Issues Associated with the Relationship between HR and ITS of the DSD

A dissertation to the
Faculty of Commerce and Law

THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Information Systems (Honours)

School of Information Systems
University of Tasmania

October 2000

ABSTRACT

The effective management of Human Resources (HR) and Information Technology Services (ITS) is crucial to the success of an organisation. HR and ITS are widely perceived to be two very distinct and separate entities. Consequently, they often operate autonomously and in isolation from each other. However, the common support role that both HR and ITS occupy within an organisation ensures a great deal of commonalities and overlap in the operations that they perform. Therefore, an opportunity exists for HR and ITS to enhance their operations by strengthening their relationship and working together to develop and exploit the issues that overlap the two fields.

This investigation seeks to gain insight into the issues associated with the relationship between the HR and ITS units of the Department of State Development (DSD).

The researcher adopted qualitative research techniques employing the interpretivist epistemology and a subjective ontology. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used as the principal data gathering technique, with observations being used as an additional source of information gathering. The data collected was analysed using a coding process that scrutinised and refined the data over three progressive levels of coding; open, axial and selective coding.

The investigation will reveal the major issues associated with the relationship between HR and ITS of the DSD as perceived by the staff employed within those business units, ultimately culminating in the identification of two dominant issues: organisational restrictions and strategic focus. The study has the potential to act as an excellent guide to further develop recommendations that may assist the DSD to address the issues identified.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Human Resources (HR) has been described as the single most influential factor related to an organisations overall success (Daft, 1994). Information Technology Services (ITS) have been referred to as the element most likely to influence the continued viability and success of an organisation into the future (Alter, 1996). HR and ITS arguably occupy the two most critical roles within any organisation. The invaluable support role that they both occupy invariably renders them indispensable and essential in an organisation's attempt to achieve its goals and targets.

Traditionally HR and ITS have been considered to be two highly distinct and autonomous fields. Restricting organisational structures and cultures have often influenced them to operate independently of each other with limited correspondence. Although HR and ITS are distinct entities in their own right, there is no disputing that the two functions intersect and overlap in much that they do. Consequently organisations are presented with an opportunity to improve processes by enhancing the relationship between HR and ITS. An enhanced relationship between the two units could result in higher levels of communication, coordination and cooperation, potentially culminating in improved strategies and efficiencies in the areas that overlap.

This study seeks to uncover the perceptions and thoughts relating to the relationship between the HR and ITS units of the Department of State Development (DSD). The identification of such issues may provide the DSD with an opportunity for HR and ITS to enhance their operations by strengthening their relationship and working together to address, develop and exploit the dominant issues identified.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

The three primary objectives of this research are to identify employee knowledge and awareness of issues associated with the relationship between the Human Resources (HR) unit and Information Technology Service (ITS) unit of the Department of State Development (DSD). Secondly, to determine the perception and thoughts of employees, in relation to the integration of HR and ITS. Thirdly, to identify the issues associated with the advancement of the link between HR and ITS. These objectives provide the basis from which the research question will be developed and ultimately provided the study with the direction necessary to generate valuable findings.

Through uncovering the perceptions of the staff, the researcher was able to seek ideas as to how the commonalities could be exploited and the differences defined in order to determine the value of an enhanced link between the two units. From this, the research then sought to make suggestions and findings that were unique and valued in the business and academic world alike. Further, the researcher was able to suggest ideas for further research and present a polished, unique and informative thesis.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the issues associated with the relationship between the Information Technology Services Unit and the Human Resources Unit of the Department of State Development?

1.3 LIMITATIONS

As the scope of the investigation was limited to the DSD, the issues and findings identified by this investigation cannot be extended to other organisations.

Throughout the time of the study the researcher was an employee of the DSD and conducted the investigation from an internal perspective. Over the period of the investigation the researcher developed strong professional and social relationships with the majority of the interviewees, particularly those staff members that are within the HR unit.

The fact that the researcher was an employee of the DSD proved to be of considerable benefit, as staff members, resources and information were made readily available to the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher's internal exposure to the DSD proved invaluable in the researcher's ability to identify an area of investigation that was significant and important to the DSD. A topic that individuals internal and external to the DSD could appreciate the potential value of insights gained though the study.

To portray any changing perceptions that the researcher may have developed over the duration of the investigation the researcher wrote four rich stories describing the researcher's personal impressions of the organisation and the people within it. The first rich story was constructed in the first week that the researcher began employment with the DSD. This was to capture the researcher's first impressions of the organisation, before the researcher had time to develop any perceptions or opinions of the workplace. The rich stories were completed at varying intervals as a means of mapping any changes in perceptions and opinions that had conjured due to the researcher's continued expose to the organisation. The rich stories are given in their entirety in Appendix D.

1.4   SIGNIFICANCE

Arguably, the most important element of any research is its level of significance. Research findings need to possess some worth and be considered useful and value adding. In ensuring that one's research is significant the researcher should address such questions as:

- Who cares as to whether or not the research is conducted?
- Who has an interest in the overall findings?
- What can the research add to society?

The significance of this investigation comes from its potential to uncover important issues related to the linkage between the HR and ITS units of the DSD. By uncovering and identifying such issues, the research provides the DSD with an opportunity to exploit the findings by addressing, correcting and further investigating the key issues raised in the research.

Ultimately providing the DSD with an opportunity to improve the relationship between HR and ITS. Which could potentially result in improved communication, productivity and efficiencies within the DSD. Such improvements within the DSD would have a positive impact upon society, as DSD would be better equipped to help advance Tasmania.

This research is of great interest and is highly significant to the DSD. Furthermore, the research adds value to society by providing information on a relatively unexposed area of research. Providing the basis from which to launch further research and ultimately develop a substantial base of information that will enable the substantiated findings and recommendations to be drawn.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

In order to undertake the investigation the researcher adopted an ontology that was based upon subjectivism and the epistemological viewpoint of an interpretivist. Accordingly, the research method was qualitative. Face-to-face interviews were the primary data gathering technique. Participant observations were employed as a subsidiary technique. Coding using open, axial and selective coding was used for the analysis of the data collected through the interviews.

1.6 ORIGINALITY OF THE STUDY

The concepts and issues associated with the enhanced linkage of HR and ITS units is a little studied phenomenon. It is widely recognised that the two fields are distinct functions that play a critical part in any organisations overall success. Whilst conducting the review of the literature it became apparent to the researcher that most studies relating to HR and ITS addressed them as two distinct and separate business functions. When researcher's did study the two functions in conjunction with each other it was in a way that focussed on how IT could help HR operate more efficiently and effectively. However, there has been little or no research conducted that has investigated the awareness, knowledge, perceptions and thoughts associated with the communication between the HR and ITS on an individual employee basis.

To the researcher's knowledge there has been no evidence of studies researching the issues associated with communication between the HR and ITS units of the DSD.

1.7   DEFINITIONS

The researcher thought it important to clarify the following:

- Researcher, interviewer, author and investigator all refer to the individual who conducted the investigation.
- Interviewee, respondent, subject and participant all refer to the individuals who participated in study and contributed information.
- Across industry, there is no one distinct or fixed name for an Information Systems (IS) department. For example the following names have been used to refer to such: IS; Information Technology (IT); Computer Services; Network Services; Management Information Systems and Technical Services, just to a name a few. These names often fluctuate from organisation to organisation, however their roles are almost always very similar. The DSD has adopted Information Technology Services (ITS). Therefore, throughout this paper ITS will encompass all and represent IS departments. It should be noted that the ITS unit of the DSD deals with both IT and IS issues. Furthermore, the use of IS implies the entire IS discipline and encompasses IT as a subsidiary element.
- In several chapters, the researcher has included quotes from particular interviewees to illustrate findings and the like. These quotes are referenced through the use of footnotes. The footnotes identify the interviewee and the section of the interview from which the quote was adopted and are listed at the bottom of the corresponding page.

1.8   OUTLINE OF THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

1.8.1   Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reveals the findings of the literature review conducted by the researcher in the initial information gathering phase of the investigation. The purpose of the literature review is to demonstrate an understanding of the major themes related to the research topic, identify prior research in the area and link the related research to the research topic and question under investigation (Neuman, 1997). The literature review discusses the following topics:

- Goals of a literature review

- The goals and roles of Human Resources

- The goals and roles Information Systems

- External and internal influences upon HR and IS

- HR and ITS as service providers

- The support role that HR and ITS play

- Planning issues related to HR and ITS

- Training as a function that both HR and ITS need to consider with almost everything they do

- The influence of HR and ITS on staff turnover and remuneration levels

- Communication between the HR and ITS units of an organisation is particularly important

- The need for top management knowledge and support

- Human Resource Information Systems to help support management decisions

- The issues evoked during the implementation of a new system clearly demonstrates the combined involvement of the HR and ITS units

- IS-user conflict as an issue for HR and ITS

1.8.2   Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter is a comprehensive description detailing how the researcher went about conducting the investigation. It discusses all the underlying research perspective's and techniques adopted by the researcher in this investigation. The following points are discussed in detail in the methodology chapter:

- The research approach, epistemology and ontology adopted throughout the study

- Preliminary research preparation

- Background review

- Research objectives

- The data gathering techniques adopted

- The interview development

- The interview set up

- Conducting the interviews

- A discussion on the data quality of the study

- An outline of the data analysis approach

1.8.3   Chapter 4: BACKGROUND

The background chapter provides details of the participants and the organisation understudy. It is designed to give the reader a "feel" for the structure and culture of the DSD and an idea of where the interviewees fit into the organisation. There is also a brief discussion relating to how the interviews proceeded. An outline of the background chapter is as follows:

- A discussion of the culture of the DSD, including the vision, mission and values of the organisation
- The Corporate Service division and the HR and ITS units that lie within it
- Position descriptions of each of the HR and ITS participants
- Issues relating to how the interviews were conducted
- Two rich stories demonstrating the interview process

1.8.4   Chapter 5: DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis chapter details the results of the coding process. It walks through the process of how the findings were generated. The data analysis has the purpose of indicating to the reader how the overall findings were generated. An outline of the data analysis chapter is as follows:

- The data analysis process
- The coding process
- Open codes stated and examples given
- Axial Codes and examples given
- Indicate the direction of the selective codes, or overall Findings

1.8.5   Chapter 6: FINDINGS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The final chapter of this study primarily summarises and discusses the overall findings of the investigation. The codes identified in the data analysis chapter are summarised into two selective codes, or overall findings. These findings are discussed in some detail. At the conclusion of this chapter, with the knowledge gained through the study, the researcher proposes suggestions for future work, involving the issues discussed throughout the investigation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1.   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and define the area of study. It was necessary to develop some insight into the questions posed in the research. A significant amount of prior reading of secondary and tertiary material in specific fields of Human Resource Management and Information Systems Management was undertaken. A key component of the review was the search for issues whose relevance extended to both the HR and ITS fields. Through reviewing the literature the researcher was able to determine and enforce the originality and uniqueness of the research being conducted. Ultimately, enhancing the intellectual value of the research and ensuring the research was not simply regurgitation of the findings of previous research.

The chapter begins with a discussion relating to the goals of a literature review. Following is a detailed description of the purpose of both HR and ITS, on an individual basis. The focus of the review is then shifted to the identification and discussion of various issues that overlap and influence both disciplines.

2.2   GOALS OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is considered to be a vital component in the preliminary planning process of a research project. Gorman and Clayton (1997) suggest that there simply is no substitute for 'reading around' in the relevant literature before beginning a qualitative research project.

Neuman (1997) purposes four major goals associated with the undertaking of any type of pre-study review of the literature concerning a specific area of research. In an attempt to enhance the value of the literature review, the researcher continually referred back to these goals in order to ensure their objectives were being met. Effectively promoting the development of an appropriate literature review. These goals, as suggested by Neuman (1997) are presented in Table 2.1.

Goals of the Literature Review

1. To demonstrate a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility

A review tells a reader that an investigator knows the research in an area and is aware of the major issues. A good review increases the reader's confidence in the researcher's professional competence, ability and background.

2. To show the path of prior research and how a current project is linked to it

A review outlines the direction of research on a question and shows the development of knowledge. A good review places a research project in context and demonstrates its relevance by making connections to a body of knowledge.

3. To integrate and summarise what is know in an area

A review pulls together and synthesises different results. A good review points out areas where prior studies agree, where they disagree, and where major questions remain. It collects what is know up to a point in time and indicates the direction for future research.

4. To learn from others and stimulate new ideas

A review tells what others have found so that a researcher can benefit from the efforts of others. A good review identifies blind alleys and suggests hypotheses for replication. It divulges procedures, techniques, and research designs worth copying so that a researcher can better focus hypotheses and gain new insights.

Table 2.1: Goals of a Literature review, adapted from Neuman (1997:80).

Goals of the Literature Review

As a result of the literature review the researcher became aware of the roles and objectives of both HR and ITS, as defined by numerous academics. The researcher became aware of the commonalities and potential areas of overlap between the HR and ITS units.

The results of the research are summarised in this chapter. The chapter has been divided into specific subject headings in an attempt to highlight the issues and topics that the researcher identified as key elements in the area of the study.

2.3   HUMAN RESOURCES

Many definitions abound as to what human resource management (HRM) actually is. Daft (1994) and believe that the term HRM refers to activities undertaken to attract, develop, and maintain an effective work force within an organisation. Stone (1991) believes HRM to be a function primarily concerned with the management of people within the employer-employee relationship. Specifically, to involve the productive utilisation of people in achieving the organisation's objectives and the satisfaction of individual needs. Robbins et al. (1994) postulates that HRM will affect both individuals and groups through the organisation's policies and procedures in how it recruits, selects, develops and compensates employees.

Over the last decade or so there has been growing recognition of the increasing importance of HRM. Many of today's organisations see HRM as a vital success component. Effective HRM can help an organisation achieve its overall strategies. Ultimately enabling that organisation to establish a competitive advantage over its rivals. However, Daft (1994) notes that despite its importance, the functions and operations of HRM still remain a mystery to employees. Furthermore, Robbins et al. (1997) postulates that effective education about the roles of HRM is essential.

2.3.1   Goals of HRM

According to Daft (1994) the goals of HRM, as presented in Figure 2.1, are to attract an effective work force to the organisation, develop the work force to its potential and maintain the work force over the long term. These subjects have attracted much attention in recent years.

Their subject areas encompass many subsidiary topics and a truly comprehensive discussion explaining all of the intricacies were neither possible nor appropriate in this investigation.

Attract an Effective Work Force
HR Planning
Job Analysis
Forecasting
Recruitment
Selection

Maintain an Effective Work Force
Wage and Salary
Benefits
Labour Relations
Turnover

Develop an Effective Work Force
Training
Development
Appraisal
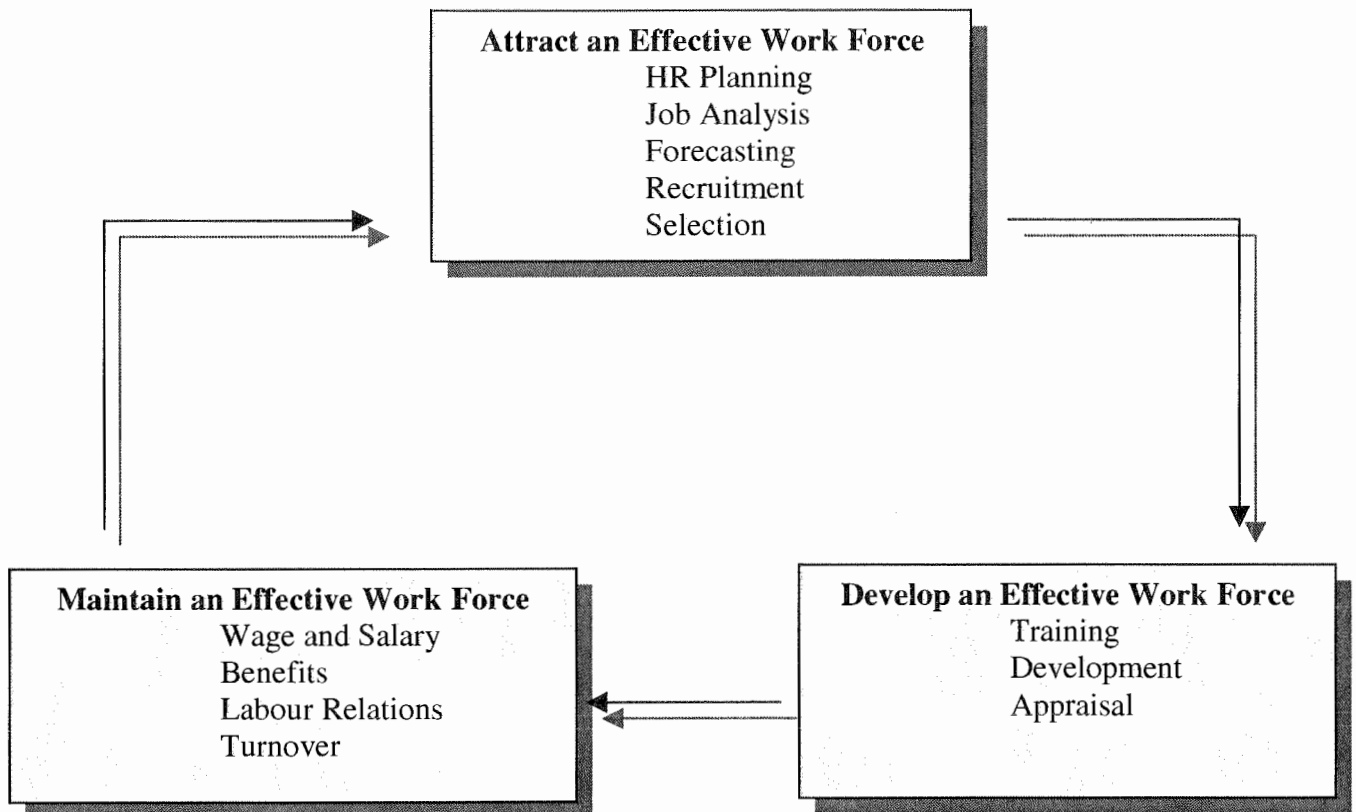
Figure 2.1: The Goals of HRM, adapted from Daft (1994:399)

2.3.2   Attract an Effective Work Force

According to Daft (1994) and Robbins et al. (1997) the first goal of HRM is to attract individuals whom are likely to add some value to the organisation. Individual's who show signs of becoming valued, productive and satisfied employees.

An organisation's success in attracting employees is totally dependent upon that organisation's ability to match the needs, interest and values of the organisation with the individual. Daft (1994) describes this process with the matching model. An employee selection approach in which the organisation and the applicant attempt to match each other's needs, interests and values.

That is, the organisation attempts to attract or induce the desired applicant through pay and benefits, meaningful work, advancement, challenge and training. The applicant is sought after due to their ability, education, creativity, commitment and expertise.

In order to attract such value adding employees Stone (1991) and Burnes (1996) postulate that HRM professionals must place great emphasis upon their planning, recruiting and selecting processes.

2.3.2.1   HR Planning

Human resource planning involves the forecasting of HR needs and the projected matching of individuals with expected job vacancies (Robbins et al., 1997; Burnes, 1996; Milkovich, 1997). Forecasting of such enables an organisation to formulate HR plans and visions at both the operational level and the strategic level. These plans and visions provide the HR unit with goals and targets and the direction needed to achieve those goals and targets. Achieving the HR targets helps to enable the overall strategic objectives of the organisation to be realised. From a practical standpoint, the benefits associated with HR planning are highly evident. For example, if a firm foresees an opportunity to exploit new technologies, the HR unit is able to forecast an increase in the need for personnel that are highly knowledgable in the new technologies. Furthermore, the HR unit could prepare a training schedule for existing employees to train them in the operation of the new technologies. The HR unit might also forecast an increase in absenteeism and turnover and might benefit from the development of contingencies that enable the organisation to deal with such issues.

2.3.2.2   Recruitment

Daft (1994: 268) defines recruiting as "the activities that define the desired characteristics of applicants for specific jobs". Potential applicants can be recruited externally and internally, depending on the organisational requirements. Both forms of recruitment have their advantages and disadvantages. For example, internal recruitment is less expensive than external recruitment, it enforces "promote-from-within" policies and can result in higher employee commitment, satisfaction and development (Burnes, 1996).

Whereas, external recruitment can be quite costly, particularly due to advertisement, however, it does promote the recruitment of "fresh blood" into the organisation. Organisations look upon recruitment as a means of attracting potentially valuable employees, whom are likely to add some value to the organisation. When used in compliance with the legalities involved, effective recruitment processes can provide an organisation with the means to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals. According to Kreitner (1995) once a pool of applicants has been recruited the next step is to select the desired employee.

2.3.2.3 Selection

According to Daft (1994: 410) "selection is the process of determining the skills, abilities, and other attributes a person needs to perform a particular job". It is then necessary to assess the compatibility of the applicant attributes and the position requirements in order to determine the "fit" between the two. The challenge faced by the employer is one in which they must attempt to select an applicant whose characteristics fit or meet the requirements and specifics of the position description (PD). Robbins et al. (1994: 694) defines a position description *as* "a written statement of what a job-holder does, how it is done and why it is done". A PD generally consists of a compilation of the primary objective of the position, specific accountabilities, level of responsibility, direction received and desirable qualifications. The most commonly used selection devices are the application form and the interview (Robbins et al., 1997; Drucker, 1994).

2.3.3 Develop an Effective Work Force

Once an organisation has selected its employees it must then be prepared to develop and mould its work force into a productive unit.

2.3.3.1 Training and Development

According to Daft (1994) and Fisher (1996) training and development represent a planned effort by an organisation to facilitate employees' learning of job-related behaviours. Training and development accounts for a substantial amount of an organisation's budget. In 1987 IBM reported spending some $750 million on training and development, a figure that has most likely increased over recent years (Hitt et al., 1997).

Training and development is fundamental to an organisation's success. In making distinction between the two functions of training and development, training refers to those activities that have the purpose of preparing an employee for a future event or task. Activities such as on-the-job-training, which encompasses job rotation, apprenticeships, traineeships, and coaching. Also, off-the-job-training, which encompasses training courses delivered by an external provider. Robbins et al. (1994) suggests that advances in communications technologies, particularly real-time telecommunications such as video-conferencing, are vastly expanding training techniques and opportunities. Furthermore, according to Kreitner (1995) and Chong (1984), advances in IT will ultimately lead to the advancement of training, as employees will need to be educated in new technologies in order to effectively use them.

On the other hand, development refers to those activities that enable an employee to "grow". Robbins et al. (1994: 700) defines career development as "the means by which an organisation can sustain or increase the employees' current productivity, while, at the same time, prepare them for a changing world". The effective development of employees depends largely upon the degree of autonomy, creativity, freedom, variety and challenge given by the employer. Combined together, training and development activities provide the means for an organisation to fully develop, utilise and satisfy their employees (Fisher, 1996).

Training and development is a function that has proven throughout history to be of great importance, as organisations have needed to educate their work force in such a way as to ensure they're up to speed with the changing technologies, policies and procedures mirrored in society. Drucker (1994) and Hitt at al. (1997) suggest that due to rapidly changing technologies the need for training and development is likely to increase considerably in coming years. Another important element inclusive in the employee development process is performance appraisal.

2.3.3.2 Performance Appraisal

According to Robbins (1996) and Drucker (1994) performance appraisal consists of the steps of observing and assessing employee performance, documenting the assessment and providing feedback to the employee.

Primarily performance appraisals are used for performance feedback, compensation allocation, promotion, personnel planning, retention/discharge and research (Fisher, 1996). They can also be used to help identify training and development needs. Through the feedback and promotion functions, performance appraisals also have the ability to act as a motivational tool (Robbins et al., 1997).

The use of performance appraisals is a topical area that raises many questions, such as what should be appraised? Who should do the appraisal? What method of performance appraisal should be administered? The answers to these questions are unique to the individual organisation and the surrounding circumstances.

2.3.4   Maintain an Effective Work Force

Once that an organisation has recruited, selected, trained and developed its work force, it is of vital importance that the organisation retain and maintain the work force in which it has invested vast amounts of money and time. A highly effective, yet topical method of retention lies in compensation (Henderson, 1997; Milkovich, 1997).

2.3.4.1   Compensation

Daft (1994: 419) defines compensation as "monetary payments (wages, salaries) and non-monetary goods/commodities (fringe benefits, vacations) used to reward employees". Henderson (1997) and Milkovich (1997) postulate that the major parts that can be included within a compensation program are base wages and salaries; wage and salary add-ons; incentive payments both short and long term; and employee benefits and services. An important point to be observed is that, ultimately, compensation has the power to influence employees to express organisational commitment and provides them with the motivation needed to perform at their utmost. On the other hand, the ineffective or inadequate management of compensation and benefits may be detrimental to an employee's commitment and motivation.

For example, if an employee senses or perceives inequality or inadequacy in an organisation's remuneration policies that employee may well be inclined to work unproductively, increase their absenteeism rate and ultimately terminate their employment (Fisher, 1996).

2.3.4.2   Labour Relations

Deery et al. (1997) purpose, that in its broadest sense, labour relations are about the behaviour and interaction of people at work. "It is concerned with how individuals, groups, organisations and institutions make decisions that shape the employment relationship between employers and employees" (Deery et al., 1997:2). HRM is now seen as a tool that has the potential to drive labour relations and promote a harmonious relationship between the employer and employee. Ultimately, helping to kerb the occurrence of industrial disputes and decrease the need for union intervention. One of the most costly and disruptive events that results from poorly managed employee relations is staff turnover.

2.3.4.3   Turnover

Turnover can be beneficial to an organisation, or it can be detrimental. Milkovich (1997) suggests that it is healthy for an organisation to have an active turnover rate. It is of benefit to an organisation to terminate employees who are not "pulling their weight" or are poor performers. As unproductive workers can be costly to maintain and add little value to an organisation. Furthermore, their unproductive attitude can be contagious and other employees may tend to adopt a similar approach to work (Stone, 1995).

Robbins (1996) indicates that turnover incorporates those employees that leave voluntarily, those that have no option other than to leave due to mergers and downsizing and those employees who are due for retirement. It goes without saying, that the loss of one or more "valuable" employees may considerably effect an organisations ability to operate. The effect is further pronounced when an employee leaves to work for a rival firm. Particularly if that organisation has invested considerable time and money to advance that employees knowledge and value (McIlwee, 1991).

For organisations turnover is a fact of life. It's the job of the organisation to ensure that it is controlled and managed in the most effective way possible (Stone, 1991). The majority of this role is assumed to be the responsibility of the HR unit. However, McIlwee (1991) proposes that the management of turnover, due to its high level of importance, is the responsibility of the entire organisation.

It seems apparent that the research topic encompasses two distinct disciplines, in HR and IS. Having discussed the role of HR it is now time to shift the focus of the review to IS.

2.4   INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Avison and Fitzgerald (1995: 1) postulate that

> "An information system in an organisation provides facts useful to its members and clients which should help it operate effectively".

In today's rapidly changing competitive environment many firms are finding it difficult to simply "keep their head above water" and continue operating. The effective management of IS presents firms with an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals and help to ensure the firms success and viability in the long term (Kreitner, 1995). Boyton et al. (1993: 32) state that

> "The effective and innovative use of information technology is at the heart of the new organisational designs and capabilities required to meet current competitive challenges".

Bettis and Hitt (1995: 7) contend that:

> "Technology is rapidly altering the nature of competition and strategy in the late twentieth century, moving us toward a 'new competitive landscape' in the twenty-first century. The new landscape presents new issues, new concepts, new problems, and new challenges".

Bettis and Hitt (1995) go on to suggest that telecommunications and computer networks are altering the way managers work and interact. Furthermore, they indicate that organisations need to gain a better understanding of technological changes that are occurring around them and then use that understanding to develop strategies that take technology into account.

According to Bettis and Hitt (1995: 9) there have been considerable changes in recent years. "Computers, software and telecommunications have been evolving in a rapid, complex and almost chaotic manner."

2.4.1 The role of IS

Lauden and Lauden (1999) contend that IS cannot be ignored by managers because they play such a critical role in contemporary organisations. The widening role of IS is forcing a new relationship between organisations and IS. Or as Lauden and Lauden (1999:15) state that:

> "In contemporary organisations there is a growing interdependence between organisational business strategy, rules, and procedures and the organisation's information systems. Changes in strategy, rules, and procedures increasingly require changes in hardware, software, databases, and telecommunications. Existing systems can act as a constraint on organisations. Often, what the organisation would like to do depends on what its systems will permit it to do."

According to Licker (1997) and Lauden and Lauden (1999) the increasing complexity and scope of system projects is drawing upon more resources. That is, constructing systems today requires the involvement of a much larger part of the organisation than it did in the past. A Change in IS significantly affects many people throughout an organisation. The people affected by the changes need to be included in the construction process as to ensure the affect of the change in IS has positive results.

Lauden and Lauden (1999: 29) state that:

> "Today's managers must know how to arrange and coordinate the various computer technologies and business systems application to meet the information needs of each level of their organisation, as well as the needs of the organisation as a whole."

Lauden and Lauden (1999) and Wallsten (1998) emphasise the importance of effective coordination between individual business units.

An annual surveys conducted by *Datamation* (a leading practitioner journal of IS) indicated that in 1993, 1994, and 1995 the most important role of IS is to support organisations in their attempt to (Turban et al., 1996: 5):

> "1.   Increase productivity (reduce cost, increase effectiveness).
>
> 2.   Improve quality.
>
> 2.   Create competitive advantage.
>
> 3.   Attain company's strategy.
>
> 4.   Reorganise and re-engineer.
>
> 5.   Make better and more effective decisions.
>
> 6.   Respond quickly to customer needs and to changes in the business or its environment.
>
> 7.   Access a wealth of information.
>
> 8.   Improve creativity and innovation."

According to Turban et al. (1996) the primary purpose of IS is to assist management execute the above mentioned functions in an efficient and effective manner. Turban et al. (1996) suggests that IS plays a dual role. They are part of the pressures (technology), but they can be used to diffuse pressures as well.

2.5   ISSUES RELATED TO BOTH HR AND ITS

Traditionally HR and ITS have been considered to be two highly distinct and autonomous fields. They operated independently of each other and the common belief was that HR and ITS had little to gain by increasing their correspondence. HR was considered to be an expendable function. That is, management generally did not considered HR to be as crucial to an organisation's success as other organisational functions, such as finance and accounting. However, today, organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the integral influence that HR has upon an organisation's success (Stone, 1995).

On the other hand, traditionally managers have had a reasonable comprehension of the importance of ITS. However, the majority of organisations alienated the ITS unit from the rest of the organisation.

That is, the ITS unit was considered to be a separate entity of the business and operated independently of other business units. Consequently, firms were not able to realise the benefits associated with fully integrating ITS into the business. Such benefits as, greater alignment of an organisations overall strategic objectives and the ITS strategic objectives. However, today firms generally understand that the alienation of the ITS unit is detrimental to an organisation's overall success (Milkovich, 1997).

Indeed, HR and ITS are distinct entities in their own right. However, there is no disputing that the two functions intersect and overlap in much that they do. Following is a discussion identifying the commonalities between HR and ITS and the issues that relate directly to both units.

2.5.1   HR and ITS as Service Providers

Both the HR unit and the ITS unit of an organisation provide the employees of that organisation with a service. The Human Resources unit ensures that all employees are paid in an accurate and timely fashion. They provide staff and managers with information pertaining to such issues as compensation, superannuation, training, recruitment and selection procedures, termination, payroll issues and much, much more.

The ITS unit provides staff with the technology required to help them operate more effectively and efficiently. They provide staff with an avenue for advice and information in relation to ITS issues (Groe et al., 1996; Reid & Chung, 1995).

According to McLeod (1994) and Licker (1997) the services that HR and IS deliver are essential to an organisations overall viability and success.

2.5.2   Support Role

Martinsons and Chong (1999), Licker (1997) and Lauden and Lauden (1999) suggest that both HR and ITS occupy a support within an organisation. That is, it is the primary responsibility of HR and ITS to provide employees, managers and business units alike, with the support that they need to perform their own role.

The support given by ITS is primarily concerned with helping employees to perform their job with the utmost efficiency, utilising information technology. Alternatively, HR is primarily concerned with ensuring that those employees are adequately looked after and compensated for (Groe et al., 1996).

2.5.3   Planning

One function that is vitally important for both HR and ITS alike is planning. Daft (1994: 9) defines planning as:

> "The management function concerned with defining goals for future organisational performance and deciding on the tasks and resource use needed to attain them."

Planning defines a pathway to future successes and the means to travel that pathway. Planning sets a vision for all to aspire to and can provide the motivation required to realise future goals. Perhaps the most important commonality between IS and HR is the need to plan for the future. Whether it be operational planning or strategic planning, it is essential (Hitt et al., 1997; Robbins, 1996).

Operational Planning

Operational planning refers to those plans developed at the organisation's lower levels that specify action steps toward achieving operational goals (Robbins et al., 1997). The operational plan is the departmental managers' tool for directing daily and weekly operations. They encompass all the regular transactions, operations and functions that need to be performed in order to keep things moving forward on a day-to-day basis.

In order to achieve their goals it is necessary for both HR and ITS to form operational plans. Porter (1996) and Kreitner (1995) believe that operational planning may well be necessary, but it is not solely sufficient. He postulates that operational effectiveness is not strategy. Operational effectiveness and strategy are both important to ensure the overall success of an organisation, however, they work in very different ways. Porter (1996: 78) states that:

"The operational agenda involves continual improvement everywhere there are no trade-offs. Failure to do this creates vulnerability even for companies with a good strategy."

Robbins et al. (1997) believes that operational plans support strategic planning by ensuring that the organisation survives on a day-to-day basis.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning encompasses plans that deal with issues at a higher level. It looks at the broader picture and sets plans for the long term (Turban et al., 1996). According to Robbins (1996) strategic plans define the action steps by which the company intends to achieve strategic objectives. They define the pathway that the organisation needs to pursue in order to realise its vision and mission. Lauden and Lauden (1999) suggest that strategic planning determines the objectives resources and policies of the organisation. Minzberg (1994: 112) believes that:

"Sometimes strategies must be left as broad visions, not precisely articulated, to adapt to a changing environment."

Miller (1998) has a strong opinion of the high importance of strategic planning. He suggests that management should consider outsourcing all non-strategic functions and let the HR function spend more time on value-added strategic thinking.

Bringing ITS into the picture, Boynton et al. (1993) suggests that managers must understand that at the heart of new strategic responses is innovative management through advanced ITS.

The importance of planning to both HR and ITS is clear, but how important is the integration of the planning process between business units? Kreitner (1995) suggests that management decisions made in isolation of the corporate vision and mission guarantee a division of resources, effort and direction. That is, the strategic plans of an organisation need to be echoed throughout that organisation. They need to be communicated from the top and filtered through to the individual business units and the employees that reside within them.

This ensures that all employees and business units operate and make decisions in a fashion that is in alignment with the overall strategic objectives of the organisation. Promoting a common goal. It stands to reason that the strategic plans of individual business units should also be communicated throughout an organisation as their operations impact upon the strategies of other business units and the overall business strategy. Common sense would suggest that two business units sharing the multitude of commonalities, as do ITS and HR, should most definitely be included in and informed of each others strategic objectives (Perrow, 1986; Ward & Griffiths, 1996).

2.5.4 Training

Perhaps the most poignant of all, training is a function that both HR and ITS need to consider with almost all that they do. According to Daft (1994) and Fisher (1996) training represents a planned effort by a firm to facilitate employees' learning of job-related behaviours.

In establishing the high importance of continuous training, Robbins et al. (1994: 698) state that:

> "Competent employees won't remain competent forever. Their skills can deteriorate; technology may make their skills obsolete; the organisation may move into new areas, changing the types of jobs that exist and the skills necessary to do them."

Milkovich (1997) and Ward and Griffiths (1996) suggest that people matter and unless adequate levels of resources are fed into the appropriate training and professional development programs of all staff members any IT strategy or plan will face an uphill battle to be accepted, let alone survive.

Avison and Fitzgerald (1995) indicate that poor training may lead to people not cooperating with the IS, ultimately resulting in the projects failure and abandonment. King (1996) suggests that it is important to train people to understand, especially among lower-level employees where turnover is high. Turban et al. (1996) postulates that thorough user training is critical to implementing an information system successfully.

2.5.5 Turnover

Robbins et al. (1994: 52) defines turnover as "voluntary and involuntary permanent withdrawal from the organisation." Cafasso (1995) suggests that turnover is a big problem.

Turnover is an issue related to both the ITS and HR functions. ITS need to provide new employees with the equipment that they require in order to perform their job. The job of ITS, is therefore made easier if HR communicate the departure of employees as well as the arrival of new employees. HR need to process the related termination paper work and they also need to recruit, select and employee someone to fill vacant positions. Clearly, the HR unit has a direct involvement in the turnover of staff (Licker, 1997; Stone, 1995).

Turnover of staff is a major problem facing ITS units. According to -Scheier (1997) finding and keeping good people is the main issue facing most information systems managers. Igbaria and Greenhaus (1992) suggest that IS people have historically displayed a turnover rate that is approximately twice the average for business managers and professionals. ITS managers are under constant pressure to recruit, hire and maintain ITS professionals. Callas (1998) postulates that IS turnover is only one of a number of symptoms related to the real problem of firms that fail to take a strategic view of IT. A precedent of turnover is absenteeism.

Absenteeism

Robbins et al (1994: 52) define absenteeism as *"the failure to report to work"*. In 1994 the cost of absenteeism to Australian employers was estimated to be over seven billion dollars per year. Cotter and Williams (1997) suggest that statistics on the rates and costs of absenteeism clearly illustrate that it has become a serious problem that needs to be addressed immediately. Another precedent of turnover is poor remuneration policy.

Remuneration

Perceived inadequacy or inequality of compensation and remuneration results in increased absenteeism and ultimately, increased turnover.

It is vitally important for employees to feel as though they are being remunerated at an appropriate level. Furthermore, remuneration must be seen to be fair and just in its efforts to achieve equality in the workplace. According to Cafasso (1995) competitive salaries are still a key factor in retaining personnel.

2.5.6 Communication

Communication is an issue that is of great importance to both HR and ITS. Whether it is HR communicating policy changes to staff, or ITS communicating a service interruption. Daft (1994:551) defines communication as:

> "The process by which information is exchanged and understood by two or more people, usually with the intent to motivate or influence behaviour."

Turban et al. (1996) suggests that through communication, people exchange and share information as well as influence and understand each other.

Communication between the HR and ITS units of an organisation is particularly important. In discussing the issues associated with the implementation of an Intranet, Wallsten (1998: 83) states that:

> "HR and IS can establish a good working relationship by openly communicating with one another to avoid problems in cooperation and communication."

According to Robbins et al. (1994) and Stone (1995) communication can be thought of as a flow. Organisations can encounter problems when that flow deviates or is blocked. Blockages in the flow prevent messages in the forms of ideas, plans, goals, objectives, directions, strategies and the like from being communicated to all in the organisation. The reason for a blockage may range from a computer network crash to a disruptive or manipulative employee deliberately distorting the communication channels (Stone, 1991).

Effective communication within an organisation is essential. Drucker (1994) and Ward and Griffiths (1996) suggest that it is particularly important to effectively communicate organisational strategies and visions throughout an organisation. This ensures that all employees are working in alignment and directing their energies toward a common goal. The communication of the vision provides employees with the direction and motivation needed to achieve a high level of proficiency.

2.5.7   Top Management

Top management undoubtably has a marked impact upon all of the business units within an organisation. HR and ITS are no exception. Drucker (1994) indicates that top management consists of those individuals who hold a senior management position and have recognised authority and responsibility within an organisation. An obvious example of top management is the Chief Executive Officer. Two contentious issues relating to top management are: their own personal level of knowledge and the level of support that they provide.

Support

Robbins et al. (1997) postulates that for any project, initiative or idea to be a success it must have top management approval and support. Without top management support the funding, resources and permission to pursue a project are not forthcoming.

Lauden and Lauden (1999:321) state that

> "If an information systems project has the backing and approval of management at various levels, it is more likely to be perceived positively by both users and the technical information services staff."

Importantly, it indicates that those who are about to initiate a project should first assess the likelihood that their top management will refuse to fund their plan. It further suggests that planners need to learn to sell their ideas to top management to prevent them collecting dust on a bookshelf (Lederer & Sethi, 1989).

A study of eighty companies with experience in planning and executing strategic information systems stated an interesting finding in Lederer and Sethi (1989: 54)

"Probably the most disturbing finding was that over half of the respondents rated the statement 'it is difficult to secure top management commitment for implementing the plan' as an extreme or major problem."

An observation of this kind implies that top management might not understand the plan or might lack confidence in the department's ability to carry it out. A blockage in the communication flow may also be an issue in such a situation.

Knowledge

Top management knowledge is a somewhat contentious issue. What level of knowledge and expertise does a top manager require? Does a top manager actually require any technical expertise at all? Drucker (1994) and Kreitner (1995) believe they do.

To find how large the discrepancy between technology and the expertise of executives might be, Opinion Research Corporation surveyed 558 executives in several departments of varying types of companies. The survey results suggested that technological expertise could become more important to HR executives, as ultimately, they are responsible for the explanation of the new technology to those who must use it productively (Fisher, 1986). Robbins et al. (1994) indicates that the core competencies that managers need to be successful are technical skills, human skills and conceptual skills. Stone (1995) suggests that perhaps an acute awareness of what is going on around them is ultimately more important than intricate expertise in specific fields.

Indeed Hitt and Bettis (1995) stray away from the need for top management knowledge and suggest that of increasing importance is a managers need to adapt a new managerial mindset that emphasises strategic flexibility.

2.5.8   Human Resource Information Systems

It would be remiss of the researcher to conduct an investigation concerning HR and IS without mentioning Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS). Battisti (1986) and Lauden and Lauden (1999) suggest that HRIS be used to support management decisions.

Furthermore, these IT based systems can be critical to a firms operations. Miller (1998) postulates that HRIS are revolutionising the HR function. That is, they are creating more time for HR professionals by limiting the administrivia' and bureaucracy traditionally associated with HR. In effect enabling them to focus on the more strategic elements and to provide management the support needed to create an efficient and effective working environment. According to Coffee (1997) employers should view HRIS as more than just procedures training, payroll and records retention. Furthermore, Coffee (1997) suggests that HRIS is the starting point for developing the creative, capable, problem-solving staff that are needed for vital tasks. In addressing the issue of top management support, as outlined previously Miller (1998: 21) states that:

> "To successfully leverage HRIS's to accelerate the HR departments transformation into top management's strategic partner, HR professionals must familiarise themselves with the expectations of senior managers from HR technology."

According to Spoor (1991) HRIS is an element that is highly dependent upon effective cooperation and communication between the HR and ITS units.

2.5.9   The Implementation of New Systems

An activity that highlights all of the afore mentioned issues is the implementation of a new computer system or information system. Whether it is an upgrade of a specific piece of software or a complete overhaul of hardware and software systems, the issues evoked during the implementation of a new system clearly demonstrates the combined involvement of the HR and ITS units (Launden & Lauden, 1999).

Callas (1998) suggests that when firms upgrade their systems, the approach is often more tactical and piecemeal, rather then strategic and integrated.

For example, in October 1998 Trust Bank attempted to "go live" and introduced a new computer system. Know as FNS Bancs, the new system was implemented in incremental steps throughout Tasmania, encompassing some mainland centres.

The system was a very expensive failure that elicited a very steady downward progression for the once thriving institution. Although the computer system itself did have some faults, the software problems played a minor role in the failure of the system

Trust Bank was a very bureaucratic firm that had a highly formalised and rigid structure, as is traditionally associated with banks. The organisational structure was the precedent that ensured minimal user involvement in the development and implementation of FNS Bancs. Top management took it upon themselves to initiate and complete the project. Top management had little knowledge of user requirements. They had limited knowledge and expertise in ITS and HR. In failing to involve users in the planning process of the project, Trust Bank left itself open to IS-User conflict. Indeed, that is what followed. Operational level staff were thrown into a very unenviable situation. They were required "look professional" in the eyes of customers and operate a new computer system that they had had limited exposure to. A computer system that many did not understand the need for, nor did they perceive any benefits. To make matters worse the system was not at all running smoothly. There was an abundance of "bugs" that needed to be ironed out in order for the system to operate effectively.

Staff members were not committed to the changes that accompanied the new computer system. What followed were high levels of IS-user conflict, user resistance, a dramatic increase in absenteeism and turnover and a marked decrease in motivation. Staff members felt as though they were not trained in such a way that would enable them to adequately operate the system. They also perceived an inadequacy in remuneration.

This disaster could possibly have been avoided had there been a dramatic increase in communication. Increased communication between top management and users. Increased communication between individual business units, in particular the HR and ITS units. Had this occurred Trust Bank might have been better informed and better equipped to plan for issues such as training. They may have been able to more effectively plan for and possibly minimise the resulting absenteeism, turnover, user conflict and resistance.

Trust Bank certainly demonstrated just how devastating an inappropriate development and implementation schedule can be. A system that highlights the need for a high level of communication between the HR and ITS units is an intranet. Its effective development, implementation and maintenance requires ongoing contributions and support from both the ITS and HR units. It is a good example of a situation where it is imperative that HR and ITS work together (Fisher, 1986).

Intranet

Lauden and Lauden (1999: 25) define and Intranet as "an internal network based on Internet and World Wide Web technology and standards." The Intranet is a means by which information can be effectively communicated throughout an organisation. Lauden and Lauden (1999: 288) state that

"Human Resources can use Intranets for on-line publishing of corporate policy manuals, job postings and internal job transfers, company telephone directories, and training classes."

The creation of an Intranet is quite a complex task. HR and ITS are central to the development process. For example, HR need to be included in the creation of an intranet because, more so than any other business unit, the functions of an employees job are influenced by its implementation. Employees are effected by the decisions that are made in relation to an Intranet and it is, therefore, necessary to include HR in the development process. Furthermore, a large amount of the information contained on an Intranet site is directly related to HR policies and procedures.

It is also clear that ITS need to be involved in the process because, unlike other business units, it has the primary role of actually developing, implementing and maintaining the Intranet (Wallsten, 1998).

According to Wallsten (1998) in order for an Intranet to meet its objectives and add value to an organisation, the HR and ITS units need to work together. In particular, Wallsten (1998) identified the following elements as crucial to the success of an Intranet:

Openly Communicate with IS

The first and most critical element in the process of creating an Intranet is opening the channels of communication between HR and ITS. As HR and ITS are generally dealing with issues independent of one another, the key is to have the two business units focus on more general issues that influence the entire organisation. Rather than focusing on the day-to-day operational tasks, which may consequently lead to the development of an Intranet site that primarily deals with operational level issues. By promoting the discussion of general themes, such as increased access to and sharing information, it enables and motivates each unit to realise the possible benefits that can be achieved. Hence, promoting cooperation and communication between the two units.

Find a Middle Ground

After communication has been established, it is necessary to find the middle ground between HR's wants and ITS's limitations. HR and ITS must attempt to determine common ground by communicating desires, limitations and capabilities to each other. They must attempt to understand the varying expectations that they may have.

Maintain Upper Management's Support

It is critical to the success of the Intranet that top management, particularly HR and IS executives, remain committed to the project. Karen Vander Linde, partner with Fairfax, Virginia-based PriceWaterhouseCo. states that, *"The active support and participation of management is critical. An Intranet can't succeed without it"* (Robbins et al., 1997). The continued support of HR and ITS executives is likely to enthuse other executives, in turn promoting the strategic focus and alignment of the Intranet.

Keep on Going

The development of an Intranet is never complete. It is an evolutionary process that requires continual updates and revision. The HR and ITS units must continue to exploit the Intranet for all that its worth. Indeed, this raises the question of whom should be responsible for IT training, the HR department or the IT department?

The above mentioned elements are suggested by Wallsten (1998) could, in fact, be extended beyond the sole task of intranet development. The elements mentioned are important in any project that involves both HR and ITS.

2.5.9.1   The User

Arguably the most important contributor in development and implementation of new systems is the end user. According to Lauden and Lauden (1999: 321)

> "Heavy user involvement in the design and operation of information systems afford them more opportunities to mould the system according to their priorities and business requirements. In addition, they are more likely to react positively to the completed system because they have been active participants in the change process."

Ward and Griffiths (1996) contend that the level of user involvement in managing projects and in developing business cases together with the ITS unit gives an indication of the cooperation and communication present between the business and the ITS unit. Lauden and Lauden (1999) suggest a *user-designer communications gap*. Where the difference in histories, interests and priorities that hinder communication and problem solving among end users and IS experts. A communication gap as such can often result in IS-User conflict

2.5.9.2   IS-User Conflict

IS-User conflict is a major issue in its own right. Its presence can have a marked negative effect upon an organisation's performance. Markinsons and Chong (1999: 123) state that

> "Despite remarkable advances in information technology (IT), many computer-based information systems (IS) still fall short of performance expectations. A growing share of these implementation failures are due to non-technical factors."

They then go on to suggest that human factors and HR issues, such as IS-User conflict are the major reason for the occurrence of implementation failures.

Lauden and Lauden (1999) indicate that increased user involvement and formal planning are necessary to successfully manage implementation.

Gaudin (1998) suggests that end-user resistance is often the biggest challenge ITS teams encounter when conducting a major systems migration. Gaudin (1998) goes on to identify substantial end-user training prior to rollout as critical to help employees deal with any change. End-users need to be involved from the very beginning and consulted throughout the process. According to Lewis (1996) ITS departments maintain a constant struggle to balance control and freedom of end-users.

For IS to be fully utilised IS-User conflict must be either overcome or considerably limited.

2.6   SUMMARY

Traditionally HR and ITS have been considered to be two very distinct, separate entities. It stands to reason that this would be the case, as HR primarily deals with people and ITS primarily deals with IT related issues. However, the preceding review of the literature has clearly identified a number of issues that are common to both HR and ITS. Issues such as communication, planning and training. Further suggesting that there may be some benefit in more fully integrating some of the common operations performed by both HR and ITS. Highlighting the significance of the relationship between the two units was the obvious similarity in the fundamental support role that they both occupy within the organisation. They provide invaluable support to staff and business units alike, assisting them to achieve their targets. HR and ITS reply upon each other and need to provide each other with a great deal of support in order to enable them to successfully assist an organisation to do things better.

The literature review suggests that the issues associated with the relationship between HR and ITS are those elements that extend across the two disciplines. As such, the researcher believes that investigating the overlapping elements that are common to both HR and ITS will uncover the underlying issues related to the enhanced integration of HR and ITS, within the DSD.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The following chapter is a comprehensive description detailing how the researcher went about conducting the investigation. It is a step-by-step account of the methodology documenting why certain research approaches were adopted. This chapter describes in some detail the research techniques that were available to the researcher. Upon discussing and assessing these techniques the researcher identified the most appropriate technique. Face-to-face interviews were the primary technique employed. The selection of the appropriate research techniques enabled the researcher to develop a concise interview schedule and approach to interviewing. A discussion of data quality and data analysis completes the chapter.

3.2   RESEARCH APPROACH

Research methods are the means by which knowledge is developed. They need to be both relevant and rigorous in order to be accepted as legitimate within a particular field of knowledge (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Yin (1994) suggests that research methodology is a continuing process. Its is a continuum that is ever changing, ever developing, making it a somewhat complex subject topic.

There are two established research approaches available to investigators at present: quantitative and qualitative research. The two approaches can be employed together as a precedent for triangulation. However, they are generally adopted on an individual basis and are conceived as being two distinct approaches whose foundations clearly run at a tangent with one another (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Kvale, 1996; Herbert 1995).

Rubin and Rubin (1995) suppose that in any research project the researcher must be absolutely clear about which approach will give the information required. In order to ensure this, the researcher reviewed the two recognised research approaches of quantitative research and qualitative research and adopted the most suitable approach.

3.2.1 Quantitative Research

Gorman and Clayton (1997: 28) suggest that the "quantitative researcher is looking for patterns in events, for normative behaviour and for causal relationships among variables". Quantitative research is based upon normal science. That is, it assumes that all new phenomenon can be reduced to, and described by formal models (Neuman, 1997). Table 3.1 presents a summary of the quantitative research approach to investigation.

Summary of the Quantitative Mode of Enquiry	
Assumptions	Objective reality of social facts
	Primacy of method
	Possible to identify variables
	Possible to measure variables
Purpose	Generalisation
	Prediction
	Causal explanation
Approach	Hypothesis based
	Manipulation and control
	Uses formal instruments
	Experimentation
	Deductive
	Component analysis
	Seeking norms and consensus
	Reducing data to numerical indices
Researcher role	Detachment and impartiality
	Objective portrayal

Table 3.1: Adapted from Gorman and Clayton (1997: 28).

Rubin and Rubin (1995) postulate that the primary reason for conducting quantitative research is to learn how many people in a population have (or share) a particular characteristic or group of characteristics. It focuses upon the production of accurate and reliable measurements that permit statistical analysis (Neuman, 1997).

3.2.2 Qualitative Research

Lindlof (1995: 21) postulates that:

> "Fundamentally, qualitative researchers seek to preserve the form and content of human behaviour and to analyse its qualities, rather than subject it to mathematical or other transformations".

Furthermore, Lindlof (1995) and Kvale (1996) suggest that actual talk, gesture, and other social action provide the foundations for analysis.

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matter. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) offer a definition of qualitative research suggesting it is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. That is, qualitative researcher attempt to study things in their natural environment, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

The qualitative researcher administers whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are needed and available to them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative research is inductive by its very nature.

According to Neuman (1997) qualitative research involves personal feelings and thoughts; employs field studies of people in their natural environment; findings are relevant to context and phenomena only; seeks to determine the deep meaning. Furthermore, it deals with complex non-quantifiable data; strives to construct propositions using largely inductive analysis, rather than use of deductive analysis to test pre hoc hypotheses; bounded by the case – cannot generalise.

Qualitative research accepts the participants at face value; captures and discovers meaning through immersion in the data and deals with concepts in the form of individuals, codes, taxonomies/categories and themes.

Table 3.2 presents a summary of the qualitative research approach to investigation.

Summary of the Qualitative Mode of Enquiry	
Assumptions	Social construction of reality
	Primacy of subject matter
	Complexity of variables
	Difficulty in measuring variables
Purpose	Contextualisation
	Interpretation
	Understanding participant perspective's
Approach	Theory generating
	Emergence and portrayal
	Researcher as instrument
	Naturalistic
	Inductive
	Pattern seeking
	Looking for pluralism and complexity
	Descriptive
Researcher role	Personal involvement and partiality
	Empathetic understanding

Table 3.2: Adapted from Gorman and Clayton (1997: 24).

3.2.3   Adopted Research Approach

Larkin (1985) and Kvale suggest that selecting and implementing a research method correctly, so that it yields evidence and not nonsense, always poses a challenge to researchers conducting an investigation. However, in this case, the research method was clear from the outset as qualitative research is widely recognised as the most appropriate method for studies related to IS.

Dey (1993) suggests that it is suitable to employ qualitative research methods when the intention is to gain a deep understanding, empathy or grasp of the richer meaning of a social setting. An inductive-proposition-forming mode of operation will yield greater insight, when one is content with findings, not conclusions (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

This investigation sought to gain insight into the organisational culture of the DSD, as well as the personal understandings, perceptions, ideas, thoughts and beliefs of individuals. The research primarily focused upon human interpretations and meanings It was therefore apparent to the researcher that qualitative research approach would be most appropriate. Furthermore, the data extracted via the research method was not quantifiable. Therefore, quantitative research is not appropriate for this investigation.

3.3   EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION

Anon (2000, c) defines epistemology as "the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, it's presuppositions and foundations, and it's extent and validity".

Weber (1997) suggests that epistemology is the study of the way in which we acquire knowledge. It encompasses our belief about knowledge. The three epistemological positions that can be held by a researcher are positivism, interpretivism and criticalism. The following discussion addresses these philosophies.

3.3.1   Positivism

Positivists believe that reality can be observed and described objectively, without interfering with the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore:

- Its foundation is built around the concepts associated with normal science – full of laws and a need to discover them via deductive logic;

- Goal is reduction of the real and the search for casual relationships. That is, break a problem down to determine what makes it tick and then build laws from it;

- Empiricism is the only way to acquire new knowledge; and

- Every scientific hypothesis is falsifiable, and through falsification may eventually lead to a new paradigm (Leedy, 1992).

3.3.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivist's believe that certain aspects of reality can only be understood by subjectively interpreted observations of that reality. Furthermore:

- We are limited by our experience;

- It focuses on studying phenomena in their natural environment;

- Interpretivists accept that scientists have an impact on the phenomena they study and that multiple interpretations of reality are possible;

- Scientific knowledge is built via human interpretation and understanding of meaning; and

- The social world is complex and cannot be effectively explained by reduction to laws of behaviour (Leedy, 1992).

3.3.3   Criticalism

Critical social science offers a third option to the meaning of methodology. Critical relativists claim that there is no one single "scientific method". Rather, the process undertaken is dependent upon the particular situation, beliefs, standards, methods and aims of its practitioners (Brown, 1977).

Neuman (1997) indicates that critical researchers criticise the interpretive approach for being too subjective and realistic. Furthermore, critical researcher's hold that positivism fails to deal with the meanings of real people and their ability to feel and think. According to Thomas (1993) in Rubin and Rubin (1995: 35) "critical social researchers argue that the purpose of research is to discover flaws and faults in society and in so doing promote actions that eliminate problems".

Neuman (1997: 74) defines critical social science as:

> "A critical process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves".

3.3.4 Adopted Epistemology

A fundamental distinction between the interpretive and positivist worldview is the former's primary presumption of social constructionism. Interpretivism assumes that reality, as well as our knowledge thereof, are social products and hence incapable of being understood independent of the social-actors that construct and make sense of the reality. In general the aim of interpretive research is to is to understand how members of a social group through their participation in social processes, enact their particular realities and endow them with meaning. Further, to show how these meanings beliefs and intentions of members help to constitute their social action (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).

The research methodology adopted in this study is qualitative in nature and emphasises language, concepts and coding. It does not need to reduce everything to numbers (Hawles, 1998). Therefore, the epistemology of qualitative research is one that relates directly to Interpretivism. Therefore, the epistemological position that the researcher adopted in this investigation was from the interpretivist standpoint.

3.4 ONTOLOGICAL POSITION

Ontology is the way in which we see the world. It can be considered a categorisation or alphabet of the world. It is the nature of reality. The two broad ontological positions able to be adopted are subjectivism and objectivism (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These two positions are discussed below. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that in uncovering one's ontology it is possible to answer questions such as:

- How do we perceive the world?
- How do we learn about the world?

3.4.1 Subjectivism

Subjectivism is inductive by nature and attempts to identify patterns in nature. Subjectivists focus upon personal views, feelings and thoughts in alignment with the qualitative, interpretivist viewpoints.

3.4.2 Objectivism

Objectivism is deductive by nature: Objectivists hold that all reality is objective and external to the mind and that knowledge is reliably based on observed objects and events. An emphasis is placed on objects rather than feelings and thoughts. Under the Objectivist doctrine, if A then B, if B then C. therefore, if A then C. Objectivism can be likened and related to quantitative research.

3.4.3 Adopted Ontology

The ontology adopted by the researcher was subjectivism. Ontologically, the interpretive perspective emphasises the importance of subjective meaning and social-political as well as symbolic action in the processes through which humans construct and reconstruct their reality (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Neuman, 1997; Yin, 1994).

To maintain consistency and align the adopted research method and epistemology with the corresponding ontology, the researcher had little choice other than to adopt a subjective ontology.

3.5   PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PREPARATION

3.5.1   Identifying the area of interest

Through academic studies and work experience the researcher had gained a comprehensive understanding of, and developed great interest in HR and ITS. It seemed apparent to the researcher that these two distinct business units were critical to an organisation's success and that their effective management could see an organisation gain a sustainable competitive advantage over their rivals. The researcher believed that, traditionally, HR and ITS had been considered to be two very distinct and contrasting fields that required little communication. Indeed, the researcher had personally observed a consistent lack of communication between the two units in numerous organisations.

The researcher conceived there to be a widespread belief among employees and management that the effective management of ITS would have a negative effect upon an organisation's human resources. That is, increased efficiencies in ITS management and advances in technology would decrease the need for a human workforce. Ultimately rendering HR redundant, in relation to ITS.

In recent years, HR has been receiving due attention and its high importance is generally recognised. Many organisations now view HR as the single most critical factor to their overall success. Adopting such views as 'you're only as good as your people'.

It seemed apparent to the researcher that the two disciplines had numerous areas that overlapped and required input from both units. The overlap was so prominent that sometimes, there would be some ambiguity as to which unit was ultimately responsible for a task. For instance training. Who is responsible for the management and delivery of IT training? The ITS unit or the HR unit?

As the researcher viewed HR and ITS as the two most powerful and influential elements of an organisation, the researcher believed that enhanced communication and integration of the units could significantly improve operations and help the organisation to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage.

3.6   DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) believe that choosing an appropriate data collection technique or set of techniques is the most important aspect of research development and is often the most difficult.

Gorman and Clayton (1997) suggest that in thinking about research design it is important to consider the major issues first. That is, having determined a topic and a subject for investigation, the researcher then asks, how is it to be done?

Gorman and Clayton (1997) site four recognised methods of qualitative research that are commonly used within the IS discipline:

1. Observation
2. Group Discussion
3. Historical Study
4. Interviewing

3.6.1   Selection of Data Gathering Technique

In selecting an appropriate data-gathering technique Yin (1994) suggest that a researcher must determine the investigative nature of the research problem and assess whether or not a technique enables the research questions to be answered in the most comprehensive fashion. The research problem is exploratory. Exploratory in that it seeks to investigate little known phenomena and to identify important variables (Gorman & Clayton, 1997). It seeks to answer questions such as: "What are the salient themes, patterns, categories in participants' meaning structures?" "How are these patterns linked with one another?" Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest that the most appropriate data collection techniques for exploratory research problems are participant observation and in-depth interviewing.

Due to the richness required of the data and in accordance with the recommendations of Marshall and Rossman (1989) interviewing and participant observation were selected as the primary data gathering techniques. These two data collection techniques are now discussed in detail.

3.6.1.1   Participant Observations

Gorman and Clayton (1997: 44) state that "observation studies usually involve the systematic recording of observable phenomena or behaviour in a natural setting". Observation enables patterns of behaviour to be uncovered that were otherwise hidden attitudes and views.

Observations were used as a secondary source of data collection to provide the research with an alternate view or slant on proceedings that the primary data gathering technique, interviewing, may have overlooked. Such elements as an interviewee's posture, hand gestures and enthusiasm.

The observations also provided the research or with a means to back-up or confirm major issues and findings uncovered in the interviews. Furthermore, the observations provided the researcher with an opportunity to assess the overall consistency and effectiveness of the interviews.

The researcher adopted an unstructured approach to observational sessions. This enabled the researcher to record any behaviour or event that was relevant to the research question being investigated. Gorman and Clayton (1997) suggest that an unstructured approach to observation is very open-ended, in-line with qualitative research and is particularly useful in exploratory research (which this research is) or when a situation is not fully understood.

Due to the fact that the researcher was involved in all of the situations observed, the researcher was able to construct the observations from the perspective of a participant and from the perspective of an observer. Neuman (1997) postulates that in being able to view a situation from multiple perspective's a researcher is able to obtain a more rounded and thorough account of a situation.

Throughout the observations the researcher adhered to the five procedures and characteristics outlined by Gorman and Clayton (1997) in order to enhance the effectiveness of the observations:

- ease yourself into the context
- place yourself carefully
- be approachable and friendly
- be receptive
- dress and behave appropriately.

The researcher took notes throughout the progression of the interview. Noting issues and topics that the participant clearly felt passionate about. The researcher also paid particular attention to issues that may have had an effect upon the quality and consistency of the data gathered. Issues such as:

- Did the interviewee discuss issues openly?

- Did the tape-recorder influence the participant's willingness to honestly answer questions?

- Was the participant comfortable in the settings?

- Was the participant comfortable with the content of the questions?

- Was the participant willing to divulge information?

- Did the researcher's prior employment relationship have an influence upon proceedings?

At the conclusion of each interview the researcher found a quiet space and brainstormed for approximately fifteen minutes in an attempt to draw out the distinctive and major issues that were suggested by the participant. The importance of such issues was reinforced if they, again, were clearly prevalent in the recordings of the interviews.

The researcher recorded the observations in the form of hand written notes. To achieve a more thorough understanding the phenomenon being investigated, the researcher chose to document some of the observations in the form of rich stories.

3.6.1.2   Interviews

Interviews were used as the primary technique for gathering data as they enable more personal information, attitudes and beliefs to be collected than questionnaires do (Dwyer, 1993). According to Sroull (1988: 161) an interview is "a data collection method in which an interviewer questions people to elicit self-reports of their opinions, attitudes, values, beliefs or behaviours."

The interview data gathering technique is personal in nature, it provides the researcher with the opportunity to immediately clarify, follow up or explore responses, promotes free expression and encourages a high rate of participation between the respondent and the participant (Herbert, 1995).

Interviews are desirable as they provide the researcher with an immediate response to questions. Interviews are designed to obtain accurate and complete information.

Interviews were the most appropriate data gathering technique to be used in this investigation for three reasons. Firstly, the researcher's desire to explore the beliefs and perceptions of the participants could not have been effectively captured via questionnaires. Secondly, the researcher believed that interviews would be the most effective technique that would enable the researcher to exploit the strong rapport that had been created between the researcher and the participants through their current working relationship. That is, interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to openly discuss issues with "work mates". Conducting a conversation, face-to-face, with the participants was the technique most likely to elicit the rich discussions that contained the invaluable information sought by the researcher. It encouraged the interviews to be interspersed with jokes, asides, stories, diversions, and anecdotes (Neuman, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Finally, the flexibility generated by employing a semi-structured interview script empowered the participant with the option of diverging from the immediate topics presented in the interview. This enabled subsidiary or related topics to be uncovered and discussed openly. The semi-structured interview script as used in the investigation, will now be discussed further.

Semi-Structured Interview Script

The interview script was semi-structured, primarily consisting of open questions. Semi-structured interviews have a number of advantages over their structured counterparts. As previously mentioned the most prominent advantage being the flexibility that they provide.

According to Neuman (1997: 371) "field researchers use unstructured, nondirective, in-depth interviews, which differ from formal survey research in many ways." Utilising this interview technique enabled the researcher to ask and order the questions in such a way that was tailored to specific people and situations. For example, the researcher opened conversations by firstly asking an individual a question that related directly to their area of expertise. This varies for HR and ITS members.

Given that the responses sought by the interviewees were regarding personal feeling sand thoughts, the researcher logically adopted semi-structured interviews. The use of such an interview structure enabled the researcher to individualise and focus interviews according to the participant.

Face-to-Face Interviews

Interviews are generally conducted by telephone, videoconference or face-to-face. According to Neuman (1997) telephone and videoconference interviews are generally employed when face-to-face interviews cannot practically be conducted. For example, distance is a barrier to face-to-face interviews and an obvious situation where a video conference or telephone call might be the only option available to the interviewee. In this investigation, the researcher encountered no such barriers and accordingly, conducted the interviews on a face-to-face basis.

Herbert (1995) suggests that face-to-face interviews should be employed wherever possible as they provide the researcher with most intriguing and rich information.

3.7   DEVELOPMENT OF CORE CATEGORIES

By reviewing and assessing a variety of sources of information the researcher was able to identify the core categories related to the study topic. The sources that enabled the core categories to be established were the literature review, the objectives of the research, DSD experts and the researcher's own personal experience and perceptions. These sources are discussed below.

3.7.1   Review of the Current Literature

Prior to the commencement of the research method, the researcher conducted an exhaustive review of the current literature in the area of the investigation topic. Both human resources and information systems were reviewed as single entities. The researcher then investigated previous research that had attempted to address the issues associated with the commonalities and overlap between HR and ITS. This provided the researcher with a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the issues and findings associated with the areas of interest. The development of the research question was paramount and provided the basic foundation and direction of the study.

3.7.2 Research Objectives

The three primary objectives of this research are to identify employee knowledge and awareness of the issues associated with the relationship between the HR and ITS units of the DSD. Secondly, to determine the perception and thoughts of employees in relation to the integration of HR and ITS. Thirdly, to identify the issues associated with the advancement of the link between HR and ITS. These objectives provide the basis from which the research question will be developed and ultimately provided the study with the direction necessary to generate valuable findings. The research question restated:

What are the issues associated with the relationship between the Information Technology Services Unit and the Human Resources Unit of the Department of State Development?

3.7.3 DSD Experts

Further to the review of the literature, the researcher also consulted a number of IS and HR professionals within the DSD. These individuals gave invaluable insight into the background and issues associated with IS and HR. The researcher also discussed the research topic with numerous individuals who had no association with IS and HR at all. This enabled the researcher to view the investigation from an alternate slant and assess their opinion of the direction of the study. It also enabled the researcher to assess the 'Who cares' factor of the investigation. That is, what is the significance of the study? Will the reader find the content of the paper interesting and informative? The researcher also sought the advice of IS and research professionals at the University of Tasmania in order to gain an understanding of the relevance of the study and to develop the investigator's research and writing skills.

The information attained from the DSD experts was critical to the development of the study and helped to ensure it was of value to the business world and the academic world alike.

3.7.4 Researcher's Perceptions and Experience

Throughout the time of the study the researcher was an employee of the DSD and conducted the investigation from an internal perspective. Over the period of the investigation the researcher developed a considerable knowledge of the DSD's culture and structure and the staff that worked within it. Particularly those staff members that worked within the HR unit. The fact that the researcher was an employee of the DSD proved to be of considerable benefit, as the internal exposure to the DSD proved invaluable in the researcher's ability to identify an area of investigation that was significant and important to the DSD. The researcher was able to "flush out" the real life issues that DSD staff members considered important. Ultimately, enabling the researcher to develop a topic that individuals internal and external to the DSD could appreciate of the potential value of the insights gained by the study.

To portray any changing perceptions that the researcher may have developed over the duration of the investigation the researcher created four rich stories describing the researcher's personal impressions of the organisation and the people within it. The first rich story was constructed in the first week that the researcher began employment with the DSD. This was to capture the researcher's first impressions of the organisation, before the researcher had time to develop any perceptions or opinions of the workplace. The rich stories were completed at varying intervals as a means of mapping any changes in perceptions and opinions that had conjured due to the researcher's continued expose to the organisation. The rich stories are given in their entirety in Appendix D.

3.8 CORE CATEGORIES

All of the above mentioned sources contributed to the creation of the core categories that provided the investigation with direction. The core categories were as follows:

- Employee awareness and knowledge of goals and strategies
- Employees perceptions and ideas related to the link between HR and ITS.
- Strategic and operational planning.
- The issues associated with the enhanced integration of HR and ITS.
- Communication between HR and ITS.

- Common roles and links between HR and ITS.
- The influence of HR and ITS on absenteeism, turnover, IS-User conflict and training.
- The benefits associated with an enhanced link between HR and ITS.
- Advancing the communication link.

3.9 INTERVIEW DEVELOPMENT

3.9.1 Interview Questions

Arguably the most critical element of a research investigation are the questions asked in the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). That is, the questions asked in an interview will, ultimately, direct the answers and information given. Therefore, if the right questions aren't being asked, in the right way, it is very unlikely that the researcher will obtain the desired information from the interviewee.

According to Gorman and Clayton (1997:128) two basic questions need to be answered in order to refine the interview questions and ensure their appropriateness.
1. "Does every one of the questions relate directly to something I need to know".
2. "Have I asked about everything I need to know".

The researcher ensured point 1, as proposed by Gorman and Clayton, was achieved by aligning all the interview questions with the research questions and core categories. For example, the question 8:

> *"Please explain how you feel an enhanced link and richer communication between HR and ITS could affect the delivery of their services. What do you perceive as being the benefits of such a move?"*

This clearly relates to the research question as previously stated. The researcher ensured point 1, as proposed by Gorman and Clayton, was achieved by concluding the interview by asking two very open-ended questions that presented the interviewee with the option of mentioning anything at all that they might have considered important.

Question 10 and question 11 of the interview questions is stated to demonstrate this point.

"Is there anything further you'd like to say?"

"Is there anything we've missed that would be important for me to know?"

As discussed, the interview questions are paramount to the direction and overall success of an interview (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Accordingly, the researcher dedicated much time to the development of the interview questions. The researcher aligned the interview questions with the core categories identified. The research question and core categories provided the foundation for the questions.

The researcher constantly referred back to the research question and the core categories to ensure the questions being asked enabled the research question to be answered appropriately.

The researcher developed the questions in such a way as to promote open discussion and conversation, in the attempt to uncover exciting new revelations. Furthermore, the researcher called upon the expert knowledge of academics and business professionals alike as to assess and enhance the suitability of the questions. The pilot interview provided the researcher with opportunity to practically assess the appropriateness of the questions. After reviewing the pilot interview, the researcher made a few minor alterations to the wording and order of the interview questions. These alterations are later discussed in full.

3.9.2 Interviewee responses

Barber (2000) suggests that the ongoing responses of an interviewee have a pronounced influence upon the fluency and effectiveness of an interview. Non-suggestive responses that are positive in nature empower the interviewee and provide them with the confidence to proceed in the interview and keep the respondent talking. Phrases such as:

- I see;
- That's important to know;
- It's important to find out what people think about this;
- That is useful/helpful information; and
- Thanks, its important to get your opinion on that

According to Barber (2000) responses such as those indicated above, places the interviewee in a neutral position, free from bias. The researcher adopted such phrases throughout the interview and was careful to ensure that the words uttered and manner in which they were uttered did not imply criticism, surprise, approval or disapproval of the respondent's answers. The researcher acted in a manner that indicated great interest in finding out the respondent's opinions.

3.9.3   Interview Schedule

Just as Neuman (1997) considers the content of the interview questions to be an essential element of an investigation, Rubin and Rubin (1995) consider the interview format and structure to be of similar importance. It was for this reason that the researcher devoted some time and effort to the construction of the interview schedule.

The interview schedule was structured in such a way as to promote open discussion of the issues, rather than evoking yes/no answers. The purpose of the interview schedule was to provide the direction that the line of questioning and discussion needed to follow in order to ensure that information related to the core categories was obtained (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The interview schedule was driven by a set of goals that the researcher sought to achieve. The interview schedule followed a succinct sequence of events as listed below:

1. Build rapport;
2. Identify HR and ITS business unit knowledge;
3. Relate and couple HR and ITS to uncover opinions, ideas and thoughts;

4. Uncover opinion, ideas and thoughts in relation to specific examples that were relevant to the DSD;

5. Relate the knowledge identified to the ideas expressed to elicit valuable suggestions; and

6. Further Comments.

In attempting to achieve a set of goals, rather than conforming to an interview structure that was driven by the format of the questions alone, the researcher was able to ensure that the goals and aims of the interview were achieved.

Note: The order of the questions varied when the same question was asked from two angles in order to gain two perspective's. This is clearly demonstrated in questions 2 (a) and 2 (b) of the interview question, as stated below:

"What is your understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the ITS Unit?"

"What is your understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the HR Unit?"

Business professionals, such as those found in the DSD, have specialised and expert skills in their chosen field. It was apparent to the researcher that respondents were likely to find it easier to answer questions that related to their area of expertise. Therefore, the researcher thought it appropriate to ask the respondent a question that related to their area of expertise first. This was to provide the respondent with the confidence needed to answer the ensuing question, which was not focused upon their business unit. For example, the order of the questions as listed above would have been directed toward an ITS staff member.

To view the interview schedule in full please refer to Appendix A.

3.9.4 Pilot Interview

Gorman and Clayton (1997) purpose that prior to the commencement of the data collection the researcher needs to conduct a pilot study in a neutral location that will not be used in the actual fieldwork. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest that the idea of a pilot interview is not to collect data, but to learn about the research process, interview schedule, observation techniques, and yourself.

The researcher informed the participant of the purpose of the interview and stated that it was a pilot, prior to the interview. This gave the researcher the opportunity to ask probing questions that would help to refine the interview schedule. Questions such as: Are the questions clear? Are the questions appropriate? What other questions could be asked? Did you feel comfortable in the interview? Did it feel more like a discussion rather than an interrogation? How could the delivery of the questions be improved? How could the interview schedule be improved?

Furthermore, the pilot interview provided the ideal setting for the researcher to assess whether or not the researcher's close involvement with the interviewees was going to affect the interview process in any way. The researcher found that the closeness of the two parties involved in the interview to be a definite advantage. That is, the researcher had little need to build rapport and gain the confidence of the interviewee as this had already been instilled though an ongoing working relationship (Kvale, 1996).

The pilot study enabled the researcher to assess a number of variables and address the issues and problems that arose, before the finalisation of the broad plan that directed the remainder of the project.

One particular point that was flushed out from the pilot interview was that the quality of the answers given might have been enhanced by providing respondents with a set of the interview questions prior to the interview. Some of the questions asked in the interview were rather complex and demanding. Giving respondents a little time to think about the answers had the potential to enhance the quality of the answers given and the comfort and confidence of the respondent. The researcher ensured all participants received a copy of the interview questions prior to the interview.

The respondents received the questions only a short time before the interviews. This was to limit the respondent's ability to research the topic before the interview, as this would see the researcher's presence have an impact upon the employees knowledge. Ultimately, limiting the validity of the data.

3.10   INTERVIEW SET UP

Upon completing the development of the interview questions and structure, the researcher then needed to select who would be interviewed. Due to time constraints it was not possible to interview all of the staff members of the HR and ITS units. The researcher had to determine how to select the interviewees.

In selecting the interviewees the researcher placed great emphasis upon the employment of stratification. The researcher deliberately selected staff members from varying levels of their respective business units in order to gain a true representation of the unit.

To enable the researcher to accurately compare and contrast the interview responses from the HR interviewees with the responses of the ITS interviewees, it was imperative that each staff member selected from the HR unit was able to be aligned with a staff member from the respective ITS unit. The researcher, sought the position descriptions (as defined by the DSD) of each interviewee and ensured that each interviewee from the HR unit had a corresponding interviewee in the ITS unit exhibiting marked similarities in their position descriptions. Furthermore, the researcher utilised the position-matching criterion suggested by Mercer Cullen Egan Dell to help identify like jobs by looking at their functions and responsibilities rather than titles. By categorising an individual position by its position description, rather than position title, the research was able to assess the content of a position more comprehensively. Enabling the researcher to ensure that the participants were accurately categorised (Anon, 2000a). Ultimately ensuring that true stratification was achieved.

Furthermore, in using this technique the researcher was able to accurately match four positions from the HR unit with four positions from the ITS unit, continually keeping in mind the need for effective stratification. Hence, the interviewees were selected.

3.10.1 Initial Contact

As the researcher was an employee of the DSD initial contact was not difficult to arrange and was made in an informal matter. On the 15th July 1999 a brief, informal discussion was held between the researcher and HR manager. The possible occurrence of the research project and its possible direction were openly discussed.

3.10.2 Secondary Contact

A second meeting occurred on the 28th September between the researcher and the HR manager. This meeting was a formal, lengthy and detailed discussion that enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of the DSD's position in relation to the study. The researcher gained the consent of Paul Leith to use the DSD as the study focus.

3.10.3 Final Contact

A final meeting occurred on the 27th March 2000 between the researcher the HR manager. This meeting was held in a formal, but relaxed setting. Issues such as the investigation's progress and direct, interview techniques, privacy and confidentiality issues, information access and usage issues were discussed. The researcher gained invaluable information from this meeting that then enabled the researcher to refine the direction of the investigation and proceed to the interviewing stage of the project

3.11 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

3.11.1 Initial Contact with the Participants

As the researcher was an employee of the DSD, all participants were informed of their possible inclusion in the study prior to any formal requests were made of them. The day-to-day workplace interactions that frequently occurred between the researcher and participants were prime opportunities for the researcher to spread the word of the study being conducted. The researcher was able let the participants in on the study well in advance of the interviews. This enabled the researcher to build rapport, gain trust and commitment and convey the issues of the investigation to get the participants thinking about the issues.

3.11.2 Formal Contact with the Participants

As mentioned above, prior to formally contacting the participants all participants had verbally been informed of the direction of the study and the intentions of the researcher. To enhance consistency and to ensure that all participants were absolutely clear as to the purpose of the study and the ensuing interviews, the researcher issued the following invitations to all participants:

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the I.S. Honours degree at the University of Tasmania I am required to complete a thesis that encompasses the I.S. field. My area of study is based upon the HR and ITS units within the DSD.

The purpose of my research is to establish the value of a strong link with rich and open communication channels between the ITS Team and the HR Team of the DSD.

It is my intention to hold discussions with four staff members from ITS and four staff members from HR, as well as the General Manager of Corporate Services.
You have been selected due to your position within the ITS section.

All that I require from you is thirty minutes of your time to run through a set of pre-determined questions in order to gain an insight into your personal ideas and perspective's. Your participation is essential to the success of my research. However, please note that participation is voluntary.

Regards,

Glen Siggins

The DSD had a communication culture strongly based around electronic mail. Particularly, when it comes to the arrangement of meetings and issuing of invitations.

For this reason, to conform to the organisational culture of the DSD and increase the probability of participant acceptance the researcher issued the invitations via electronic mail.

3.11.3 Stages of the interview

Following is an account of the generic interview process that was administered to all interviewees. Neuman (1997) believes the interview process consists of a number of phases. The researcher adopted these phases and manipulated them in such a way that enabled them to more truly representative of the unique investigation being conducted. The interview schedule can be viewed in its complete form in Appendix A.

3.11.3.1   Interview Preparation

This phase includes all the ground work and background that was necessary in the development of the interview structure and questions, as presented in Appendix A. The literature review and methodology chapters of this paper are examples of the background that was done in order to ensure the interview preparation was complete.

3.11.3.2   The Rapport Building Opening

This is the phase where the researcher first gains permission to use the tape recorder. The researcher used this phase to "set the scene" and help to make the interviewee feel as though they were having a friendly chat or constructive conversation, rather than an interrogation. The researcher sought to establish rapport and provided the respondent with the information that they had had a right to know and the information that was likely to give them the confidence needed to proceed in a constructive manner. Such information as; the reasoning for the respondents selection, the purpose of the interview, the research question, the value of the investigation and the format of the interview (Herbert, 1995).

3.11.3.3   The Interview Questions

As the name might suggest, this phase was dedicated to the asking of the interview questions. The researcher promoted flexibility in the structure of the questions by enabling both respondent and researcher to diverge when the need arose.

This provided the researcher with the opportunity to pursue issues of interest and provided the respondent with an opportunity to ask questions or discuss other issues of interest. However, the researcher did ensure that the list of pre-determined questions were all answered (Kvale, 1996).

3.11.3.4   The Close of the Interview

This phase of the interview had the purpose of concluding the conversation and bringing the interview to an end. At this point the respondents were given the opportunity to make any further comments and were warmly thanked for their time and input. Respondents were also informed that they would have the opportunity to view the paper before it was published in order to provide them with a chance to object to any of its contents (Kvale, 1996).

3.11.3.5   The Post-Interview Stage

Directly after the interviews were completed the researcher sat down for approximately fifteen minutes and noted any phenomenon that were observed in the interview and were considered to be of interest to the investigation. These observations are represented in Table 4.1.

3.12   DOCUMENTING THE INTERVIEWS

3.12.1 Tape Recording

The aim of the researcher was to elicit as much valuable and rich information from the interviews as possible. As the number of interviews, or sample size, was relatively low, the researcher thought it appropriate to record the interviews and then transcribe the data. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to capture all that was said and done in the interviews. It also provided the researcher with the option of revisiting the events of the interview as they occurred and ensured that nothing would be forgotten or lost. Recording the interviews enabled the researcher to comprehensively decipher the interviews and not overlook anything. The researcher attempted to reduce the obtrusive nature involved with the use of a tape recorder, by placing it to the side and providing respondents with the option of stopping the tape recorder at any time. All respondents consented to the use of the tape-recorded (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

3.12.2 Interview Observations and Notes

As previously discussed, to capture information not captured by the tape recorder the researcher also developed a set of notes describing phenomenon observed in the interviews by the researcher. These observations are presented in Table 4.1.

Furthermore, the writing of notes seemed like a sensible back up medium in the event that the tape recordings were not effective.

3.13 DATA QUALITY

The development and maintenance of data quality is an integral component of any investigation. Without data quality, a researcher's findings cannot be accepted to be accurate or plausible. Neuman (1997:368) suggests that quality data for the qualitative researcher are *"detailed descriptions from the researcher's immersion and authentic experiences in the social world of members"*.

Neuman (1997) suggests two tests can help to maintain and develop data quality; natural history and the richness of description.

Natural History

The natural history represents the big chronological picture. It is a precise history of how the research was conducted. The researcher has maintained a complete natural history of the research by documenting the researcher's intentions, preconceptions, assumptions and procedures.

Richness of Description

The richness of data is the extent to which description captures the essence of the situation. The researcher sought to capture the readers interest and belief through rich detail and thick story telling. For example, through the use of rich stories the researcher was able to give the reader a feel for the proceedings of the interviews conducted and an internal perspective of the DSD's culture. Another element central to the maintenance of high quality in the data is validity.

3.13.1 Validity

Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest that if research is valid, it closely reflects the world being described. According to Dey (1993) the level of validity results from the degree of confidence placed in the researcher's analysis and data to accurately represent the real world.

Various forms of triangulation are useful in the search for high levels of validity. Triangulation is the confirmation of findings from multiple sources and/or analysis techniques. Jick (1979) suggests that multiple viewpoints allow for greater accuracy. Neuman (1997) believes that the basic idea of triangulation is that measurement improves when diverse indicators are used. To ensure high data quality, the researcher employed stratification to help ensure that the data was valid by gaining an insight into various perspectives. That is, from operational staff members to executives. The use of two research techniques, in the form of interviews and participant observations, also acted as a form of triangulation and, accordingly, enhanced the validity of the research.

Neuman (1997) suggests several types of validity that are critical to the development and maintenance of valid data generated through field research:

Ecological Validity

According to Neuman (1997) ecological validity is the extent to which the social world depicted by a researcher corresponds to the world of members. The researcher achieved ecological validity in this investigation by ensuring that the natural setting was relatively undisturbed by the researcher's presence and procedures.

Member Validity

Member validity is the extent to which the observations and findings have been confirmed by the participants (Neuman, 1997). By allowing participants an opportunity to read over their own interview transcripts, the researcher provided all participants with an opportunity to correct, confirm and object to the results obtained. Furthermore, the researcher forwarded an electronic copy of the completed thesis to all participants providing them with a final opportunity to object to any references or findings that they found inaccurate, prior to publishing the paper.

3.14 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process employed by the researcher in order to identify patterns in the data related to key issues. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 226) state that *"data analysis is exciting because you discover themes and concepts embedded throughout your interview"*. The purpose of the data analysis is to organise the interviews so as to compile an explanation of what occurred or provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behaviour (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The analysis method adopted to analyse the data obtained was coding at three levels. This enabled the researcher to:

- Review data under multiple interpretations;
- Seek patterns in the data related to key issues;
- Seek linkages (associations) within the data ;
- Enrich interpretations and produce preliminary findings;
- Validate interpretations and findings; and
- Gather further data if necessary.

The three levels of the coding process are discussed. Actual extracts from an interview conducted have been included to further demonstrate the coding process.

Open Coding

Generally the first phase in the coding process, open, is the where the researcher has a first pass through the data in order to absorb the meaning of the data. Neuman (1997) suggests that the researcher identifies themes and assigns initial codes or labels in a first attempt to reduce the data into categories. Miles and Huberman (1994: 56) define codes:

> *"Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting."*

Open coding enabled the researcher to uncover and identify themes that are embedded deep in the data. It helped to build up a classification schedule that was used to index and categorise issues of importance. In this investigation, the researcher coded the data to the phrase level.

Actual interview extracts have been included below to demonstrate the process.

The phrase below was tagged with an open code titled "*involve everyone*".
"*To be involved in each others meetings or even having a fairly regular meeting I suppose.*"[1]

The phrase below was tagged with an open code titled "*physical location*".

"*.....right now we are physically separated by a floor. To bring HR closer to where we are would make it easier for communication and we'd have a better understanding of what was going on.*[2]"

At this, the first level in the coding process the all of the data was tagged with open codes in this fashion. Some thirty-seven open codes were generated in this phase. The open codes provided the basis through which the axial codes could be generated.

Axial Coding

The second phase in the coding process, axial coding focuses upon the themes and codes designated to the data in the open coding phase. Neuman (1997) believes that additional codes and ideas may occur and be noted in this phase, however, the primary objective of the axial coding phase is to review and examine initial codes. Neuman (1997: 423) states that "*he or she moves toward organising ideas and themes and identifies the axis of key concepts in the analysis.*" The researcher seeks to develop taxonomy of codes using categories as codes. During this phase, the researcher sought evidence to support the coding scheme by asking questions such as those suggested by Neuman (1997: 423-424):

---

[1] SSO: Question 9
[2] SSO: Question 4

> *"Can I divide existing concepts into sub-dimensions or subcategories? Can I combine several closely related concepts into one more general one? Can I organise categories into a sequence (ie. A, then B, then C), or by their physical location (ie. where they occur), or this relationship to a major topic of interest?"*

The researcher used the axial coding phase as an opportunity to stimulate and evoke thoughts about linkages and relationships between concepts.

In relation to the actual interview example given above, the two open codes identified; *"include everyone"* and *"physical location"* were related to and combined with some seven other tags identified in the data to form an axial code that was able to encompass the meaning of all the open codes within it. The axial code generated in this case was titled *"communication"*. At this level of coding the researcher was able to group the thirty-seven open codes into eight axial codes. The generation of the open and axial codes provided the basis from which the selective codes, or overall findings were constructed.

Selective Coding

The selective coding phase is generally near the end of the coding process, or indeed, the final phase of the process. According to Neuman (1997: 424) *"selective coding involves scanning data and previous codes"*. This is the section of the process in which the researcher sought cases to illustrate major interpretations and findings. The researcher conducted a review of the data in order to check for further meanings and support or refute interpretations and findings. During this phase, the researcher was guided by themes and concepts defined previously and sought to elaborate upon them.

In relation to the preceding example, the researcher uncovered the true meanings of the codes generated previously and summarised the eight axial codes into two final findings.

The results of the data analysis and final findings are presented in full in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 respectively.

3.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Herbert (1995) suggests that in selecting a research method for a qualitative study, ethical considerations will be of great importance. Gorman and Clayton (1997) purpose that all subjects have ethical rights: to be consulted, to give or withhold consent, and to confidentiality. These given rights can often need to be applied with greater intensity in qualitative research, due to the associated issues. Issues such as:

- Generally, the researcher studies their subject in greater depth and on a more personal basis in attempt to increase the personal richness of the information gained, rather than reducing individuals to numbers as can often be the case with quantitative research (Gorman and Clayton, 1997).

- Qualitative research frequently uncovers information that has the potential to compromise both the person and the organisation.

- The sometimes personal relationships that an effective qualitative researcher establishes with their subjects often relies upon mutual trust and respect (Herbert, 1995).

Therefore, making it apparent to the researcher that there was an unquestionable need and obligation to alert the subject to such ethical considerations. The researcher ensured that all ethical considerations were taken into account. Guaranteeing that all participants were informed of their rights and were treated in an ethical manner.

3.16 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research methodologies chosen by the researcher and the justification for these decisions. In summation, the researcher used qualitative research methods undertaking the interpretivist epistemology and a subjective ontology. The primary research technique adopted was face-to-face , semi-structured interviews with some subsidiary participant observations. Along with the use of stratification, these two research techniques ensure the data was valid. Coding at three levels; open, axial and selective, was employed to analyse the data.

Chapter 4: Background

4. BACKGROUND

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The following chapter seeks to provide the reader with some insight into the culture and structure of the DSD. It provides details of the participants and the organisation under study. It is designed to give the reader a "feel" for the structure and culture of the DSD and an idea of where the interviewees fit into the organisation. The chapter begins with a discussion of the culture of the DSD, including the vision, mission and values of the organisation. Following that is a description of the Corporate Service division and the HR and ITS units that lie within it and position descriptions of each of the HR and ITS participants. Concluding the chapter is a discussion relating to how the interviews were conducted, including rich story examples detailing the progression of two separate interviews.

4.2 CULTURE AND STRUCTURE OF THE DSD

As documented in the DSD Annual Report 1998-99, the DSD came into being in September 1998, following the Tasmanian election (Anon, 1999). The State Government established it as a central plank in the restructuring of the State's industry development activities required by the new Government in order to align programs and service delivery with its new industry development policies.

The vision of the DSD is to see Tasmania established as a premium supplier of quality products and services, leading to strong economic, cultural and social growth. This will be achieved ethically, with empathy to our environment and with regard to the lifestyle expectations of all Tasmanians.

The mission of the DSD is to support the Tasmanian Government and community in nurturing an innovative, productive and prosperous community that is economically, culturally and socially fulfilled.

Strategic managers of the DSD suggest that the mission of the DSD can only be achieved by adhering to several values, as identified below:

- Being ethical, fair and socially responsible in all our relationships;

- Being outcome oriented, customer focussed and accountable in all our activities;

- Sharing a commitment to excellence, innovation and creativity;

- Communicating as openly as possible with stakeholders and the community, while respecting absolutely clients' rights to confidentiality;

- Valuing the resource entrusted to us;

- Recognising a broad economy that encompasses the arts, culture, heritage, sport, recreation, and community well being, along with business;

- Continually learning and teamwork oriented;

- Committing to equal opportunity in our working environment; and

- Contributing to healthy and safe workplaces.

The aim of the DSD as documented on the DSD web site is as follows:

> *"The aim of the Department of State Development (DSD) is to identify and convert all industry development opportunities into economic growth realities and to support parallel Government policies in areas of sport and recreation, the arts, Tasmania's cultural heritage and the State's role as a gateway to the Southern Ocean and Antarctica.*
>
> *The DSD's programs ensure the broadest possible approach to improving the standard of living for all Tasmanians".*

The organisational structure of the DSD is one that is indicative of the classic hierarchical, top-to-bottom structure. The vertically shaped structure is one that promotes process and formality and displays low levels of flexibility. The DSD organisational structure is depicted in Figure 4.1.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE DEVEOPMENT
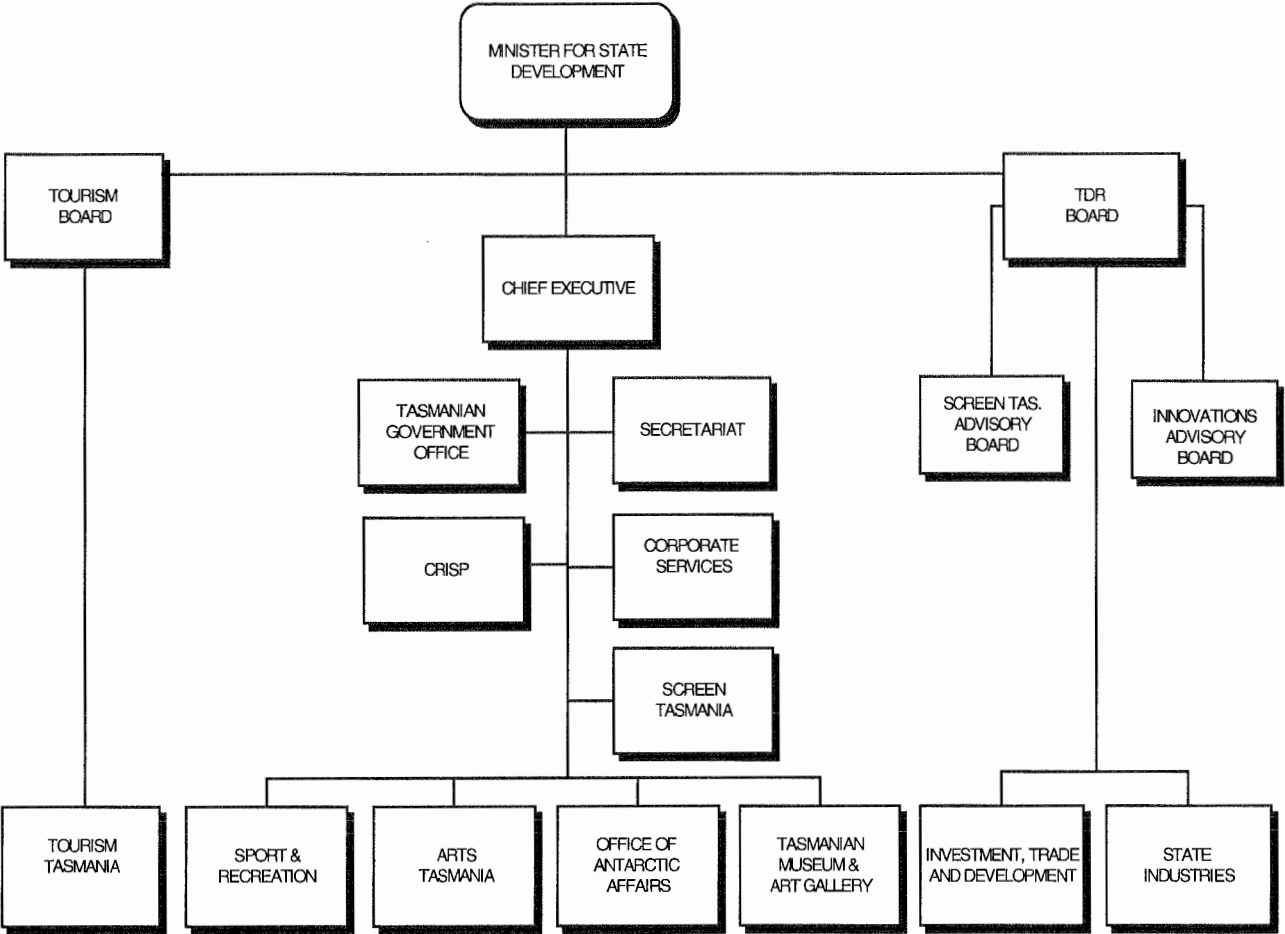
Figure 4.1: DSD Organisational Chart, adapted from DSD Organisational Chart: July.

The ITS and HR business units are located within the Corporate Services division. The Corporate Services Division provides support functions, policies, planning and procedures to the department's operating divisions through Financial Operations; Administration Services; Human Resources and Information Technology Services (Anon, 1999).

The strategic objective of the Corporate Services division is to provide effective, efficient and quality support services to designated Government outputs.
The role that Corporate Services plays enables other divisions within the DSD to achieve their objectives. Collectively promoting the fulfilment of the overall objectives of the DSD. The Corporate Services division is depicted in Figure 4.2.

CORPORATE SERVICES
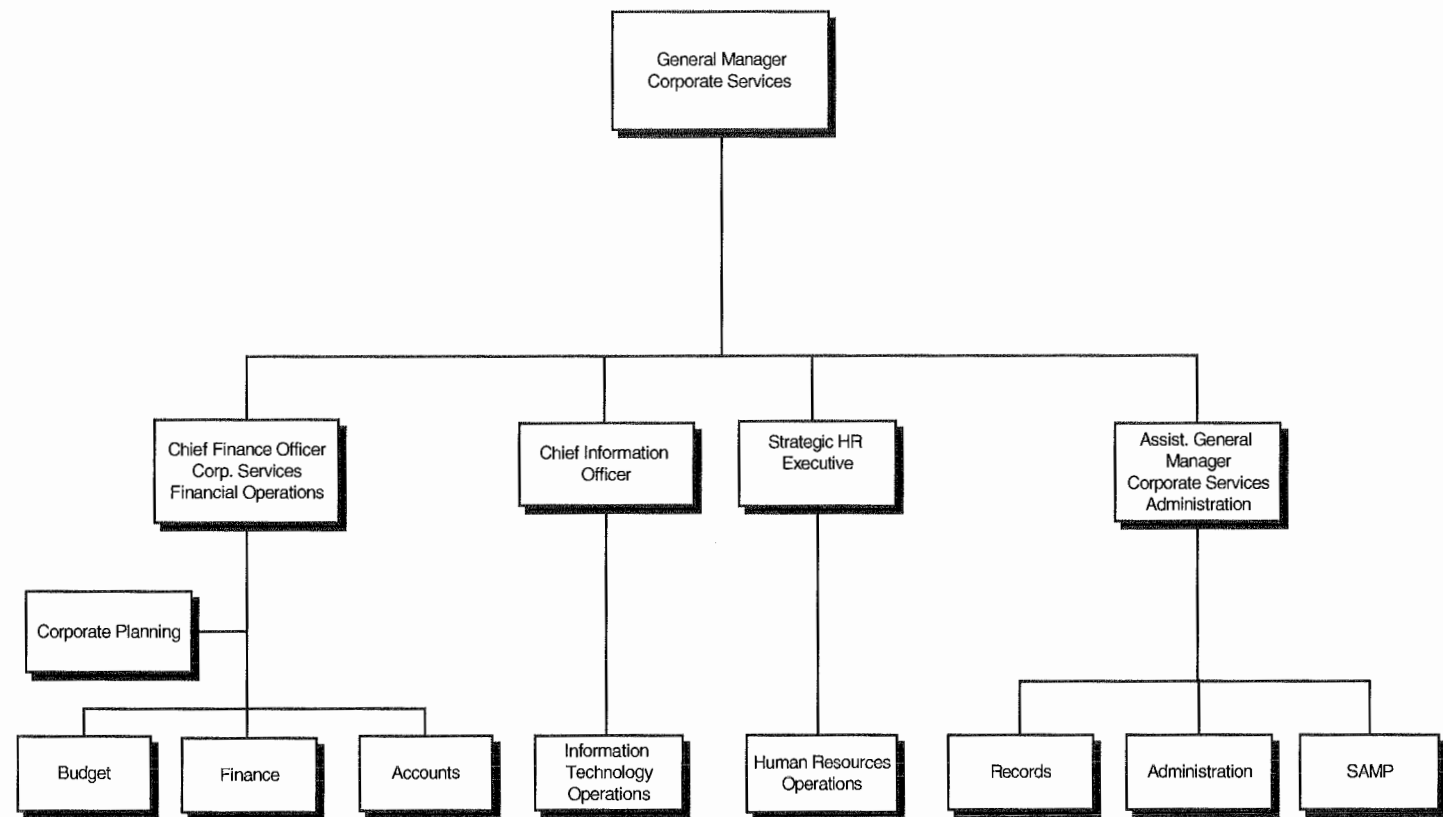
Figure 4.2: Corporate Services Organisational Chart, adapted from DSD
Organisational Chart: July.

As depicted in Figure 4.2 HR is one the of business units located within the Corporate
Services division.

Figure 4.3 indicates the structure of the HR unit corresponds to the overall
organisational structure, in that, it too has a vertical, top-to-bottom structure.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Strategic HR Executive (HRE)
HR Operations Manager (HRM)
HR Systems Administrator (HRS)
HR Clerk (HRR)
HR Officer (HRC)
HR Officer
HR Assistant (The Researcher)
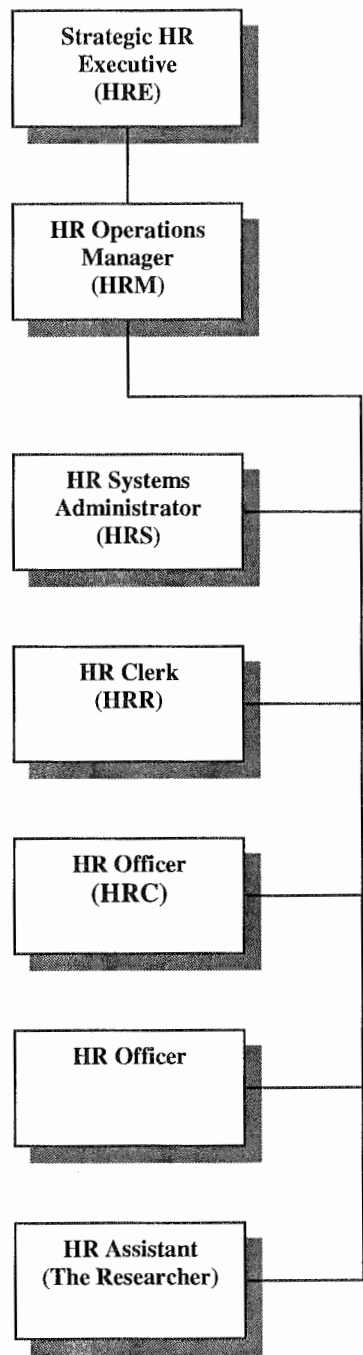
Following is a brief description of the HR participant's roles within the DSD. Complete position descriptions are presented in Appendix C.

Participant: HRR (pilot Interview participant).

Position Title: HR Clerk

Position Description Summary: Provide administrative and keyboard support for the Human Resources section. This participant was responsible for a wide range of HR operational support functions including; recruitment and selection, induction and probation reports, general inquiries and administration.

Participant: HRM

Position Title: HR Operations Manager.

Position Description Summary: To contribute to the achievement of the agency's long term goals through the delivery of policies, programs and services to enable effective management of staff. This participant was responsible for the management of the day-to-day operations of the HR unit and provided all staff with high level advice on almost all matters.

Figure 4.3: The HR Business Unit Structure, adapted from DSD Organisational Chart: July.

Participant: HRS

Position Title: HR Systems Administrator.

Position Description Summary: Contribute to the development and implementation of Human Resource policies, plans and procedures. Manage and coordinate the activities required in the efficient and effective performance of the agency's Human Resources Management Information Systems. This participant was responsible for the REMUS HR Management Information System, HR report development and management, HR systems administration and data systems work flow.

Participant: HRE

Position Title: Strategic HR Executive.

Position Description Summary: To plan, develop and direct human resources strategy and policy for the Department to ensure continuous quality improvement of HR services to meet current and future Departmental needs. This participant was responsible for the strategic leadership and direction of HR Primarily responsible for: the planning and development of policies; manage and review contract and remuneration policies and procedures and to act as an external point of contact for the DSD.

Participant: HRC

Position Title: HR Officer.

Position Description Summary: As a member of the Human Resources team, contribute to the development and implementation of Human Resource policies, plans and procedures. This participant was responsible training and development, the HR Intranet Site, Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and ergonomics.

According to DSD Annual Report 1998-99, HR within the DSD has three main functions:

1) Management of personnel and remuneration systems including training and development, performance appraisal, recruitment and induction.
2) Co-ordination of staff support activities such as Occupational Health and Safety, Workers Compensation, Equal Employment Opportunities and Employee Assistance Programs.

3) Payroll processing services.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

```
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Chief Information    │
│ Officer             │
│ (CIO)               │
└─────────────────────┘
         │
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Manager of Info.    │
│ Tech.               │
│ Vacant              │
└─────────────────────┘
         │
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Network/Systems     │
│ Administrator       │
│ (NSA)               │
└─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│ Analyst             │
│ Programmer          │
│ (APG)               │
└─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│ User/Systems        │
│ Support Officer     │
│ (SSO)               │
└─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│ Senior Analyst      │
│ Programmer          │
└─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│ Help Desk           │
│ Support Officer     │
└─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│ PC Support          │
│ Trainees            │
└─────────────────────┘
```
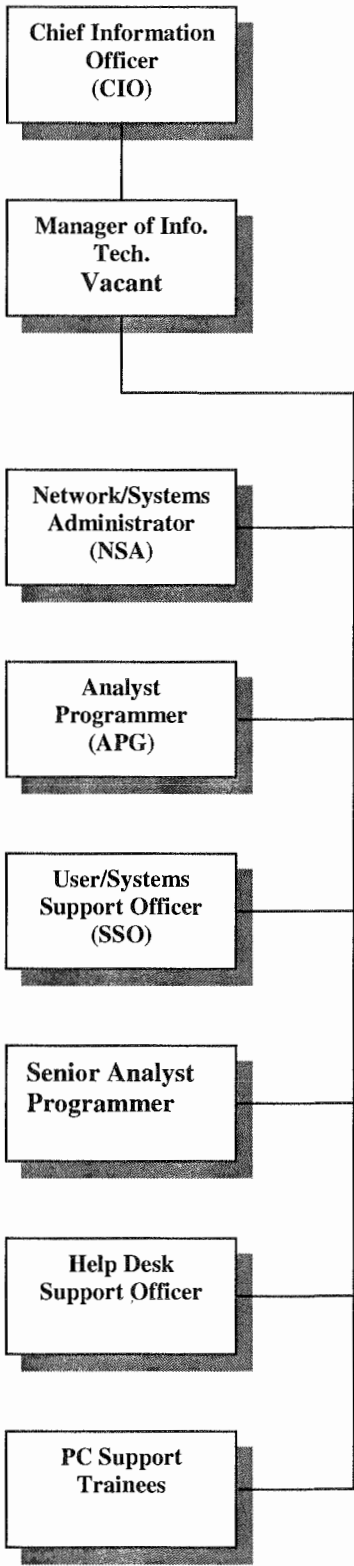
Following is a brief description of the ITS's participant's roles within the DSD. Complete position descriptions are presented in Appendix C.

Participant: CIO

Position Title: Chief Information Officer.

Position Description Summary: To plan, develop and direct IT policies and programs to achieve the most efficient use of IT resources across all divisions of the Department, in line with the Department's strategic plan. This participant was responsible for the strategic planning and direction of the ITS unit.

Participant: NSA

Position Title: Network/Systems Administrator.

Position Description Summary: Manage, coordinate and direct the activities and resources of the section in line with the agency's Strategic Plan. This participant was responsible for practically all day-to-day operations within the ITS unit.

Figure 4.4: Information Technology Services Business Unit Structure, adapted from DSD Organisational Chart: July.

Participant: APG

Position Title: Analyst Programmer.

Position Description Summary: Undertake analysis, design and programming tasks involved with systems and applications development and maintenance including documentation of systems and programs. Provide backup user support on personal computers (PC) and PC network systems. This participant's fundamental role was to develop and maintain Lotus Notes.

Participant: (SSO)

Position Title: User/Systems Support Officer.

Position Description Summary: Maintain a Help Desk facility and assist in the coordination of user and technical support to users of the agency's PC networks. Assist in the programming tasks involved with systems support, applications development and maintenance. Document systems and programs. This participant focused on technical support and is only occasionally involved directly in user support.

Of similar importance to the HR unit is that of the ITS unit. Societal and organisational dependence and continued focus on process development through the increased use of I.T. inevitably places ITS in a role that is of great importance. According to the DSD Annual report 1998-99, ITS within the DSD has two major functions.

1) Management of information technology infrastructure including enhancement, maintenance, support and controls; and

2) Analysis and development of business information systems, including application system, data management and infrastructure.

The majority of the information describing the DSD and the HR and ITS units within it, as given in the preceding pages, is as communicated by the DSD. For an alternate

perspective, four rich stories have been provided in Appendix D that describe the researcher's observations and perspective's of the DSD.

4.3   THE INTERVIEWS

The interviews were all conducted from a location that would enable the interviewer and the interviewees to feel relaxed and open to discussion, without interruption. For those that had offices the interviews were conducted from them. To enable a free flowing discussion, telephones were diverted and doors were closed. For those that operated from an open work space, the interview was conducted from a vacant office or meeting room. In accordance with the organisational culture, to ensure professionalism and the comfort and confidence of the interviewee, the researcher was formally dressed.

Immediately after each interview was completed the researcher brainstormed for approximately fifteen minutes in order capture the researcher's perceptions and observations of the interviews. This was to enable the researcher to assess the level of comfort that was apparent between the interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, it was also considered to be of assistance in the attempt to determine whether or not the interviewee responses were influenced or biased due to the researcher's close working relationship with the majority of the participants. These short observations have been compressed and are presented below in Table 4.1.

Questions	HRE	HRM	HRS	HRC	CIO	NSA	APG	SSO
Discussed issues openly?	Cautious, but open	Yes	Cautious, but open	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cautious, but open
Influence of the tape recorder?	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	Appeared a little nervous.
Comfortable in the settings?	Yes – Private office.	Yes – Private office.	Yes – Private office.	Yes – Meeting room.	Yes – Private office.	Yes – Private office.	Yes – meeting room.	Yes – Private office.
Comfortable with the content of the questions?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – Asked numerous clarification questions.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Seemed a little surprised by some of the questions.
Reserved and unwilling to divulge information?	No	No	Cautious	No	No	No	No	Cautious
Influence of researcher employment relationship?	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

Table 4.1: Researcher Interview Observations.

4.4 INTERVIEW RICH STORIES – EXAMPLES

Following are two examples of detailed rich stories developed by the researcher in order to describe and demonstrate the progression of the interview. The two examples given have been chosen due to their contrasting progressions.

Interview Rich Story – HRE

Some two months prior to the interview the participant in question resigned from their executive position within the DSD, citing personal reasons. At the time of the interview the participant was employed by the Australian Defence Forces as a Colonel in the Australian army.

Due to the close working relationship between the researcher and the interviewee, the latter had an understanding of the topic, and objectives of the investigation, prior to the interview.

The concept of a future meeting in which an interview could be conducted was first discussed at a corporate luncheon in an informal fashion. The interviewee displayed a willingness to participate in the study.

The interviewee was later contacted by telephone, in a more formal manner in order to arrange a time and place for the interview to occur. The interviewee was positive in his response and suggested that his personal office at the Angelsea Army Barracks would be the most appropriate and convenient location to meet. As a sign of goodwill and in order to promote the comfort of the interviewee, the researcher concurred.

Upon arriving at the barracks the researcher was met by a very formal officer in uniform and informed that the participant would arrive shortly. The origin of the military style traits that the HRE displayed was apparent at this time.

The participant arrived and warmly welcomed the researcher to a private office. The participant and researcher talked casually for a few minutes before the interview commenced. What followed was a very open and frank discussion between the participant and the researcher. The topical flow of the discussion followed the interview schedule very closely, while maintaining a high degree of latitude and flexibility.

Throughout the interview the participant was open and deliberate in his approach and did not seem at all influenced or intimidated by the presence of the tape recorder. It was obvious to the researcher that the participant did not hold a grudge or have ill feelings toward the DSD. Rather, the participant communicated disappointment and dismay as to operating procedures of the organisation. In particular, the participant displayed passion and focussed upon the lack of cooperation and communication across the DSD.

Furthermore, the participant believed the rigid organisational structure and the ever present politics and procedures stifled communication and strategic planning. The participant stressed these issues throughout the interview and displayed concern for their resolution.

The interview ran very smoothly and was not interrupted at all. The participant displayed a vast knowledge of the internal culture and workings of the DSD. Further, the participant also displayed a comprehensive understanding of influential topics that expanded well beyond the confines of the DSD. The participant gave confident, clear and informed responses throughout the interview. Upon the interview concluding the participant invited the research to a luncheon in which further issues were openly discussed. Throughout the interview the researcher was eager to hear what the participant had to say and left the interview with a feeling of accomplishment. The interview seemed extremely productive.

Interview Rich Story – SSO

The researcher made initial contact with the participant via the telephone. The two informally discussed the purpose of the investigation and the researcher clarified the requirements of participant. The interviewee displayed a willingness to participate in the study. The interviewee was later sent a formal invitation to participate, via electronic mail, suggesting a time and place for the interview to occur. The interviewee was positive in his response and accepted the invitation to participate.

The interview was conducted in a vacant office located within the HR confounds. The interviewee arrived on time and was escorted to the office by the researcher. The interviewee was friendly and easy to talk to. However, the interviewee did, at first, seem a little unsure what to expect. This may have been due to the fact that the respondent hadn't looked over the interview questions prior to the interview.

Although the interviewee agreed to the use of the tape recorder his body language and verbal responses suggested that he might have been a little uncomfortable with its presence.

Throughout the interview the respondent displayed a calculated and cautious approach to answering questions posed by the interviewer.

As a result, the participant generally took quite some time to respond to questions. The respondent was very knowledgable in the topics discussed and consistently gave informed and valuable responses. However, the respondent did seem a little unsure of the answers that he'd given as he questioned their appropriateness. That is, the respondent sometimes searched for the interviewer to agree with what he said. At this point the researcher reassured the respondent that there were no wrong or right answers and that the unique perspectives and experiences of each individual was the determining factor that would add great richness to the data.

Throughout the interview, generally after some consideration, the interviewee suggested clear and succinct thoughts and ideas. The respondent displayed an excellent understanding of the internal functionality of the DSD. The majority of the responses were focused upon operational issues. In particular, the interviewee continually referred to issues that directly affected the day-to-day operations of the two units, recognising the strong service role of the two units and the impact that this had upon their operations.

The duration of the interview was quite long. The respondent didn't ramble or repeat himself. Rather, the respondent was cautious and calculated in his approach. The respondent thoroughly addressed all questions and provided the researcher with a wealth of information. Upon concluding the interviewee thanked the respondent. The respondent once again suggested that he was not sure if the responses that he had given were appropriate. Once again, the researcher reassured the interviewee and finally thanked him for his time.

4.5   SUMMARY

This chapter has briefly described the culture and structure of the DSD. The culture was demonstrated by stating the mission, vision and key values of the organisation. Charts and brief descriptions demonstrated the structure. It provided details of the participants and the organisation understudy.

This chapter was designed to give the reader a "feel" for the structure and culture of the DSD and an idea of where the interviewees fit into the organisation. There was also a description of the Corporate Service division and the HR and ITS units that lie within it and position descriptions of each of the HR and ITS participants. Concluding the chapter was a discussion relating to how the interviews were conducted, including rich story examples detailing the progression of two separate interviews.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the results of the coding process. It walks through the process of how the findings were generated. The data analysis has the purpose of indicating how the coding process refined the data and led to the eventual identification of the overall findings. This chapter firstly discusses the data analysis process and then proceeds to discuss the coding process. At this point the open and then axial codes are given and actual interview examples given. Finally, an indication of the direction of the selective codes and overall findings is given.

5.2   THE ANALYTICAL PROCESS

As previously discussed, it was the literature review, DSD experts, the objectives of the research and the researcher's own personal experience and perceptions that enabled the key issues, or core categories, relating to the area of interest to be identified. The core categories provided the foundation for the development of the interview questions. The interviews were then conducted and recorded and the corresponding researcher observations were documented. At this point the interviews were transcribed and coupled with the observational data, which saw the researcher presented with a mass of raw data. In order to accurately interpret the data and convert it into something more meaningful, the data was put through a coding process. It is the purpose of this chapter to focus upon how the coding process lead to the overall findings to be discussed in Chapter 6, The Findings and Future Research Chapter. The full analytical process is depicted in Figure 5.1. The coding process will now be discussed.

Development of Core Categories

| Research Objectives | Literature Review | DSD Experts | Researcher's Experience and Perceptions |

Core Categories and Interview Questions

Collection of the Data

Researcher Observations

Face-to-Face Interviews

Interview Transcripts and Data

Coding Process

Phase One: Open Codes

Phase Two: Axial Codes

Final Phase: Selective Codes (overall findings)
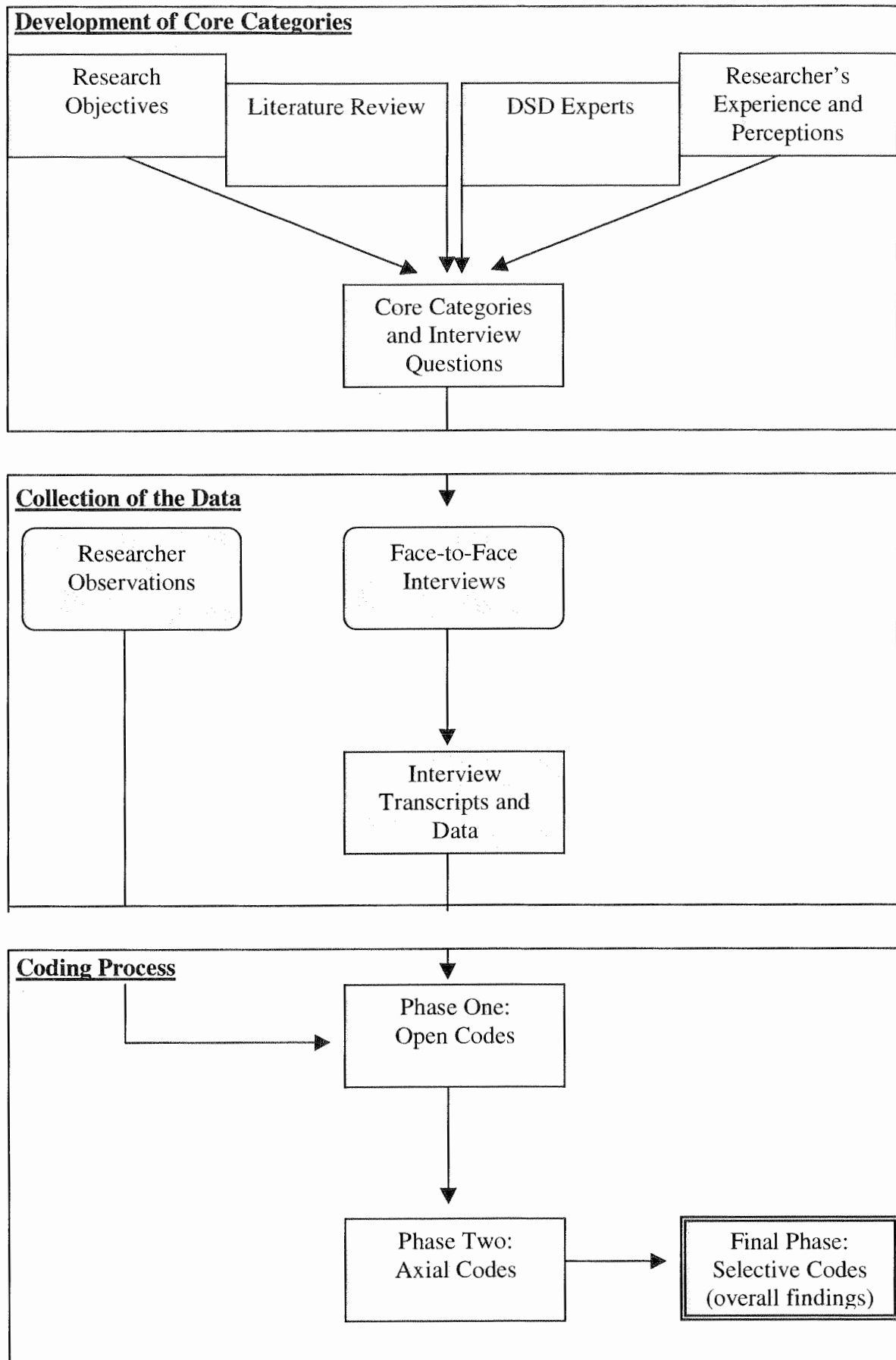
Figure 5.1: The Analytical Process

5.3   THE CODING PROCESS

As detailed in Chapter 3, The Methodology Chapter, Coding using open, axial and selective coding was used to conduct analysis on all interviews. The results of the coding process will now be discussed.

5.3.1 Phase One: Open Codes

Upon the completion of the development of the core categories and the collection of the data, it was time to begin the coding process by assessing the data for the first time and assigning open codes where appropriate.

To demonstrate how codes were generated at this phase, the researcher has drawn upon several examples of open codes that were assigned at this phase. Actual quotes from interviews have been drawn upon to more comprehensively demonstrate how codes were generated. Open codes have been italicised to mark their existence and significance.

The data clearly indicated that participants believed that a perhaps the most prominent role of HR and ITS was to act as *service providers* to the rest of the organisation. The fact that one of the major functions of HR and ITS is to provide others with a service is what distinguishes them from all of the other business units within the DSD (other than the records unit). It was also apparent that DSD managers and subordinates alike required and demanded a high quality of service from both HR and ITS. The following participant remarks identify the perceptions mentioned above:

> *"To provide all the basic HR functions, to support agency staff, management particularly to equip managers with the tools they need to manage their people effectively, defensively, productively, so that we are all heading towards a common goal".*[3]

---

[3] HRC: Question 1 (b) - HR

> *"Both HR and ITS are service providers. The services that ITS provide on a individual basis consistently overlap with the service that HR provide and visa versa. That is why they will eventually merge together and form a single entity".*[4]

> *"A support role, dare I use a cliche? An engine room role, their role is to essentially provide support which in their area of speciality is the IT sides of things to various business units of the department, to enable them to go about their business efficiently and effectively. So I think the role is quite broad but in a very simple sense it is essentially a support role".*[5]

Other passages similar to those given above as were also tagged with the open code of *service providers.* Throughout the interviews, participants continually referred to both HR and ITS as *service providers.*

In referring to HR and ITS as service providers it was also identified that participants perceived that there was a constant need to *improve the delivery of services.* Improve the services by increasing their accuracy, timeliness and effectiveness. If the services the HR and ITS provide were enhanced and improved it would enable employees and assist business units to operate in a more productive and efficient manner. By improving the delivery of services HR and ITS could instil the confidence in employees that they require in order to perform their job at their utmost. However, it was apparent that participants felt that they were restricted by a lack of resources, in their attempt to improve the delivery of services. Participants from both HR and ITS clearly stated that IT was a medium through which the delivery of services could be improved in both units. This belief is evident in the following two examples:

> *"If HR and ITS communicated and cooperated more readily and we would most definitely see an improvement in the delivery of the services that they provide."*[6]

---

[4] NSA: Question 1 (b) - HR
[5] HRM: Question 1 (a) - ITS

> *"We need to be constantly looking for opportunities to better the way in which we deliver our products and services".*[7]

Several participants suggested that a major role of ITS was to provide the organisation with the *infrastructure* it needed to operate in an efficient manner. To provide the employees with the tools they need. The infrastructure that ITS provide directs employees and enables them utilise the technology around them. Typical of the responses were:

> *"ITS provide the basic infrastructure for business to work on".*[8]

> *"We (ITS) provide the organisation with the foundation and infrastructure it requires to perform at its optimum. The implementation of the appropriate infrastructure is a major function of the support role that we provide".*[9]

Also identified as an important issue for both HR and ITS was the *value adding* function. Participants referred to the support role that HR and ITS as a value adding function. Whether it is an upgrade in software or the recruitment of a new employee, participants perceived HR and ITS operations as factors that contributed heavily, to the betterment of the organisation. HR and ITS were viewed as the means by which the DSD could improve its efficiencies and help other business achieve their outcomes in the best possible way. They added value to the organisation by ensuring that the right people employed and the right technology implemented. Typical of the responses were:

> *"Essentially HR provide the DSD with a value adding function."*[10]

> *"ITS provide value-added service assistance to enable business to do better."*[11]

---

[6] APG: Question 11
[7] HRM: Question 5
[8] APG: Question 3 (a) - ITS
[9] NSA: Question 1 (a) - ITS
[10] APG: Question 2 (b) - HR
[11] APG: Question 2 (a) - ITS

> *"Yes, I think once again, we (HR) are pretty much the same as ITS. We are both here to add value to the firm."[12]*

A common statement among interviewees was that HR was generally the *first point of contact* for new and existing employees. This theme was particularly evident in the case of new starters. New employees have an obvious and immediate need to deal with HR upon commencing employment. That is, if they wish to be paid! Contact between a new starter and ITS also needs to be swift in the attempt to information and technology needs of that employee. Some of the responses tagged with the *first point of contact* open code were:

> *"Staff and managers perceive HR as a problem solver. We are their first port of call."[13]*

> *"The first point of contact should be HR before coming to other departments."[14]*

As demonstrated in the quote above, another common theme identified was that participants suggested that HR were *not problem solvers.* It was widely acknowledged that staff looked upon both HR and ITS as problem solvers. A number of participants passionately indicated that HR were *not problem solvers"*. The identification of this theme demonstrated a miss-conception by staff as to the proposed role of HR. To draw upon actual quotes:

> *"HR have very few resources to apply to the value adding stuff that should go on, which doesn't because they are bogged down by the ordinary day-to-day problem solving type stuff."[15]*

> *"Clearly what we're not are personal problem solvers"[16]*

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[12]HRM: Question 2 (b) - HR
[13] HRE: Question 1 (a) - HR
[14] SSO: Question 2 (a) - HR
[15] APG: Question 1 (b) - HR
[16] HRE: Question 1 (a) - HR

Proceeding with the development of the open codes, the researcher identified another common theme referred to as *reactive versus proactive*. As demonstrated below, it was a widely held belief that HR, ITS and the department as a whole, need to be more proactive in its operations. Participants believed that operations were too reactive.

> *"We actually should perhaps be a business partner to the organisation, in that we are able to in a proactive sense, assist the business in getting on with what it is meant to be doing."*[17]

> *"Both HR and ITS need to show initiative and help each other to progress in a positive manner."*[18]

> *"We need to develop systems to keep up with the best practices around that people expect to see and see other departments utilising."*[19]

A number of participants identified an apparent *gap between HR and ITS*. A perceived difference in the way that they operated and the way that they are able to operate. The concept of a potential *gap between HR and ITS* is demonstrated the following examples:

> *"Probably a bit two fold. And this again is perhaps because there is a slight difference the HR environment and the IT environment But I see ours as being two fold."*[20]

> *"Sure ITS and HR may well have differences in what we need to do on a day-to-day basis, but ultimately our overall strategies are very similar. At the moment HR and ITS often seem to be working in isolation of each other"*.[21]

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[17] HRM: Question 1 (a) - HR
[18] NSA : Question 9
[19] HRS: Question 2 (a) - HR
[20] HRM: Question 3 (a) - HR

Another common theme identified was *flexibility*. A common perception uncovered by the coding process was that the DSD lacked flexibility. The structure and culture retarded the level of flexibility that the organisation could achieve. This was uncovered by quotes, such as that given below

> *"Such issues as business units who have particular needs, who don't sort of fit the corporate mould, how are we going to allow them to be part of the corporate family?"*[22]

Upon investigating the perceived lack of flexibility, the researcher noted another distinct, yet related theme. That common theme was referred to as *State Government bureaucracy*. It was common for participants to classify DSD as bureaucratic. Throughout the interviews, participants consistently vented their frustrations of being employed within a highly bureaucratic organisation. Illustrating this theme were quotes such as:

> *"What difference can it make? Bureaucracy. It is extremely difficult to master it with the associated layers and structures and difficulties You have to be very careful because the government is obviously very sensitive (whichever one is in power at the time) about things that are said and done by the departments."*[23]

> *"Clearly, by working within a government organisation we are limited in what we can do. The ever present policies and procedures stifle advances.".*[24]

Question six of the interview questions: do you feel the two units could actually operate as a single unit? *Why?* Was a very thought-provoking question as it presented participants with an issue that they may not have encountered before, the very extreme end of a potential relationship between HR and ITS. That is, their integration into one single entity.

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[21] NSA: Question 4
[22] SSO: Question 3 (a) - ITS
[23] CIO: Question 2 (b) - HR
[24] HRE: Question 8

Most participants were quick to suggest that HR and ITS *cannot operate as a single entity,* and so, another common theme was identified. Typical of the responses were:

> *"No. Records and ITS, yes. You could call it one unit, but it wouldn't really be an integrated unit. There would be two teams within one group."*[25]

> *"There could be clashes with policies and that sort of thing. It would be better to collaborate together, rather than as a single unit"*[26]

> *"I don't see any point in having the two combined. I'm not quite sure about the synergies."*[27]

However, there was one participant who was very confident and enthusiastic about the prospects of HR and ITS becoming fully integrated. This participant was adamant that the two units would most definitely become a single entity in the not too distant future. As demonstrated in the following example:

> *"Oh yes, definitely. ITS and HR will eventually unite and form a single department. They both provide an integrated service to the department and that service will be enhanced by their eventual unity."*[28]

Another theme identified in phase one of the coding process, was the common view that there was a *lack of strategic direction.* That is, managers and subordinates alike were not very familiar with actual strategic plans and visions as set in place by top management. Participants were often able to conjure up something that they thought might resemble the HR or ITS strategic plan. However, in general, they were unable to indicate what the strategies actually were or where they might be located. There was a general consensus that strategic plans were not sufficiently promoted or communicated to staff.

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[25] APG: Question 6
[26] SSO: Question 6
[27] CIO: Question 6
[28] NSA: Question 6

This perception is evident in the following examples:

> *"We are not told or talk on that level but I know the sorts of things that they do."* [29]

> *"I couldn't identify any real strategic plan."* [30]

> *"These strategies have just come from me, what I have put out. Nobody has communicated any strategies to me, what so ever, from IT or HR. Or they may have done but not said, "This is a strategy", or "this is our key strategy." I don't seem to be involved in those sorts of things."* [31]

Stemming from the *lack of strategic direction* was a general belief that there was a *need to change management strategy.* As demonstrated by the following quotes:

> *"I think that training is one area that is really in the shitter at the moment."* [32]

> *"The DSD doesn't have a great, broad strategic planning system in place. There is a definite lack of communication and consultation."* [33]

Also related to the two strategic themes as given above was the need for a strategic review. The identification of a *lack of strategic direction* and a *need to change management strategy* lead some participants to believe that there was an increasing need for a more comprehensive *strategic review* then there was in place at that time. As demonstrated in the following example:

> *"I know there's a strategic review going on, but I'm not sure if that its enough".* [34]

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[29] HRC: Question 2 (b) - ITS
[30] APG: Question 2 (a) - ITS
[31] HRS: Question 2 (a) - HR
[32] APG: Question 4
[33] HRE: Question 2 (b) - ITS
[34] HRE: Question 2 (b) - ITS

The open coding process continued until the researcher had absorbed the meaning of the raw data and assigned it with some thirty-seven open codes in total. In assigning the open codes the researcher has effectively built up a classification schedule that indexed and categorised the issues of importance. The entire array of open codes is presented in figure 5.2.
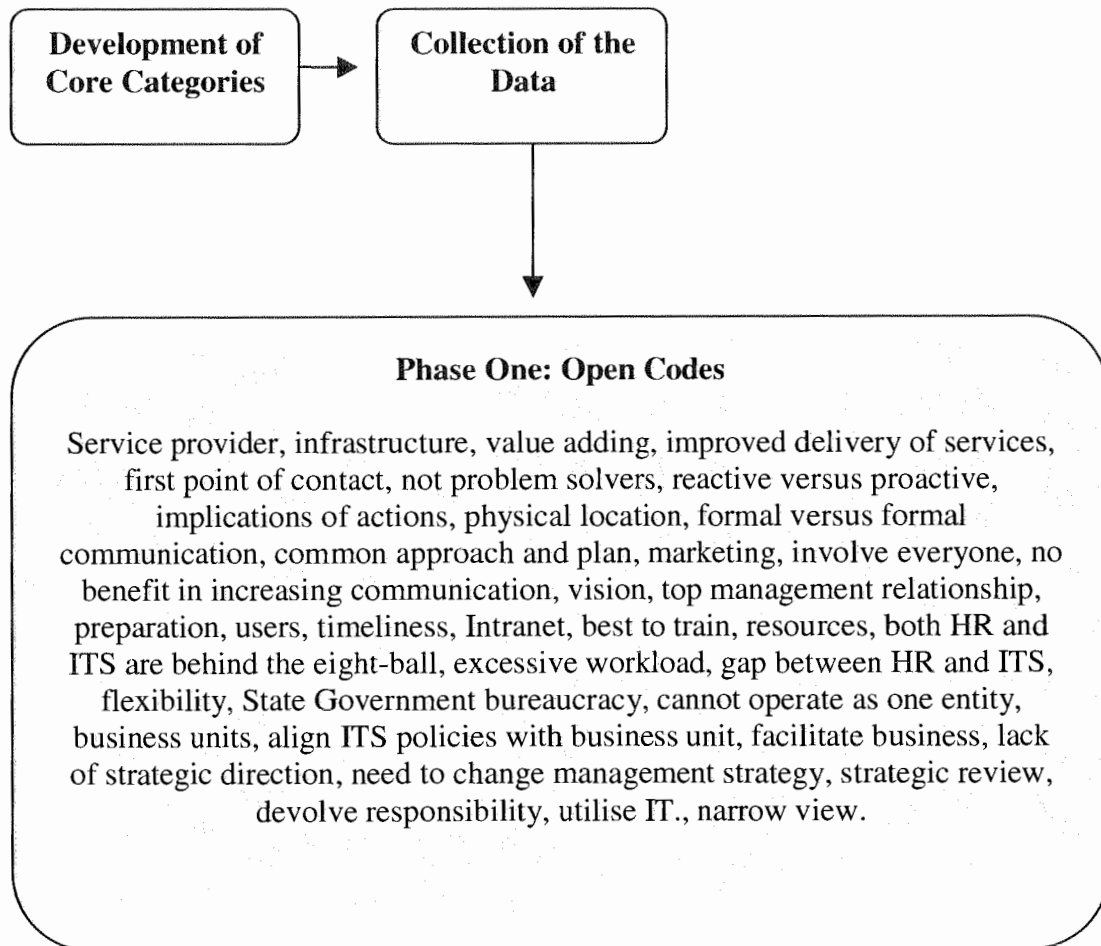
Figure 5.2: Phase One: Open Codes.

The open codes as given above, provided the basis from which the axial codes were developed.

5.3.1 Phase Two: Axial Codes

Upon the generation of the open codes, it was then appropriate that the researcher focus upon the themes and codes that had already been designated. The researcher used the axial coding phase as an opportunity to stimulate and evoke thoughts about linkages and relationships between concepts.

In doing this, the researcher was able to gather the open codes that echoed a general overall theme and combine them into to groups, or axial codes. In effect refining the number of codes. As the axial codes represented groupings of open codes it was clear that the axial codes encompassed all that had been identified by the open codes and more. The axial codes represented themes that had a much wide scope and vast amounts of evidence supporting their generation.

Following are three examples of axial codes demonstrating how they were generated from the open codes as described in the preceding section.

Support Role

The following open codes; *service providers, infrastructure, value adding, improved delivery of services, first point of contact, not problem solvers, reactive versus proactive*, as discussed in the previous section, were grouped together as they all possessed a common underlying theme. The perceptions and ideas portrayed by the open codes eluded to a common belief that HR and ITS occupied a *support role* within the DSD. That is, HR and ITS needed to provide the DSD with support functions in order for the organisation to operate in a constructive manner.

The support role axial code was also presented in more obvious or evident forms throughout the data. The responses given below were common and clearly indicated the belief that both HR and ITS had a fundamental support role within the DSD.

"The primary role of HR is to support staff and management."[35]

"To provide corporate computer facility support and management."[36]

It was interesting to note that participants identified a need to provide support on varying levels. Whether it be to an individual user, a single business unit manager, specific business units, or the entire DSD, it was apparent that ITS and HR support was needed to assist and facilitate business.

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[35] HRE: Question 1 (a) - HR
[36] SSO: Question 1 (a) - ITS

Negating Constraints

Another grouping of open codes that displayed similar underlying meanings were; *gap between HR and ITS, flexibility, State Government bureaucracy, cannot operate as one entity*. The common relationship between these concepts was that they all tend to limit the ability of the DSD to vary operating procedures when needed. Which, at times, may restrict the organisation to operating in a fashion that is not particularly appropriate, nor effective. That is, the open codes given above acted as **negating constraints** upon the operations of the DSD. These open codes and participant statements, such as those given below, lead to the identification of negating constraints as a common perception among participants.

> *"I think that is very closed minded these days. Everyone should have their rights observed and their cultural well being taken into consideration and keep the peace."[37]*

> *"The organisation is not communicating well enough within itself, internally, to help the structure move forward. To move the business forward."[38]*

> *Being a government agency, you're always going to have to conform to requirements of the particular government of the time".[39]*

Strategic Planning

It was apparent that the employees interviewed held similar views and had similar understandings of the issues associated with **strategic planning**. Of the open codes generated in phase one of the coding process the following indicated themes relating to strategic planning; *lack of strategic direction, need to change management strategy, strategic review.*

Strategic planning was an issue that was highly prevalent in the literature review and was later identified as a core category of the research. Accordingly, it was a prominent issue embedded in the interview questions.

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[37] HRS: Question 7 (a) – HR
[38] SSO: Question 1 (a) - ITS

It was therefore fair to expect that there would be a reasonable amount of discussion relating to it. What resulted was an overwhelming amount of information given that related directly to strategic planning. Virtually all respondents alluded to the fact that there was an overall lack of strategic planning within HR, ITS and the DSD as a whole. Furthermore, strategic plans were poorly communicated and were not prominent or clearly visible to staff. Participant understanding of the strategic plans of HR, ITS and the DSD, was very low. A point that is clearly demonstrated by the following quotes:

"Strategic direction, I don't know at this stage."[40]

Nobody has communicated any strategies to me what so ever, from IT or HR."[41]

"As far as communication of strategy goes, no I don't recall actually ever being aware of that in a formal sense."[42]

We currently have a strategic plan I just don't know it. But, you don't hear a lot."[43]

The axial coding process continued until the thirty-eight open codes generated had been refined to eight far-reaching axial codes. A complete listing of the axial codes and the open codes that they encompass is presented in Figure 5.3.

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[39] HRE: Question 8
[40] HRS: Question 2 (b) - ITS
[41] HRS: Question 2 (a) - HR
[42] HRM: Question 2 (b) - ITS
[43] SSO: Question 2 (a) - ITS

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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│ Development of  │ ───▶ │ Collection of the│
│ Core Categories │      │      Data        │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
                                  │
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                         ┌─────────────────┐
                         │ Phase One: Open │
                         │      Codes      │
                         └─────────────────┘
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Phase Two: Axial Codes

Support Role *Service provider, infrastructure, value adding, improved delivery of services, first point of contact, not problem solvers, reactive versus proactive*	**Communication** *implications of actions, physical location, formal versus informal communication, common approach and plan, marketing, involve everyone, no benefit, vision, top management*
Training *preparation, users, timeliness, Intranet, best to train*	**Day-to-Day Operations** *resources, both HR and ITS are behind the eight-ball, excessive workload*
Negating Constraints *gap between HR and ITS, flexibility, State Government bureaucracy, cannot operate as one entity*	**Need to Work with Business Units** *business units, align ITS policies with business unit, facilitate business, users*
Strategic Planning *lack of strategic direction, need to change management strategy, strategic review*	**Operational Planning** *devolve responsibility, utilise I.T., narrow view*

Figure 5.3: Phase One: Open Codes.

5.3.1 Phase Three: Selective Codes (dominant findings)

This was the final section of her coding phase. It was the section of the process in which the researcher sought cases to illustrate major interpretations and findings. The researcher conducted a review of the data in order to check for further meanings and support or refute interpretations and findings. During this phase, the researcher was guided by themes and concepts defined previously in the open and axial coding phases.

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┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│  Development of   │─────▶│  Collection of the│
│  Core Categories  │      │       Data        │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
                                    │
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                          ┌──────────────────┐
                          │  Phase One: Open │
                          │       Codes      │
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                          ┌──────────────────┐
                          │  Phase Two: Axial│
                          │       Codes      │
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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Final Phase: Selective Codes (dominant findings)      │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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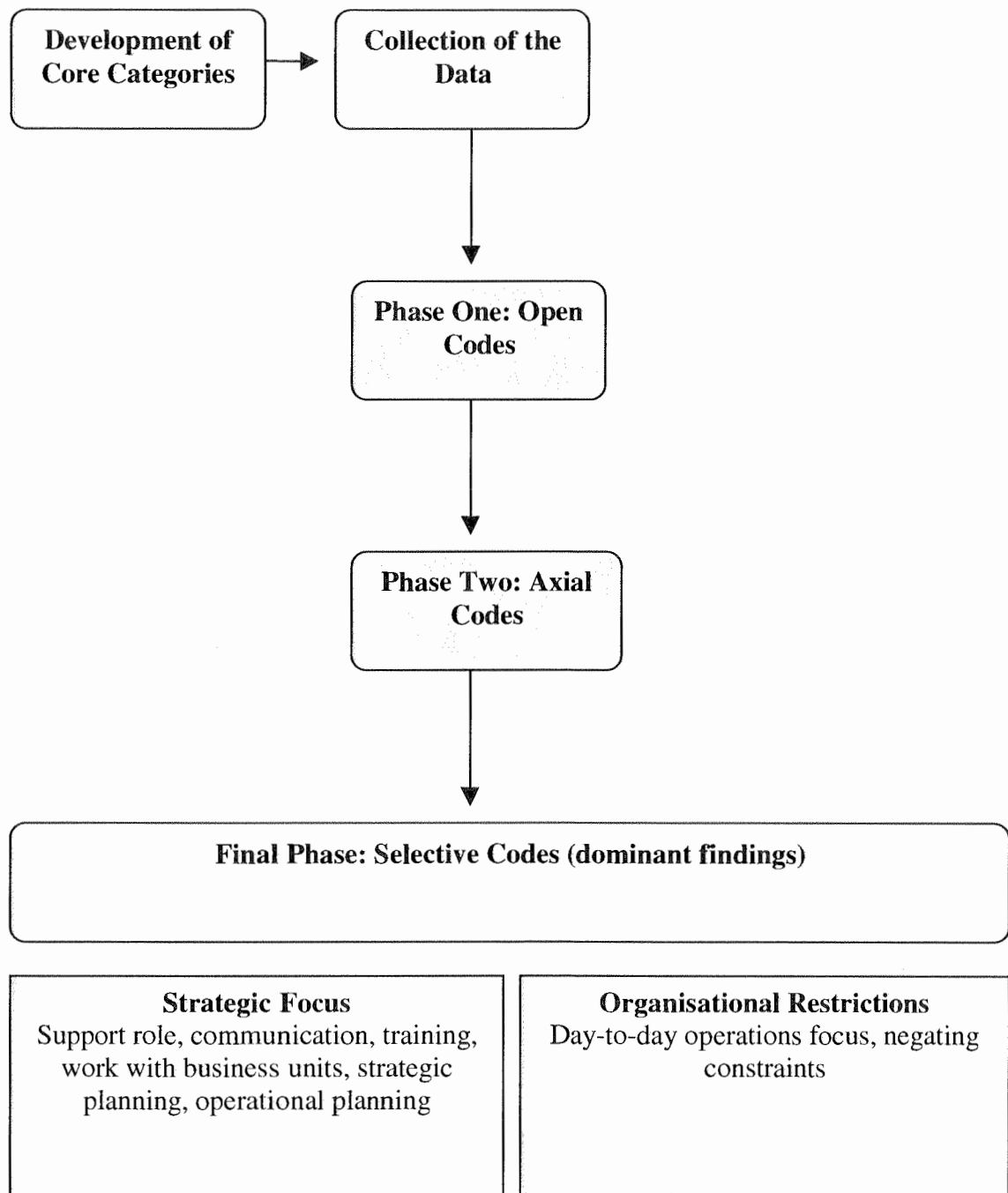
Strategic Focus	Organisational Restrictions
Support role, communication, training, work with business units, strategic planning, operational planning	Day-to-day operations focus, negating constraints

Figure 5.4: Phase Three: Selective Codes (dominant findings).

All of the codes generated throughout the process were refined to produce and support the two major, overall themes uncovered by the study. Through delving into the axial codes the researcher was able to uncover the true meaning of the codes. The axial codes were compared, linked, contrasted and finally grouped to from the two overall findings as demonstrated in Figure 5.4. The overall findings will be comprehensively discussed in Chapter 6, Findings and Future research.

5.4   SUMMARY

This chapter has provided the reader with a step-by-step account of the data analysis. A first run through the data enabled the researcher to identify common themes and tag them with open codes. The researcher then focussed upon refining the open codes in phase two of the coding process. Resulting in the development of the axial codes. By scanning the data and refining the axial, the researcher was able to uncover two overall findings that, effectively, summarised the preceding codes and issues prevalent in the research.

Chapter 6: Findings and Future Research

6.   FINDINGS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1   INTRODUCTION

It is in this chapter that the overall findings as uncovered by the research are discussed. It is a summary of the main themes that were laden in the data. The two dominant findings identified as critical to the DSD were strategic focus and organisational restrictions. This study has clearly answered the research question by uncovering the issues associated with the relationship between HR and ITS. By answering the research question the researcher was also able to satisfy the main objectives of the investigation as stated below.

6.2   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As stated previously, the research question for this investigation was as follows:

What are the issues associated with the relationship between the Information Technology Services Unit and the Human Resources Unit of the Department of State Development?

The three primary objectives of the research were to identify employee knowledge and awareness of issues associated with the relationship between the Human Resources unit and Information Technology Service unit of the DSD. Secondly, to determine the perception and thoughts of employees in relation to the integration of HR and ITS. Thirdly, to identify the issues associated with the advancement of the link between HR and ITS. These objectives provided the study with the direction necessary to generate the findings.

6.3   DOMINANT FINDINGS

All of the information generated by this investigation was refined to produce and support the two dominant themes uncovered by the study, strategic focus and organisational restrictions, as demonstrated in figure 6.1.
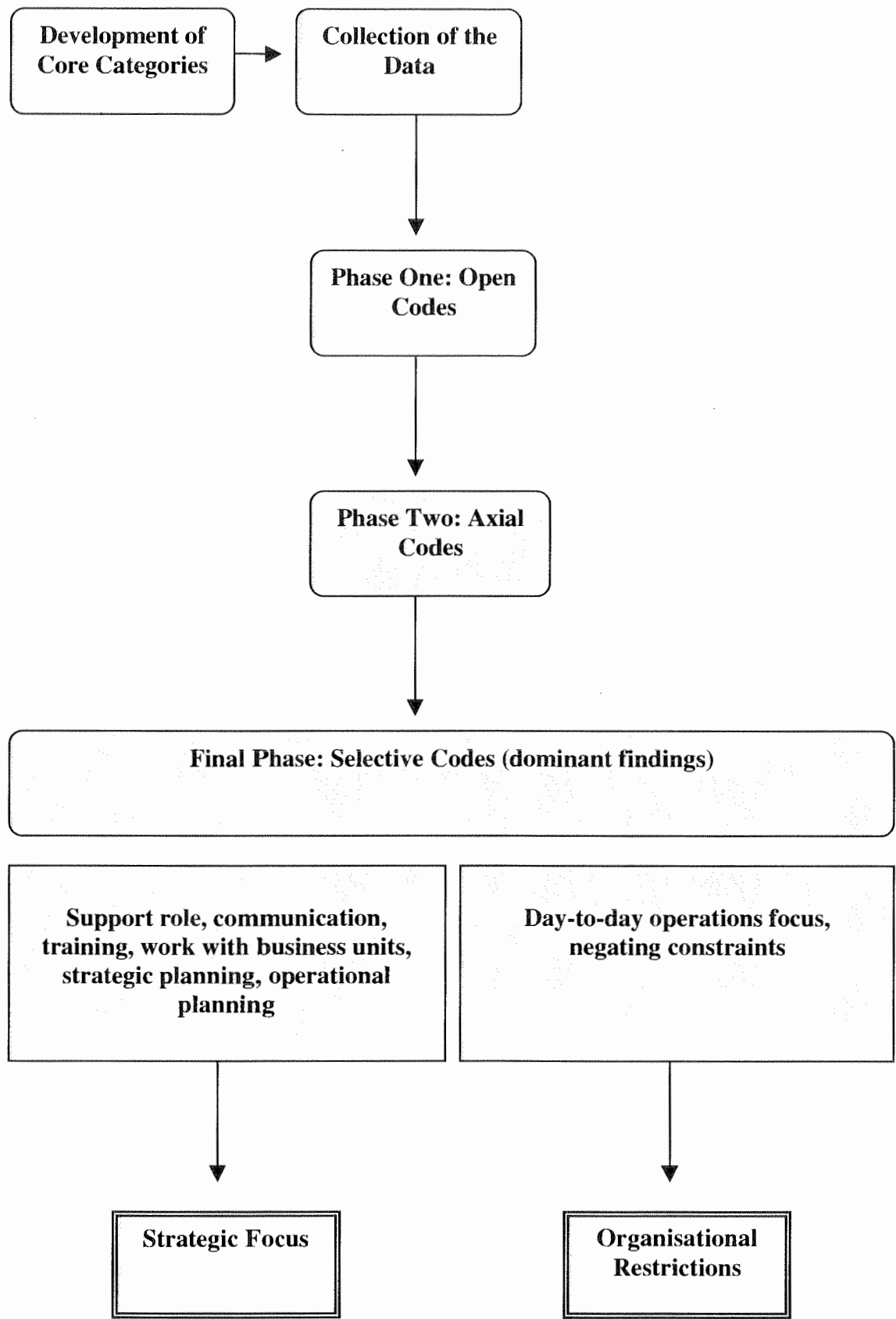
Figure 6.1: Dominant Findings of the Investigation.

6.4   ORGANISATIONAL RESTRICTIONS

Robbin et al. (1997), Drucker (1994) and Kreitner (1995) believe that relatively large organisations, such as the DSD, due to their sear weight in numbers, are reactive and slow moving due to the formal procedures that they require in order to effectively control, lead, organise and control their staff. Furthermore, Kreitner (1995) suggests that the degree of flexibility that large organisations can exhibit is often limited. This is particularly true for those organisations that operate within the public sector, such as the DSD. As ultimately, they are governed by policy makers and they have an obligation to adhere to those policies set by the Government of the time.

The issues uncovered by this investigation clearly suggested that organisational restrictions were a major issue for the DSD. The following statement as made by the HR Executive best summarises the predicament that the DSD is in:

> *"My outlook has always been that the structure and culture of the organisation is not right."*[44]

The structure and culture of the DSD are somewhat restricting the level of flexibility that it can exercise. The rigid and bureaucratic structure of the DSD is one that emphasises adherence to formal policies and procedures. The politics associated within the DSD forces the continued need for due process. It is because of these organisational restrictions that business units, managers and subordinates alike can be restricted in their attempt to attain the resources and flexibility that they require to operate in a pro-active manner.

The DSD certainly has many staff that are capable of achieving high standards. The HR and ITS staff are all highly skilled and are bursting at the seams with new ideas and initiatives.

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[44] HRM: Question 1 (a) - HR

However, to the frustration of the organisation, these potential initiatives, or stars, may never be given an opportunity to rise. In the case of HR and ITS they may never be realised because staff are *"too busy trying to keep up with the day-to-day operations that they must perform in order to keep the engine running."*[45] Both HR and ITS have excessive workloads and feel as though they are always behind the eight-ball. They tend to be reactive rather than pro-active. Chasing the cats tail, so to speak. There is little spare time and room to develop the value adding processes that will enable to the DSD to perform at a higher level that it currently operates. As a result, HR and ITS staff are restricted in what they can achieve.

What's even more frustrating than the lack of opportunities to advance beyond the day-to-day operations is the possibility that HR and ITS staff may lose the motivation and drive needed to perform even the day-to-day operations that have to be done.

HR and ITS staff are often presented with a lack of avenues available for them to try and exploit value-adding initiatives. They cannot be expected to repeatedly take it on the chin and continue to suggest initiatives if they perceive little hope in the realisation of their ideas. This eventual decline in motivation may inturn lead to a decrease in productivity and a possible increase in absenteeism. Potentially, this could culminate in an increase in turnover as employees seek to leave the positions that provide them with a limited degree of job satisfaction.

However, there is some relief in sight. The HR and ITS staff are still exhibiting a willingness to work with and around the restrictions of the system. The DSD needs to provide staff with more flexibility. It needs to provide staff with the opportunities that will enable them to develop value-adding processes. Otherwise, the great initiatives and ideas that are thought of everyday by staff will continue to be lost. Furthermore, a continuance of the current circumstances may influence the motivation of staff to continue to think laterally, outside of the day-to-day operations, may also be lost.

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[45] HRE: Question 8

An avenue for both HR and ITS to escape the confines of the day-to-day working requirements could come through their increased integration. Through increasing their integration and communication, and through enhancing their working relationship, HR and ITS might be able to identify ways to more effectively perform the unavoidable day-to-day operations that bog them down. That is, through learning, sharing and communicating the intricacies of each others operations, HR and ITS may be able to suggest ways to help each other as to better utilise the knowledge and tools that the other unit has to offer.

There needs to be a change in the focus of the DSD. The organisational restraints make it very difficult for HR and ITS to look beyond planning at an operational level. In effect limiting their ability to focus their energies on the value adding activities that can be achieved at the strategic level. Indeed, for the DSD to "take a step up" the way of the future must be to encompass a strong strategic focus.

6.5   STRATEGIC FOCUS

Daft (1994: 220) states that "strategy is the plan of action that prescribes resource allocation and other activities for dealing with the environment and helping the organisation attain its goals." According to several authorities including Daft (1994), Robbins (1996), Drucker (1988) and Hitt et al. (1997), the effective development and implementation of organisation strategies is vital to the overall success of an organisation. Strategies are the mechanism that drives and directs business units, managers and subordinates alike to achieve the targets and goals set by themselves and by the organisation. Strategies provide an organisation with a vision. A strategic vision for all to strive for. Robbins et al. (1997) believes that without a common vision an organisation lacks direction.

According to Kreitner (1995) and Ward and Griffiths (1996) strategic plans and visions are the precedents that enable an organisation to exploit the internal and external opportunities presented to them.

Their effective management can ultimately provide an organisation with a competitive advantage over their rivals. Indeed, Milkovich (1997) indicates that effective strategic management can be considered a competitive advantage in its own right.

Drucker (1994) and Fisher (1996) believe that for organisational strategies to be effective they need to be exhaustively communicated throughout an organisation.

Furthermore, employees at all levels within an organisation need to be included in the development of organisational strategies in order for them to perceive that they are a part of the vision. Daft (1996) believes that an acute awareness of organisational strategies enables staff and business units alike to align themselves and their operations with the overall strategic direction of the organisation. Effectively ensuring that all are striving for a common goal. Drucker (1994) suggests that without an inherent and concentrated effort to develop a strong strategic focus the future of an organisation is bleak.

The DSD lacked a truly strategic focus. Generally, employees did not have a full awareness of the strategic intent or vision of the organisation. They did not share a common vision. The DSD was failing in its attempt to implement and maintain strategies that were appropriately coordinated and communicated throughout the organisation. It was clear that the more effective communication of strategies was an issue of major concern for the DSD.

The DSD displayed an apparent inability to effectively communicate its strategies to staff. This, in effect, limited the degree to which all could conform and direct their efforts toward a common strategy. Staff were unaware of strategies and did not know where they could access them. How could they knowingly help to achieve them? The strategies of the DSD need to be communicated and filtered through to all levels of the organisation as to promote a common approach and plan.

Top management need to be seen supporting and communicating a common vision throughout the DSD. *"A common approach and plan would at least ensure that everyone was sing the same song."*[46] By communicating strategies throughout the DSD, staff are provided with the direction and guidance they need to ensure that they are operating in alignment with the overall strategies of the organisation.

Enhanced communication of strategies throughout the DSD could only result in positive spin-offs. Surely an increase in the communication between management and subordinates and across business units would open the channels for the effective communication of organisational strategies?

Furthermore, involving everyone in the strategic planning process would promote employee commitment and possibly influence employees to work harder in their attempt to achieve the vision that they are an integral part of.

The HR and ITS staff have an excellent understanding of the need for high levels of communication. After all, the communication of policies and procedures is a major function of HR, they have an exhaustive requirement to continually provide staff with up-to-date information on a day-to-day basis. On the other hand, communication is what ITS are expert in. It is their job to provide the various mediums through which information is communicated. The acute awareness of the importance of communication, demonstrated by HR and ITS, lead HR and ITS to meet on an irregular basis to discuss issues that were common to both units. The meetings were seen as an opportunity to keep each other informed of the current and future issues that had an impact upon both units. For instance, HR would endeavour to inform ITS of new employee commencements well in advance of their start date. This provided ITS with the time and information that they required in order to set new employees up with all of their IT requirement from day one.

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[46] APG: Question 9

The communication between HR and ITS did not always occur via a formal meeting, nor did it need to. Information can often be just as effectively communicated via a simple, informal phone call. The communication does not need to be formal, its just needs to be regular. The advantages in communicating issues such as the departures and arrivals of employees was highly evident, as the information transferred between HR and ITS enabled them to provide a high level of support to staff. Enhanced communication also has the benefit of reducing mix-ups, delays and frustrations.

Communication at the operational level helps the HR and ITS units to keep their heads above water and complete the day-to-day tasks that have to be done.

However, as was demonstrated by HR and ITS, communication across the DSD is too heavily focussed upon operational level issues. That is, strategic issues are not often discussed. This was particularly evident between the HR and ITS units as participants displayed an apparent lack of knowledge and awareness of each other's strategies. Sometimes, this lack of strategic awareness also extended to encompass the unit in which they resided.

The scope of the communication between HR and ITS needs to be widened, as to encompass strategy review and formulation. The need for an increase in the communication of strategy development between HR and ITS is particularly evident when assessing the issues associated with IT training.

IT Training was an issue that neither HR, nor ITS would claim full responsibility for. Possibly suggesting that training was a shared role that needs defining. Participants were generally unsure as to the roles of both HR and ITS in relation to training. This point demonstrates a lack of awareness and understanding on the behalf of the HR and ITS staff members. An issue that has most likely occurred due to a lack of communication between the two units.

For the rollout of new systems to proceed smoothly and without hitch, there is invariably going to be a need for some sort of IT training. The fact that IT training incorporates an element of HR and an element of ITS suggests that both should be involved in the administration of training.

By combining forces and through enhancing the level of communication and collaboration between the two units, HR and ITS could formulate strategies that ensured staff had access to the training that they required, at the right time and at the right level. Ultimately, increasing the effectiveness of the training delivered.

In effect, a strengthening of the relationship between HR and ITS could ultimately, for example, result in an improvement in the timeliness, delivery and content of IT related training. Employees would receive more appropriate and timely training, potentially leading to a more productive workforce as employees exercised their highly developed IT skills.

Perhaps the HR and ITS units could work together to develop a truly comprehensive Intranet site, which has the primary objective of promoting the collaboration and communication of strategies throughout the DSD. This could act as a mechanism for HR and ITS to convey a message to the rest of the organisation, that there is an immediate need to focus upon strategy.

However, for the DSD to move forward as a whole and develop a truly common approach to strategy, the increased integration and enhancement of relationships needs to extend beyond the link between HR and ITS. It needs to extend across the DSD to encompass all business units within it. It was apparent that participants believed that the many business units that make up the DSD often worked in isolation of each other. That is, communication and integration was low between managers and business units.

It is only when all the business units within the DSD begin to regularly collaborate and communicate with each other, that the strategic focus of the DSD will amplify as it becomes truly unified in its approach toward a common goal.

Perhaps HR and ITS need to be more proactive and attempt to initiate a deliberate attempt to magnify the strategic focus of the DSD. This could possibly be achieved by enhancing the relationship between HR and ITS and by focussing on exploiting the distinct commonalties between the two units.

The most apparent and common function between the two units is clearly the fundamental support roles that they both occupy. It is the support roles that equip both HR and ITS with the tools required to facilitate business. HR and ITS could work together to communicate the need for an increase in the strategic focus of the DSD. The need for HR and ITS to work together is evident, as the following quote suggests:

> *"The ITS and HR executives need to be pissing in each others pockets quite a bit. They need to talk to each other a lot about where they are going on certain issues. They both need to be prominent."*[47]

HR and ITS could seek to broaden the scope of the support role that they perform to encompass, and primarily focus upon, issues at a strategic level. Potentially enabling them to facilitate business. In effect, influencing the DSD to focus upon the communication and development of strategic plans and goals.

A major component of the support roles occupied by HR and ITS is need to provide support for each other's strategies. This investigation demonstrated that generally, participants had limited understanding of their own units' strategies and very little knowledge and awareness of the corresponding units' strategies. How could they accurately support each other strategies if they did not know what they were? An increase in the communication and relations between HR and ITS would ensure staff had a comprehensive understanding of the strategies of both units.

A strategic focus could take the support role that HR and ITS occupy up a level and enable them to more effectively support the strategies of individual business units and the organisation as a whole. HR and ITS could primarily focus the support and facilitation that they provide upon the strategic direction of the DSD. Effectively, communicating and promoting the overall organisational strategies to all of the DSD. Providing all with a measuring stick by which they could attempt to align their own strategies.

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[47] APG: Question 9

An increase in the strategic focus of the DSD would challenge the current focus, which is very much based upon day-to-day operational level issues. A strategic focus would also challenge the reactive function of the DSD.

An enhanced strategic focus is certainly the way of the future for the DSD. For this to occur, HR and ITS need to further develop their working relationship. Who better to initiate, support and communicate the need for a greater emphasis upon strategy, then the two units that provide the DSD with the information and support that it needs to function efficiently.

6.6 SUMMARY

This investigation has clearly answered the research question by uncovering the issues associated with the relationship between HR and ITS. The two dominant issues being organisational restrictions and strategic focus.

The reality is that both HR and ITS staff are restricted by the operational level tasks that they must perform on a day-to-day basis. The resources and time allocated to value adding process are limited

The structure and bureaucratic nature of the organisation dictates a culture that primarily focuses upon operational level issues in an attempt to "keep the engine running". The DSD needs to shift the focus of the organisation as to encapsulate a truly strategic focus. HR and ITS, through their facilitation and support roles, may well need to be the instigators of a shift to a common strategic approach. By communicating a common strategic approach throughout the organisation, the DSD may be able to a achieve a truly strategic focus.

Enhancing the strategic focus of the DSD may well provide it with the opportunity to overcome some of the organisational constraints that limit the development of the processes and initiatives that add value to the DSD. A truly strategic focus is the way of the future for the DSD.

6.7   FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focussed upon the identification of the issues associated with the relationship between HR and ITS. The DSD might further benefit from a study that extended the findings of this research to encompass recommendations. Perhaps it could be presented in the form of an official business report. Recommendations that addressed the issues identified in this investigation and suggested what the DSD could do to improve the situation. Potentially enabling the DSD an opportunity to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. The recommendations could place emphasis upon the strategic focus of the DSD and the organisational restrictions and seek to determine:

- How can the DSD communicate an all-encompassing common strategy throughout the organisation?
- How can the DSD address the organisational restrictions?

Recommendations relating to these dominant themes identified by this study could ultimately provide the DSD with a means to challenge and ultimately improve the way that it operates.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Researcher requests permission to tape-record the interview and states:

- *Interviewer Name;*
- *Interviewee Name;*
- *Date and Time.*

RAPPORT BUILDING OPENING

Please see this interview as an interesting and satisfying encounter, as a chance to express your dislikes, disappointments and ideas. Your willingness to call upon your expertise and discuss issues openly is critical to the success of the interview. Please think of this as an opportunity to tell your stories, call upon examples as they come to mind.

Reasoning for the Respondents Selection

You (the respondent) have been selected due to your role and position within the ITS/HR unit of the DSD.

It is my intention to interview four staff members from varying levels of both the ITS unit and the HR unit of the DSD. Ranging from executive management through to operational staff members. This will enable me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues that is truly representative of the unit at all levels.

I am Interested in how you and others, like you in the organisation communicate in the setting. It is important to hear this in your own words.

Purpose of the Interview

The fundamental purpose of this interview is to assist me in my honours investigation being conducted at the School of IS at the University of Tasmania. This investigation seeks to uncover the answer to and the issues related to the research question. That being;

Research Question

What are the issues associated with the relationship between the Information Technology Services Unit and the Human Resources Unit of the Department of State Development?

The information obtained from this interview has the purpose of enabling to answer the research question stated. It will not be used in a dishonest fashion that is likely to bring disrepute or professional harm to you. If at any time you feel it necessary to speak "off-the-record", please feel free to suggest so and I will turn the tape record off.

Value of the Investigation

Through investigating this question I hope to uncover some valuable findings that will be of great interest to academics and business people alike. Your participation is very important to the success of this investigation.

Format of the Interview

Please disregard the fact that I am a DSD employee and look upon me as a researcher firstly.

The experience will be more like a conversation than an interview. Feel free to interrupt at any time or diverge from the questions being posed. However, please note that I do have a set of predetermined questions that I need to work through in the allocated time. Feel free to ask questions at any time.

Please note that there are no wrong or right answers. It is your personal feelings and thoughts that are important.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Question 1 (a) - ITS

Please tell me what you see as the role of ITS within the DSD.

Do you believe this role to be ideal? If no, what do you consider the ideal to be?

Question 1 (b) - HR

Please tell me what you see as the role of HR within the DSD.

Do you believe this role to be ideal? If no, what do you consider the ideal to be?

Question 2 (a) - ITS

What is your understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the ITS Unit?

Question 2 (b) - HR

What is your understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the HR Unit?

Question 3

Can you identify any common roles or links between the two business units?

Question 4

What advantages do you see in more fully integrating the operational and strategic planning processes of the HR and ITS?

Question 5

Using the development of the Intranet as an example, how could an enhanced link between the two units promote improved products and services?

Question 6

Do you feel the two units could actually operate as a single unit?

Why?

Question 7 (a) - ITS

The conversion to new systems and the implementation of new software pose stressful, testing and challenging times for those needing to adapt to the change and for those implementing the changes. This may result in increased absenteeism, turnover or user resistance. Staff may also perceive an inadequacy in remuneration and training. Please describe how you feel these concerns and issues could be addressed by ITS as to achieve a more positive result?

Question 7 (b) - HR

The conversion to new systems and the implementation of new software pose stressful, testing and challenging times for those needing to adapt to the change and for those implementing the changes. This may result in increased absenteeism, turnover or user resistance. Staff may also perceive an inadequacy in remuneration and training. Please describe how you feel these concerns and issues could be addressed by HR as to achieve a more positive result?

Question 8

Please explain how you feel an enhanced link and richer communication between HR and ITS could affect the delivery of their services.
What do you perceive as being the benefits of such a move?

Question 9

How could the communication channels and link between the two business units be improved?

Question 10

Is there anything further you'd like to say?

Question 11

Is there anything we've missed that would be important for me to know?

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – EXAMPLE ONE: HRM

Researcher gains permission to tape-record the interview.

Interviewee: HRM

RAPPORT BUILDING OPENING

Please see this interview as an interesting and satisfying encounter, as a chance to express your dislikes, disappointments and ideas. Your willingness to call upon your expertise and discuss issues openly is critical to the success of the interview. Please think of this as an opportunity to tell your stories, call upon examples as they come to mind.

Reasoning for the Respondents Selection

You (the respondent) have been selected due to your role and position within the ITS/HR unit of the DSD.

It is my intention to interview four staff members from varying levels of both the ITS unit and the HR unit of the DSD. Ranging from executive management through to operational staff members. This will enable me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues that is truly representative of the unit at all levels.

I am Interested in how you and others, like you in the organisation communicate in the setting. It is important to hear this in your own words.

Purpose of the Interview

The fundamental purpose of this interview is to assist me in my honours investigation being conducted at the School of IS at the University of Tasmania. This investigation seeks to uncover the answer to and the issues related to the research question. That being;

Research Question

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Through investigating this question I hope to uncover some valuable findings that will be of great interest to academics and business people alike. Your participation is very important to the success of this investigation.

Format of the Interview

Please disregard the fact that I am a DSD employee and look upon me as a researcher firstly.

The experience will be more like a conversation than an interview. Feel free to interrupt at any time or diverge from the questions being posed. However, please note that I do have a set of predetermined questions that I need to work through in the allocated time. Feel free to ask questions at any time.

Please note that there are no wrong or right answers. It is your personal feelings and thoughts that are important.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Question 1 (a) - HR

Please tell me what you see as the role of HR within the DSD.

Well obviously, vitally important. But in that sense, there are a lot of commonalities between IT and HR. The role of HR is also a support role, it is to provide support in the different areas, specifically that of Human Resources to the organisation. Human Resources in this particular organisation, or the role of Human Resources in this particular organisation is very broad. It covers practically every division of HR, literally from A-Z. So it is quite a diverse and busy role. I would also argue that we should be more than just a support service or the old fashion personnel branch. We actually should perhaps be a business partner to the organisation, in that we are able to in a pro-active sense, assist the business in getting on with what it is meant to be doing. If we are a strategic partner then we can add some value to what the organisation is trying to do. Whether we are there yet is another matter, or whether the organisation understands the potential is another matter.

Do you believe this role to be ideal? If no, what do you consider the ideal to be?

I see the HR role as being significantly more than personnel and processing. That is the ideal. Perhaps we are far from that. I mean, we are compromised a bit by being in a government department. We have a lot of tasks that a private enterprise HR unit wouldn't have to do. In reporting to government and sort of due diligence in that area and that takes quite a lot of work. But I guess that is the environment we are in.

Question 1 (b) – ITS

Please tell me what you see as the role of ITS within the DSD.

A support role, dare I use a cliche? An engine room role, their role is to essentially provide support which in their area of speciality is the IT sides of things to various business units of the department, to enable them to go about their business efficiently and effectively. So I think the role is quite broad but in a very simple sense it is essentially a support role.

Do you believe this role to be ideal? If no, what do you consider the ideal to be?

That is actually a hard one to answer because you can come at it at a number of different ways. I think we actually have a fairly good IT service here so that would lead you to say, yes, what they do is ideal. I suppose like all parts of an organisation, particularly in the Corporate Services area, the funding and support might be less than desired. So perhaps they could do more if they had more resources to do more but I suppose with my reasonable level of ignorance of what is out there that we don't have, I can't actually make a judgement. It's is sort of, "What would I like that we don't have?" I couldn't answer that, but I think they do a reasonable job.

Question 2 (a) - HR

What is your understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the HR Unit?

Probably a bit two-fold. And this again is perhaps because there is a slight difference the HR environment and the IT environment but I see ours as being two-fold. Clearly, one is to provide the sort of efficient and effective personnel services. That is the core role that we have to do. And we should be doing that in an effective and efficient way, maximising the use of resources, minimising double handling, inefficiencies etc. But parallel with that comes out the big picture stuff, in that we need to be developing systems to allow managers to better manage their human resources. I don't believe it is the role of the human resources section to manage the human resources of the organisation. That to me is clearly a management role. Our role is to provide guidance, systems, education and training to enable managers to perform that role. So we have a strategic role there in doing that sort of stuff.

Question 2 (b) - ITS

What is your understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the ITS Unit?

I suppose my understanding of their strategic direction, specifically is quite limited. But, I would imagine that it is aimed at maximising the efficiency of the IT system.

Ensuring that we are up to date with developments, that we use the tools that they provide in a cost effective way, we maintain awareness of developments and what we have actually does add value to the organisation. This is only I assuming. As far as communication of strategy, no I don't recall actually ever being aware of that in a formal sense. It is probably more of an assumption on my part, than anything else.

Question 3

Can you identify any common roles or links between the two business units?

Yes, there are lots. In a simple sense when everything is going right in both units, whether it is HR or IT, people perhaps forget about us. When something goes wrong, it is jumped on very quickly, either by individuals or by the organisation. We perhaps have to be able to be reactionary and respond very quickly to problems. So there are a lot of similarities in the environment we work in and perhaps with our relationship with the organisation and at an individual sense or at a divisional sense. Going back to our function as a support unit. There are perhaps other similarities in the fact that we are (I would argue) that we are both under-resourced financially and in human terms to sort of carry on our role (a bit of politics there). So there are a great deal of commonalities. Perhaps the biggest difference though is that (and this is in a very, very general sense), the IT discipline is more focused. It is a big discipline but it is just that decupling. Where HR, particularly as we run it here, we need to be expert in an enormously broad range of fields. Wether it be from a remuneration, recruitment, OH and S, safety, workers compensation, best practising in EEO, employee diversity, you name it we have got to be sort of an expert in it and that covers a very wide field of expertise. Legislative compliance, understanding the legislation and acts, industrial relations. So our base of activity is a lot broader than the IT section. But the way we operate within the organisation is very similar.

Question 4

What advantages do you see in more fully integrating the operational and strategic planning processes of the HR and ITS?

Perhaps it just goes back to communication. Maybe it, while there is sense in linking and being aware of what we do at the higher level, in the strategic planning area, so that we can prepare for impacts of each others strategic plans. And by that I mean, if they are aware that we have got employee numbers likely to increase, well then they can factor in and obviously purchase additional computers and all that sort of stuff. So at the high level planning area, there is lots of sense in linking. But, I think more often the greater benefits are at the operational level. That clear communication thire can just benefit all of us, very much so, so at the operation level they are aware as to who is coming, who is going. That helps IT section plan the use of their limited PC resources and all that sort of stuff. We need to be aware of what sort of software developments maybe coming up that have a training impact so we can plan the training and scheduling of training for issues like that. Because we are both providing support to the various business units and so much of our activities are linked to the same event. Like the starting of a new employee - has a HR impact and an IT impact. The departure of an employee has a HR impact and an IT impact. So there are all these linkages where if we communicate well at the operational level, it would improve the efficient of the way we do things that will then hopefully lesson the workload as well. So there are lots of common sense reasons for working at that level.

Question 5

Using the development of the Intranet as an example, how could an enhanced link between the two units promote improved products and services?

If I go back to the fact that, right back to the development of the Intranet, when the organisation first got Lotus Notes and HR became aware of some of the capabilities, purely by chance, we were physically located next to each other. It was a five-metre walk between HR and IT. As funny as it may seem, that distance probably had a very significant impact on the fact that we achieved as much as we did in the development of the Intranet and our work-flow. That combined with the ability and the enthusiasm of the temporary employee we had in HR at that time, that under took that task. But the fact, that employees were very busy doing a normal range of administrative tasks.

The close physical location meant they could dart down the corridor, solve a problem very quickly, come back and very efficiently develop our Intranet site. So physical location made a big difference.

But also the fact that the HR section and the IT section always got on well and I suppose in trying to understand why that occurred or occurs still, is actually because of the similarity of the environments that we work in. The pressure is on and the fact that we need to react quickly and are last to know about things and all that sort of stuff. So we do have a very similar environment so again it is a good working relationship. That has been a very positive impact in us developing our Intranet and certainly any on-going development and maintenance work is going to require the continuation of a close working relationship. I consider us to be a bit behind the eight ball. Both sections, since the restructure, have been frantically busy and we just haven't had the opportunity or the resources to even consider ongoing development. But when a bit of serenity returns to the environment, if it ever does, that relationship between HR and IT, that close working relationship will enable us to do project work. It keeps it at operational level. It cuts out the middle person and it is easier to achieve things. Less fingers in the pie. We know what we want, we can ask them a question, we can get some advice, we can get some help and away we go. And it works quite well.

Question 6
Do you feel the two units could actually operate as a single unit?
Why?

No. While there are lots of similarities, the differences I believe are far too diverse. It is a bit like (I don't know) making the assumption that emergency services can do each other's jobs. I mean they all have flashing lights on their cars and they all drive fast but the disciplines are quite specialised. So a policeman could not swap duties very easily with an ambulance officer and vice-a-versa. So I see HR and IT much the same. The disciplines, the background for professionals in those areas comes from opposite directions. To do the job well, I think the knowledge required for someone to work well in HR and IT would be too much, too diverse.

IT is a field, that the technology is changing so rapidly that an IT professional is flat out keeping up with developments in the IT field, yet alone picking up developments from within the HR field. So while there are lots of similarities in the environment in which we work and in the way in which we work and strong linkages between the two sections, I believe it cannot be of significant benefit, the nature of the work is too different.

As I said we have a broad range of disciplines, we have to be expert in. We spend a lot of time just dealing with people, talking one on one, dealing with personnel issues in a way of a sort of a counselling role, where as IT are more of a technical area. It is just in some areas a bit black and white. So I don't think there would be any benefit in combining the two sections. Working closer together, Yes. Combining, No.

Question 7 (a) - HR

The conversion to new systems and the implementation of new software pose stressful, testing and challenging times for those needing to adapt to the change and for those implementing the changes. This may result in increased absenteeism, turnover or user resistance. Staff may also perceive an inadequacy in remuneration and training. Please describe how you feel these concerns and issues could be addressed by HR as to achieve a more positive result?

This goes back to where perhaps I eluded for the need for better communications and it goes right back to the strategic level. If we are aware in the long term planning process that there are projects coming up that will have a new technology impact. Then common sense would say that there is most likely to be a training component in that and these sorts of issues should be fleshed out right from the word go. Because I think there are a lot of assumptions made in organisations in the IT area, you know, most people now sit behind a PC. I think, quite foolishly, organisations make an assumption that if someone can type a letter or do a simple spread sheet, that they are actually using that particular software package efficiently. I would actually argue it quite the opposite in that the average punter behind a computer would be lucky to use 5 or 10 % of the capability of the software package they are using. They perhaps, if they are doing more than a simple task on it, they are actually probably doing it

rather inefficiently and a little bit of time spent in training could make a significant difference to the way people use the package.

They are much more powerful than the average punter uses them. So the same goes for the introductory for new technology. If HR and IT work closely together in the timing and implementation, there is enough lead-time and there are budgets set aside for training.

We actually sit down and work together and brainstorm the training needs, who should do it, how best do we do it, do we do it in-house, out-source, timings, priorities, all that sort of stuff. Then link it all together as one, then it will work better than not talking or not planning at that high level to start with.

Question 7 (b) – ITS

The conversion to new systems and the implementation of new software pose stressful, testing and challenging times for those needing to adapt to the change and for those implementing the changes. This may result in increased absenteeism, turnover or user resistance. Staff may also perceive an inadequacy in remuneration and training. Please describe how you feel these concerns and issues could be addressed by ITS as to achieve a more positive result?

Yes, actually this is interesting the way it is developing because we sort of look in a lot of different areas but they have all got the one thing in common. Which to me seems to be communication and again it sort of goes back to the high level planning that we need to be aware of what each other is going to do. We need to be aware of the planning, time lines etc. and then at the operation level we need sort of regular updates and progress. So again, it just goes back to communication, in both directions, I mean they are just as readily. There could be some HR issues that will have a significant impact on IT. Like organisational structuring or relocations or development of some processes we would like to implement or something like that. So it is a two way street but it all goes back to communication.

Question 8

Please explain how you feel an enhanced link and richer communication between HR and ITS could affect the delivery of their services.

What do you perceive as being the benefits of such a move?

It can only improve for the benefit of both organisations. I mean it would improve the service delivery to the organisation but even more selfishly it would improve just the efficiency of the way we do our work. Enhance communication and enhance linkages will just save mix-ups, delays and frustration's. It will make it easier for both of us.

Question 9

How could the communication channels and link between the two business units be improved?

I am a great one for common sense, informal approaches. If an organisation doesn't have a regular planning forum (monthly meetings or weekly meetings or what ever) involving those two sections or other sections within the Corporate Services group. If there is no formal mechanism for that level of communication to occur, then I believe the easiest way is not to make work but just develop and informal arrangement between the two sections where we meet on a regular basis. I think it is important to have a regular meeting schedule, otherwise you are always busy. If you don't make a regular commitment, you always have a valid excuse to miss out so you need that regularity. And then just deal with it simply at the operational level.

Just get the key players in. I don't think it has to be everyone. It just needs to be a couple of key players. A bit of a new session, on what is happening and what is coming up. What has happened in the past, what has worked well, what hasn't worked, where the holes in the net are and just work at a sensible operational level? I don't think it needs to be much bigger than that. I think that if it becomes to formal, then it only complicates it.

So what happened to the long-term strategies, in that case? That should be apart of the planning process.

That high level stuff and perhaps that is a function at the Corporate Services level in that part of the planning process should be that all sections of Corporate Services are actually aware of some of the big ticket items going on, within other sections of Corporate Services. So that high level awareness perhaps needs to be more formal as part of the planning process, the wrap up of the planning process that everybody is aware of what is finalised, signed off and in the plan.

Question 10

Is there anything further you'd like to say?

It is interesting working through the questions the way they actually reinforce. When you think about it, like this in a structured way that it is, actually just sensible and maybe to a degree because the two sections always got on here, we are a fair way down the path anyway but that is not to say that we are perfect. In fact we are probably far from it but that perhaps supports your primus right from the word go, that there are benefits, we already know there are benefits in communicating. Perhaps we just need to tidy it up a bit so that we actually really do make it apart of the way we operate, between the two sections and reap the benefits that I am sure are there to be reaped.

Question 11

Is there anything we've missed that would be important for me to know?

No. I think that just about covers it.

Thank you very much for your time!

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – EXAMPLE TWO: CIO

Researcher requests permission to tape-record the interview.

Interviewee: CIO

RAPPORT BUILDING OPENING

Please see this interview as an interesting and satisfying encounter, as a chance to express your dislikes, disappointments and ideas. Your willingness to call upon your expertise and discuss issues openly is critical to the success of the interview. Please think of this as an opportunity to tell your stories, call upon examples as they come to mind.

Reasoning for the Respondents Selection

You (the respondent) have been selected due to your role and position within the ITS/HR unit of the DSD.

It is my intention to interview four staff members from varying levels of both the ITS unit and the HR unit of the DSD. Ranging from executive management through to operational staff members. This will enable me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues that is truly representative of the unit at all levels.

I am Interested in how you and others, like you in the organisation communicate in the setting. It is important to hear this in your own words.

Purpose of the Interview

The fundamental purpose of this interview is to assist me in my honours investigation being conducted at the School of IS at the University of Tasmania. This investigation seeks to uncover the answer to and the issues related to the research question. That being;

Research Question

What are the issues associated with the relationship between the Information Technology Services Unit and the Human Resources Unit of the Department of State Development?

The information obtained from this interview has the purpose of enabling to answer the research question stated. It will not be used in a dishonest fashion that is likely to bring disrepute or professional harm to you. If at any time you feel it necessary to speak "off-the-record", please feel free to suggest so and I will turn the tape record off.

Value of the Investigation

Through investigating this question I hope to uncover some valuable findings that will be of great interest to academics and business people alike. Your participation is very important to the success of this investigation.

Format of the Interview

Please disregard the fact that I am a DSD employee and look upon me as a researcher firstly.

The experience will be more like a conversation than an interview. Feel free to interrupt at any time or diverge from the questions being posed. However, please note that I do have a set of predetermined questions that I need to work through in the allocated time. Feel free to ask questions at any time.

Please note that there are no wrong or right answers. It is your personal feelings and thoughts that are important.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Question 1 (a) - ITS

Please tell me what you see as the role of ITS within the DSD.

The current role at the moment is a service department, which is very largely running behind the business because we can't quite catch up. We don't know where this is heading and what each business unit does and we are just providing a service, which allows them to do certain things on a day to day basis. That's what I see as the current role. Under-resourced, under-funded. That is the role.

Do you believe this role to be ideal? If no, what do you consider the ideal to be?

The ideal role is what it looks as if it is getting to by virtually what management has done in the recent past by employing myself, looking at consultants and having a higher level of strategic in provided the outcomes of that is correct, by what is followed. I see the role has been working together with the business and that is to look at the mission statement of DSD. So really we want to know what do we want to come to achieve. How can we in IT allow ourselves in the business unit such as mentioned but together. Well we are doing this, what we'd like to do is look at each business unit and say what are your plans for the next two or three years? How do you expect to achieve that? And what we would do is say.

This is our advice to you, this is how we believe it would be best to achieve it. We will ensure we have affluent strategies to be able to do that. For example, lots of people have said to me on web sites etc, "Well they are running to us and we are trying to get software onto the system to provide the platform for them to do that. If we had known in advance, if we knew how many web sites are going to be created in the next year. And the trouble you do that and continue on a day to day maintenance on a support service. Haven't you ever seen the program in HR, it's exactly the same situation. With that we start to get everybody to work together for the same goals. We could provide technical support when it's required before the event happens. That's what we would like to see. I believe we can get there. We are getting there but we'd be a lot closer than what we are now.

Question 1 (b) - HR

Please tell me what you see as the role of HR within the DSD.

HR at the moment I think is very largely again administrative in the function from what I can see. Again, under-resourced and under-funded in the sense of providing a service. I don't see how Paul (for example) has any time to do any counselling. If he does, then other things, the operational sides. He is carrying too much as the same in IT, too much operation activities to be able to look after the other things, in the strategic direction. He is expected to do both as personnel with John so that's really unfair. The whole department suffers as a result.

Do you believe this role to be ideal? If no, what do you consider the ideal to be?

Well the idea should be again, planning for the future as to what kinds of people are required, what kind of resources should we obtain? How are we going to obtain them? How are we going to change the structure so that we can entice people to come to Tasmania to fill these positions? All, to grow then within Tasmania. I see that's the role as an IT consultant.

Question 2 (a) - ITS

What is your understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the ITS Unit?

Well currently in the short term the strategic objectives are to set policy that has not really been formalised to the pro-extent, in terms of where IT should be going, how it should be aligning itself with the service. We had the workshop that you have probably heard about. We had representatives from every business unit that you could think of. We had them together with IT. Discussed what they believe we should provide as a service and we in turn what they should be giving us. The outcomes I believe were very positive aligned exactly with Martin's group before the workshop had in mind. But I wasn't looking for that. I was hoping it would come and it did. Just showing the direction we were going in and where we intended to go and what is going to happen. So that's really all the strategic direction should be for us to work together with them to get to the ultimate. What ever that might be, whichever direction that IT technology goes and the business units want to go.

Sometimes all the technologies bitter, depending on what the business needs because everybody likes to have their say and it's not easy and it's very, very expensive. For example we're stuck now on a platform.

Question 2 (b) - HR

What is your understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the HR Unit?

Well again as I say, they should be provided with the long-term policy from management side. We need 500 of this kind and 200 of those. What ever it is they believe they have a need for in the medium to long-term future and HR should be reminding itself to provide that with minimum disruption and minimum problems in the way that making sure that payroll has everything in place. All those other administrative duties that they look after and advising management on policy decisions, contract arrangements before you put it in and avoid any difficulty or problems with staff, as well as support for the management. It is difficult for the government but it's not impossible and I think GST has a really unique position because it's really commercially aligned.

I think it will add balance given to achieve better and easier here than in other government division or departments or what ever they call it.

What difference can it make? Bureaucracy, it is extremely difficult to master it with layers and structures and difficulties. You have to be very careful because the government is obviously very sensitive (whichever one is in power at the time) about things that are said and done by the departments. For example, when a statement was made about GST the other day, in a public forum about two different government departments. Not contradictory but the party argued different in their statements.

Question 3

Can you identify any common roles or links between the two business units?

Not specifically for me. Not more than in the other departments. The secret services that they provide which interlink.

Training is often particularly or technical IT training is always been seen to be reserved of IT, which it is not, we are not in the training game. As we were split up in the workshop most of the people in IT are not suited for training. Their aptitudes are usually in other directions. So someone else should be doing the training. In fact, we should out source it, as much of that as we possibly can. We don't just want to become holis bolis to HR and expect them to do it. There are certain roles they have to play in the provision of it, making sure the quality and standards of it are all good. That's all they really expect.

Question 4

What advantages do you see in more fully integrating the operational and strategic planning processes of the HR and ITS?

I think that should be integrated with all of it or if you are talking specifically in the last two years, then yes definitely. Especially in the publishing of IT, human resources and the provision of IT services that are in HR.

Question 5

Using the development of the Intranet as an example, how could an enhanced link between the two units promote improved products and services?

I would think it would. I cannot think of a specific example of where or how it should.

Question 6

Do you feel the two units could actually operate as a single unit?
Why?

I think they could report to the same structure as they do at the moment. I don't see any point in having the two combined. I'm not quite sure about the synergies.

Question 7 (a) - ITS

The conversion to new systems and the implementation of new software pose stressful, testing and challenging times for those needing to adapt to the change and for those implementing the changes.

This may result in increased absenteeism, turnover or user resistance. Staff may also perceive an inadequacy in remuneration and training. Please describe how you feel these concerns and issues could be addressed by ITS as to achieve a more positive result?

The responsibility is that business unit that has the particular product. So if a/ business unit wants a particular thing, we would like the consulting role on it. If we were the ones who were promoting a new product then we would have to take responsibility for it. But for each of the business units the business unit would have to take responsibility and work together with who ever the service provider is for the training. They may do it themselves, they may decide to do it that way. So what we are trying to do is shift the responsibility from one area where it has been traditional. Which is because if you've got time, the historical thing is we had many, many years ago, things called main frames. Which were huge monsters of computers, not very much more powerful than what's sitting on our desk today but it had to be housed in a special area, it had to have one hundred people sitting around it to make it really good and those people called the shots. Nobody could put in an accounting package; nobody could do anything at all without coming to them. They had a priority list and they used to sit in on every week or so and adjust the priorities. It was really horrific for the users. It was terrible. We lived through that and we have got now to the point where people are much more comfortable with IT and they are more educated about it, they know what's happening. They are asking for things and now we're trying to play catch up, as I said earlier and that's not it, we should be working together. We shouldn't be telling them what to do and they shouldn't be telling us. Ownership must reside wherever the responsibility is. So who ever wants a new product, for example if HR go out tomorrow and they find a u-beaut package that not only does the payroll but does the leave and does everything else you can imagine and only costs one hundred thousand dollars. They want it. Then they take responsibility for it. We should have put it on the platform quickly, provided we have been given time and have been funded for it. We do all of that. We cannot take responsibility for that product and for the maintenance of it. This is where I am seeing the segregation, in fact we have got two pilots running now in this division where they are working very well, where that's precisely what has happened.

For every department that does anything where finances are involved, primarily, initially the accounting and the IT are in the picture to be involved. The accounting to ensure that what ever that package delivers is what they are looking for and if not how they are going to run it. Are they going to change the business or are they going to change the package? Our side, we need desperately to know about that in advance, because as I said to you before, if I walked in and said this young one, new finance and this u-beaut personnel HR package runs on Oracle. We have to install it. We have to some how get it. We also have to be able to do all the other things that we have got running because it's not a little isolated thing that happens once in a while. It has to have some connection made somewhere along the line. It's got to somehow intergrade into the financial area because the accounting, pay and all sorts of other things that happen. If that integration is seamless and can be done then that's wonderful.

If you put in the Oracle package, finance one and it doesn't talk to you, like they have got now. We have got the funding for them. So yes there are all sorts of implications from our side which people are not always aware of. And changing from one package to another is often done with great difficulty because of the integration, which is the same with accounting. They have got a new accounting package, finance and they are now looking at administration and they don't talk to each other. We have got GST implications and our charge outs in IT for services provided outside and ABN numbers. Because of that we have to raise an accounting entrance but we are going to be doing our own spreadsheet. That spreadsheet is fed into the GST model. They then have to go and put that same information into the accounting model, finance one, they then have to put it (this is ridiculous) It should be looked at right at the beginning. OK, it's not always possible to write packages off the shelf but they've got to look at the integration issues before they start and that's where we believe we can fire it along. We can give the advice, in a constructive technical side. We are going to look after it, we are going do it, and we are going to run it. That is their baby, their responsibility, and their ownership. We will sort out the issues if possible before it is purchased. It is no good coming to us, "look we have got a package we want you to put up and now intergrade all these others". You can't do it. It would definitely being a training issue. They'd have to do something.

Question 7 (b) - HR

The conversion to new systems and the implementation of new software pose stressful, testing and challenging times for those needing to adapt to the change and for those implementing the changes. This may result in increased absenteeism, turnover or user resistance. Staff may also perceive an inadequacy in remuneration and training. Please describe how you feel these concerns and issues could be addressed by HR as to achieve a more positive result?

Well I think again if IT is going to introduce a new product that everyone should know about they should know what is going to happen so that HR particularly can align themselves, prepare themselves. It should be apart of a whole project of the implementation or installation of a new product. It will have to be a huge learning curve for everybody because immediately things change, the system changes the way the operator works. So number one, a date has to be set and the whole thing is to be run properly in its approach. And to do that and where that comes from doesn't really matter, as long as they can approach it and to be sure that it is installed correctly and seamless. That the training is in place before the problem happens. So all of that is done at once. When it actually done, there are just a few physiological problems and less absentees and people don't feel threatened. They've been walked through it, they've seen it and they are more comfortable with it before it actually happens, and then they have to set up and do their job. That is an on going thing as well. That people can have, like myself, use a product once in six months and when we come to use it, we have forgotten what you want on the specific side of it all and to me the quickest and easiest way is to ask one of your peers. If they can solve it, it is done. A lot of people believe that is an expensive way. But I think it is a really convenient and efficient way of doing it rather than have to go to a formal training session for half a day to learn something which you can pick up in a few minutes, provided it doesn't become nuisance for your peers, that's fine. How you achieve that, I don't know.

Question 8

Please explain how you feel an enhanced link and richer communication between HR and ITS could affect the delivery of their services.

What do you perceive as being the benefits of such a move?

Well number one, I think we have a high quality of staff and by are again there huge integration with working in the government as appose to someone working in the private sector. In the private sector, okay, it is open to abuse and that's the thing that the government is trying to avoid. To be seen to be fair to everybody. But unfortunately sometimes it is not as fair as it looks at all because the person that you know who can do the job and for no other reasons, just that you want the work done by the most competent person that does the work. We have a situation now where we have two people working here on a part time basis who would be well at full time here. If we advertise outside, the chances of them getting those positions are as thin as anybody else. But we'd have to take somebody else, by the way the government operates. So I think it would enhance that we could find someone if we wanted to. The benefits in terms of IT, again the quality of staff that we would get in terms of yourselves, I can't see any advantages that you don't already have.

Question 9

How could the communication channels and link between the two business units be improved?

I can't think of a way. I believe we operate really well as far as I am aware. I try; I try to respond extremely well under pressure. Except as you said earlier, using the example other than that, I don't know.

The way management drives and keeps everybody operating together is very important. So communication between the divisions is essential and as I say "the thing that I believe is missing at the moment (or that I feel is missing) is the future". At what the progress is, it's not always clear, we have as what you know as a consortium is wanting to do something, as some of the units, or division or departments (or whatever they call it) wanting to do something else. We don't use the consortium but we use the product, so that we are tied in. Tourism use them and use their product obviously and now there is a decision that the consortium got to make as to whether they can choose the platform or choose the product or the two. We have to make the same decision. Tourism has to be guided to decide whether they are going to stay or whether they are going to commune with us. We have very, very good political reasons for not going through the consortium.

So the communication there is very, very important. Happily with Paul in his position, rather than his personality, it's working extremely well, but if somebody else was there, it may not work as well. How you would improve that communication, I don't know.

Question 10
Is there anything further you'd like to say?

Not at this point.

Question 11
Is there anything we've missed that would be important for me to know?

Not that I can think of at this time.

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix C: Interviewee Position Descriptions

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWEE PD'S

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title: **STRATEGIC HR EXECUTIVE (HRE)**

Position Number: 424310

Division: Corporate Services

Location: Hobart

Job Grade: 8

Employment Conditions: Full-Time, TDR Contract (3 years)

Immediate Supervisor: General Manager, Corporate Services

Primary Objective:

To plan, develop and direct human resources strategy and policy for the Department to ensure continuous quality improvement of HR services to meet current and future Departmental needs.

Specific Accountabilities:

- Provide high level strategic planning, direction and leadership in managing the HR function.

- Provide advice to the Chief Executive in relation to HR strategic direction.

- Develop and implement personnel and industrial relations policy, with appropriate consultation, to meet organisational, Government and legislative requirements.

- Formulate broad strategic directions across a wide range of areas, ie. Organisational development, recruitment, induction, performance development, employment equity and occupational health and safety.

- Develop plans to meet the ongoing training and development needs of the Department.

- Manage and review the Department's contract employee remuneration policy and procedures.

- Monitor industrial relations developments to prevent and settle disputes. Negotiate with unions and industrial authorities to determine and develop agreements and minimise the possibility of industrial disputes.

- Monitor and evaluate the impact of HR policy initiatives, meet the Department's HR strategic reporting requirements and prepare Board reports as required.

- Represent the Department as required.

Level of Responsibility:

Responsible for the development and delivery of HR services consistent with the long-term objectives of the Government and the department. Responsible for the provision of authoritative advice on HR policy and strategic matters.

Conflicting priorities and tight time frames is often a feature of this position.

Direction/Supervision Received:

The Chief Human Resources Officer operates with a substantial level of independence and autonomy and is expected to display a high degree of initiative in meeting HR priorities and allocating resources.

Knowledge and Skill (Selection Criteria):

1. High level management and leadership skills together with a demonstrated understanding of contemporary management techniques and practices.

2. Knowledge of the *Tasmanian State Service Act 1984* and Government employment arrangements or the ability to readily acquire it.

3. Demonstrated experience in the provision and implementation of wide-ranging HR policy advice at a senior level.

4. The ability to represent the department in dealings with Ministers, Parliamentary Committees, other government agencies, unions and the general public.

5. Demonstrated desire to achieve a high level of work performance, dedication and perseverance to ensure the successful completion of projects.

6. The capacity to develop and implement change strategies within a diverse organisation.

7. Highly developed communication skills, both oral and written, together with the ability to organise, plan and negotiate.

8. Demonstrated practical experience in HR management.

Qualifications:

Essential Qualifications:

* Nil.

Desirable Qualifications:

* A tertiary qualification in a related discipline.

Desirable Requirements:

* 5 years of relevant experience in a similar role.

Occupational Health and Safety and Employment Equity:

Department of State Development is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity. All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practice as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title:	**HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER (HRM)**
Position Number:	424031
Division:	Finance and Administration
Location:	Hobart
Job Grade:	6
Employment Conditions:	Full-time, TDR Contract
Immediate Supervisor:	General Manager Finance and Administration

Primary Objective:

To contribute to the achievement of the agency's long-term goals through the delivery of policies, programs and services to enable effective management of staff.

Specific Accountabilities:

- In consultation with other management, formulate and recommend Human Resources objectives and methods.

- Contribute to the formulation of Human Resource policy.

- Co-ordinate recruitment, selection and training of staff to meet agreed needs.

- Control and coordinate activities such as personnel administration, staff selection and training, wage and salary administration, health and safety, employee benefits, remuneration, induction and activities relating to EEO.

- Administer remuneration policies, advise on internal remuneration anomalies and prepare remuneration review information to enable managers to conduct reviews effectively and efficiently.

- Ensure the agency's training activities are planned to meet current and future agency and employee needs.

- Ensure personnel records are maintained to meet employee, agency and statutory requirements and entitlements.

- Represent the agency in dealings with industry associations, other government agency's and relevant bodies as required.

- Contribute to the preparation and management of the Human Resources budget.

- Control the selection and training of subordinate staff, establish lines of control and delegate responsibilities to subordinate staff.

- Conduct evaluations of positions and maintain the job evaluation system.

- Contribute to the development and maintenance of the agency's performance management system.

Level of Responsibility:

The incumbent is responsible to the agency through the General Manager Finance and Administration for the effective delivery of Human Resource programs and services.

Direction/Supervision Received:

The position is expected to operate with a minimum degree of supervision. The General Manager Finance and Administration will provide general direction and policy initiatives.

Knowledge and Skill:

- A demonstrated understanding of contemporary human resource management techniques and practices.

- A knowledge of, and commitment to the principles and practices of Equal Employment Opportunity, Occupational Health and Safety and staff development and training.

- Excellent written and oral communication skills.

- Ability to represent management during negotiations with staff and/or unions.

- Ability to motivate and manage people in a team environment.

Qualifications:

- Tertiary qualifications in an appropriate discipline are highly desirable.

- At least six years experience in the Human Resources field.

- Previous front line management experience.

Occupational Health and Safety and Equal Employment Opportunity:

TDR is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity. All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practice as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

TDR has a smoke free working environment.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title:	**HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER (HRS)**
Position Number:	424075
Division:	Finance and Administration
Location:	Hobart
Job Grade:	5
Employment Conditions:	Full time, TDR Contract
Immediate Supervisor:	Human Resources Manager

Primary Objective:

Contribute to the development and implementation of Human Resource policies, plans and procedures.

Manage and coordinate the activities required in the efficient and effective performance of the agency's Human Resources Management Information Systems.

Specific Accountabilities:

- Manage the ongoing operations of the Agency's Human Resource Information System, including the administration of the system, to ensure a high level of system reliability and compliance, liaising with the Human Resources Manager or Remus Consortium as necessary.

- Develop, document, implement and review practices and procedures associated with the operation of the Human Resource Information System, and coordinate necessary changes to the system.

- Maintain appropriate levels of security to control levels of REMUS access by users.

- Develop and coordinate the production of standard and ad-hoc reports from the REMUS database or other sources to assist with the production of HR strategic or management reports.

- Provide technical advice and support to resolve user and operational problems and maintain user manuals and other system related documentation.

- Provide appropriate levels of security to control levels of REMUS access by users.

- Administer the operational aspects of employee leave entitlements, ensuring the maintenance of accurate records.

- Undertake higher level payroll related functions and assist with the development of IT based systems to improve payroll processes.

- Act as the Agency's Responsible Officer for the Retirement Benefits Fund.

- Undertake a range of general administrative duties to support the operations of the section.

- Represent the Agency on external committees regarding matters within the portfolio.

Level of Responsibility:

Responsible for expert, timely and accurate advice on the Human Resources Information System and related legislative requirements and business rules. Will be required to maintain security in relation to confidential records and will have a significant degree of independent judgement associated with daily activities. Will be required to consult with, and provide advice to, all client groups.

Direction/Supervision Received:

Receives guidelines and direction from the Human Resources Manager but will be expected to work with limited supervision. Work is generally undertaken within operational guidelines and procedures however there are discretionary elements for which the incumbent will need to exercise independent judgement. Important reports or submissions may be subject to policy checks by the Human Resources Manager.

Knowledge and Skill:

- Demonstrate sound knowledge of, and experience in, system and network environments, in particular the REMUS Human Resource Information Management system.

- Experience in project planning with the ability to work in a team environment.

- Highly developed interpersonal skills including negotiation, verbal and written communication and the ability to liaise with, consult and advise management at all levels.

- Highly developed task coordination and time management skills with a proven ability to set priorities and meet deadlines.

- A high level of analytical skills along with a demonstrated ability for creative problem solving.

- Sound knowledge and understanding of human resource management and policy issues.

Qualifications:

- Experience in information technology based human resource information systems.

- Experience in providing technical support to all levels of users.

- Tertiary qualification or progress towards a qualification, in Human Resource Management is desirable.

Occupational Health and Safety and Equal Employment Opportunity:

TDR is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity.

All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practice as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

TDR has a smoke free working environment.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title:	**HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER (HRC)**
Position Number:	424139
Division:	Corporate Services
Location:	Hobart
Job Grade:	3
Employment Conditions:	Full-time, TDR Contract (3 year)
Immediate Supervisor:	Human Resources Manager

Primary Objective:

As a member of the Human Resources team, contribute to the development and implementation of Human Resource policies, plans and procedures.

Specific Accountabilities:

- Co-ordinate strategic training and development needs to meet agency objectives and recommend and implement appropriate programs in consultation with Human Resources staff, managers and employees.

- Co-ordinate within established guidelines, monitor and report on the agency's training budget.

- Provide general assistance to the Human Resources Manager in the implementation of human resources programs; undertake research and policy development activities as required.

- Develop and maintain appropriate databases or records for the management and reporting of training activities.

- Co-ordinate the development and maintenance of the HR Intranet and other HR communication systems.

- Co-ordinate workers' compensation and rehabilitation administrative requirements.

- Represent the agency on external committees regarding matters within the portfolio.

Level of Responsibility:

Responsible to the Human Resources Manager for the provision of advice and recommendations and the completion of specific accountabilities and tasks in an accurate and timely manner. Meeting deadlines and shifting priorities is frequently a feature.

Direction/Supervision Received:

Functions are undertaken under general direction and supervision with some independence in planning daily activities and determining short and long-term priorities in accordance with strategic objectives. The exercise of discretion is also required.

Knowledge and Skill (Selection Criteria)

1. Knowledge of contemporary training and development practices or the ability to readily acquire it.

2. Experience in developing and delivering training courses.

3. Sound PC skills; particularly word processing and spreadsheet development.

4. Good time management skills and the ability to complete tasks with a minimum of supervision.

5. Demonstrated personal qualities such as flexibility, self-motivation and ability to use judgement, tact and initiative.

6. Highly developed written and oral communication skills and the ability to liaise with people at all levels.

Qualifications:

Essential Qualifications:

- Nil.

Desirable Qualifications:

- Tertiary qualifications in a relevant discipline.

Desirable Requirement:

- Nil.

Occupational Health and Safety and Employment Equity:

Department of State Development is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity. All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practice as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title:	**HUMAN RESOURCES CLERK (HRR)**
Position Number:	424101
Division:	Finance and Administration
Location:	Hobart
Job Grade:	2
Employment Conditions:	Full-time, TDR Contract
Immediate Supervisor:	Human Resources Manager

Primary Objective:

Provide administrative and keyboard support for the Human Resources section.

Specific Accountabilities:

- Provide keyboard support for the section, involving the advanced operation of a variety of software applications.

- Prepare routine correspondence and coordinate the regular personnel requirements and activities undertaken by the section.

- Prepare accounts to be approved for payment, maintain expenditure records and examine monthly budget reports.

- Prepare Corporate Reports and other associated HR Reports.

- Maintain organisation charts.

- Assist with the administration of the Agency's recruitment process.

- Assist with the administration of staff training and development activities as required.

- Develop and maintain record keeping and reporting systems for the section as required.

- Prepare and enter personnel, payroll, leave and position data into the REMUS system.

- Screen telephone calls, answer routine inquiries and keep the HR Manager organised.

- Assist with or coordinate projects and tasks as requested by the General Manager, Finance and Administration.

Level of Responsibility:

The incumbent is directly responsible for the completion of tasks in an accurate and timely manner. Tasks are generally based on established guidelines and procedures, however a sound knowledge of the Agency's human resources practices is required to ensure that correct processes are applied.

Direction/Supervision Received:

The Human Resources Manager will provide routine supervision and direction.

Knowledge and Skill:

- Capacity to provide high-level keyboard support, using word processing and other applications and systems software.

- Demonstrated ability to undertake administrative and clerical duties with a high degree of accuracy.

- A general knowledge of relevant award conditions and payroll matters.

- Ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, with all levels of staff, both internally and with outside organisations.

- Ability to perform reception duties and handle inquiries in a courteous and sensitive manner and maintain confidentiality.

- Personal qualities of initiative and judgement.

Qualifications:

- Completion of secondary schooling at HSC level.

- At least two years administrative and clerical experience.

- Demonstrated ability with contemporary computer software.

Occupational Health and Safety and Employment Equity.

TDR is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity. All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practice as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

TDR has a smoke free working environment.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title: **CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER (CIO)**

Position Number: 424373

Division: Corporate Services

Location: Hobart

Job Grade: 8

Employment Conditions: Full-Time, TDR Contract (3 years)

Immediate Supervisor: General Manager Corporate Services.

Primary Objective:

To plan, develop and direct IT policies and programs to achieve the most efficient use of IT resources across all divisions of the Department, in line with the Department's strategic plan.

Specific Accountabilities:

- Plan and formulate IT policy to meet the current and future needs of the Department.
- Direct IT operations and set priorities between development, maintenance and operating.
- Plan, recommend, coordinate and schedule all investigations, feasibility studies and surveys of proposed and existing IT machine applications to achieve the department's objectives.
- Direct the selection, installation and use of computing equipment and software.
- Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of new equipment, systems and programming techniques appropriate to the department.
- Control and establish operations, expense and development budgets.
- Control the security of information systems.
- Direct maintenance work and quality control to ensure the efficiency and timely operation of the IT operations.
- Monitor the IT operations and recommend improvements.
- Prepare and control budgets, and other management plans.

- Make policy decisions, and accept responsibility for operations, performance of staff, achievement of objectives and adherence to budgets.
- Control the selection and training of IT professionals and other staff, and monitor their performance.
- Ensure all activities undertaken by IT employees comply with relevant Acts, legal demands and ethical standards.

Level of Responsibility:

Responsible for the provision of policy, strategic advice, planning, project management, computer operations and network activities and effective and efficient client support. Responsible for performance management including career development of staff within the IT section.

The incumbent is also accountable for complying with and promoting the principles of EEO, including the principles of access and equity, in the workplace.

Direction/Supervision Received:

The incumbent will operate with a high degree of autonomy, however broad direction will be received from the General Manger Corporate Services on policy matters and agency priorities.

Knowledge and Skill (Selection Criteria):

- Proven management and leadership skills, in an IT environment.
- A sound knowledge of contemporary resource and project management techniques.
- Capacity to assess new developments in IT and their relevance to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency.
- Proven strategic, conceptual, analytical, creative skills and the ability to develop and make sound judgements about the application of information technology.
- Demonstrated interpersonal skills, including communication, negotiation and conflict resolution skills.
- Demonstrated experience in systems analysis and system development, local and Wide Area Networks, PC networking, including file servers and desktop systems.

- Ability to be adaptable and flexible to achieve results whilst maintaining a clear client focus in a rapidly changing environment.

Qualifications:

Essential Qualifications:

- Nil.

Desirable Qualifications:

- Tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline.

Desirable Requirements:

- At least five years experience in an IT environment in a senior management capacity.

Occupational Health and Safety and Employment Equity:

Department of State Development is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity. All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practice as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title:	NETWORK/SYSTEMS ADMIN. (NSA)
Position Number:	424134
Division:	Finance and Administration
Location:	Hobart
Job Grade:	4
Employment Conditions:	Full-time TDR Contract
Immediate Supervisor:	Manager Information Technology

Primary Objective:

Administer TDR's Application, Data Base and Network Servers, the wide area and local area networks and co-ordinate user support service to ensure effective and efficient usage of the IT infrastructure.

Specific Accountabilities:

- Administer and maintain TDR's Unix and PC network servers.

- Administer and maintain TDR's wide area and local area Unix and PC networks.

- Supervise and manage the help desk facility and co-ordinate all technical user support across TDR.

- Ensure all corporate systems are backed up according to standards and that the standards and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect new requirements.

- Assist in the development of IT policies and procedures. Ensure security policies are fully implemented across all systems according to approved policies and procedures. Provide management reports on security issues.

- Supervise the installation, configuration and upgrade of new standard PCs and network hardware and software.

- Evaluate, test and recommend new software and hardware solutions that may be applied at TDR to enhance the cost effectiveness of the IT infrastructure and IT service delivery.

- Supervise and co-ordinate technical support staff and external providers in the delivery of infrastructure and support services to TDR users.

- Assist with the planning, co-ordination and running of user training courses.

Level of Responsibility:

Responsible to the Manager Information Technology for maintaining the effectiveness of TDR's servers, WAN and LANs throughout the State and ensuring a high level of reliability and security is in place. Work with internal and external groups to monitor and maintain performance levels of data communications systems and for ensuring the IT infrastructure is developed according to TDR's business needs and standards.

Direction/Supervision Received:

The occupant receives direction on general approach. Limited direct supervision is considered necessary as the occupant is expected to work as both a team member and independently.

Knowledge and Skill:

- An extensive knowledge of PC's, PC operating systems and commercial Windows application packages.

- Proven systems and network administration skills, acquired through training and extensive experience.

- Knowledge of local area networking technologies and network operating systems and experience in the installation, configuration and management of PC networks.

- Knowledge of Unix and TCP/IP networks and Unix systems administration.

- Considerable experience with PC network support and managing a client focussed help desk facility and a good understanding of the operations of an IT service unit.

- High level skills to perform complex technical analysis, research and problem solving. Technical knowledge and conceptual ability to design and implement new systems.

- Adaptability and flexibility to achieve results under pressure, while maintaining a clear client focus in a rapidly changing environment.

- Highly developed task and time management skills.

- Demonstrated good communication and inter-personal skills.

Qualifications:

- Tertiary qualifications in a relevant discipline are highly desirable, with eligibility for membership of the Australian Computer Society.

- At least 3 years experience of systems and network administration. Formal training/qualifications in Unix, Novell Netware and Windows NT would be an advantage.

Occupational Health and Safety and Equal Employment Opportunity:

TDR is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity. All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practices as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

TDR has a smoke free working environment.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title: **ANALYST PROGRAMMER (APG)**

Position Number: 424135

Division: Finance & Administration

Location: Hobart

Job Grade: 4

Employment Conditions: Full-time TDR Contract

Immediate Supervisor: Applications Supervisor

Primary Objective:

Undertake analysis, design and programming tasks involved with systems and applications development and maintenance including documentation of systems and programs. Provide backup user support on PC's and PC network systems.

Specific Accountabilities:

- Analyse, design and implement small to medium scale information systems in close consultation with end users and immediate supervisor.
- Produce documentation for systems and programs
- Assist in the systems, design and development of corporate information management systems, with particular emphasis on Lotus Notes, Delphi and SQL Server database applications. Produce and maintain systems and operational documentation.
- Assist in the development of HTML and Domino Web based applications including e-commerce.
- Develop, implement, document, support and administer other client/server information management systems.
- Provide backup user and technical support to users of the agency's PC's and PC network (LAN's).

Level of Responsibility:

The occupant is responsible to the Applications Supervisor for providing effective application development and PC user support. Providing effective support in the development of the IT infrastructure and documentation of all systems and procedures so that they are accurate and conform to established agency and government standards.

Direction/Supervision Received:

The occupant will receive regular direction on approach to duties and supervision of tasks.

Knowledge and Skill:

- Good knowledge of PC hardware and applications software.
- Good knowledge of PC LAN technology, including Novell Netware Microsoft Windows NT.
- Skills in developing small Windows applications and systems utilities. A working knowledge of Visual Nasic, Delphi and/or Lotus Notes is required.
- The adaptability and flexibility to achieve results whilst maintaining and clear client focus in a rapidly changing environment.
- Highly developed task and time management skills.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills.

Qualifications:

- Five years experience in an Information Technology environment.
- A degree in Information Science or equivalent would be advantageous.
- Eligibility for membership of the Australian Computer Society is desirable.

Occupational Health and Safety and Equal Employment Opportunity:

TDR is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity.

All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practice as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

TDR has a smoke free working environment.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title:	**USER/SYSTEMS SUPPORT OFFICER (SSO)**
Position Number:	424106
Section:	Information Technology
Branch:	Administration
Division:	Finance and Administration
Location:	Hobart
Job Grade:	3
Employment Conditions:	Full-time TDR Contract
Immediate Supervisor:	Network/Systems Administrator

Primary Objective:

Maintain a Help Desk facility and assist in the coordination of user and technical support to users of the agency's PC networks. Assist in the programming tasks involved with systems support, applications development and maintenance. Document systems and programs.

Specific Accountabilities:

- Maintain a help desk facility and assist in the coordination of all user support for the agency.

- Assist in the System Administration tasks associated with the Lotus Notes GroupWare product.

- Provide technical support to users of the agency's PC networks.

- Assist in the administration and maintenance of the agency's PC's and PC networks (LAN's).

- Perform relevant back-up procedures and ensure the security of the PC network environments is maintained.

- Install and configure new PC and LAN related hardware and software. Produce documentation for systems and programs.

- As required assist with the analysis, design and implementation of small to medium scale information systems in close consultation with end users and immediate supervisor.

- **Level of Responsibility:**

The occupant is responsible to the Network Administrator for providing an effective Help Desk and User Support function; development of the IT infrastructure; and documentation of systems and procedures.

Direction/Supervision Received:

The occupant will receive general direction and direct supervision on specific tasks as required.

Knowledge and Skill:

- Good knowledge of PC hardware and applications software.

- Good knowledge of PC LAN technology, including Novell Netware and Microsoft Windows NT.

- Good knowledge and skills in the system administration and application development aspects of Lotus Notes/Domino.

- Skills in developing small Windows based applications and systems utilities. A good working knowledge of MS Office based software and/or Visual Basic is an advantage.

- The adaptability and initiative to achieve results whilst maintaining and clear client focus in a rapidly changing environment.

- Highly developed task and time management skills.

- Good communication and interpersonal skills.

Qualifications:

- Progress towards tertiary qualifications in a relevant discipline is desirable.

- Eligibility for membership to the Australian Computer Society is desirable.

Occupational Health and Safety and Employment Equity.

DSD is committed to high standards of performance in relation to Occupational Health and Safety and the provision of Equal Employment Opportunity. All employees are expected to participate in maintaining safe working conditions and practice as well as promote and uphold the principle of fair and equitable access to employment/promotion, personal development and training and the elimination of workplace harassment and discrimination.

Appendix D: Rich Stories

APPENDIX D: RICH STORIES

RESEARCHER IMPRESSIONS OF THE DSD

Rich Story Number One: First impressions
Date: 1st June 1999
Tenure of Researcher: One week

IMPRESSIONS OF THE DSD

Upon joining the DSD the researcher felt excitement, trepidation, nervous and eager to take on a new challenge. The researcher observed that everybody seemed to know each other. Virtually all staff members observed communicated with individuals whom they came into contact with, either verbally or non-verbally. Staff members were formal in their dress code, but not uniform. Everyone that the researcher was introduced to (the majority of the employees on level 6 of the ANZ building) addressed the researcher in a professional and friendly manner. The HR team seemed particularly welcoming.

The structure of the workplace indicated security, formality, conservation and privilege. The main entrance was guarded by a security system that required an individual security swipe card to gain entry. The colour of the walls was a drab grey colour that was uniform throughout the building. It seemed visibly apparent to the researcher that an employee's level of responsibility or authority was made obvious by the size of their work-space. Workers at an operational level were allocated relatively small and open work-spaces as are generally associated with open office plans. Managers were privy to an entire office. Even higher level managers were stationed in larger offices, some with a fantastic view of the Hobart waterfront. The office space observations were of some interest to the researcher. An open office plan in generally considered being a tool that helps to break down the rigid organisational structures displayed in bureaucratic organisations. However, the DSD seem to adopt an open office plan, but at the same time clearly differentiate office space allocation in such a way that promotes the bureaucratic structure of the organisation.

The researcher was allocated a very small work-space with an antiquated personal computer and no telephone. Other than the size of work-spaces, it was difficult to determine an individuals ranking or level within the DSD.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE HR UNIT

The researcher was interviewed and instated by the HR unit for IT/IS work within the HR unit. The researcher found all of the HR staff to be friendly and welcoming, particularly the HR manager, the researcher's first point of contact. HRC and HRR seemed very friendly and clearly displayed extensive people skills. However they did seem a little stressed and pushed for time. The HR unit seemed like a tight knit unit that worked closely together and communicated openly. Once again an individuals level of responsibility was apparent through their office space.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE ITS UNIT

At this stage the researcher had had little contact with the ITS unit. However, it did seem apparent to the researcher that employees within the ITS unit opted for electronic mail as their preferred form of communication.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE HR – ITS LINK

The ITS unit and the HR unit were both located on the same level. Other than this fact the researcher observed little communication between the two units. However, it was clear to the researcher that some communication was occurring between the two units. This was apparent to the researcher through personal experience in being provided with a PC and being set up on the internal payroll database and Lotus Notes databases.

Rich Story Number Two

Date: 1st September 1999

Tenure of Researcher: 3 Months

IMPRESSIONS OF THE DSD

Having worked with the DSD for over three months, the researcher had gained a reasonable understanding of the organisational culture. In the researchers opinion, the DSD was an organisation whose culture was defined by its bureaucratic structure.

The employees within the DSD conformed to this structure and consequently the individual personalities of employees had a limited effect upon the organisation's culture. The culture of the DSD was not obvious. There was no set uniform that enabled employees to be easily identified as DSD employees. There was no-one common behaviour or trait that branded an individual as a DSD employee.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE HR UNIT

The HR unit was a very cohesive and tight-knit team that acted as a point of reference for the entire organisation. The HR unit was providing the entire organisation with a service. Due to this, the HR focus was very much driven by the need to provide quality service and accurate information. The importance of quality service and adequate information far outweighed the need for timeliness. The unit was open to all other employees, however it appeared to be a distinct unit whose operations were divorce from other DSD units.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE ITS UNIT

After three months the researcher had still had minimal contact with the ITS unit. In what the researcher had observed, the ITS unit was a hard working group in which the employees seemed to operate on an individual basis, rather than as a team. The ITS employees appeared talkative toward fellow employees who seemed "well-known" to them and somewhat and displayed a somewhat withdrawn approach to new employees. The researcher experienced this on a personal basis. Similarly to the HR unit, but perhaps in a more pronounced fashion, the ITS unit appeared to operate divorce from other units of the DSD.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE HR – ITS LINK

If the ITS unit was inclined to communicate with another unit, it was most likely to be the HR unit. The function of HR was to provide all DSD staff with a service, ITS included. It seemed apparent to the researcher that the ITS unit was merely utilising the HR resource as to enable them to fulfil their positional roles.

Electronic mail appeared to be the preferred method of communication between the two units, even though the physical distance between the two units was minimal.
In a number of cases it may have been quite a deal easier to communicate face-to-face, rather then sending numerous email's back and forth in order to establish the true understanding of a circumstance.

Rich Story Number Three

Date: 1st December 1999

Tenure of Researcher: 6 Months

IMPRESSIONS OF THE DSD

After six months of employment with the DSD, the researcher had developed some personal opinions and perceptions of the organisation. The researcher was exposed to issues that highlighted the highly bureaucratic structure of the organisation. The red tape, formal policies and procedures seemed never ending. The policies involved in issues that were seemingly clear-cut were hideous. Issues at a relatively low level that could be effectively addressed with little fuss seemed to be "blown out of proportion" and made into time consuming, mundane tasks. The organisation seemed driven by policies and procedures influencing the DSD culture to be one dictated by politics. Employees seemed more intent on "covering their back" by following the correct procedures, even if it was to the detriment of the organisation.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE HR UNIT

The restrictive policies and procedures of the DSD, as mentioned above, had a direct impact upon the day-to-day operations of the HR unit.

The political nature of the organisation forced the HR unit to operate in a manner that was based upon conformity.Innovation and creativity were constrained a lack of resources and by the need to adhere to formal procedures. This seemed to frustrate the HR staff, as they would develop excellent initiatives only to find that they were not feasible due to some nonsensical reason.

Due to the wishes of the DSD executive, the HR unit was relocated from the sixth floor to the 5th floor. This physically separated the HR unit from the nerve centre of the Corporate Services division of which HR was incorporated in.

Furthermore, the move increased the physical distance between the HR and ITS units. The researcher believed that this would increase the use of email between the two units and all but eliminate regular, face-to-face contact between HR and ITS members. It wasn't an extreme relocation, however it was a significant one that widened the gap between the two units. The researcher believed that this gap would negatively impact upon the communication between the two business units.

The HR unit was heavily bogged down in day-to-day operations and found little time to develop and implement long term strategies.

The researcher had developed a sound working relationship and a strong social relationship with all of the HR staff members.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE ITS UNIT

At this point in time the ITS unit was virtually "off-limits' to the entire organisation, as year 2000 compliance testing and preparation was consuming a great amount of their time. Consequently, all of the other ITS operations and functions, such as the upgrade of Lotus Notes to Version 5, were either placed on stand-by or given far less attention. Due to the high priority placed upon year 2000 compliance by top management and due to a lack of resources it was virtually impossible for the ITS team to follow up other projects. The service that they provided to the DSD was also restrained.

The ITS team seemed to be under a lot of pressure and were working long hours in order to meet the year 2000 deadline.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE HR – ITS LINK

All forms of communication between the two business units, including face-to-face, increased during this period. In particular, the number of outgoing emails from the ITS unit increased considerably. This was due to the increase in correspondence required for the effective management of the year 2000 project. The HR unit was responsible for the management of the DSD payroll database, referred to as REMUS. For this reason HR had an increased need to communicate with the ITS unit as to ensure the REMUS database was year 2000 compliant.

It was brought to the researcher's attention that there was a regular meeting occurring between the two business units. The meeting was composed of two or so high-level staff members from each unit. Their purpose was to discuss important upcoming events at both the operational and strategic levels. However, it was apparent that the regularity of the meetings was somewhat inconsistent and their content seemed to focus on operational level activities rather than strategic level activities.

Even though the year 2000 project influenced the communication between the two units to increase, the effectiveness of that communication needed to be questioned. Many procedures, in particular the development of year 2000 contingency plans, were replicated across business units within the DSD. Replication of such was very unproductive and was seemingly avoidable had there been more communication between the business units and between top management and the project leaders. However, it should be noted that the year 2000 project was actually lead by a person independent of HR and ITS.

Rich Story Number Four

Date: 1ˢᵗ June 00

Tenure of Researcher: 12 Months

IMPRESSIONS OF THE DSD

The DSD is a public organisation operated by the State Government. It is the means by which the State Government achieves many of its policies and initiatives.

Consequently, the DSD is subjected to the rigid rules, procedures, policies and politics that are evident within the within the State Government. Therein lies the very nature and culture of the organisation. It is an organisation that has a rigid bureaucratic structure whose culture is defined by the rules and procedures regulated by the State Government. The DSD has limited flexibility in its operations and strategies.

The organisation does not have a clearly defined vision that is shared among staff and communicated throughout the organisation. A vision needs to be communicated from the very top level of management and filtered down throughout the organisation. DSD employees might then look upon their CEO as a transformational leader and be motivated and committed to the achievement of such a vision. Such a move might also take away from the individualism demonstrated in the organisation and promote a more unified approach to the attempt to achieve excellence. Of course there are many related issues and variables that need be addressed also however, a discussion of them is not necessary at this time.

The researcher observed an unusual phenomenon that occurred in the social events. It seemed as though the majority of the bureaucratic nature of the organisation was lost during social events, such as "Friday night drinks". Employees appeared free to communicate with whom ever they pleased. However, when work resumed it was back to business and the relationships that were developed during the social events weren't necessarily carried over into business hours.

Communication in the organisation follows a 'need to know' basis. That is, some issues are only communicated to the individual employee and/or business unit that the issue is directly related or involved. Even though it may be beneficial to communicate an issue to others that might not appear directly related.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE HR UNIT

The HR unit was a cohesive, productive and capable unit. The skills and knowledge contained by the HR staff members enabled them to deal with all the operational challenges that they encountered on a day-to-day basis. The disappointing aspect was that the HR staff was capable of dealing with much more than day-to-day operations. However, due to the lack of resources the HR staff was not given the opportunity to expand themselves in the development and implementation of strategic plans and initiatives. The very restraining culture of the organisation would not enable it to occur.

The researcher continuously observed the HR staff suggesting great ideas and initiatives that had the potential to significantly improve productivity and the quality of the services that they delivered. However, these ideas, or stars, rarely made it "off the ground".

A lack of resources and opportunity stifled innovation. The HR staff seemed to accept or understand that innovations that did not elicit a direct and immediate in impact upon day-to-day operations are unlikely to be supported by top management. Hence, staff displayed little motivation to pursue promising initiatives.

Above all the HR unit focused on accuracy. Timeliness and quality were also emphasised. But, accuracy was of the utmost importance. It was in this, that the HR team encountered their greatest dilemma. Its seems apparent that the accuracy of information can be dramatically enhanced through the increased use of IT. The HR team demonstrated an acute awareness of this. Constantly looking for ways in which IT could help to improve data integrity. However, discovering an idea was one thing, getting it going was another. The organisational culture and a lack of resources restricted such advances.

The primary focus of the HR team, accuracy, could not be fully realised, as they were unable to implement the initiatives that would enable increased accuracy.

The HR team was a highly knowledgable and hard working team that consistently achieve the requirements of the DSD.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE ITS UNIT

The ITS unit was a very efficient and effective team that met and continue to meet the requirements of the DSD. The individual staff members of the ITS unit possess excellent skills and knowledge in their particular field of interest. The range of skills displayed within the unit is diverse.

Ranging from high level strategic development skills to expert knowledge of a particular software package. The ITS unit were a cohesive and approachable team.

Considering the scope of the responsibility of the ITS unit there seems little doubt that the unit suffered from a lack of resources. This restricted the unit from being as pro-active and visible as they might otherwise have liked. The members of the ITS unit displayed innovative and visionary skills and a desire to engage them. However, they were so tied with day-to-day operations that they had little time to look beyond the immediate task at hand. The ITS unit were in a similar position to the HR unit. That is, a bunch of very talented individuals that was not able to fully realise their potential due to organisational restraints.

Note the manager of ITS, resigned from the position on the 18th of March 2000. Futhermore, the two ITS trainee positions were made redundant.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE HR – ITS LINK

The link between HR and ITS was certainly there, however, in the researcher's opinion it was nowhere near strong enough. The communication medium most frequently observed between the two units was email. Electronic mail is a very useful form of communication, however it is not always suitable. For instance, issues that require some sort of discussion might be best handle face-to-face, or over the telephone.

Communication between the two tends to be rather informal and ad hoc. The communication that does occur between the two seems to focus on day-to-day operations. Rather then long term strategies. Perhaps there needs to be a more regular meeting between the two, primarily focussed upon issues of a strategic nature.

The organisation does not seem demonstrate an understanding of the close working relationship required between the two units. Therefore, there is no real strategic relationship directly linking the two.

The two units display a strong working and social relationship. Clearly, this could be exploited as to enhance the link between the two units.