) Use of HR IS: providing global information handling, as a central mechanism to understand the development of CONNECT. Studying the appropriation process of technology may show the logical demands of the integrated system and its role as a boundary object. By studying the demand of integration of HRM strategy and policies, as they are documented in web-based and other communication material, the aim is also to understand the intended HR practices
- 2) Transformation of HR work practices: understood as real time changes in both management and shop floor practices. Studying interpretations of formal roles and processes to uncover differences in the way this transformation is enacted and perceived in actual HR practices
- 3) New roles and relationships between top and line management: studying how CONNECT program management, HR advisors and line management collaboratively/relationally make sense of their new work situation, to understand how new work roles/identities are played out, and how these relationships changes over time as work is routinized.
- 4) Value creating HR work: the subjective experience of value in the constructing HR tools, transformational leadership, and every day practicing of HR. A deeper understanding of the practical knowledge needed to produce value will unravel important competency needs. A relative appreciation of the contribution within the organization from HR problem solving and the development new tools and policies, will show both the political and creative/productive value.

a. Practice-based theorizing

The construction of these four study objects, as understood in the empirical setting, has also been constantly influenced by a parallel theorizing process. The guiding principle in my research has been the iterative “dance” between different explanatory frameworks and the experiences at Sandvik Corp. From the early framing the empirical phenomena and the interrelation of technology, HR practice transformation and HR managerial competence, I was trying to find research that could help me get a better general understanding.

In this theorizing process I was initially inspired from contemporary academic debates within relevant academic fields, and interviews with key stakeholders at Sandvik Corp. Reading literature on the area of HRM resulted in a broad informing research base that supports the problemization of the case, pointing out some relevant theoretical questions and concepts regarding HR IS and HR transformations [35, 47], subsequent changes in competency demands for HR professionals [28, 38, 87, 89, 90], and the changing role of line managers [8, 66, 93]. This reasoning was further complicated with arguments from adjacent disciplines such as Information systems (IS) research, Organization Studies (OS). Driving this process is my fundamental interested in the link between research and practice, and the ‘practice turn in social science’ [67, 79]. From a sociological background [13, 30] practice-based studies have offered a pragmatic (re)orientation in organizational studies through the observation of everyday practices [14, 43, 53, 56, 61, 103].

‘...beyond its canonical abstractions of practice to the rich, full-blooded activities themselves. And it must legitimize and support the myriad enacting activities perpetrated by its different members.’ [14] p. 53.

Basically these influences handles the phenomena of organizational learning [14, 29, 43, 51, 79, 84, 85], and within information systems research a substantial research of 'IT and organizational change' [6, 12, 48, 52, 54, 91, 102, 103].

In later developments this iterative process has resulted in a framing of more distinct theoretical constructs. To further focus my elaboration of central mechanisms (i.e. the study objects), I refer to some key constructs in a number of converging debates within information systems research, organization studies and science and technology studies. These concepts gain their relevance in explaining central phenomena at Sandvik Corp., but their common philosophical argument is just as interesting. From a sociology and science and technology perspective [5, 42, 64, 79] scholars argue we need relational view of organizational practices, understanding technology and human organization on an ontological level as fundamentally entangled. Rather than talking about objects and humans as having distinct properties, these authors, and I, argue we need to better understand the social and technical phenomena as fundamentally relational phenomena, i.e. the one cannot exist without the other.

'The thrust of site [practice] ontology, consequently, is that human coexistence inherently transpires as part of a context of a particular sort...What makes them ('sites') interesting is that context and contextualized entity constitute one another: what the entity or event is tied to the context, just as the nature and identity of the context is tied to the entity or event (among others).' [78] p. 465

We do not "come into" a situation, but we constantly are in situations as we go about, together, and with the use of tools and cultural artefacts, to take purposeful action, already 'being-in-the-world' [34]. I refer to this relational ontology and its phenomenological grounding as a new meta-theoretical starting point [36]. As a sort of 'pragmatic pluralism' [97], or what may be called 'interpretive repertoire' [4], I will reflexively refer to theoretical concepts relevant for empirical interpretation, also trying to ensure that central concepts within the are used together in a coherent way, introducing a framework of assumptions that has its own ontological, epistemological and methodological integrity [97].

This framework will involve relational concepts such as 'socio-technical agency' and 'performativity' [5, 39], 'reflection-in-action' and the constitutive 'entanglement of sociality and materiality' in organizational life [55]; all used as tools to cut the rose out of the cake. Based on such theoretical background knowledge, the aim is to present a relevant vocabulary and analysis of HR work as sociomaterial practices, and a direct argument for a relational view of both HR transformations, and HR professional competence and expertise needed in contemporary HR work [22, 76].

b. Methodological and theoretical awareness

Charreire Petit & Huault (2008) argues forcefully that the general deployment of constructivist approaches in studies of organizational knowledge is unreflective as to the specificity of the research design and the basic philosophical assumptions [17].

A practice-based problematization needs an inquiry where data are inextricably fused with theory, and where academics and practitioners constructs the mystery by deepening their understanding of the phenomena [2]. Theorizing practices this way also becomes a problem of recognizing the interplay between theory and method [94]. It is an iterative research process where there is no blueprint, but every approach needs to be justified and the contribution needs to be constructed [92] via recursive cycling among

the case data, emerging theory, and later, extant literature [25], theorizing ‘up’ from grounded practices [51, 100].

Through the constant negotiation of the role of technology and how modern HR practices may look like, the subjective elements of powerful stakeholders and creative users at Sandvik Corp. plays a subtle but very significant role. Whether or not these changes are objective in the form of materialized technology, or subjective in the form of line managers understanding of their formal HR responsibility, what we experience as a change is always happening in the every-day coping with HR service delivery at Sandvik Corp. Arguably then, a practice-based approach need to have an appropriate methodology for research of what it is people in organizations actually do, and In contrast to traditional triangulation of data or methods, a constructivist approach requires an emphasis on the varied and engaged nature organizational practices. This needs an commitment seeking approach, such as ethnography [80] or action research, that forces the researcher to participate and familiarize oneself with the situation and to gain empirical access into these knowledge based processes to “get a feel” for the place. I use an ethnographically inspired investigative method, using three distinct methodological lenses (time, breakdowns and narratives) [61] to distil the rich and tacit knowledge to be found in every day informal organizing activities.

4 Summary

This paper is an argument for the understanding of HR design practices and the design of HR practices that takes into count the situated character HR transformations. Rather than just affirming the ‘black box’ view of organizations, a situated perspective can probably help closing the gap between theory and practice in HRM research, contributing with a critical discussion of modern HRM. A practice-based approach argues that we need better knowledge of how rules, routines and roles are affected by these premises of complex technology and program management. From this understanding I hope to achieve an analysis and vocabulary relevant both to academics and practitioners, and strong consistent arguments for alternative ways to understand success or failure of HR transformations.

Engaged by voices that encourages scholars in the field of HRM to continue exploring empirical investigations through innovative theoretical and methodological approaches [40, 58, 81], the main aim is to theorize these changing HR practices in a way that informs discussions within the field of HRM and e-HRM, and practitioners interest in this process. Hopefully my study will be of value for those interested in the phenomena of HR transformation projects, presenting a case that works as a reference frame for discussion and debate and work as a catalyst of new theoretical knowledge [24, 25, 101], crossing both academic and occupational boundaries. With the help of other modern ways of communicating this academic knowledge, as suggested by Guest (2007) (e.g. homepage, forums and networks for Swedish e-HRM research, and pedagogical interventions/feed back sessions within Sandvik Corp.), a secondary aim is also to contribute directly to the development at Sandvik Corp. and other Swedish organizations conducting this type of transformation.

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