



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The role of HRM in innovation processes

Nurturing or constraining creativity

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how different HRM practices nurture and constrain creativity in the organization, upon which companies build their innovation processes. This was explored by the perspective of employees working to contribute to innovations, line managers and HR professionals. A case study was conducted in two cases in two different companies, which had different strategies and hence different settings for HRM to nurture and constrain creativity. The empirical material was based on interviews with employees, line managers and HR professionals employed in the two companies. How HRM practices nurture and constrain creativity in the innovation context was analysed and explained by theory which focus on the dual role of HRM as both stabilizing and destabilizing and also the componential theory of creativity. HRM was found to nurture and constrain creativity and hence innovation by three practices: organizing practices, staffing practices and motivating practices, which provided different opportunities. By aiming to change the culture within the company to be more innovative, a major part of the activities and practices made by HRM were included in the motivational practices. Without having a clear mission to affect creativity and innovation processes, HRM was found to nurture creativity through the three practices but mainly through the formal and structured HR processes in the organizing practices and in the staffing practices. Despite of different strategies, the cases was found to have several similar opportunities for HRM to nurture creativity and hence innovations. The dual role of HRM as both stabilizing and destabilizing was found to be similar in both cases. Additionally, a major part of the motivational practices were introduced and affected employees indirectly, through managers who could affect practices and activities as freedom, encouragement, feedback, work climate, organizational support and knowledge sharing which nurtured creativity and hence innovations.

Key words: HRM practices, creativity, innovation, knowledge sharing

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1. Introduction

Many companies today face a constantly intensified global competition demanding that they transform themselves and their production on a regular basis. In order to achieve a competitive position and thereby also survive, companies are dependent on their flexibility and ability to adapt and respond to the environment (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2005) and to their ability to come up with and introduce innovative products to the market (see for example Mumford, 2000; Jiang, Wang & Zhao, 2012; Beugelsdijk, 2008; Chen & Huang, 2009).

In this context, the *creativity* hosted by the companies becomes a crucial resource, referring to their ability to generate both ideas that are new and useful, and ideas that can be implemented in order to solve a significant and novel problem (Mumford, 2000). Creativity is something valuable, unusual or pattern breaking (Martens, 2011), which in the context of innovation also includes the implementation of the ideas into products, processes or procedures which will benefit the organization, the work team or the individual (Jiang et al., 2012). This includes both radical and incremental innovations. The former refers to major changes or something brand new, and the latter refers to slight changes or improvements in existing products, processes or procedures (Beugelsdijk, 2008). The likelihood of innovation can be enhanced by management practices, but it is the individuals that are part of the firm that are seen as the source of the new ideas (Mumford, 2000). Individuals are the ones who develop ideas, and who propose and implement the ideas. Creativity is therefore argued to be the root to innovation (Jiang et al., 2012).

Human Resource Management (HRM) has a crucial function in stimulating innovation processes in companies (Li, Zhao & Liu, 2006), by affecting creativity (Jiang et al., 2012) and knowledge sharing (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011). However, this function is rather difficult to manage. They have to manage the fact that feasible solutions to novel problems do not just arise (Mumford, 2000), and recognise that knowledge or expertise is only one factor that influence creative problem solving; i.e. to develop something new requires more than the existing knowledge. Their ability to combine and reorganize information and knowledge in order to develop new understandings or new conceptual systems is a key to creative thoughts that hence also influence creative problem solving (ibid.). Furthermore, HRM then has to care for the intrinsic motivations that often drive creative individuals (Amabile, 1997).

In other words, HRM practices become crucial to how organizations influence and shape attitude, behavior and skills of individuals, of importance to whether organizations deliver innovations that corresponds with their goals (Chen & Huang, 2009). But the role of HRM in organizations is dual. On the one hand, HRM concerns policies and practices for organising and managing work, which includes the fundamental structure of the work organization. On the other hand, HRM also encompasses policies and practices to employ and manage people which includes both individual management activities as for example recruiting, motivating, developing and retaining employees, and also processes to inform, consult and negotiate with individuals and groups (Boxall & Purcell, 2011).

Different HRM practices are seen as valuable to stimulate and support creativity mainly through enable freedom among employees, which hence improve innovation processes (Jiang et al., 2012). By the dual role of both representing structure and managing work and at the same time stimulating creativity and freedom among employees, we do however also imply that it is possible to imagine that the HRM practices that are being used also could constrain creativity and innovation processes rather than nurturing them.

The question is how HRM can manage this duality by both representing the organization and management and also to enable freedom and creativity? *How* and *in what way* does HRM contribute to innovation processes? Does HRM nurture or constrain innovations, and in what way? And how are these contributions perceived by the HR professionals themselves and by the employees and line managers who are affected by HRM?

Previous studies have contributed to an extensive understanding of the positive relationship between HRM practices and firm performance (Jiang et al., 2012), but studies regarding the role of HRM in innovation processes (Beugelsdijk, 2008) and the relationship between HRM, employee creativity and innovation are scarce (Jiang et al., 2012), even more limited from an empirical perspective (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2008). Therefore, this master thesis aims to fill this gap and will contribute to the understanding of the role by HRM in creativity and innovation processes by further exploration.

1.1 Objective and research questions

The main purpose with this thesis is to improve our understanding of how HRM practices nurture and constrain creativity within their organization, upon which various companies build their innovation processes. This purpose have been divided into two main questions that will guide the analysis, and that will cover different sub-areas of importance to our understanding of the opportunities for HRM to be part of and contribute to the innovation process:

- What role is attributed to HRM within practices intended to encourage creativity in innovation processes?
- How can HRM nurture and constrain creativity within innovation processes?

Two cases from two different companies will be in focus in this study. Both of them operate in the high-technology production industry and are therefore excellent examples of companies who are facing a highly competitive environment which forces them to constantly change and to develop innovations in order to survive and to achieve competitive advantage. Both companies also have a clear innovation strategy and are operating globally. There are some differences between the cases, which makes a comparison between them interesting. A major difference is the strategy for HRM in innovation processes in the different organisations. In Company A, HRM has a mission from management to change the culture to be more innovative and has both a direct and indirect role in innovation processes. HRM in Company B does not have an explicit goal to improve innovations and have a more indirect role in innovation processes.

In order to answer the research question, this thesis is disposed as follow: After this introduction, previous research related to the topic of the study will be presented. This is followed by a section which presents the theoretical concepts. The methods that were used will thereafter be described to give an illustration about how this case study was conducted. The validity and reliability as well as limitations and ethical considerations of the study will also be discussed. After that, the results of this case study will be presented which are subsequently analysed by using theories and previous research in the discussion. Finally, conclusions will be drawn in order to answer the research questions and the purpose of the study, and suggestions for future research will be described

2. Previous research

Previous research will be presented in this section. The main focus is previous research of HRM, creativity and innovation, which additionally will be described in relation to knowledge sharing, since it is also required for innovation to occur.

2.1 HRM and innovation

Previous research in the field of HRM and innovations will be described below, by describing the different HRM practices and its impact on innovations that has been studied.

According to previous research, HRM practices are the main methods for organizations to influence and shape attitude, behavior and skills of individuals to perform at work and hence to achieve the goals of the organization (Chen & Huang, 2009). Certain HRM practices do affect the innovativeness of a firm, and might therefore be a valuable resource for firms wishing to innovate (Beugelsdijk, 2008). Several studies has concluded that organisations should develop a system of internally consistent HRM practices (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2005; Laursen & Foss, 2003) since a system with mutually reinforcing practices are the most beneficial to innovation performance rather than isolated HRM practices (Laursen & Foss, 2003).

The role of staffing in innovation has been studied by different researchers (see for example Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2008, Jiang et al. 2012; Chen & Huang, 2009; Beugelsdijk, 2008). Since staffing includes organizational practices to attract, recruit and retain employees with traits that support innovations, it is argued to be a key practice in order to affect innovation (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2008). Additionally, Chen & Huang (2009) argue that selecting employees with appropriate skills and attitude to perform at work will enable organizations to integrate diverse sources of knowledge and hence stimulate innovations. Recruitment and selection of employees has been found to affect both the ability to and the motivation for employees to be creative, which are positively related to both administrative and technological innovation (Jiang et al., 2012). Administrative innovation is referring to organizational forms, procedures and policies whereas technological innovation includes products, services and technologies (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2008). Contrary to these findings, Tan & Nasurdin (2011) did not find any support for recruitment of employees and innovation. For attracting and retaining employees with the right traits for innovations, providing employment security is argued to be important (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle (2008). Additionally, Beugelsdijk (2008) concludes that stand-by contracts are negatively associated to both radical and incremental product innovations.

After being employed, different studies have found that the job design has an impact on innovations. A job design that increases autonomy and focus on empowerment were found to influence the motivation for being creative, to contribute to innovations (Jiang et al., 2012) and to generate more product innovations (Beugelsdijk, 2008). Job rotation (Jiang et al., 2012) and flexible working hours were also positively related to technological innovations and were especially associated with radical innovations, but not with incremental innovations (Beugelsdijk, 2008).

The impact of training of employees on innovation has been studied, with inconsistent results. A quantitative study of high-tech firms in China by Jiang et al. (2012) found no relationship between training and administrative and technological innovation, when studying creativity in a mediating role. A positive effect of training on technological innovation was on the other hand found by Li et al. (2006) in a quantitative study that focused on high-tech firms in China. Additionally, in a study by Tan & Nasurdin (2011), training was the only studied HRM practise that had both a direct and an indirect impact on the different types of innovations: product, process and administrative innovations. In this study, knowledge management was studied and was found to be a mediator between training and innovation. Chen & Huang (2009) argue that a benefit of trainings is that it may foster employees to gain new knowledge, get new insights and develop innovative minds and skills. Additionally, Beugelsdijk (2008) found that training was important for employees to generate incremental, but not radical, innovations.

Previous research has been studying the impact of appraisal systems and incentives on innovations, also with inconsistent results. For example, by studying the impact of performance appraisals on innovations with knowledge management as a mediator, Tan & Nasurdin (2011) found that performance appraisal has both a direct and an indirect effect on administrative innovations, but not on product innovation or process innovations. Additionally, this relationship has also been studied by Jiang et al. (2012) by studying creativity as a mediator, who however did not find a relationship between performance appraisal and administrative and technological innovation. The authors argue that performance appraisal may result in undermining the intrinsic motivation of employees, since performance appraisals are mainly used when the level of payment are about to be determined. Different kinds of appraisals were studied by Li et al. (2006) who concluded that process appraisal and control is to be preferred over outcome appraisal since it is positively related to technological innovation. Additionally, outcome appraisal and control were found to be negatively related to technological innovation.

The relation between performance-based pay and innovations is argued to be complex and is connected to a potential risk. On the one hand, performance-based pay may contribute to and stimulate creativity and initiatives for improvements. On the other hand, by introducing these individual incentives may also negatively affect the willingness of employees to contribute to solving problems, by which they are not directly involved in (Lau & Ngo, 2004). Additionally, a majority of innovations are required to be approached by teams. By introducing individual rewards, it might erode the crucial feeling of we-ness which is argued to be necessary for both knowledge sharing and innovations (Beugelsdijk, 2008). Performance-based pay has also been found to have an impact on the generating of incremental innovations, but not on radical innovations. Other researchers have studied the effect of innovation on different kind of rewards and distinguish between material and immaterial incentives. Li et al. (2006) found that immaterial incentives such as independence at the workplace and allowance of self-growth were positively related to technological innovation, whereas material incentives were negatively related. In contrast, Jiang et al. (2012) found that rewards were influencing both the ability of and the motivation for

employees to be creative, which hence was positively related to both administrative and technological innovation.

2.2 HRM, creativity and knowledge sharing

Both creativity and knowledge sharing are agreed to be important prerequisites for innovations to occur. For example, Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, (2008) argue that innovation resides in the intelligence, imagination and creativity of the employees. The role of creativity and knowledge sharing, in relation to HRM practices and innovation will therefore be described below.

Some previous studies has focused on the role of HRM practices in innovation processes with a mediating variable and have found support for the importance of creativity, knowledge management and knowledge sharing as mediators, which hence resulted in an indirect positive relationship between HRM practices and innovation (see for example Jiang et al., 2012).

2.2.1 HRM and creativity

Previous studies concerned with HRM and creativity have focused on the impact of personal factors which resulted in the importance of motivation, knowledge and skills for creativity (Martens, 2011). Regarding motivation, Jiang et al. (2012) argue that HRM practices that motivate employees to a sense of autonomy will result in employees being more effective in problem solving and creating new ideas in order to cope with job demands. At the individual level, job complexity includes a high degree of autonomy and skill variety, and is alleged to be an important factor that promotes creativity. Additionally, task autonomy and employee empowerment were found to have an impact on exploratory learning (Beugelsdijk, 2008). Further, resources such as time, money, information and physical space, were found to be an important condition for creativity to occur. Contrary, lack of resources was also found to be a potential driver for creativity. This situation is argued to often be the reality for companies during their start up phases. By lacking resources, they use motivation, determination and creativity instead (Martens, 2011).

The opportunity at the work place to be creative and to have an autonomous job design is argued to be important attractors for employees (Marks & Huzzard, 2008) and is therefore motivating in itself. Also, to perceive the work environment as attractive was found to have an inspirational and motivating impact on employee creativity. Additionally, by expressing the creative identity of the organisation is another factor that was found to be important for stimulating the creative culture (Martens, 2011).

The impact of leadership has been studied regarding its importance for creativity in the workplace. A supportive supervisory style which facilitated development is argued to be an important antecedent to creativity, whereas a controlling leadership style is related to reduced motivation, creativity and innovation (Beugelsdijk, 2008). Additionally, Montag et al. (2012) found that supervisory feedback is important for creativity.

Workforce flexibility was found to have a negative impact on creativity (Beugelsdijk, 2008), a finding that might be connected to the fact that job security is positively associated to innovations as described above.

2.2.2 Knowledge sharing

To be able to develop new ideas and products, employees must have enough knowledge about the field they operate in to move it forward. The support for knowledge sharing and exchange of ideas in the organization is therefore argued as important for promoting creativity. To support this, a work environment that is tolerant and welcome new ideas, which includes freedom and challenges at work, shared objectives and open relationships between colleagues and managers have been found to be important (Martens, 2001). To be exposed to a range of perspectives in trainings or in teamwork, preferably in cross-functional teams, was found to make employees less resistant to change which is argued to be an important factor for promoting creativity (Beugelsdijk, 2008).

Formal knowledge sharing is institutionalized by management and includes all organised activities that aim to promote knowledge sharing and learning from each other. The major part of knowledge exchange is however informal, which refers to informal networks and informal communication and includes activities, services and resources that facilitate knowledge transfer, but are not necessarily designed for that purpose. Even though knowledge sharing is seen as crucial, too much knowledge sharing might be negative for the performance of the company since it is connected to the potential risk of giving away power and influence (Taminiau et al., 2009).

Knowledge sharing requires a willingness to collaborate with other employees in the organization. Many organizations are however facing the problem that the employees are lacking the desire to share knowledge with each other (Casimir et al., 2012). A positive relationship was found between HRM practices and knowledge sharing and hence innovation (Chen & Huang, 2009; Tan & Nasurdin, 2011). Different studies has concluded that the organisational culture has an important impact on knowledge sharing in the organisation An organisational culture that encourages trust between employees are facilitating knowledge sharing (Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Casimir et al. 2012; Taminiau et al., 2009; Suppiah & Sandhu, 2011) since trust might reduce the sense of vulnerability, caused by the perception of knowledge sharing as giving away power (Casimir et al., 2012). Additionally, teamwork and a collaborative culture were also argued to affect knowledge sharing positively (Suppiah & Sandhu, 2011; Casimir et al. 2012). An organisational culture that facilitates a flow of communication, social networking and cross-functional interactions was positively associated with knowledge sharing (Casimir et al. 2012).

Regarding recruitment and its impact on knowledge sharing, there is some contradictions in pervious literature. On the one hand, by using external recruitment, new knowledge comes into the organization. On the other hand, internal recruitment might facilitate the development of an organisational learning culture. This could also imply stability and career opportunities for employees, which might increase commitment and hence facilitates knowledge sharing from the individual to the company (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2013). Employment

security is argued to be important for knowledge sharing since it means stability, which affects employee motivation positively and promotes learning (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2013).

The job design was found to have an impact on the motivation to share knowledge. A job design that includes teamwork, autonomy and internal communication was positively related. Additionally, with a flexible organisational structure with broad defined jobs, knowledge sharing behaviour was enhanced since it encourages experimentation (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2013.) Some previous studies found support for the positive role of training for knowledge sharing (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2013; Minbaeva, 2005). By training, individual capabilities and a learning-oriented culture could be developed and maintained. Additionally, employee skills could be translated into organisational routines (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2013).

Performance appraisals are argued to potentially enhance employee motivation for knowledge sharing. Previous research found that compensations should be linked to performance appraisal and rewards should reflect employees' contribution to knowledge creation and transfer. The experimentation and learning should be encouraged, as well as the importance of teamwork. Therefore, the authors argue that incentives should be based on both individual performance and group performance (ibid.).

3. Theory

This section will summarize the theoretical departure of this study and is focusing on finding the central concepts that are used in the analysis.

Since the purpose of this study is to explore how HRM practices can nurture and constrain creativity in the innovation context of an organization, a theoretical departure concerning creativity and how an organization can support and stimulate creativity is needed to serve as tools for explaining the empirical findings. To start with, this section will focus on central concepts and definitions that are used in the analysis. Thereafter, the conditions for organizations and HRM to support creativity will be described. Further on, the components of creativity will be described followed by a presentation of the activities and practices that support creativity.

3.1 Central concepts and definitions

Since the purpose of this study is to explore how HRM practices involved in innovation processes can stimulate creativity, the concepts of practices and activities need to be clarified. By *activities*, I refer to the actions and interactions between different actors when they perform in their daily roles, usually without a deeper social meaning or reflection. By *practices*, I mean patterns of activities across actors which provide tools for ordering social life and activities with a broader meaning to a set of otherwise banal activities. Practices are fundamentally shaped by cultural frameworks as classifications, frames, categories and other belief systems (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007). *HRM* involves management activities for hiring and managing employees, processes for informing and negotiating and also activities concerning disciplining employees. Therefore, HRM is argued to be an aspect of all management in general and not just the exclusive work tasks of HR professionals (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). In this thesis, I will however by HRM refer to the HRM practices done by the HR department and the HR professionals and its contribution to creativity and innovation processes. The activities and practices that are in focus in this study affect employees directly, but also indirectly since HRM by HR professionals operate indirectly through managers in their work to manage and support employees.

In the empirical material, different strategies are used that the HRM practices support in order to improve innovation nurturing creativity. By *strategy*, I am referring to the characteristic way HRM acts to cope with the strategic problems of the firm (Boxall & Purcell, 2011) which in both studied cases are to generate innovations. The strategy can also be linked to the culture, which HRM try to affect by practices that nurture creativity in the innovation context. By *culture*, I refer to a pattern of basic assumptions, norms and beliefs that has been learned and are perceived as the accurate way to perceive, feel and think (Schein, 1990) in order to improve creativity and innovations in the company. The focus in this thesis is however the creativity nurturing HRM practices, and not to focus on the formation of the strategy or the culture as such.

When talking about innovation and creativity it is important to define the concepts, since there are potential different meanings. The definition of innovation differs in previous research (Taminiau et al., 2009). From a broad perspective, Jiang et al. (2012) distinguish

between creativity as the development of new ideas and innovation as putting the ideas into practice, which includes ideas, processes, products and procedures that will benefit the organization, the work team or the individual. Creativity is also connected to positive connotations by referring to valuable work, as new, unusual, unique or pattern breaking (Martens, 2011). Since people are the ones who develop ideas, and who also propose and implement the ideas, employee creativity is therefore argued as being the root to organizational innovation (Jiang et al., 2012).

For the purpose of my study, I will use this wide definition of innovation and creativity since it serves my exploratory purpose. Additionally, I am mainly interested in product and process innovations, both radical and incremental.

3.1.1 Stabilizers and destabilizers

To support organizational creativity, from a management perspective, the concepts of stabilizers and destabilizers are useful. Organizations usually have many stabilizers, while the amount of functional and appropriate destabilizers is scarce. Stabilizers include fixed repertoires of behaviors over time and ensure uniformity, reliability and predictability, which are needed in all organizations. Most of them become too rigid and are therefore insensitive to changes in the environment. Stabilizers act as a filter to conflicts, uncertainty, overlaps and ambiguities and overpower different change signals. Stabilizers support continuous step improvements and are for example management control, planning, extrinsic motivation, reduced slack, projectification and instrumental rational processes. Destabilizers, on the other hand, include dynamic or unpredictable organizational factors or behaviors, and are destabilizing the organization by challenging the conventional. Proper destabilizers are important to promote creative actions. Destabilizers support radical change and are for example informal networks, information sharing, new skills, intrinsic motivation and thinking out of the box (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005).

To promote organisational creativity, management must create a dynamic balance between these two systems. The most effective way is argued to be effective communication and a dialogue about the vision and the goal of the company, which hence will open up for new thinking, change and support for revising control mechanisms. The leadership style that is argued to be appropriate is to mediate and lead through others with less control. By ongoing reflection and an understanding of the direction as stated in the vision and goals, the risk for an imbalance between the stabilizers and destabilizers can decrease. This leadership style is argued to both nurture organizational creativity and enhance efficiency with increased intrinsic motivation (ibid.).

Since HRM has a dual role, by both organizing and managing work and also to develop and motivate employees (Boxall & Purcell, 2011), it is possible to imagine that the HRM practices might have both a stabilizing and a destabilizing role in the organization.

3.1.2 The influence of management

Leadership and management are central for creativity in organization, when considering a system perspective. Management decides what kind of behavior is and is not creative and decides to what extent creativity will satisfy the organization's need for renewal of products

or services. By being able to support and reinforce creativity, the role played by leadership is important. By creating an environment that is less bureaucratic with less tight structure and by encouraging openness to new approaches, permitting autonomy and risk taking, reward creativity and innovations as well as providing challenging environments and building feeling of self-efficacy in employees, management can facilitate creativity (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005).

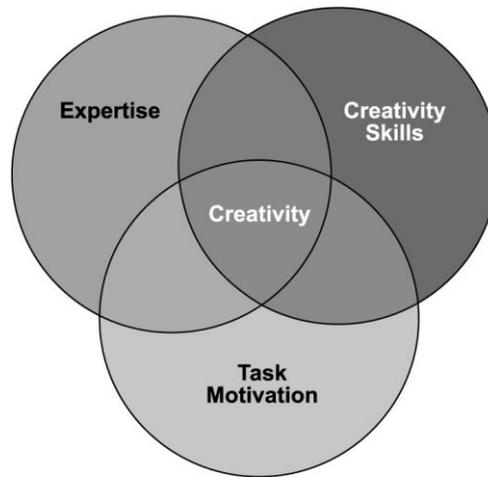
However, there are also potential barriers to creativity, associated with the influence of management. Elements as political problems and battles between turfs, competition within the company, destructive critique, strict control by management and a surplus of formal procedures and structures can undermine creativity (Amabile, 1997).

3.1.3 The componential theory of organizational creativity and innovation

Creativity can be understood as consisting of several interrelated practices, cognitive models and procedures (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). Creative and innovative behaviour could be seen as a cognitive flexibility, with a combination of personal qualities and work environment factors. What motivates individuals to be creative in the work environment is individual (Martens, 2011).

In spite of this, an assumption in the componential theory of creativity is that all humans are, at least to a moderate level, able to produce creative work during some of their time in some domain. Additionally, the social environment at work is able to influence both the frequency of and the level of creative behavior (Amabile, 1997) by both promote and/or inhibit creativity in organizations (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). A successful implementation of creative ideas in the organization is what organizational creativity is referring to. Therefore, to nurture innovation, management must take action and allocate resources for its development and implementation (ibid.).

The componential theory of creativity consists of three major components of creativity on individual or group level: domain-relevant expertise, creativity-relevant skills and task motivation, whereas each component is necessary for creativity (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). According to the theory, creativity is suggested to most likely occur when there is an overlap of people's skills and their deepest passion – as in their strongest intrinsic interest. The higher the level of the three components in the model is, the higher will the level of creativity be. This is illustrated in the intersection of the model below (Amabile, 1997).



Source: Amabile (1997)

As you can see in the model, creativity is the intersection and consists of three different components.

The component *Expertise*, which is illustrated in the picture above, is fundamental for all creative work. It includes the cognitive pathways used for solving a task or a problem (Amabile, 1997). The expertise component also includes the memory for factual knowledge and technical skills in the knowledge domain in combination with a set of cognitive pathways (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005) and also special talent in the work domain (Amabile, 1997).

Creativity skills is another component of creativity, which also is illustrated in the picture above. This component focus on personal characteristics such as self-discipline, risk-taking orientation, tolerance of uncertainty, the ability to explore new pathways, working style (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005), being persistent to frustration and relatively not bothered by social approval. The cognitive styles included in these skills are a favoring to take on new perspectives on problems and to apply techniques for exploring new cognitive pathways. Even if the expertise level is extremely high, the person will not produce creative work if the skills in creative thinking lacks. The cognitive skills are to some extent dependent on personality characteristics. However, by learning and practicing techniques to improve the cognitive flexibility and intellectual independence, creativity skills can be increased (Amabile, 1997).

Task motivation, the third component in the model above, is the driving force for creative actions in an organization. This element is fundamental and is connected to the intrinsic motivation principle of creativity, which argues that people are at their most creative when they are intrinsically motivated by the challenge, joy, satisfaction and interest in the work itself. Intrinsic motivation is commonly used for explaining why creative individuals show a lot of energy and engagement in their work tasks. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to factors at work that are driven by the desire to achieve goals outside of the work itself, as attaining a promised reward, achieve a position or to meet a deadline (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). Combinations of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are common, but

intrinsic motivation is argued to be primary for a person to do a given task. There are however synergies between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, where extrinsic motivators can act either as a constraint or as a support for creativity. Constraints regarding how work can be done or rewards that are perceived to be constructed as attempts to control behavior, will undermine a person's self-determination and will therefore never be positively combined with intrinsic motivation. Instead it would rather decrease both intrinsic motivation and creativity (Amabile, 1997). Reward, recognition and feedback that rather confirm a person's competence and feedback that provide the person with information about how to improve its competence, are argued to have a positive effect as support for creativity in case it does not undermine the person's sense of self-determination. Additionally, overall goals that direct a person to accomplish a task as well as enabling rewards, which involve more freedom, time or resources to work on exciting ideas, are argued to support rather than detract intrinsic motivation (Collins & Amabile, 1999).

The components *expertise* and *creative thinking skills* determine what a person is capable of doing, whereas the component of *task motivation* will determine what the person will actually do and will determine to what extent the person will engage his expertise and creative thinking skills in the creativity performance. A high degree of intrinsic motivation can to some extent make up for a shortage in expertise or creative thinking skills, since that makes it more likely that the person draw skills from other domains or apply a huge effort in attaining the necessary skills (Amabile, 1997).

3.1.4. Managerial practices for motivation

The organization and managers can influence the development of the three components of creativity. Expertise and creative-thinking skills can for example be influenced by problem solving, training in brainstorming and lateral thinking. These components are however more time-consuming and more difficult to affect than motivation of employees (Amabile, 1998). Despite of the fact that intrinsic motivation partly is dependent on the personality, the organization actually has its most direct and strongest influence on motivation, which in turn can have a significant effect on the individual's creativity (Amabile, 1997). Motivation for creativity is argued to possibly be influenced by minor organizational changes, divided into six categories of managerial practices: challenge, freedom, resources, work-group features, supervisory encouragement and organizational support (Amabile, 1998). These practices will be described below.

Challenges include matching the right people with the right assignments. This match refers to the combination of the person's expertise, the skills in creative thinking and intrinsic motivation and based on this combination, challenge the ability of the individual in a balanced way.

Freedom is referring to giving employees autonomy regarding the process in itself, the means to perform a work task but not necessarily the end. Clear goals may rather enhance individual's creativity.

Resources such as time and money are affecting creativity and should therefore be distributed carefully. In some circumstances, time pressure is argued to enhance creativity, since it can increase the sense of challenge which may increase the intrinsic motivation. Too tight and impossible deadlines as well as fake deadlines may on the other hand eliminate creativity.

Regarding *work-group features*, the importance of the design of the teams that are supposed to develop creative ideas are emphasized. A diversity of backgrounds and perspectives and a mutually supportive group are aspects argued to be important.

Supervisory encouragement is important for sustaining the passion and the intrinsic motivation for a work task. This is referring to the recognition, rather than extrinsic rewards, of creative work by individuals and teams. In opposition, harsh skepticism and time-consuming layers of evaluating an idea could damage creativity. Supervisory encouragement can also support all three components of creativity by being a role model, being persistent when working on tough problems and to encourage collaboration and communication among the team members.

Organizational support is enhancing creativity by implementing appropriate procedures and systems or by clearly stating values that clarifies that creative efforts are prioritized. By directing collaboration and knowledge sharing, all three components of creativity are supported (ibid.). Knowledge sharing is, as well as creativity, argued to be a prerequisite for innovations to occur (Taminiau et al., 2009) and is therefore an important aspect of the practice of organizational support. To be able to develop new ideas and products, employees must have enough knowledge about the field they operate in to move it forward. To support knowledge sharing and exchange of ideas in the organization is therefore argued as important for promoting creativity. Knowledge sharing requires a willingness to collaborate with other employees in the organization. The decision to share knowledge is very much dependent on the perceived benefits and cost for sharing, such as self-interests, costs in time and effort and the sense of giving away power. Since trust reduces the feelings of vulnerability, it is argued to be important to encourage trust between employees in the organisational (Casimir et al., 2012).

In order to explore how HRM practices can nurture and constrain creativity in the innovation context, the described theory regarding the concepts of stabilizers and destabilizers as well as the componential theory of creativity and previous research will be used to analyse the empirical findings in the discussion in section 6.

4. Method

This section will describe the design of the study, the method used for collecting the data, a description of the chosen cases, the method used for analysis, issues regarding validity and reliability and ethical considerations.

4.1 Research design

In order to answer the research questions, a qualitative approach was used. This research design makes it possible to get rich descriptions of the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and meanings attributed to behaviours, events and things, and also the connection and potential contradictions between them (Hakim, 2009). A qualitative study enables exploration and can generate data that provide a deeper understanding of the role by HRM in innovation processes and different factors that can nurture or constrain creativity and hence innovations in the studied organisations, which suits the exploratory purpose of this study very well.

Additionally, an inductive approach was used to conduct this study. This allowed exploration since the study was not built on predetermined theories or conceptual frameworks. The point of departure was rather the literature review in the subject area. Data was collected to explore which themes that emerged, which after being analysed resulted in a formulation of theory. The strength of this approach is that it permits alternative explanations of the studied subject (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The inductive approach was chosen in this study since it is beneficial for the exploratory purpose of this kind in order to avoid searching for patterns according to theories. Therefore, the approach was open when the data was collected.

To study this complex phenomenon with different actors involved, this study is based on a case analysis which offers a flexible research design with different kind of data collection methods and is appropriate when the purpose is to get a holistic understanding (Hakim, 2009) with rich descriptions of the studied phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Stark & Torrance, 2005).

4.1.1 Realizing the study

In this case study, data from two different cases in two different organizations was collected. The combination of both semi-structured interviews and document analysis was appropriate for this study.

Documents were collected in both cases and were used as background information in order to contribute to a better understanding of the organizations as such and the processes and procedures that were used in the organizations, and served as a basis for conducting the interviews.

The empirical material was collected by interviews with 16 professionals, 8 in each organization. The respondents are employed in the organizations and are located either in Sweden or in another site abroad. The interviews were held face-to-face when possible. Some of the respondents were located in other countries far away from Sweden, which required these interviews to be held over the phone. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

An interview guide was developed, which was divided into themes that were inspired by previous research in this field. The interview guide served as a basis for the interviews, which were semi-structured. The benefit of using semi-structured interviews for this exploratory study is the use of open-ended questions, which encourage the respondents to respond extensively and developmentally (Saunders et al., 2009). Each question could be followed-up by additional questions. Some of the interviews were held in Swedish when the respondent was fluent in Swedish, whereas the other interviews were held in English. All respondents were fluent in English and use it on a daily basis as business language. Before the interviews started, the respondents were informed about voluntariness, confidentiality and anonymity.

Two pilot interviews were conducted with individuals working either as an HR generalist or in the field of research and development. None of them work in the studied organizations. The reason for choosing interviewees outside of the organizations was the fact that I wanted to assure that the questions served my exploratory purpose well, by being appropriate to use in different organizations and for respondents in different job roles. By conducting pilot interviews with people in other organizations, the interview guide was tested to be free from pre-defined knowledge from the organizations. The pilot interview showed that relevant data could be collected by using the developed interview guide. However, some questions were missing or were unclear or unnecessary and could therefore be added or clarified to give a deeper understanding of the subject. Therefore, the interview guide was modified in order to fit the purpose better.

16 interviews, with 8 in each case, were thereafter conducted with HR professionals, line manager and employees in the two organizations by using this modified interview guide. The intention was to conduct 20 interviews, with 10 in each organization. 4 interviews could not be conducted due to the fact that these respondents did not either show up, respond to several invitations for an interview or postponed the interview until a point where it was not possible to include the interview as empirical data because of time limits for this study. The interviews lasted for 45-90 minutes. The respondents were given a brief introduction about the purpose of the study beforehand. Since none of them were given the questions before the interviews, it was not possible for them to prepare for the interview.

In both cases, documents were also collected to contribute to a greater understanding of the HRM practices and processes. In order to get an overview and a deeper understanding of these practices and processes, a number of informal meetings with different professionals in the organizations were also held along the research process.

4.2 The cases

This study focused on two different cases in two different organizations, which provided appropriate data for the purpose.

The respondents were chosen in collaboration with HR professionals in each organization. This means that the respondents were not randomly chosen which however is neither necessary nor preferred in this kind of study. A selection of cases where the process of interest in the study is observable is argued to be preferred instead. Cases can be chosen due

to different reasons, where choosing examples of polar types are one of them (Eisenhardt, 1989). The contribution of HRM in innovation processes by nurturing or constraining creativity is in focus in this study and the chosen cases have different strategies for working with these questions. This fundamental difference between the cases makes them represent two polar types, which provided an appropriate and even more interesting setting for the purpose of the study.

The two cases belong to different organizations in different sectors. Both organizations are operating globally and are focusing on technological innovations as pioneers for its survival and competitive advantage. Both organizations have its HR function both in Sweden and in other countries.

In Company A, the role by HRM in innovation processes is both direct by actively introducing and managing initiatives and also indirect in order to change the company culture to be more innovative, which is a clearly stated goal by management. In Company B, the role played by HRM in innovation processes is mainly indirect through the formal HRM processes and by supporting and challenging managers in their role to improve the conditions for innovation processes. Company A argues for the importance of a general mindset within the organization that focuses on innovations, and is defining every employee as an important actor for innovations to occur. Therefore, the aim of the HRM activities in Company A is to reach employees that are working in all job roles in the organization, both in product development, but also in other functions as sales, in marketing, in finance etc.

Company B has on the other hand a defined group of employees and line managers who work as research engineers on innovations, which is the target group for initiatives to improve innovations. In Company B, HRM does not focus on innovation explicitly. Instead it is described to be implicitly included in the existing HRM processes and activities and in the work as such made by the HR Business Partners.

Therefore, the different settings in the cases provided an interesting base for studying this subject in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of this field. The different strategies for working to contribute to creativity and innovation processes, as either aiming to affect the entire organization and all employees in general or to a specific department and certain employees, in the different cases made a difference between the cases regarding which job role the chosen employee respondents have. In both cases, a similar number of HR professionals, line managers and employees were however chosen.

To clarify and to make it easier to compare, some of the HR professional respondents will have other titles in this thesis. The titles that will be used are the same for the respondents with similar work tasks.

In Company A, 3 HR professionals were interviewed. These professionals had different roles. One of them is an HR director working on corporate level, and will be called HR professional, corporate level further on. One respondent works as an HR manager, in a function which is similar to the HR Business Partners' in Company B. This person will be called HR Business Partner in the study. The third HR professional works as an HR manager in one of the

factories and will be called HR manager in the study. 3 respondents were employees with different job roles in technical service, sales and in the product organization, all of them involved in innovations but with other daily work tasks than contributing to innovations. These respondents will be called employees. One respondent works as both a line manager and operatively in the research and development organization, and will be called line manager/employee. Finally, one respondent is a line manager in the research and development department. Both respondents who work in the research and development department work daily on innovations. The respondents in Company A are visualized in the table below:

Job role in the organization	Title in this thesis
HR director, corporate level	HR professional, corporate level
HR manager	HR Business Partner
HR manager	HR manager
Line manager, R&D	Line manager
Line manager and employee, R&D	Line manager/Employee
Marketing manager	Employee
Technical service director	Employee
Product manager	Employee

In Company B, 3 HR professionals were interviewed. These professionals had different roles. One person works as an HR director on corporate level and will further on be called HR professional, corporate level. The two other respondents work as HR Business Partners but support different functions in the organization, and will be called HR Business Partners in this study. Two respondents are line managers and three respondents are employees, all of them working daily on either radical or incremental innovations. These respondents will be called either line manager or employee in this study. The respondents in Company B are visualized in the table below:

Job role in the organization	Title in this thesis
HR director, corporate level	HR professional, corporate level
HR Business Partner	HR Business Partner
HR Business Partner	HR Business Partner
Line manager	Line manager
Line manager	Line manager
Employee within research engineering	Employee
Employee within research engineering	Employee
Employee within research engineering	Employee

4.3 Data analysis

The empirical data was analysed by the procedures included in the grounded theory approach, in order to build an explanation around the central themes that emerged from the data. The collected data was coded in two steps. The first step was open coding in order to disaggregate the data into conceptual units and provide the units with different labels. The same labels were used for similar units of data. Thereafter, the second step was axial coding, which refers to the process of looking for relationships between the categories that occurred from the open

coding. (Saunders et al., 2009). These relationships were investigated and the theoretical framework was developed.

4.4 Reliability

Reliability is referring to the trustworthiness and the consistency of the research findings and whether the findings can be reproducible by other researchers at another time, or if the interviewees will give different answers to different researching interviewers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Reliability is therefore concerned with whether the findings have been established by and are ensuring that they are supported by sufficient and compelling evidence (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

In order to secure the reliability of a qualitative study, the steps of the procedures during the research process should be documented. To increase the reliability, the transcripts were checked several times in order to find potential mistakes during the transcription. The used codes was also checked by comparing the data with the definitions of the codes, in order to secure that there was no drift away from the definitions of the codes (Creswell, 2009). To increase the reliability, the questions were tested during pilot interviews. However, there is always a risk for subjectivity in qualitative research since interpretations of data are to some extent affected by the researcher. Therefore, it is argued to be difficult or impossible to replicate results from a qualitative research (Bryman, 2008).

4.5 Validity

Validity refers to whether the study measures what it is intended to measure (Franfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). It is concerned with the degree to which the observations reflect what is in interest of being studied (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and the credibility and authenticity of the findings. A potential problem in qualitative research is that the researcher's background, beliefs, culture etc may shape the interpretations of the data that is formed during the research process (Creswell, 2009).

Several actions have taken place in order to increase the validity of this study and to determine the accuracy of the findings. Two pilot interviews was conducted with the intention to secure that the questions were relevant and understood as intended by different respondents. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, from which quotes are presented in the results of this thesis. Additionally, in accordance with what is suggested by Creswell (2009), member checking was used which means that specific descriptions and themes was taken back to the respondents to let them confirm the accuracy of the descriptions and that the intended meaning was interpreted correctly. This strategy was appropriate for dealing with the potential validity problem caused by the translation of the interviews, with a risk of interpreting the meanings as not intended. Therefore, I would argue that my interpretations and translations do not affect the results of this study. In order to increase the validity, I have also used rich descriptions of the findings with the intention to present different potential interpreting perspectives regarding the findings. Creswell (2009) argue for the importance of clarifying the bias that the researcher brings into the study. To prevent the interviews from my potential bias, the respondents were asked to extensively describe their perspective of

different phenomenon despite the background information that I had got through reading different documents.

4.6 Limitations

One limitation of this study is the number of respondents. Due to time limits I was not able to conduct a larger amount of interviews. I do believe that more interviews would have been valuable for the purpose of this study, in order to get an even deeper understanding. I conducted interviews in Sweden and also with respondents located in other countries in one of the companies. If I would have conducted more interviews, with respondents from other countries in both cases, the result might have revealed variations because of cultural differences and potential effects due to different distances between the respondent and the head quarter. Another limitation in this study is that the findings are not generalizable to individuals or organizations outside of those who have been studied. This is however not the intention in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009), and the purpose of this study was rather to explore the phenomenon. An additional potential limitation is the fact that some of the respondents were interviewed in English, which was not their native language. However, since these respondents use English fluently as the business language on a daily basis, I argue that this fact does not affect the results of the study. Finally, it is important for the reader to be aware of the fact that I as a researcher have done my interpretations of the data which unintended might have affected the results.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were done during the entire process of conducting this study, which was inspired by the guidelines of Saunders et al. (2009). The principle of not causing harm to either the individual respondents or the organizations as such was considered during the process. After agreement with the companies, their anonymity was guaranteed. Therefore, the organizations does not know which the other studied organization is. The individual respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, how the information will be used, the voluntariness of participating, confidentiality of the data and the fact that their anonymity was guaranteed.

The principle of voluntariness was considered in contact with the respondents that did not respond to the invitations sent regarding participating in this study or did not show up to the agreed meetings. Therefore, it was accepted that these respondents were not part of this study.

In order to guarantee the anonymity of the respondents and the companies, some minor things regarding names of divisions and departments as well as process names has been slightly changed, which however do not have any impact on the results as such.

5. Results

The findings from the interviews and the themes that emerged will be presented in this section in order to answer the research questions. Since this study focused on two different cases with two different strategies for HRM to contribute to innovation processes, the findings will be described as similarities and differences between the cases. Each respondent has been given a number between 1-16, which is distributed without any particular order.

Three major themes of practices where HRM is contributing to innovation processes, by both nurturing and constraining creativity, emerged in the empirical findings which were labeled: organizing practices, staffing practices and motivating practices. In the organizing practices, administrating and governing activities are included which both govern the activities and practices by HRM and also the activities done by HRM in order to organize and govern employees. In the staffing practices, different activities in order to attract, recruit, develop competences and retain employees were found. Finally, in the motivating practices, different factors in the work place as the work climate, work group and leadership were found to be of importance for creativity. Further descriptions of these practices will follow below.

5.1 Organizing practices

To begin with, we will focus on the organizing practices which include the activities that govern HRM and hence the conditions for HRM contribute to innovation processes by nurturing and constraining creativity. Further practices that we look closer at later in section 5.2 and 5.3 then include the staffing and the motivating practices.

5.1.1 The strategy

The formation of the strategy for HRM to contribute to innovation processes was found to be of importance by affecting the focus of HRM and which actors who are involved in these HRM activities.

In both cases, innovation is a clear focus by being a part of the company strategy in order to be pioneering in the sector where the companies operate. There is however a fundamental difference in the companies regarding the strategy for HRM in innovation processes, which has an impact on the focus of HRM in the activities for affecting innovations in the organization.

By having a clear and stated goal from management to change the culture in order to be more innovative in Company A, it affects the initiatives and also the actors involved in these activities. To reach this goal, different initiatives are taken by both HR professionals and line managers in R&D. A line manager explains:

"It is cross-functional and we try not to work isolated. HRM does not do anything isolated, we rather work close together, HR and line managers, in order to make it happen" (n. 3, Line manager Company A).

This expresses the importance of working together across functions in order to change the culture. The involvement of and the collaboration with HRM was expressed as necessary for succeeding.

Company B does not have an expressed goal connected to a need for changing the culture to be more innovative, but to nurture the conditions for innovations was anyway perceived as important. The need for working together with HR professionals has been identified by line managers and employees in the technical organization. Additionally, the need for HRM to support innovation processes seems identified as important by individual HR professionals in their job role to support the function. Therefore, individual HR professionals participate in different innovation related activities and supports from an HRM perspective. The engagement of individual HR professionals is described by a line manager:

“She is very interested in these questions and makes an effort to participate in the dialogues concerning innovations, which is very good. I think collaborating with HRM in these questions is extremely important.” (n 12, Line manager, Company B).

This quote shows the importance for HR professionals to actively enable their participation in innovation processes and that HRM are perceived as valuable in the innovation context. The different strategies also affect which target group that the activities made by HRM to contribute to innovation processes aim to affect. Therefore, it differs fundamentally between the cases. In Company B, the target group for the activities aiming to nurture creativity is in comparison specific and consists of employees who work as research engineers in research and development and product development at certain departments. In company A, the target group for these initiatives is everyone in the company. Everyone is perceived as being able to be innovative and creative in their job role. A line manager expresses:

”It is important that everyone works with it. People in R&D, finance, the reception.. Otherwise you won’t get enough power in it. It is not working if it’s just one team that works with it, since it is all about a culture and a mindset that we need in this company” (n. 3, Line manager, Company A)

This quote points to the importance of reaching everybody in order to change the culture within the company. By just focusing on a specific target group is not perceived as sufficient for changing the culture to be more innovative.

5.1.2 The role by HRM

The fundamental difference in the strategies in the cases that was described above, seems to affect the role by HRM to be more or less directly or indirectly involved in innovation processes.

Some respondents in Company B emphasize the indirect role of HRM to create the conditions for creativity and innovation, and express that it is thereafter up to line managers and employees to act. The approach by HRM in Company B is mainly to support managers in their job to manage and support employees to be creative and innovative, by different activities and practices but also to support creativity and innovation processes by the existing HRM processes. At the same time, the role by HRM in innovations is described as constant, since innovations are about employees which are the target group for HRM. An HR professional expresses:

“I am involved in innovation processes all the time in my job since HRM concerns securing the engagement of employees and to utilize the talent of employees the best possible way” (n. 9, HR professional, corporate level, Company B)

This quote shows that HRM activities are perceived as indirectly and constantly involved in innovation processes. Since the target group of HRM is employees, the HRM processes are therefore perceived as being able to nurture innovation processes in general since it is an implicit part of the role. In Company A on the other hand, the HR professionals described the approach as being both directly involved in changing the culture and indirectly involved in the projects focusing on finding new product and in supporting managers. HRM introduces broad initiatives in parallel by both creating conditions for innovation and aiming to change the culture. Some of the HR professionals in Company A perceive their knowledge in the areas of innovation, leadership and behaviors as good, and therefore of great value to transfer to leaders within the organization.

5.1.3 Demanding and directing innovations

Whether innovations can be demanded, directed, governed or not were revealed as one on the key questions in the empirical material. All the respondents expressed an opinion regarding this question, but the perception differs depending on what role the respondent have in innovation processes.

The goal of being innovative is divided into goals regarding the numbers of ideas and innovations to come up in Company A, which are thereafter cascaded from line managers to employees. In Company B, the respondents have innovation goals regarding what kind of effects the new products should have. There is a difference in the goals regarding incremental and radical innovations. The goals are mainly connected to incremental innovations, which are perceived as positive and as supporting incremental innovations properly. Radical innovations are perceived as not possible to demand or to have as a stated goal, which are connected to the nature of the products as such and the impossibility of defining something that does not yet exist in a goal. A line manager describes:

“We do not have formal demands regarding radical innovations. That is connected to the nature of science. It is difficult to demand someone to come up with something, like you have to come up with something really radical every 6 months. It does not work that way.” (n. 13, Line manager Company B)

This quote expresses that radical innovation is different from incremental innovations by being perceived as not possible to demand. The goal for incremental innovations is possible to define as for example in its effect, whereas radical innovations are connected to something new and cannot therefore be defined beforehand.

5.1.4 The importance of goals

In the empirical findings, goals were among some line managers and HR professionals perceived as a mean to direct innovations and creativity. Goals were described as motivating and as contributing with several positive benefits for creativity and innovation processes.

The importance of having both shared and communicated goals for different functions, job roles and departments was expressed as positive for contributing to innovations. In Company A, professionals from different functions have shared and common goals. This affects the collaboration positively by giving a shared focus about what to achieve. A line manager explains why shared goals are important:

“I have goals together with an HR professional, which I think nurture innovation. For example to have common goals in both R&D and marketing, otherwise we will work with different agendas. In that case they have their goals that they are being judged by for example cost savings, and if they don’t achieve them they will get a bad result. But in this department, we don’t have resources for cost saving since it is not our goal. Both of us will be frustrated and therefore it is certainly nurturing to have common goals.” (n. 5, Line manager/Employee, Company A)

This quote points to the perceived risk of having contradictive goals between functions, since different focus could potentially lead to different directions to work towards which could affect innovations negatively.

To direct goals to be common is also perceived as having positive effects regarding the work climate, the willingness to help each other and to share knowledge. In Company A, the line managers are therefore transparent about their individual goals and they also set shared goals between team members. The reason for doing this is expressed as it makes people be more willing to support when the line managers goals are open. A line manager expresses:

“I have chosen to have a shared goal in the team and not only individual goals, since I hope to create some kind of prestigeless behavior of not keeping your ideas to yourself, rather elaborate on each other’s ideas.” (n. 5, Line manager/Employee, Company A)

This quote expresses the perceived positive benefits of having shared goals, such as employees are being more willing to share knowledge and ideas instead of keeping them to themselves.

As an HRM initiative, in order to direct this innovative culture, every employee in Company A has an innovative goal in their individual development plan which is discussed with the manager during the yearly performance appraisal. In the performance appraisals, it is possible for the manager to give feedback to the employee regarding the performance and also to identify development needs regarding innovations. The HR function owns this process, has developed it and also make follow-ups to make sure that it has been done properly:

“I secure the quality in this process. If we say that this process is a part of driving innovations, then we also need to follow up the quality to make sure that it has been done and that it is not just a tick off, that you have done the process properly” (n. 1, HR Business Partner, Company A)

This quote points to the way HRM is directing creative and innovative behaviors through a formal HR process, and also directing that the process is followed as intended by securing the quality.

The responding employees in Company A do not express the individual development goals regarding innovations as motivating because the fact that it is stated as an individual goal. On the other hand, some employees express that the fact that innovation is a part of the individual development plan is contributing to sending the message that innovations are encouraged in the organization. One employee expresses:

“I would be surprised if anyone in the organization was not aware of that we are allowed and encouraged to be more innovative. In our PPRs (individual development plan, ed:s clarification) there is a section about innovations. The global internet often has messages about innovations, there are innovation awards, incentives for people who come up with ideas that are adopted in the organization. I see those messages and that tells me that the organization is very encouraging now when it comes to innovations.” (n. 7, Employee, Company A)

This quote shows that specific goals regarding innovations were perceived by employees as contributing to the message from the organization to make employees aware of the fact that innovations are encouraged and valued.

In company B, the target group of employees used to have innovation and innovation ability as part of the individual development plans, which however is under development at the moment. This was customized for the specific target group, and other employees in the organization had other capability goals suitable for their job roles. These individual development plans are initiatives made by HRM after collaboration with line managers. The measurement of the innovation ability could be challenging, and is connected to what is being valued in employees regarding innovations. A line manager says:

“How is the innovation ability valued from an HRM and a management perspective? You usually focus on whether the person can deliver, can communicate and are trustworthy. Sometimes you have people who are sprawling, who doesn’t deliver and might be a bit unclear about the innovative things, but who has an amazing ability to find the new.” (n., 12, Line manager, Company B)

This quote expresses that both creating new ideas and to realize the ideas are both important aspects in innovation processes. It is perceived as complex to value this and the tendency is to mainly value the delivering of ideas into products, rather than the creation of new ideas which is also crucial for innovations.

5.1.5 Knowledge sharing

Another activity that was perceived as important for creativity and innovations was knowledge sharing. By enabling activities for knowledge sharing, HRM was revealed to have an active and important role.

In order to get external knowledge and influence, Company B is participating in different research projects. By enabling conditions for collaborations with external networks, HRM is involved in directing the innovation processes. This is based on the assumption that knowledge sharing, by being connected to the external environment and its influences are

very important for creativity and innovations to occur. Company B is therefore participating in different collaborating projects with other competitors, universities and institutes. These projects give an opportunity to create brand new ideas and to take part of great feedback on ideas from other participants that have a high degree of competence, which is perceived by the employees as very positive for creativity and hence innovations. By dividing the development costs between the participants, these projects also enable the development as such of these products which is also perceived as positive. There is however another side of the coin that is also expressed. Collaboration is also perceived to be connected to the risk for competitors to take the ideas and develop them themselves. Some responding employees express feelings of being unsecure about what to share, which result in the fact that only what has to be shared according to the agreements will be shared in these projects. By not sharing openly, it is not possible to turn to account from all potential feedback that could be received, which could have improved an idea extensively. An employee says:

“There are requirements to collaborate with other industrial partners, institutes or universities. Even though the goal is to feed creativity, it may also be inhibiting since there may be things that you cannot communicate, that we as a company prefer to keep a secret. We might be unsure of what information we currently are able or would like to share, since information may be used elsewhere.” (n., 14, Employee, Company B).

This quote describes that the risk of spreading crucial knowledge to competitors is perceived as a barrier for sharing knowledge, even though these projects are thought to nurture creativity. The project participants are therefore described by some informants as not being either willing or allowed to share knowledge freely and a need for constantly pay attention to patent the ideas that might be potentially good ideas. The benefit from these collaboration projects are therefore not as good as it could potentially be. Therefore, internal knowledge sharing was described as less shallow and that it gives more than external knowledge sharing.

In both Company A and Company B, knowledge sharing is expressed as positive for nurturing creativity and innovations. Ideas are commonly expressed to be even better when they are shared and further developed after receiving feedback and being elaborated on. Open innovations are another activity that are used to get external knowledge and input. In open innovations external people are invited and new ideas are elaborated on and developed. Company B sometimes set up open innovations for specific areas to develop. These open innovations are described as positive but also challenging because of the regulations regarding intellectual properties, something that HRM through the HR function supports by knowing how and when to disrupt an open innovation. An HR Business Partner says:

“HR supports the situation with the intellectual properties, which are regulations that are quite difficult during open innovations. We support how you can do it and when during the open innovation process you should interrupt because we have our competitors there.” (n. 11, HR Business Partner, Company B)

This quote points to the fact that open innovations are also connected to a perceived risk of spreading knowledge to competitors and the difficulties regarding the intellectual properties which direct when the process must be disrupted, a complex situation that HRM is supporting.

Different perspectives and the encouragement of diversity of opinions are stated as one definition of innovation in the core behaviors in Company A. In the meanwhile, the team working on innovations consists of only internal employees. The expressed barrier for using open innovation for idea generation is the perceived risk for competitors to use the ideas and the knowledge and develop products themselves. External influence is perceived as valuable, but it is also expressed as beneficial to get influences from another division in the company in order to get more input. A line manager/employee says:

"We could have a semi-open innovation. If everyone in this house knew what we worked on and are looking for, we would have many more people that kept their eyes open for solutions instead of just the employees in this division." (n., 5, Line manager/Employee, Company A)

This quote expresses a need for enhanced knowledge sharing in the organization, which would nurture the creative development of innovations. Organizing internal knowledge sharing by semi-open innovations could be one way of minimizing the risk of spreading crucial knowledge to competitors, but at the same time get new influences and other perspectives.

When it comes to the organizing practices, we can see that the strategy for HRM to contribute to innovation processes has an impact. The existence of a clear and stated goal from management to change the culture to be more innovative or to contribute to innovation processes, was affecting the role by HRM. With a clear goal to change the culture, the initiatives by HRM were both direct and indirect and were focusing generally to affect all employees within the company. Without a clear goal to contribute to innovation processes, this affected the initiatives by HRM to be connected to individual HR professionals and their engagement in these questions. The role by HRM was mainly indirect through managers and also indirectly and implicitly existing in the existing HRM processes. Goals were found to be of importance for innovation and had several benefits for creativity and innovation processes. It provided employees with a common direction to work towards, expressed encouraged behaviors in the organization and was positively associated with knowledge sharing.

5.2 Staffing practices

The next practice that will be in focus is the staffing practices and how these practices contribute to innovation processes by nurturing and constraining creativity. These practices encompasses different HRM practices and activities made by HR professionals directly or in collaboration with other actors as line managers in order to attract, recruit, develop and retain the employees that will contribute to the competitive advantage of the company by working on innovations.

5.2.1 Attract

To attract the right future employees who have the right personality, education and drive was revealed as important for creativity and innovations in the empirical findings. One area where

HRM in Company B operates that was revealed to have an important role, is in communicating the employer brand externally as well as internally.

In Company B, HR professionals and line managers argue for the importance of the mix of employees with a senior experience with a lot of knowledge and also employees with a junior experience, who have the latest theoretical skills and knowledge and have not tested different solutions yet. A Line manager expresses:

“Innovations are not just about bringing the best product to the market. It is also about profiling our brand and attract young and brilliant workforce. The most popular companies to apply for a job at have a strong innovation brand.” (n. 12, Line manager, Company B)

This quote shows that the communicated innovation image of the company is perceived as an attractor in itself for attracting future employees, along with other factors. Talented students are identified as an important target group to attract in Company B, in order to secure the diversity of experiences and to secure that the company will get the latest theoretical knowledge. HRM is a part of the process and supports regarding issues as where to find these students, what kind of activities are appropriate and other related HRM issues when for example offering an internship in another country. A line manager describes the activities:

“We have been running this idea contest to attract students. HR is participating during the whole process. It is closely tied together. The best examples of initiatives that have been successful are when HR and the technical organization have worked very close together.” (n. 12, Line manager, Company B)

This quote expresses that the collaboration between the technical organization and HRM in activities that aim to attract students are perceived as preferable, rather than isolated initiatives by the different actors. The aim is to communicate an image externally, in order to be an attractive employer among students and other potential future employees. The company culture and the potential opportunities for career paths within the company are argued to be important to communicate, as well as communicating the actual and true picture. An employee explains:

“If the communicated employer brand is not connected to the actual culture, people that enter the company will think that the company is in one way when it actually is in another way. This means that you will get wrong kind of people over and over again into the company and by this, the company culture will change to something else.” (n. 15, Employee, Company B)

This quote points to the risk of attracting wrong employees who will not have their expectations met when entering the organization if there is an inconsistency between expectations and actual possibilities. Besides from being disappointed and not performing optimally, there is a risk for attracting and hiring employees who will change the culture to something else, something that is not wished for. The role by HRM is argued to be to control and secure the consistency between the actual culture and what is being communicated externally.

5.2.2 Recruitment and staffing innovation teams

The empirical data revealed that for innovation processes, it is not just perceived as important to attract the right employees. It is also of a great value to recruit and to employ the right employees to work creatively on innovations.

Similar in the cases, the respondents have a quite clear picture about what kind of employees that are the right ones to work on innovations. Many respondents expressed the major importance of the personality for people working creatively on innovations. To be creative is argued to be an obvious prerequisite when working in research and development and product development. At the same time, the importance of having a shared picture among the different actors involved in recruitment and employing a new employee was perceived as important. One line manager says:

“In order to affect creativity and innovation, the organization should have a common picture of what kind of behavior we want regarding this”. (n. 3, Line manager, Company A)

This quote expresses that there are some preferred behaviors that are beneficial for creativity and innovation, and that there is a need for having a common picture in the organization regarding those. Therefore, HRM through HR professionals in Company A are working to acknowledge gaps in the organization regarding competences and behaviors which could be used for the recruitment of certain people in order to contribute to the innovative culture. HRM is also argued to have a great role in securing that projects are being staffed with the right people. This is also expressed as a contribution by HRM through HR professionals in Company B, who supports managers in their role to recruit new employees: to create a competence profile, select and to secure that the right interview questions are asked and that proper personality tests are used. A close collaboration between HRM and line managers is argued as important.

The picture regarding what kind of personality that is preferred for working creatively and on innovations was not consistent between the respondents. Contrary to the expressed need for a common picture regarding the personality, the empirical data revealed that diverse perspectives are perceived by a majority of the respondents as valuable for creativity and developing innovations and are therefore an important aspect to be aware of when recruiting new people to the organizations and for staffing projects. Different educational backgrounds, work experiences and different views are expressed as nurturing ideas, and by sharing ideas and elaborating on the ideas, the outcome will be even better. In Company B, HR professionals have identified that the employees that work on innovations has a rather homogeneous educational background and argue for the importance of recruiting new employees with alternative backgrounds. In Company B, an important function of HRM through HR professionals is to challenge managers to be aware of the possibility to recruit people with other perspectives and for managers to think differently than they use to in recruitment. An HR professional explains:

“HR needs to argue a lot to managers in order to get them to look for alternative educational backgrounds. Not always demand that the applicant has studied at a certain university, rather

ask questions to recruit another category, or another gender or another background.” (n. 9, HR professional, corporate level Company B)

This quote describes the role by HRM in recruitment processes as creating an awareness of potential alternative profiles of the candidates in order to secure that the organization will have diverse perspectives which could be alternative competences, educational backgrounds, gender or nationality than the other team members. Diverse profiles, backgrounds and perspectives are argued to be a prerequisite for creativity and an innovative climate and therefore of great importance to secure in the organization.

Even though diversity of perspectives is generally perceived as positive, it was also revealed as connected to some barriers regarding staffing. Sharing knowledge when working creatively on innovations is, as described above, closely linked to a risk for competitors to develop the ideas into products themselves which is a situation of great importance to avoid. This risk affects the staffing of the projects. To hire consultants are used as a staffing strategy with the perceived benefit of getting another perspective and expertise into the projects, which hopefully make the innovations even better. The use of consultants is at the same time perceived as a potential risk since knowledge about new ideas and innovations might leave the company. Therefore, consultants are not allowed access into areas of importance for competitive advantage in Company B:

“There is sometimes a belief in this company that consultants cannot take part of all information because you don’t know what they will do next. Therefore you don’t let them work on strategic issues, since you are worried that this knowledge will leave the company. It is these kinds of barriers that you should think about.” (n. 12, Line manager, Company B)

This quote expresses that the risk of spreading crucial information is perceived as a barrier for staffing by using consultants in order to get additional diverse perspectives in the innovation projects.

When staffing the organization for working creatively and with innovations, a future perspective regarding competences is argued to be of great importance. In both companies, structured initiatives regarding mapping strategic competences and capabilities are driven by HR. The identified gaps as the result from these activities are argued to be important for the recruitment of new employees. The value of bringing in the long term perspective is expressed by an employee:

“I think you have to look at not just basic capabilities or core capabilities and competitive capabilities, you also have to look for future capabilities, Not just here and now to keep status quo, rather to focus on the future” (n. 15, Employee, Company B)

This quote points to the importance of the long term perspective in recruitment to be able to develop the products and services that will be needed in the future. This perspective is also argued to be of importance when employing people to internships after open innovations. This by securing that it is people who except from having the best ideas also have the education, personality and the fit with the company culture that is needed in a long perspective.

5.2.3 Developing capabilities and competences

The future orientation was also revealed to be of importance for creativity and innovation in the HRM activities and practices for developing the capabilities and competences of the employees. This is connected to the fact that the environment is constantly changing, and therefore a future perspective regarding which competencies that are needed in the future is important. A structured approach which is led by HR is argued to be of importance. An HR manager states:

“You need to take the lead in identifying the learning and development that is needed. This is very important when you talk about what capabilities you want to develop for the future. HR needs to play an important role in that. You must be able to continuously identify what kind of capabilities you need for each role and function, because things keep changing. Things are becoming more stringent, product’s life cycle and product characteristics keep changing, to remain competitive you need to know what kind of capabilities you could build into the people and how you go about.” (n. 8, HR manager, Company A)

This quote points to the importance of HRM having a long-term perspective when identifying future learning and development needs, which is a perspective perceived to be necessary for being an actor in the constantly changing environment.

The future orientation is also reflected in the career paths that are developed in Company B, but in a slightly different way. The aim of securing that the talented employees are used the best possible way and to motivate and retain them is argued as important for HRM in the development initiatives. This is connected to the assumption that when people are motivated they will make a better job in being creative and developing innovations. An important motivator that is argued among many of the respondents is suitable career paths for the target group. In order to reflect these both diverse and motivating career paths, HR in Company B has developed career paths thought to be suitable for employees who want to continue to develop as specialists, which will also deepen their knowledge further which is perceived as positive for innovations.

“It is strategic HRM, about career paths and that you have a succession plan for employees who are about to take the next step as a scientist, a project manager, are becoming a leader or a specialist. We think that these career paths are motivating. I hope that we will find suitable career paths for those who work with innovations and development too” (n. 10, HR Business Partner, Company B)

This quote describes an awareness of diverse development needs due to what is perceived as motivating among employees, which is reflected in the HRM activities of career paths. Enabling the development of specializing employees is argued to be motivating for employees and could be a great use of the human capital within the organization. It is however also connected to a potential risk. Some respondents expressed that understanding each other is more difficult when the employees are having fundamentally different working areas. An employee in Company B explains:

"Silos are easily created. We work on this, and they work on that. We don't communicate or go into each other's areas. You have specialized people who just focus on their part and then you put all the pieces together. Since we work that way it is difficult to transfer knowledge between people." (n. 15, Employee, Company B)

This quote described that increased specialization among employees might affect collaboration and the possibility to transfer knowledge negatively, since it makes it more difficult to understand each other's areas.

Connected to the fact that the target group for the initiatives aiming to improve innovations in Company A is everyone in the company, different initiatives regarding development are introduced and organized by HRM. The aim of the initiatives is to develop the competence among the employees to think more creatively and innovatively but also to learn more about the products as such. The value of including everyone has been argued as important when arranging this kind of initiatives. Therefore, everyone was invited and encouraged to participate:

"We have done quite a lot of initiatives: Monthly open seminars, workshops and innovation days at the factories. Everyone from the head quarter participated and everyone was invited" (n. 3, Line manager, Company A)

This quote describes different initiatives taken with the aim of affecting the creativity and innovation level in general in the organization. These arranged activities were found to be suitable for meeting the need of the target group as well as the importance of inviting everybody to participate in order to change the culture.

When it comes to the staffing practices we can see that HRM is involved in different activities that are connected to innovation processes, such as attracting the right employees, securing that the true picture is communicated as the employer brand and by making managers aware of the benefits of diversity in recruitment. A future perspective regarding the capabilities to develop as well as customized development initiatives suitable for diverse needs was clearly emphasized.

5.3 Motivating practices

Finally, the third that emerged as a practice in the empirical material was the motivating practices. These practices include activities that are perceived as important for being motivated to work creatively for employees but also HRM activities and practices that are aiming to affect motivation. The results revealed that the motivating practices are mainly dependent on the leadership, the work group, the work content and the perceived support. Since HRM in both organisations mainly does not have a direct contact with employees, the possibility to affect these factors is mostly indirect through leaders. By recruiting, developing and supporting leaders, HRM has an opportunity to affect the conditions for innovations to occur. Depending on how leaders act thereafter, will affect creativity and innovations either negatively or positively.

5.3.1 Matching work tasks

A match between the individual employee and the work tasks was perceived as important for being motivated to creativity. Additionally, there is a consensus among many of the informants about the importance of the motivational aspect for being creative in the work tasks as such. Employees describe themselves as motivated for being innovative and creative because of the content of the work tasks, which was described as interesting and challenging. Additionally, problem solving, trial and error approaches and the fact that the finalized innovations make a difference in the society were described as motivators. The interest in solving problems is described by an employee:

“I am supposed to work as a project manager, but I constantly also end up working operationally in the projects. If you are this technically interested, you cannot stay out of it”. (n. 16, Employee, Company B)

This quote expresses the engagement and motivation of an employee in the work tasks. Even though the fact that the employee has other and new works tasks, the person engages in the creative and innovative project anyway. Some work tasks in the daily job such as some administrative tasks were expressed by some employees as demotivating, time-consuming and as negatively affecting the crucial inspiration for working creatively. These administrative tasks are perceived as something on top of their work tasks and something that someone else should do instead, which would be more efficient. One employee expresses:

“The difficult part is not to do these administrative tasks, it is to stay inspired for the job you should do.” (n. 16, Employee, Company B)

This quote expresses that the administrative work tasks might be a barrier for the creative work, since it could constrain the employees from working on what they perceive as their main work tasks which is to work creatively. It is not only a fit between the employee and the works task that was perceived as important. Optimized conditions for developing innovations were also argued as requiring a fit between the team members and the fact that the teams consist of engaged members who are willing to both fight for their ideas and to drive the development and implementation of the ideas. A line manager says:

“Innovations are not only about finding good ideas, it is about finding people who are willing to develop and strive for these ideas. We realized that it was just as important to select the idea team as selecting the idea as such, therefore we started to select the combination of them.” (n. 12, Line manager, Company B)

This quote shows that matching employees with creative and innovative work tasks are complex. Additional to generating new ideas, it also requires a team of individuals who are motivated and willing to strive for and to develop the ideas, which were described as different aspects for HRM to be aware of in recruitment and staffing the innovation teams.

HRM was also expressed as stimulating employees, through line managers, in order to be more entrepreneurial and fight for their ideas. The engagement of employees could be secured by supporting managers to be able to optimize the development, engagement and performance

of the individual, by for example having stimulating performance appraisals and including coaching and feedback in the leadership.

Be willing to work hard and to be patient were other aspects in the creative and innovative work that were expressed as important among some respondents. Even though creativity among the employees is argued to be an obvious prerequisite for working with innovations, it is still something that must be fought for. A line manager expresses:

“A lot of people think that either you are creative or not, you were born creative and that you get good ideas. Good ideas are hard work, either by yourself or together with others. It is hard work and a process to get there” (n. 5, Line manager/Employee, Company A)

This quote describes the complexity of the needed abilities when working creatively on innovations. Additional to be a creative individual, it is also required to be able to make great efforts to use the creativity in innovation processes.

Since HRM has the possibility to contribute to innovations indirectly through leaders, there is a challenge regarding sending this message. First, it includes making leaders aware of the importance of working for nurturing creativity and innovations, and secondly, it includes for leaders to find it as important so they are willing to affect employees in the wished direction. An HR Business Partner explains:

“We can have an individual who perform very well, in both behaviors and actions regarding this, but who has a manager who impedes the behavior by neither seeing nor rewarding it. That could be quite contradictive, and therefore we have to work on this from different perspectives. That is a challenge. Just because we have this in our strategy does not mean that all managers are comfortable to manage it through their team members. Therefore, we need to support everywhere.” (n. 1, HR Business Partner, Company A)

This quote describes the challenges in the indirect role by HRM in innovation processes. The target group for the HRM practices is therefore dual, both directly to affect line managers and thereafter indirectly to affect employees. If the line managers are not encouraging employees to work creatively on innovations, it might be connected to the risk of demotivating and confusing employees.

5.3.2 Empowering and trusting

To be empowered and trusted by the line manager and other representatives of the organization were revealed as important for employees to be creative and innovative. A trusting work climate was argued as crucial among many of the respondents. Many respondents described the value of being responsible and having freedom regarding how to solve their work tasks, and perceived it as important when working creatively. Limiting responsibility for the employees is perceived as a risk for constraining creativity and innovations. HR professionals in both cases described an awareness of the need for employees to be responsible as crucial. Therefore, the principle of delegating responsibility rather than work tasks was communicated as a key question in the leadership development programmers. An HR Business Partner says:

“I think most people feel that we have a quite wide space for freedom of actions. In our leadership, we strive to be very development oriented towards people and we want leaders who focus on coaching rather than managing the details. We find it extremely important to develop our employees. Therefore, this is one of our key questions.” (n. 1, HR Business Partner, Company A)

This quote expresses the value of a coaching leadership approach that HRM through HR professionals focus on and tries to communicate and secure among the leaders within the organization. Managers that are focusing on details are perceived as potentially constraining creativity and hence innovations, and to provide leaders with coaching skills were therefore argued as crucial.

The importance of freedom for creativity is also expressed by employees and line managers in Company B. Freedom is both something that is perceived as motivating in the work as such and that it enables for creativity and hence innovations at work. Freedom is also described from another dimension, regarding what is attractive when a person is looking for a job. An employee describes:

“Creativity is something you were born with, you cannot stay out of it. It is the kind of people that enjoys problem solving and technique that orient themselves towards these kind of jobs. In order to keep the interest, you look for these kinds of positions.”(n. 16, Employee, Company B)

This quote expresses that freedom at work is something that some employees orient themselves towards, to be able to enjoy their job and to be motivated to perform. Even though freedom of how to do the work tasks is seen as very important, it is not perceived as contradictive with clear goals. Lack of clear goals is expressed as confusing and demotivating, while clear goals are pointing the direction in a positive way. The sense of freedom includes just the means of how to achieve the defined goal. A line manager describes it this way:

“We as research engineers are supposed to think new and radical, and we do not have to think about costs and suppliers. We have clear goals to work towards, but can present different solutions for product management to decide upon” (n. 13, Line manager, Company B)

A balance between a clear goal and the freedom of the means for developing different solutions to present is described in this quote as positive and appropriate for working creatively on innovations. HR professionals in both companies support and develop managers in their ability to give employees great freedom to act, to delegate responsibilities rather than work tasks and not to focus on details when leading people. In both companies, the leadership style regarding giving freedom to employees is perceived as crucial.

Another kind of freedom is free time to work on a free project for employees, which was discussed in the empirical material. Free work hours are assumed to be motivating in both cases, but are used in different ways in the different cases. In Company A, the team members

working in the R&D team have one day each month to spend on an own project. By doing something the employees think is fun, it is assumed to enhance the potentiality for creating radical ideas. As an HRM practice in Company B, offering free work hours to do free research in the specialist area of the employee is one part of the career paths for specialists. Different criterias are considered when selecting employees to be offered this opportunity, which is described by an HR Business Partner:

“People get selected to this. It is people who have competence, talent and drive, because it has to do with a lot of things. You should be able to work independently, have a quite large network and be able to develop the area and become a specialist for others to benefit from.”
(n. 11, HR Business Partner, Company B).

This quote points to the fact that this possibility is directed by different aspects. The competence level of the employee is one aspect, and the benefit for the organization of developing the specific area is another crucial selection criteria. Free time is assumed to be motivating for the employee and by selecting which areas to develop is also perceived as beneficial for the company since it is thought to generate new knowledge to be shared within the organization and to be used in the development of new innovations.

5.3.3 Supporting

Support and commitment from top management were clearly revealed as required for managing innovation processes and to change the culture to be more innovative. The need for top management to encourage innovation by communicating the importance of it by sending the message that innovations are in line with what is wished for was argued as important. Additionally, top management commitment was described to be especially important when focusing on new and radical innovations. One line manager expresses:

“In a company with a top management that doesn’t express themselves positively regarding this and that they want to do something innovative, it is very difficult to work on innovations”
(n. 12, Line manager, Company B)

This quote points to the need for being explicitly supported by top management when working creatively on innovations. The support could be expressed in stated innovative goals, which were perceived as a message for being encouraged to focus on creativity and innovations. In order to get top management commitment in innovations, HR professionals and line managers bring these questions into different forums. In Company A, HR professionals have put a lot of effort into convincing top management of the importance of including innovation as one of the core behaviors in the company. In parallel with this top-down perspective, the bottom-up perspective is also described as crucial for HRM and line managers to affect. By not having the engagement of the employees, a single line manager will not succeed in innovation processes. By creating a common picture regarding the current state of where the group is in relation to innovations and defining a goal as the desired state of the team, is described as a possible way to get employees engaged. A line manager described an effort made in Company B:

"We focused on innovations in all teams, and focused on what they can do to create this innovative culture and how we can make time and room for generating innovations" (n. 12, Line manager, Company B)

This quote expresses the need for managing the resource of time and that it is possible to engage the whole team in finding solutions for managing the perceived obstacles in order to be able to create innovations. A supporting and positive organizational attitude towards failures is consistently perceived and expressed as required for working creatively on innovations. Historically, there has been a sense of being punished for failures in both companies. Therefore, respondents from both cases described that people in the organization are still scared of being punished in case of failure and are therefore hesitating a bit to experiment and test. Testing and experimenting are important for innovations to occur, and a positive and accepting attitude towards failures makes employees encouraged to and secure enough to test. An employee in Company B states:

"There must be room for failures. And you have to get feedback along the way so you won't stand there by yourself. You should have the organization with you and perceive that you have tried your best. It you feel that, then it's ok." (n. 16, Employee, Company B)

This quote expresses the need for feeling secure about both testing and failing to be able to work optimally creatively on innovations. The sense of security could be supported by getting feedback during the process. To recognize both the achievement of goals and also failures were expressed as important for employees to dare to test and experiment. By recognizing failures, important behaviors for innovations that the organization wants to communicate to the employees as for example being brave and experimenting are encouraged. An HR Business Partner expresses:

"I think it is a very good idea to encourage them who dared to think differently and new, who dared to take a chance and not only the ones that succeeded. Those have shown that they have the courage and the power." (n. 11, HR Business Partner, Company B)

This quote points to the importance of testing and experimenting when employees are working on innovations. To be allowed to fail was perceived as a necessary condition for testing, and makes the outcome of testing even better. The behaviors of employees that made them test were therefore perceived as very important for creativity and innovations to occur, and should as well as successes be encouraged. Both organizations use the expression "fail early, fail fast and learn faster", which is thought to communicate the encouragement of testing and acceptance of failures. Even though testing is encouraged, there is a limit for testing. The role by HRM could in this context be contradictory. HRM must balance between on the one hand encouraging testing and accepting failures, but on the other hand representing the point where the organization cannot accept failures. An HR Business Partner says:

"If we demand that people should act in a certain way, how tolerant are we towards those who do not accomplish to do this. We got to have a balance, since in the meanwhile we state that you are allowed to fail. If you are pointing at wrong behaviors, it will be contradictory." (n. 1, HR Business Partner, Company A)

This quote points to the challenge for HRM of having a dual role, as both encouraging but also disciplining behaviors which might send ambivalent messages to employees. This was perceived as a potential barrier for creativity, since employees are not sure about to what extent testing is allowed or encouraged.

When HRM aims to motivate employees to be creative, directly or indirectly, there is a problem concerning the amount of time and the resources that are allowed. All respondents expressed a perspective regarding how time affects innovation processes. Many of the respondents argued for the need for having time to reflect, collaborate, think and share knowledge in order to work creatively on innovations. The empirical findings revealed however a clear contradiction among the respondents regarding how they perceive that time affects innovation processes. Most line managers and HR professionals perceive time in one way, which is in a clear contrast to how employees perceive time in order to work creatively. The employees expressed lack of time as stressful and that it affects innovation processes negatively. In Company A, the line managers expressed that the problem is not about not having the time. It is about employees who do not use their time for creativity and innovations, and who creates limitations automatically by themselves. A line manager says:

“The conditions for being creative are very much about the limitations that you make yourself and that you think that some things are not allowed. Some people do it automatically, while others need to have the permission to do other things.” (n. 5, Line manager/Employee, Company A)

This quote describes the perception of the importance of the personality of the employee for working creativity. The personality was argued to affect how time is being used by the individual, which hence affects how the existing resources are perceived. During shorter periods of time, with some time to rest in between, tight deadlines and time pressure or small resources for generating innovative ideas were among some line managers and HR professionals expressed as positive for innovation processes. This was described as helping to keep the energy level high which affects the idea generation positively. Longer periods for idea generation with no time pressure was described as a risk for the energy level to decrease, which hence affects creativity and innovation processes negatively.

5.3.4 Work climate

Another important aspect that was revealed in the empirical findings was the importance of the work climate in the work group in order to be able to be creative and innovative. Which work climate aspects that was found to be of importance for creativity and hence innovations were quite consistent in both Company A and Company B and concerned openness, feeling safe, being able to express, test and discuss ideas and to elaborate on each other's ideas. One HR Business Partner states:

“It should be an open climate, where you feel safe to express ideas and to test things that don't work. It is important to be open for testing new things. This kind of culture, including collaboration across functions, thinking, encouragement and feedback is all part of leadership.” (n. 11, HR Business Partner, Company B)

This quote explains that an open climate that nurtures creativity are perceived as connected to leadership, and that leaders have a crucial role in creating the conditions for this kind of climate. The role by HRM in affecting the work climate was described to be by developing and supporting leaders in their leadership, both regarding coaching skills but also techniques for facilitating meetings in order to nurture creativity and innovations. The line managers in Company A use different methods to facilitate creativity in their team meetings and express the value of directing team member to either just focus on the positive things about an idea or only the negative things. A line manager explains:

“An idea is like a seed. In order to make it grow, you got to take care of it. It is the same thing with an idea. If you do not take care of it, creativity and engagement dies if you don’t get feedback.” (n. 5, Line manager/Employee Company A)

This quote expresses the importance for leaders to give feedback to employees in order to nurture creativity. By not getting feedback, there is great risk of affecting creativity negatively. Additionally, encouragement by feedback was described as especially critical in the early stages of developing an idea. Therefore, it was described as certainly important for leaders to be able to use techniques that facilitate creativity rather than constrain it.

5.3.5 Recognition

The empirical data clearly revealed the importance of being recognized at work and to get feedback for creativity. HRM was perceived as having a very important role, both by recruiting managers and also by supporting and developing them in order to be aware of the importance of giving feedback and also to do it in a stimulating way, during formal meetings as performance appraisals or informally. To be able to recognize creativity among the employees, the importance for the leaders to be aware of the need for innovations in the company was seen as a prerequisite. An employee says:

“The biggest obstacle for creativity is line managers that do not buy in to the importance of it, because a lot of the encouragement to employees comes from the line managers. Someone who has a line manager who is excited by innovations and sees the real need for it, they will encourage it more in their team. So I think that probably is the biggest challenge, to ensure that all line managers are onboard and encourage their teams.” (n. 7, Employee, Company A)

Even though employees are the ones who are working creatively on innovations, this quote expresses the role by line managers as enabling the conditions by encouraging it. The need for securing that line managers are aware of the importance of innovations and also to be able to encourage it among the employees was argued as important by HRM.

Some informants in Company B expressed that the output, which is the result of the innovation process, is usually in focus when the work is being recognized. These informants rather emphasized the importance of being recognized and to get feedback along the different stages in the innovations process, from generating ideas to the final result. Feedback along the work progress was also described as crucial for keeping the motivation, by providing a feeling of a constant progress. An employee expresses:

“You have got to feel that you are going somewhere. That is fundamentally important in the culture, regarding how you work with recognition and reward and how you work with milestones, to make you sense a progress and that you are moving somewhere all the time. If you want to kill people’s passion, then you should kill the sense of progress” (n. 15, Employee, Company B)

This quote points to the perceived importance of daily recognition by feedback and the sense of constant progress that were expressed as crucial for creativity. Lack of feedback, no matter if the results are positive or negative was expressed as a barrier to creativity among some respondents in Company B.

The impact of extrinsic rewards, as bonuses for example, was mentioned by many respondents. The employees themselves did not find extrinsic rewards as motivating for them to be creative and innovative at work, but did express that it was motivating for other employees. Both organizations offer a reward for employees who come up with an idea that is patented. This reward is supposed to be motivating and to encourage employees to apply for patenting ideas. However, by connecting a reward to ideas was also perceived as potentially negative for the development of the idea. In Company B, some respondents have perceived that some employees do not share their ideas because they perceive it as a risk for not getting the reward themselves. A line manager says:

“When you are patenting ideas, you often have a situation such as: don’t tell anyone that you have an idea, hide your idea and try to patent it yourself. Therefore, we try to promote a culture that rather focuses on: share your idea, and your idea will be better” (n. 12, Line Manager, Company B)

This quote expresses that employees are encouraged to share their ideas, in order to develop it by sharing, elaborating and getting feedback. Not sharing ideas was expressed as connected to a risk for ideas to not be as good as they potentially might be, which could have negative consequences for the innovations and hence the company in the end.

When it comes to the motivating practices we can see that different factors and activities were perceived to be of importance for creativity in the innovation context. In these practices, HRM operates mainly indirect through leaders. Therefore, making leaders aware of the importance of nurturing creativity among employees were perceived as an important condition. Factors of importance for employees to be motivated to be creative was a match between the employee and the work tasks, which required an interest and capability in problem solving and generating ideas but also the courage and power to strive for and realizing the ideas. Additionally, support from the organization for innovation processes and for individuals to feel safe in experimenting and failing, a safe and open work climate, an empowering and trusting leadership style and freedom in solving the work tasks were important factors for being creative. Feedback and recognition were perceived as important to keep the motivation for being creative since it was perceived as giving a sense of progress during the innovation process.

6. Discussion

In this section, the results of the study will be discussed in order to answer the research questions. The two cases that are in focus have two different strategies for HRM to contribute to innovations. These cases will be compared in this section, by integrating the theory in order to see how the different settings affect the HRM practices that are used in order to nurture creativity and hence innovation processes. First, the role attributed to HRM in innovation processes will be discussed, followed by the factors in innovation processes that HRM are perceived to be able to stimulate, and finally a discussion regarding the contribution of HRM as nurturing and constraining innovation processes.

6.1 The role attributed to HRM

The role by HRM in innovation processes is ambiguous, and could be contradictive. In order to understand the nature of this duality, this study suggests that the role by HRM must be problematized in its context. Therefore, let us remind ourselves about the former reasoning regarding stabilizers and destabilizers in the theoretical section.

Stabilizers are ensuring uniformity, predictability and reliability (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). By being a representative for management and the organization, HRM has per se a stabilizing role. By HRM processes and procedures, a predictable structure and support for managers and employees are being created. For example, HRM processes to recruit, develop and reward employees are aiming to be predictable and reliable, and are therefore stabilizing.

Destabilizers are, on the other hand, representing the dynamic and unpredictable, like a catalyst for change and behaviors. In order to affect organizational creativity positively, a balance between the stabilizer and the destabilizer is needed (ibid.). The opportunity for HRM to be attributed as a destabilizer seems dependent on management, invitation by the technical organization or the engagement of individual HR-professionals.

By the stated goal in Company A to change the culture in order to be more innovative, HRM is attributed the role as a destabilizer. This seems to give HRM the mandate to act destabilizing, to start with as challenging the conventional role by HRM as a stabilizer. By this mandate, HR professionals as representatives for HRM are given free space to think and act unconventionally, in order to nurture the new, creative and innovative in the organization. This mandate also seems to have given HRM a possibility to act directly to affect innovation processes, in addition to the indirect actions.

Motivation for creativity could be influenced by different practices (Amabile, 1998). The principles in these practices seem to be effective also in order for HRM to act destabilizing. By being given a clear goal to change the organizational culture, HRM in Company A have at the same time been given the freedom to create the means in order to achieve this goal. However, still with the organizational support as clearly and positively valuing the achievement of this goal.

A major distinction between the cases are the fact that Company B does not have a clear goal regarding changing the culture. HRM is invited to participate in innovation activities by line

managers. The role attributed to HRM is in these activities rather stabilizing. This by supporting with what is labeled as HRM related activities, which are referring to stabilizing activities as recruitment processes, support in questions related to legislations and students relations. All of these activities ensure predictability, reliability and conformity, by which HRM is attributed a necessary role with a positive value in innovation processes.

The role for HRM as being a destabilizer in Company B seems to be dependent on the individual HR professionals and their knowledge about creativity and innovations and the perceived possibility to nurture these from an HRM perspective positively in the organization. By challenging conventional perspectives of managers to think new and differently by reflecting diversity when new employees are recruited and to offer career opportunities that fit the different needs of different employees, seems like an attempt to make the stabilizing processes and procedures destabilizing and more unpredictable. Additionally, the role attributed to HRM in innovation processes seems to be mainly indirect by creating conditions for creativity and knowledge sharing and hence innovations and by supporting and developing leaders to affect the creative climate positively.

Despite of the differences in the settings, the line managers in both cases did express the value that they perceive that HRM contribute with in innovation processes and also that they want to collaborate with HR professionals and include HRM in innovation processes. The attributed value of HRM is connected to what HR professionals actually do in the different cases, which therefore are connected to what mandate HRM is given. Regardless, we can therefore assume that HRM can play a valuable role in innovation processes in general, despite of which mandate HRM is given from management.

In the studied cases, the role that is attributed to HRM in innovation processes is therefore truly ambiguous, by being both stabilizing and destabilizing depending on what mandate HRM is given from management, other actors and what role individual HR professionals take on by themselves. This seems to affect the conditions and opportunities for HRM to act to nurture or constrain innovation processes and whether HRM focuses on affecting the creativity level in general in the organization or to a specific target group, which we will look into next.

6.2 The contribution of HRM in innovation processes.

In previous research, it has been argued that it is by affecting creativity and knowledge sharing that HRM has a crucial role in stimulating innovation processes (Jiang et al., 2012; Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011). Regarding how HRM can nurture and constrain innovation processes is therefore dependent on how HRM can affect both creativity and knowledge sharing. According to the theoretical departure, creativity consists of the combination of the three components of expertise, creative thinking skills and task motivation (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). HRM has the potential opportunity to affect these three components by the different practices that were revealed in the empirical findings: the organizing, staffing and motivating practices.

6.2.1 Expertise

Factual knowledge and technical skills are crucial for creativity at work (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005) and the opportunities for HRM to secure that the employees working on innovations have the required expertise were both externally and internally focused.

Strategic competences and capabilities that are important for the future are to a large extent affected by the staffing practices, where HRM in both cases work in order to attract, recruit, develop and retain the right employees with the right expertise for working on innovations. To secure that the company has the latest theoretical skills, HRM in Company B nurture innovation processes by building student relations. By creating the employer brand, with the aim of attracting talented students to want to work there and to develop future innovations and to offer thesis work and internships to students, HRM enables knowledge transfer. By focusing on the unpredictable and unknown in the expertise of students, HRM in Company B contributes with a destabilizing role. In comparison, Company A does not focus on the employer brand or to attract students externally by emphasizing innovations. The aim to change the culture to be more innovative could rather be seen as a focus on creating and communicating the employer brand internally.

By recruiting new employees with alternative knowledge and skills that are needed now or in the future, is another way of securing the expertise. In both cases, the role by HRM is mainly to support managers in recruitment processes which hence gives HRM a possibility to nurture innovation processes indirectly by making managers aware of the strategic competences and capabilities that HRM has managed the development of. This long-term perspective when recruiting employees is similar in both cases. By recruitment, diverse sources of knowledge can be integrated in the organization which stimulates innovations (Chen & Huang, 2009), which is a great focus of HRM in Company B when supporting managers in recruitment processes. This differs from HRM in Company A, where diversity is not clearly stated as focused in recruitment processes. By challenging managers and to encourage the unpredictable, which diversity can contribute with, HRM in Company B seems to add a destabilizing perspective to the stabilizing process of recruitment.

Development was another area where HRM is involved and has the possibility to nurture creativity in the innovation processes by creating conditions and opportunities for developing expertise competence among the employees. In Company B, developing the competence within the specialist area is a part of the possible career paths for specialists. Since the aim is to use this new and deeper knowledge, it is supposed to be beneficial for the development of innovations. The content of the career paths is connected to the expertise of employees and is thought to fit specialists. This contributes to planning of the staffing in the company which by being both reliable and predictable reduces uncertainty among employees and the organization, which hence have a stabilizing effect (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005) that is perceived as valuable. In Company A, creativity or innovation nurturing aspects are not mentioned to be included in the career steps in order to develop and retain employees. The different settings might cause these differences between the cases. Since the target group for the activities to nurture innovation in Company A is everyone in the organization, the activities have mainly a more general focus, and are therefore not specifically designed to fit a

certain target group or work team. Innovation is however reflected in the capabilities of some job roles, which is an opportunity to affect and develop the expertise level regarding innovation of some employees.

6.2.2 Creative thinking skills

The personality as such is described to distinguish employees who are talented in working on innovations from others. Since creative thinking skills are to a large extent related to personal characteristics (Amabile, 1997), the personality of the employees who work creatively and on innovations has a great impact on the results. Through staffing practices, by recruitment into the organization and by staffing specific work tasks, HRM has an important impact on which personalities that are being matched with which work tasks.

Similar in both cases is that creativity is perceived as an obvious prerequisite for working on innovations. In Company A, this is referring to the employees working in the innovation team in R&D and not everyone in the organization, despite the general focus in the strategy. By being involved in the recruitment of new employees by supporting managers, HRM in both cases have an opportunity to direct and secure that the competence profile for the vacancy is reflecting creative thinking skills. Also, by having knowledge and competence about psychometric test, HRM has the possibility to secure that a proper test is being used and that it will test what it intends to. Therefore, HRM in both cases have an impact on the staffing and hence what personalities the employees that will be employed have. This was however connected to the individual HR professionals, who described themselves as aware of the importance of creativity and innovation and were therefore focusing on creative thinking skills in recruitment processes. By using the actual recruitment processes with defined procedures and formal steps, to secure these defined skills, HRM is acting as a stabilizer in order to reduce uncertainty and unpredictability as an outcome of the recruitment process.

Workshops and open seminars are described as initiatives by HRM in Company A that focus on innovations. Creative thinking skills can be improved by learning and practicing (Amabile, 1997) and the organized events are described as having an effect on the overall ability to think creatively and innovatively among employees in general. By focusing on different customer needs and to work out solutions, employees practice and improve their ability to think creatively. By inviting all employees, not only those who work directly on innovations, it communicates the organizational support for working creatively. This might additionally have a positive effect on the task motivation among the employees, which also is a component of creativity (Amabile, 1998). Inviting all employees might also be destabilizing, because it increases knowledge sharing and the use of alternative and different perspective (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005) which may result in something new, creative and unpredictable. HRM in Company B does not do any initiatives in order to affect the overall level of creativity to nurture innovation among the employees. This difference could be explained by the different target groups that HRM in the different cases aim to affect. HRM in Company A aims at affecting the general culture and the mindset to be more creative and innovative, which could be affected by open seminars for developing creativity and innovative skills for everyone. HRM through HR professionals in Company B supports departments with employees whose work are to develop products and innovations, which specify the target group automatically.

In both cases, the importance of having the possibility to test and experiment is described among many respondents as important for working creatively and developing innovations. This is connected to the theory that emphasizes that risk taking (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005) and the preference of using new perspectives on problems are important characteristics focused in the component of creative thinking skills in creativity (Amabile, 1998). Similar in both cases, by supporting and developing the line managers in order to encourage testing and risk taking and also to accept failures, HRM are indirectly communicating support to employees for testing and failures which hence might affect the creative thinking skills of employees positively. However, in both cases, respondents described that failures has historically not been accepted, employees has rather perceived punishment for failing. In both cases, the importance of “fail fast” are described as used for encouraging risk taking, and are similarly expressed among HR professionals as valuable for innovations. This might affect the perceived possibility to take risks among employees and hence affect the creative thinking skills positively. An employee can be risk taking, but in order to make use of that ability, it seems important that this is supported by the organization by communicating encouragement and allowance of taking risks and test new things. A consistency between what is said and how the situation is perceived by the employee was therefore important. This might also have the positive effect of retaining employees with the right traits for working on innovations, since providing employment security is positively associated with innovations (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2008).

The role by HRM might be a bit contradictive regarding the organizational support for failures in both cases. Despite of the different settings and strategies for nurturing creativity and hence innovations, HRM does have a dual role in both cases. By representing the organization, HRM in both cases does communicate organizational support (Amabile, 1998) by encouraging testing and failure which acts destabilizing by focusing on encouraging something new and unpredictable. In Company B, HRM does also communicate this support by being involved in the creation of the employer brand and is therefore having an impact on what is communicated regarding the encouragement of creating new and experiment to future employees.

Meanwhile, by representing the organizations and therefore having an idea regarding right and wrong behaviors among employees, HRM in both cases do also have a disciplinary role towards employees who do something wrong, by for example failing too much. This role by HRM is stabilizing, by reducing uncertainty and supporting uniformity. The balance of both nurture testing and also to correct what is wrong, might have a constraining effect on the creative thinking skills of employees and hence on innovation processes.

Despite of the different settings in the cases, the dual role for HRM in nurturing creativity in the innovation context is similar. HRM has the possibility to encourage the destabilizing, but has also a fundamental role as stabilizing by communicating and directing what is right and wrong and to take disciplinary actions to correct wrong behaviors, which is a role that cannot be ignored.

6.2.3. Motivation

The *motivational practices* that were revealed in the empirical findings seem to be closely linked to the component task motivation in the componential model of creativity.

Similar in both cases regarding the *motivational practices* is that HRM mainly have the possibility to affect employees indirectly, through management, and the fact that the leadership was revealed to have a great and crucial importance for creating the conditions for creativity and innovations. This opportunity to nurture innovations was revealed in both cases, regardless of the strategy for HRM to nurture creativity and innovations and could therefore be assumed to be an important area for HRM in general to focus on in order to nurture creativity in the innovation context.

Similar in both cases, the role by HRM was both stabilizing and destabilizing in contact with managers. By the organizing practices, HRM in both cases contribute with processes, procedures, guidelines and templates in order to support managers in their job to for example set goals with employees and thereafter to evaluate and give feedback during performance appraisal meetings. By this, HRM contributes with a structure which aims to both facilitate and also to direct the quality of the meetings as well as the behaviors as such among the employees. By reducing uncertainty, creating conformity and securing predictability (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005) HRM seems to have a stabilizing role. A described challenge was to make leaders aware of the importance of creativity and innovations. By communicating this actual goal in the companies to line managers, HRM in both cases might nurture the organizational creativity by balancing the stabilizing and destabilizing role of HRM (ibid.). To nurture creativity, self-determination is important (Collins & Amabile, 1999). By directing managers to use a leadership style that motivates creativity might be perceived as a risk for them to lose their possibility to self-determination. Therefore, HRM might on the other hand constrain the creativity among line managers. Creativity among managers is however not stated as an explicit goal in none of the cases, but the managers in Company A are among all other employees in the organization defined as the target group of the initiatives made to improve innovations in the organization.

The *match between the employee and the works tasks* was a theme that emerged, which was important for motivation for creativity in the cases. By offering a challenge that matches the expertise, creative thinking and the motivation of employees, motivation for creativity could be enhanced (Amabile, 1998). HRM is involved in securing this principle, when supporting leaders in recruitment, staffing and creating teams in order to improve and nurture creativity

The next theme that emerged was the importance of being *empowering and trusting*. This theme can be related to the managerial practice of giving freedom to employees (Amabile, 1998). The importance of giving responsibility to employees, rather than delegating work tasks, was described by HR professionals as a very important condition in both cases. Employees were perceived to grow and develop by being responsible which was thought to motivate them to be creative, which is a job design that according to Jiang et al. (2012) has a positive influence on innovations. A constraining leadership style where managers were too much into the details, was described as the opposite management style and was seen as a risk

for being interpreted as distrusting the employees. By being controlling, it might according to Beugelsdijk (2008) affect motivation and creativity negatively which hence constrains innovation.

The importance of making leaders aware of the value of giving trust and empower the employees was described as reflected when HRM in Company B is supporting managers. Another opportunity which HRM in both cases used for focusing on the importance of giving responsibility to employees, was to include it in leadership development programs where coaching as leadership style was thought to include this principle. Giving responsibility in work tasks seems related to what is described in theory as freedom (Amabile, 1998), since the employees are given freedom to choose how to solve a delegated work task, which are perceived as nurturing creativity. This approach is an organizing practice, by which HRM directs wished behaviors of leaders, which could be seen as a stabilizer (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005) in order to develop and make sure that leaders will have a more destabilizing approach when leading employees.

The third theme that emerged in the motivational practices was the importance of *support* for being motivated to creativity. Similarly, the support for creativity and innovations was communicated by HRM in both cases. By including innovation as a core behavior which thereafter was followed up during the performance appraisal, HRM in both cases are communicating the organizational goal by including it in a formal structure which enables to direct it, define which behaviors that are in focus and the quality of it. By contributing to the clarifying of prioritized values in the organization, HRM is contributing with what is described as organizational support in the theory (Amabile, 1998). By enabling this through formal procedures and processes, HRM acts stabilizing.

Time and resources was important factors for enabling creativity but were perceived in a contradictive way among the respondents, where employees represented one pole and HR professionals and line manager another one. Both line managers and HR professionals perceive time pressure as positive for creativity, a perception that is in accordance with Amabile (1998) who argues that it can be perceived as a challenge. By setting tight deadlines, line managers perceived that the energy level was kept high, which is perceived as positive for creativity. Employees in Company B perceived time limits to be stressful and as a blocker for creating radical innovations, instead it resulted in incremental innovations. These different perspectives are in accordance with Martens (2011) who argues that time and resources are on the one hand an important condition for creativity but could on the other hand also be a driver for creativity. This could also be related to the reasoning regarding stabilizers and destabilizers (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005) since time limits are connected to planning and rationality, which acts stabilizing and might therefore mainly support and nurture continuous steps improvements, as incremental innovations. Meanwhile, time limits are contradictive to destabilizing factors as unpredictability and might therefore constrain radical innovations.

In Company A, the responding employees that do not work on innovations in their daily job role did also describe that time pressure and other work tasks took too much time, which resulted in the fact that they perceived themselves as not having enough time to also focus on

creativity and innovations in addition to their regular job assignments. These employees do not however have a deadline for their creative ideas. Time pressure in general and time pressure due to a deadline seem to be two different things, where general time pressure seems to not affect motivation for creativity, by not being connected to a deadline to perceive as a challenge. Interestingly is that all employees expressed that they perceived time pressure in their job and as a barrier for creativity, regardless of which strategy for innovation the company where they are employed at have.

Another factor that emerged in the themes was the importance of room and support for failures, to feel safe and therefore be able to test and experiment. By communicating the support for failures widely as a part of changing the culture in Company A, HRM has a nurturing role for creativity both directly to all employees but also indirectly by directing and encouraging managers to communicate this message. HR professionals in Company B are communicating support for failures indirectly, through support of managers. The role by HRM in both cases could however be contradictory regarding the communicated support, which might rather constrain creativity. HRM cannot fully support total and endless testing and experimenting, since HRM also has the disciplining role by correcting behaviors that are not supported or wished for in the organization. These actions could be perceived as attempts to control the behavior of the employee. By defining constraints regarding how to perform work, it might be perceived as undermining the self-determination of the employee, which therefore will affect the creativity negatively (Amabile, 1997). Hence, the role by HRM may regarding this be to constrain innovation processes.

Diversity of perspectives by differences in backgrounds were in both cases described as having a positive effect on knowledge sharing, which in turn was described as having a positive effect for working creatively on innovations. By sharing ideas and receive other employees feedback, ideas were described to become even better. Therefore, sharing ideas and knowledge are attributed a great value in innovation processes. HRM in Company B is focusing extensively on the importance of diversity and encourages the recruitment of employees with alternative backgrounds when supporting managers to recruit new employees, and is therefore indirectly nurturing creativity in the organization. The connection between recruiting employees with a diverse background to have a positive effect on creativity and hence innovations are not clearly in focus by HRM in Company A. Diverse perspectives are rather reflected when team members are selected to the cross-functional teams which will work to develop innovations.

A major difference between the cases is the external connection for sharing knowledge. HRM in Company B enables the conditions for sharing knowledge by participating in research project with other specialists. By supporting knowledge sharing, HRM makes according to Martens (2001) an important contribution for promoting creativity. This could be seen as a mean for showing organizational support for creativity (Amabile, 1998). By enabling this, HRM seem to affect all three components of creativity. By sharing knowledge with other experts, the company can get access to technical skills and knowledge that does not exist within the company, which is related to expertise in the componential model of creativity (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). Further, by practicing the exploration of new

perspectives on the research problems, it might positively affect the creative thinking skills among the participants. Finally, if the specialists that are participating in the research projects are interested in the area for the research projects and the connected challenge, it might also affect their intrinsic motivation positively. By enabling for a new and unpredictable outcome, HRM is nurturing the destabilizing into the organization. However, the participation in these projects is also related to a risk of affecting creativity negatively. The participation was described to be directed and impeded by the fact that it is not possible to share knowledge openly since there is a risk for affecting the competitive advantage negatively in case competitors use the knowledge to develop products themselves. This could be perceived as controlling and directing the self-determination, which could decrease intrinsic motivation for creativity. Hence, the participation in these kinds of projects might be a constraint to innovations. HRM in Company A does not focus on initiatives that aim to connect employees with external knowledge and perspectives in order to improve creativity and innovations. Diverse perspectives are seen as valuable in the innovation teams, and the strategy to achieve this is to engage employees from different job roles within the organization. This could also be interpreted as a way of communicating the organizational support for creativity (Amabile, 1998). At the same time, by not focusing externally there is a risk of not nurturing creativity regarding expertise, since the creativity and the innovations are dependent on the knowledge that exists internally which according to Martens (2001) must be sufficient for moving the field forward. By having cross-functional teams who work together on creative ideas to develop innovations, it might at the same time positively stimulate the creative thinking skills among the team members. Additionally, by selecting team members that are interested in this area might positively affect their intrinsic motivation and hence creativity.

The HRM activities of extrinsic rewards, as bonuses and patents, are in both cases connected to the realization of an idea or product and have the purpose as being motivating. However, this was also described as negative for knowledge sharing because employees do not want to share ideas since they perceive a risk of not getting the reward themselves. By introducing individual incentives, the willingness for others to contribute to the problem solving might according to Lau & Ngo (2004) also be negatively affected. By constructing rewards as being connected to the output of an innovation, rather than the actions during the process, HRM might constrain creativity and innovation processes by constraining the conditions for knowledge sharing negatively. This might have a negative impact on innovations since outcome appraisals are negatively associated with innovations whereas process appraisals are positively related to innovations (Li et al., 2006).

Recognition of employees by leaders was consistently perceived as crucial for motivation for creativity among employees. This seems to be connected to a coaching leadership style and focus on recognizing and giving feedback to employees, which according to Montag et al. (2012) are important for creativity. The importance of not only recognizing achieved goals and output of innovation processes seemed important for the employees. Working on innovations in these organizations is a process that takes time from generating an idea to delivering the innovation to the market. In Company A, the team members in R&D work on the innovations during the whole process, whereas different departments contribute by

working on different steps in the innovation process in Company B. The long time perspectives might make it even more important to recognize employees along the innovation process, for employees to keep their motivation. To feel the progress of work was also described as important for creativity, which also might be connected to the situation with long term perspectives for developing innovations. Recognition, feedback and reward are closely linked to the leadership. Similarly, HRM in both organizations is playing a role in affecting leaders in this direction by different practices and activities. By being involved in recruitment and also in leadership development, HRM is affecting what leadership skills that is both recruited into the company and also developed among the actual leaders. Additionally, by acting as a support function for managers, HRM is making leaders aware of the importance of recognizing, rewarding and giving feedback to employees. By these activities, HRM is indirectly nurturing the creative climate and hence innovation processes in the organization.

7. Conclusions

In this section, the key points of the study will be presented as well as contributions to theory and practice. Finally, suggestions for future research will be presented.

This study has explored the role by HRM in innovations processes and has shown that the role by HRM in innovation processes is complex and is dependent on different conditions.

The role attributed to HRM is dependent on which mandate HRM is given in innovation processes by management or by being invited to participate by the technical organization or which role HRM by individual HR professionals attribute to themselves. By being given the mission to change the culture in order to be more innovative, HRM in Company A was given freedom and a great mandate to operate on different levels in the organization. By representing HRM, HR professionals have been attributed the role of an actor that contributes to innovation processes active, direct and indirect. This has created initiatives which are characterized as both stabilizing and destabilizing.

With no clear goal to change the culture or to work to improve innovations, the role by HRM in Company B was attributed as a valuable participant in innovation processes and activities. This was initiated by being invited by members in the technical organization, and the role by HRM is mainly to contribute by support with more traditional HRM activities as different processes and procedures. The role by HRM was also closely linked to individual HR professionals, who have identified the need for HRM to contribute to innovation processes and who also have the knowledge and competence about the field, as well as the courage to challenge the traditional role of HRM and to act differently. In this context, the role by HRM could be more or less active, and also direct and indirect.

The role by HRM was found to be both stabilizing and destabilizing, both of value in innovation processes and it is not either possible for HRM to ignore this duality. HRM is a representative for the organization and is therefore representing directions and control, as stabilizers. The stabilizing activities are supporting incremental innovations such as continuous step improvements, whereas activities that is destabilizing are supporting the new, the dynamic and creative and hence radical innovations, which refers to brand new products or solutions.

Since creativity and knowledge sharing are prerequisites for innovations to occur and by affecting these factors, HRM can both nurture and constrain innovation processes. Despite of the fact that the studied cases have different strategies for HRM to nurture creativity and hence contribute to innovation processes, this study found that there are similarities in the opportunities for HRM to nurture creativity. These opportunities can be assumed to be possible for HRM to contribute with in general to affect creativity and innovation in organizations. This study also found differences between the cases, which might be connected to the different settings that the different strategies provided. This study also found that in order for HRM to constrain innovation processes, these practices and activities were mainly connected to the shortage of or the opposite to the practices and activities that nurture creativity and hence innovations.

To support and nurture creativity, HRM in the studied cases uses three different practices which can be divided into: organizing practices, staffing practices and motivating practices.

By creating and driving HRM processes, HRM in both cases was found to be able to direct employees and line managers and their behaviors and activities in the organizing practices. By the processes and the connected procedures, HRM was also able to control that the directions were followed as intended.

Additionally, HRM was in both cases connected to the staffing practices and was found to be involved in practices as recruitment and development of employees. By this, HRM was affecting which employees with which competences, personalities and motivations that were attracted to work at the company, which employees that were employed in the organization and also how these factors could be developed in the actual employees.

By creating conditions for and enabling different activities for knowledge sharing, HRM in both cases was contributing to innovation processes by improving the skills in creative thinking and also the intrinsic motivation of employees. HRM in Company B was focusing on external knowledge, and was therefore by different initiatives improving the level of expertise. HRM in Company A was focusing on internal knowledge sharing which develops the creative thinking skills. The external focus was reflected in the employer branding and student relations activities that HRM in Company B are in charge of, which also contribute to an improved expertise level. HRM in Company A aims to change the internal culture and is therefore focusing on the employer brand internally. By being more dependent on the existing knowledge within the organization in Company A, it might affect creativity and hence innovations negatively.

In the motivational practices, the role by HRM in both cases is to a great extent to support managers in their job to support employees to be creative and hence contribute to innovations. Therefore, the role by HRM is mainly indirect through managers in the motivational practices. The leadership was consistently found to be crucial in innovation processes by affecting motivation to creativity. Practices in leadership as being empowering and trusting, supporting and encouraging, as well as valuing diverse perspectives and to match the right employees with the right tasks in the project teams were found to have a great impact on motivation for creativity. By supporting and developing leaders in a coaching leadership style which emphasized leading but not directing, HRM was found to indirectly nurture creativity and hence contribute to innovation processes. It was however found to be quite complex, since the sense of being controlled and lack of self-determination affects motivation for creativity negatively. In order to nurture creativity among employees, HRM was directing managers, which might affect the degree of creativity among leaders negatively.

The importance of diversity for creativity and innovations was argued in both cases. Meanwhile, processes and procedures are per se supporting uniformity. By for example having a common idea about what kind of personality that is right for working creatively on innovations or to create processes that are supposed to be appropriate for creative people as the target group, are ideas and initiatives that might be barriers for diversity in the organization. Standardization and procedures that assumes that groups of people are similar

with the same needs, might be good for planning by supporting predictability, but might at the same time constrain creativity since creativity needs freedom, dynamics and being unsecure about the outcome.

7.1 Suggestions for future research

Previous studies in this area have been mainly quantitative. By its qualitative approach, this study provides a deeper understanding of the role by HRM in innovation processes and contributes with the employee perspective, which has not been studied before.

Regarding the validity and reliability of this study, one could question whether the different strategies and settings in the different cases have implied that the meanings of creativity and innovation differ between the cases, and hence whether the respondents have been talking about the same things. This could be a potential deficiency in this study. However, since the studied practices have the same aim which is to support the development of new products or improvements of existing products, I argue that what have been in focus regarding creativity and innovation in this study have been highly relevant for the results of the study and do not affect its reliability and validity negatively.

Since this study is based on qualitative data, the results are suggested to be tested by a quantitative approach in order to explain potential causality among the themes that emerged and to be able to draw conclusions whether the findings are generalizable to a larger population. By a quantitative approach, the themes that emerged in in this study as well as additional themes could be added and be operationalized into quantitative variables in order to explain the relationships connected to the role by HRM in innovation processes. Gender, age, educational background and culture has not been included in this study, but could for example be interesting for future research.

The both studied cases belong to globally operating companies. The international context of leading employees which are located at different sites and its effect on motivation for creativity and innovations could be interesting to investigate further. That situation might be complicated and therefore interesting to investigate due to the need for constant and daily recognition and feedback from managers as important factors for creativity which was revealed in this study. How is motivation for creativity affected by having a manager who is located in another country with no daily contact? The international context is interesting and important to understand in order for HRM to be able to develop relevant HRM strategies that fit the needs of the organization in order to contribute to innovation processes.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide to employees

Give the respondent information about confidentiality, anonymity, voluntariness, the possibility to not answer questions and to discontinue the interview at any time.

General questions/Background

1. Age?
2. What is your educational background?
3. What is your job role?
4. For how long have you worked in the organization/in this job role?
5. Can you give an overview about what your team is doing?

Creativity and innovations

6. Are you engaged in some kind of development project/innovations at your job?
7. Would you describe these development projects as innovative initiatives? – in what way?
8. How do you contribute to that work?
9. What demands do you perceive that those developing initiatives put on you?
10. Would you describe your contribution in this work as creative? How?
11. Is creativity needed in the organization? Why/why not? For what?
12. When do you feel motivated for being creative and innovative?
13. What conditions are important for you to be creative and innovative at work?
14. How would you describe the conditions for being creative in the organisations/in your team at your job?
15. What improves or could be obstacles to creativity and innovations in the organization?
16. How could an organization affect the creativity and innovation level in the organization?
17. Have you experienced any efforts made in the organization/by HR that aims to contribute to improving creativity and innovations? What?
18. How have you perceived them?
19. Have these efforts affected your level of and the conditions for creativity and innovation for you? In what way?
20. Have you experienced any efforts made by the organization/HR to improve creativity and innovations that have affected your motivation positively/negatively? Describe.
21. What can HR do to contribute to creativity in the organization? What can the organization do?

Knowledge transfer

22. Do you have someone to share knowledge and experiences with? Who?
23. When do you share knowledge with other? With who?
24. How do you share knowledge?

25. Is it important for you in your job to share (give and receive) knowledge? Why/why not/when is it important/not important?
26. What conditions are important for you for sharing knowledge?
27. If you have an idea for a new and/improved way of doing things or developing something, what do you do?
28. How do you prefer to learn? From who? How?
29. How do you perceive the conditions in the organization for sharing knowledge?
30. What do you think could improve the conditions for sharing knowledge and learning from each other?

Appendix 2

Interview guide to line managers

Give the respondent information about confidentiality, anonymity, voluntariness, the possibility to not answer questions and to discontinue the interview at any time.

General questions/Background

1. Age?
2. What is your educational background?
3. What is your job role?
4. For how long have you worked in the organization/in this job role?
5. Can you give an overview about what your team is doing?

Creativity and innovations

6. Are you engaged in innovations? How?
7. Is creativity needed in the organization? Why/why not? For what?
8. Are people in your team involved in innovations? Describe.
9. When do you think people in your team feel motivated for being creative and innovative?
10. What conditions are important for the team to be creative and innovative at work?
11. How would you describe the conditions for being creative in the organisations/in your team/in your job?
12. How could an organization affect the creativity and innovation level in the organization?
13. Have you experienced any efforts made in the organization/by HRM that aims to contribute to improving creativity and innovations? What?
14. How have you perceived them?
15. Have these efforts affected your level of and the conditions for creativity and innovation for you/for your team? In what way?
16. Have you experienced any efforts made by the organization/HR to improve creativity and innovations that has affected your/your teams' motivation positively/negatively? Describe.
17. What can HR do to contribute to creativity and innovations in the organization?

Knowledge transfer

18. Do people in your team have someone to share knowledge and experiences with? Who? When?
19. How do they share knowledge?
20. Is it important for them team in their job to share (give and receive) knowledge? Why/why not/when is it important/not important?
21. What conditions are important for the team members in order to share knowledge?
22. If a team member has an idea for a new and/or improved way of doing things or developing something, what does that person do?

23. Do the team members feel that they can learn things from their co-workers? Why/why not?
24. How do you perceive the conditions in the organization for sharing knowledge?
25. What do you think could improve the conditions for sharing knowledge and learning from each other?

Appendix 3

Interview guide to HR professionals

General questions/Background

1. Age?
2. What is your educational background?
3. What is your job role?
4. For how long have you worked in the organization/in this job role?
5. Can you give an overview about what your team is doing?

Creativity and innovations

6. Are you engaged in some kind of development project/innovations at your job?
7. Would you describe it as innovative initiatives? – in what way?
8. How do you contribute to that work?
9. What demands do you perceive that those innovation initiatives put on you?
10. Would you describe the work with innovations in the organization as creative? In what way?
11. Is creativity needed in the organization? Why/why not? For what?
12. When do the employees feel motivated for being creative and innovative?
13. What conditions are important for the employees to be creative and innovative at work?
14. How would you describe the conditions for being creative in the organisations?
15. What affects – improves and could be obstacles to - creativity and innovations in this organization?
16. How could this organization affect the creativity and innovation level in the organization?
17. Have you experienced any efforts made in the organization/HR that aims to contribute to improving creativity and innovations? What? Have you been involved in them? In what way?
18. How have you perceived them?
19. Have these efforts affected the level of and the conditions for creativity and innovation for employees in the organization? In what way?
20. Have the efforts made by the organization/HR to improve creativity and innovations affected the motivation positively/negatively for employees? Describe.
21. What can HR do to contribute to creativity in the organization? What can the organization do?

Knowledge transfer

22. Do the employees that works creatively/innovatively have someone to share knowledge and experiences with? Who?
23. When do they share knowledge with other? With who?
24. How do they share knowledge?

25. Is it important for them in their job to share (give and receive) knowledge? Why/why not/when is it important/not important?
26. What conditions are important for employees in order to share knowledge?
27. If an employee have an idea for a new and/improved way of doing things or developing something, what do that person do?
28. How do employees prefer to learn? From who? How?
29. How do you perceive the conditions in the organization for sharing knowledge for employees that works creatively/on innovations?
30. What do you think could improve the conditions in the organization for sharing knowledge and learning from each other for employees that works creatively/on innovations?