

# **Contextualising the Requirements for Human Resource Competencies**

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree of a university or other institution of higher learning.

The following presentations and papers relate to work undertaken for this thesis:

1. Lo, K., Macky, K. and Pio, E. (2014, August). The competency requirements for HR practitioners in domestic firms and multinational enterprises. Paper presented at the 74th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management (AOM), Philadelphia, PA.
2. Lo, K., Macky, K. and Pio, E. (2013, December). The HR competency requirements for strategic and functional human resource practitioners. Paper presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM), Hobart, Australia.
3. Lo, K., Macky, K. and Pio, E. (2012, November). Contextualising the requirements for human resource competencies. Paper presented at the Human Resource Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ) Research Forum, Auckland, New Zealand.

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## **Abstract**

Over the last two decades, there has been growing interest on how human resource management (HRM) contributes to organisational performance (Guest, 2011; Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012; Paauwe, Guest, & Wright, 2013; Singh, Darwish, Costa, & Anderson, 2012). One dimension is the critical competencies required of human resource (HR) practitioners (Caldwell, 2008). HR competency models have been used to define the effectiveness of the HR function and to set benchmarks of best practice for HR practitioners (Brewster, Farndale, & van Ommeren, 2000; Ulrich, Brockbank, & Yeung, 1989a). In general, the HR literature assumes that some HR competencies are necessary and desirable for all organisations. Other researchers, however, contend that the salience of HR competencies varies in different organisational settings and are therefore contingent on factors in the environment that influence their requirements (Caldwell, 2008; Roehling et al., 2005). HR practitioners also believe that existing HR competency models are ineffective in predicting job success in their roles because they lack relevance to a particular organisation (Caldwell, 2008). This thesis intends to contribute to this discussion on the contextual nature of HR competencies by adopting a situationalist perspective. Specifically, this thesis seeks to explore whether some HR competencies are context-specific; that is, relevant to a narrower range of settings.

As an exploratory study, a mixed-method design is used involving content analysis of HR job descriptions and an integrated concept mapping process (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Trochim, 1989). Based on the literature review, content analysis of HR job descriptions was used to firstly to identify the range of HR competencies required in organisations and then to analyse their relevance to different HR roles and organisational contexts. Then, concept mapping focus groups were used to verify the critical HR competencies identified and their conceptual meanings. Finally, a concept mapping online survey was used to analyse the thematic relationships of HR

competencies and to identify key similarities and differentiators in competency requirements for HR practitioners in different HR roles and organisational contexts.

This thesis makes three key contributions. First, it challenges the universalist approach to HR competency research which assumes that a generic list of competencies is relevant to HR practitioners regardless of the context by differentiating generic HR competencies from those that are context-specific. Second, it calls into question the assumption that strategic HR competencies are more desirable than functional HR competencies in all contexts by examining the interrelationships of HR competencies and their contextual requirements for private, public, and not-for-profit sector organisations, domestic firms and multinational enterprises, and different firm size by employees. Finally, it suggests that the critical competencies required of HR practitioners are related to a wider array of underlying qualities than those suggested by the HR literature.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

In this chapter, the rationale and significance of the current study are first discussed. Then the research objectives and research questions are presented followed by definitions of key terms. Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined.

## 1.1 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Proponents of strategic HRM advocate that linking human resource deliverables with business outcomes contributes to the building and sustaining of competitive advantage. This calls for a shift towards a more strategic and integrated model for HRM, including an increased internal consistency of HR policies and practices, realignment of HR strategies with business strategies, devolution of HR activities to the line (Caldwell & Storey, 2007), and the implementation of high performance work practices (Macky & Boxall, 2008). The adoption of these HR models has reshaped the role of the HR / personnel function, thereby redefining the competency profiles required for HR practitioners (Caldwell & Storey, 2007).

During the 1990s, new frameworks for capturing the reinvented HR roles were developed, such as Ulrich's (1997) business partnering model. This model implied a strategic-driven and forward looking role for HR practitioners, in addition to their functional role. Since then, other HR competency models have been researched and developed including those by a number of professional bodies for HR practitioners; for example, the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) in the US.

A review of the literature reflects a predominant focus on identifying *generic* HR competencies. That is, competencies relevant to the entire HR occupation irrespective of the context (Caldwell, 2008; Yeung, Woolcock, & Sullivan, 1996). Among these studies, a great deal of attention has been focused on measuring and verifying the impact of critical HR competencies on organisational performance (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). This has led to

the general belief that HR competencies with the greatest performance impact, such as strategic thinking skills and business knowledge, are more important and desirable than other competencies (Long & Wan Ismail, 2008; Yeung et al., 1996).

However, extant HR competency literature seems inconclusive and incomplete, and there are several aspects of HR competency that need academic attention. First, there is disagreement on the nature of the competencies required and their relative importance (Buckley & Monks, 2004; Graham & Tarbell, 2006). Another important issue, which is seldom raised in the HR competency literature, is the suitability of generic HR competencies for HR practitioners in different organisational contexts (Buckley & Monks, 2004; Caldwell, 2008). Recently, Caldwell (2008) has suggested that existing HR competency models are perceived by HR practitioners as ineffective in predicting job success in their roles because they lack relevance to a particular organisation. “[Generic HR competency models] they don’t work...competencies are particular to the organisation or an industry...each person has to build on their own abilities and find what fits for them” (Caldwell, 2008, pp. 285-286).

Issues of the contextual requirements of HR competencies are imperative when considering the discussion on the need for HR practitioners to adopt a strategic focus in their roles (Alfes, Truss, & Gill, 2011; Brown, Metz, Cregan, & Kulik, 2009; Caldwell, 2010; Rasmussen, Andersen, & Haworth, 2010). Given the volatility of the current global business environment, the HR function is increasingly seen as one of the key functions in the development of strategic responses to increasing competitive pressure (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Caldwell & Storey, 2007). Yet, evidence shows that HR practitioners are spending a considerable amount of time on functional HR activities, such as providing support to line managers and HR administration, compared to making a strategic contribution (Brown et al., 2009; CIPD, 2007; Ramlall, 2006). What remains unclear is whether this lack of strategic focus is because HR practitioners lack the competencies seen as necessary to be a strategic partner, or because they have

them but are not required to use them, or because there is a lack of clarity on the strategic competencies needed.

The purpose of this thesis is then to explore the relevance of HR competencies in different organisational contexts. The aim is to contribute to the knowledge and awareness of the organisational contexts that affect the critical competencies for HR practitioners, as well as explore the mix of competencies required in different contexts. The remaining section outlines the research questions and objectives for this study. Then key terms and definitions are explained.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

This thesis investigates the *contextual* nature of HR competencies. This means whether the requirements of HR competencies vary across organisations and within complex organisations (e.g. multi-divisional firms). This thesis therefore, sought to differentiate between HR competencies that are *generic* from those that are *context-specific*. Specifically, the objectives set out for this study were:

1. To identify the competencies required of HR practitioners
2. To provide an integrated approach to HR competencies using a situationalist perspective
3. To develop a contextual framework on HR competency requirements
4. To identify theoretical and practical implications of the contextual nature of competencies

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The main research question guiding this study is:

What are the generic and context-specific HR competencies?

The subsidiary questions include:

- What are the key competencies required of HR practitioners? (this operationalises research objectives 1 and 2)
- What HR competencies are context-specific? (this operationalises research objectives 3 and 4)
- What organisational contexts are relevant to HR competencies? (this operationalises research objectives 3 and 4)

The key terms competency, HR competencies, generic HR competencies and context-specific HR competencies are defined in the next section.

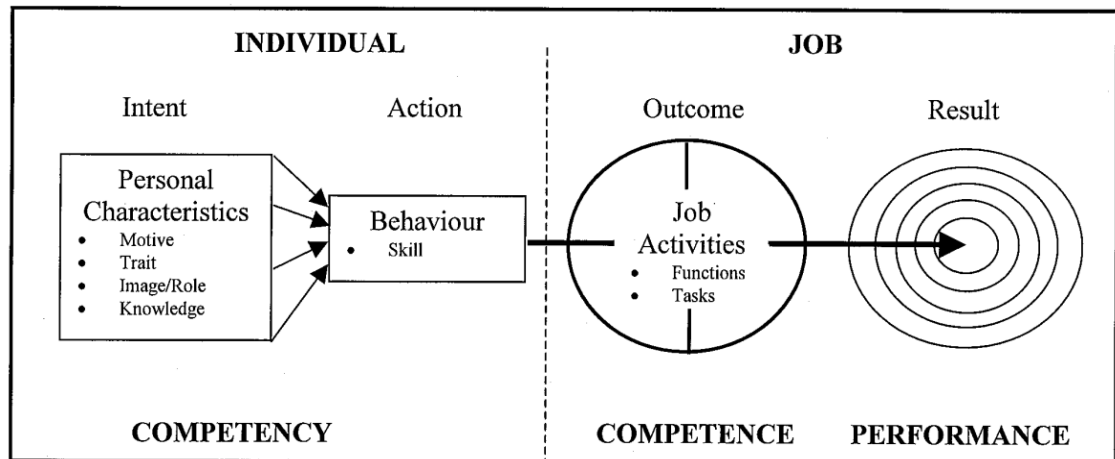
## **1.4 Key Terms and Definitions**

### **1.4.1 Competency and Competence (see also Chapter 2)**

The term *competency* is often confused with the term *competence* in the literature.

Early commentators used the terms competency and competence synonymously (e.g., McClelland, 1973) and some used the term competence when meaning competency (e.g., Boam & Sparrow, 1992). Le Deist and Winterton (2005) explained that the concept of competency in USA complements the use of competence in the UK occupational standards. However, Woodruffe (1993) asserted that the two concepts are distinct and must be used with precision. He related competence to “aspects of the job at which the person is competent” (e.g., staff management) and competency to “aspects of the person which enable him or her to be competent” (e.g., sensitivity) (Woodruffe, 1993, p. 30). In other words, competence is what people must be able to do (i.e., job roles, outputs and deliverables) and competency is what they need to do it effectively (i.e., behaviours). Woodruffe (1993) warned about confounding competence with competency in competency lists as it will create confusion when crediting a behavioural dimension with a particular job role, which will in turn disrupt the validity of competency assessment. His view is supported by Tate (1995) and Kurz and Bartram (2002) who referred to competency as the input of competence. For the purpose of the

study, competencies are therefore defined as an *input* required of a person to achieve successful performance. Competence is an *output* of an individual's application of competencies and is reflected in performance in the role. Figure 1 illustrates the distinction between competency and competence.



**Figure 1 Competency and competence**

Source: Young, M. (2002). Clarifying competency and competence. *Working Paper Series*. Henley Management College, Greenlands. p.22. Adapted from Spencer, L., McClelland, D. & Spencer, S. (1994). Competency assessment methods: history and state of the art. Hay/McBer Research Press. p. 5.

### 1.4.2 Individual Competencies and Core Competencies

While this study focuses on individual competencies, there is a separate body of literature in strategic management that views competencies as the characteristics of an organisation at the collective level (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). As used in the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, the notion of *core competencies* refers to organisational routines that generate sustained superior organisational performance (Clardy, 2008). Although the concepts of competency and capability are used interchangeably at times in the strategic management literature (Fince-Lees, Mabey, & Liefoghe, 2005), core competencies are a sub-set of capabilities which are associated with distinctive strengths at the organisational level of analysis (Clardy, 2008). The strategic management perspective of core competencies is concerned with the properties of a system that is rare and hard to imitate. This is distinct from the individual level of competencies, which is concerned with the characteristics possessed by more superior

performers in a particular job class (e.g., managers) (Boyatzis, 1982). In other words, individuals do not have core competencies and therefore these will not be further explored in this thesis.

### **1.4.3 HR Competencies**

This thesis focuses on HR practitioners, who are defined as staff members of HR / personnel departments and who have responsibilities and expertise in HR policies and practices (Brewster et al., 2000; Hall & Torrington, 1998). This definition includes both HR generalists and HR specialists but excludes line and operational managers who may have devolved human resource management responsibilities. For the purpose of the study, HR competencies are therefore defined as the personal characteristics and behaviours required of an individual HR practitioner in order to achieve superior performance in his/her job (McEvoy et al., 2005; Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson, Sandholtz, & Younger, 2008).

### **1.4.4 Generic and Context-Specific HR Competencies**

For the purpose of this thesis, *generic HR competencies* are universally applicable to the entire HR occupation irrespective of the context (Caldwell, 2008; Yeung et al., 1996). *Context-specific HR competencies* are relevant to a particular industry or organisation (Caldwell, 2008; Selmer & Chiu, 2004). As a subset of context-specific competencies, *role-specific HR competencies* are relevant to a particular HR job role or position level (Blancero, Boroski, & Dyer, 1996; Yeung et al., 1996).

## **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

Having introduced the research topic for this study and provided a background to the research problem in this chapter, Chapter 2 discusses the debate over generic and context-specific HR competencies, and reviews the literatures that are relevant to the requirements of HR competencies in the following organisational contexts: public sector organisations, not-for-profit organisations, multinational enterprises, and firm size in terms of number of employees.



Chapter 3 presents the mixed-method design used for this research. This chapter firstly presents both the social constructivist epistemological stance and the interpretivist theoretical perspective for this study and the selection of the research methods is then justified. The methods chosen for the research involved three phases: 1) content analysis of HR job descriptions, 2) concept mapping focus groups, and 3) a concept mapping online survey.

Chapter 4 presents the procedure and findings for the HR job descriptions content analysis. The data collection method and content analysis procedures are firstly explained. Key findings are then presented in terms of the range of HR competencies identified from the HR job descriptions and their contextual relevance to different HR roles. The issue of research reliability and validity for the HR job description content analysis are explained.

Chapter 5 presents the procedure used for the concept mapping focus groups and key findings from this method. The data collection method and data analysis procedures are firstly explained. Key findings are then presented and converged with the data collected in Chapter 4. Ethical issues for the concept mapping focus group are discussed.

Chapter 6 presents the procedure and findings for the concept mapping online survey. The questionnaire design and the sampling procedures are firstly outlined, and the demographics of respondents are then presented. Then, a preliminary analysis is undertaken to identify the thematic relationships of HR competencies through the use of concept maps. Key similarities and differentiators in competency requirements between strategic and functional HR roles are firstly identified, followed by different position levels and areas of HR specialism. Then, a contextual analysis is undertaken to identify key similarities and differentiators in competency requirements for private, public, and not-for-profit organisations, followed by a comparison of domestic firms and multinational enterprises and different firm size by employees. Ethical issues for the

concept mapping online survey are discussed and issues of reliability and validity are addressed.

Chapter 7 discusses the overall findings of the study with regards to the impact of the stated contextual variables on HR competency requirements and their implications, including contribution to knowledge and practical implications. The research limitations and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

This chapter firstly reviews the conceptual models of competency. Then, the literature relevant to the generic and context-specific nature of HR competencies is reviewed to provide the context and rationale for the research questions. Finally, this chapter presents an investigation into the contextual nature of HR competencies from a variety of organisational perspectives.

### **2.1 Defining Competency**

As indicated in Chapter 1, the concept of competency has been widely applied by various disciplines with different purposes and different focuses (Burgoyne, 1993). In relation to HRM, competency has the potential to integrate all aspects of HRM systems, including recruitment, selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and performance-based pay by defining the behavioural performance required for achieving business objectives (Heffernan & Flood, 2000).

Although the term competency has undergone definitional debates in the literature, there is still no consensus on what constitutes a definition (Hoffmann, 1999; Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; Soderquist, Papalexandris, Ioannou, & Prastacos, 2010). Hoffmann (1999) explains that the concept of competency is multi-dimensional and its meaning is determined by the user's requirements and context of use. A review of the literature reveals four key definitions of competency: as a personal attribute, as a behavioural repertoire, as performance standards, and as a situational construct. These definitions are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1 Summary of Key Competency Perspectives Relevant to This Study**

<b>Competency Perspective</b>	<b>Competency Definition</b>	<b>Constructs/ Measures</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Contributing Authors</b>
<b>Personal Attribute</b>	Underlying characteristics causally related to effective or superior performance	Motives, traits, self-concept, social role, knowledge and skills	Produce a universal model of management performance applicable to multiple settings	McClelland (1973), Boyatzis (1982), Spencer and Spencer (1993)
<b>Behavioural</b>	Behavioural repertoire a person brings to a job to enhance performance	Observable behaviours	Define organisational objectives in terms of improved behavioural performance	Woodruffe (1993), Boam and Sparrow (1992)
<b>Standards</b>	Consequences or quality of a person's performance	Output Tasks to be completed	Set a minimum or acceptable level of performance for the industry or organisation concerned	Rutherford (1995), Strebler, Robinson, and Heron (1997)
<b>Situationalist</b>	Social idiosyncratic construct activated and developed through social interactions	Social context Personal attributes Observable behaviours	Question the transferability of management competencies across situations	Antonacopoulou and FitzGerald (1996), Sandberg (2000), Grzeda (2004), Capaldo, landoli, and Zollo (2006)

### **2.1.1 Personal Attribute Model**

The *personal attribute model* is the earliest approach to competency. This model is primarily initiated by psychologist McClelland (1973) and is further developed by Boyatzis (1982). Boyatzis (1982) defines competencies as the underlying characteristics possessed by a person that contribute to successful performance. This notion of underlying characteristics includes a person's motives, traits, self-concept, social role, knowledge, and skills. Examples of such attributes are efficiency orientation, proactivity, self-confidence, specialised knowledge, and developing others (Boyatzis, 1982).

Proponents of the personal attribute approach have tended to focus on identifying a set of competencies that differentiate between high and average performers in multiple job situations (e.g., Boyatzis, 1982; Dulewicz, 1989; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). This has led to the universalist perspective that competencies are generic or universally applicable to multiple occupations irrespective of the context.

### **2.1.2 Behavioural Model**

In response to Boyatzis (1982), Woodruffe (1993) proposes the *behavioural model* which defines competencies as the behavioural repertoires a person brings to a job to enhance their performance. Rather than focusing on underlying traits and motives, he argues that behavioural dimensions of competencies are more specific, observable, and readily assessable for organisations (Woodruffe, 1993). In other words, competencies are the things a person needs to be able to do in order to be successful in their job, that is, the patterns of behaviour that enable employees to do their jobs with competence.

### **2.1.3 Standards Model**

The *standards model* refers to competencies as the output or quality of the outcome of a person's performance (Rutherford, 1995; Strebler, Robinson, & Heron, 1997). However, as stated previously, standards are about competence (i.e., the output of

performance), which is distinct from competencies (seen as the input of performance). Hence, the standards approach will not be further explored in this thesis.

#### **2.1.4 Situationalist Model**

The *situationalist model*<sup>1</sup> is an extension to the earlier personal attribute and behavioural approaches. This model is derived from social phenomenology (Lewin, 1951) which views competencies as a function of the context in which they are activated (Capaldo et al., 2006; Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). In this model, competencies are defined as situated, idiosyncratic constructs that arise from the interaction between a person and the situation (Antonacopoulou & FitzGerald, 1996; Capaldo et al., 2006). While there are contingent factors in the environment (e.g., organisational culture and politics and social networks) that determine the competencies required for a job, each individual's response to a given situation is subject to their idiosyncrasy and the way they make sense of their roles.

The situationalist perspective also emphasises on the person and their work situation as 'one entity' (Sandberg, 2000, p. 50). Earlier competency approaches have tended to treat the person and their work situation as two separate entities by focusing on the former at the expense of the latter (Capaldo et al., 2006). However, the situationalist perspective argues that when people encounter work, they frame their work situations through their lived experience of the world (Schön, 1983; Stoof, Martens, Van Merrienboer, & Bastiaens, 2002). Their actions and reactions to the situation will then influence the further expectations of their roles from other social actors which in turn reinforces further changes in the setting (Antonacopoulou & FitzGerald, 1996). In this sense, a competency is a *moving object* and is constantly redefined through a person's reflection and their interaction with the social environment. Therefore, it is more fundamental to understand people's ways of experiencing work rather than their attributes *per se* (Sandberg, 2000).

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<sup>1</sup> The situationalist model (Capaldo, landoli, & Zollo, 2006) is also referred to as the *interpretative* approach in Sandberg's (2000) study and the *organic* perspective in Grzeda's (2005) study.

While the earlier competency approaches focus on identifying a set of generic competencies, the situationalist perspective argues that there are *context-specific* competencies. This means that the salience of some competencies varies in different situations. This view is implicit in the work of Boyatzis (1982) and Woodruffe (1993). While Boyatzis (1982) takes a universalist perspective, he notes that generic competencies can probably account for a third of the variance in management performance. The remaining variance is explained by job-specific and organisation-specific competencies and day-to-day situational factors. Similarly, Woodruffe (1993) asserts that organisations should focus on identifying context-specific competencies that support organisational change and development. In other words, some attributes and behaviours are relevant to multiple situations (i.e., generic), and other attributes and behaviours are relevant to a narrower set of situations (i.e., context-specific).

Another problem associated with the earlier competency approaches is that they fail to demonstrate how competencies are integrated into competent work performance (Sandberg, 2000). However, the situationalist perspective contends that competencies are interdependent constructs. For example, Buckley and Monks' (2004) study provides support that there are *meta-competencies* or higher-order-enabling competencies, such as self-knowledge and balanced learning, which underpin and determine how and when job-specific competencies are used in different situations. Likewise, Capaldo et al. (2006) assert that apart from *expected competencies* that are predetermined by job demands and organisational requirements, there are *emerging competencies* that an organisation does not realise it possesses but have developed through individual learning. It is these emerging competencies that enable a person to achieve satisfactory performance in new and unexpected situations and contribute to the competitive advantage of an organisation. Therefore, it is important for individuals to realise their personal attributes for development purposes rather than limiting their learning to a set of job-specific behaviours.

Early research evidences supporting the contextual nature of competencies have emerged from constructivist and interpretativist studies (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). These studies focused on various professional occupations, such as artificial intelligence among pilots (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986), consultative practice of nurses (Benner, 1984) and police occupational culture (Fielding, 1998). Likewise, management studies that have adopted the situationalist perspective have also used an interpretativist approach to identify context-specific competencies for a single firm (e.g., Capaldo et al., 2006; Raelin & Cooledge, 1995; Sandberg, 2000), rather than relying on large-scale quantitative surveys and statistical analysis. Others have demonstrated that generic competencies can be differentiated from context-specific ones across different organisations (Martin & Staines, 1994; Soderquist et al., 2010) and that the meaning of the same competency terminology can vary across different firms within the same industry sector (Antonacopoulou & FitzGerald, 1996).

Against this background, this thesis draws upon the situationalist model of competency because it suggests that there are context-specific competencies as well as generic ones and therefore provides a more integrated approach to HR competencies.

## **2.2 Defining HR Competency**

The existing literature on HR competencies typically draws on the value-added approach suggested by Ulrich and others (e.g., Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Selmer & Chiu, 2004; Ulrich, Brockbank, Yeung, & Lake, 1995). In this approach, HR competencies are the factors that define the successful performance of HR practitioners in a “business partner” role (Ulrich, 1997). Ulrich et al. (1995) define HR competencies as the ability to add value to the business, which means the ability to contribute to the organisational bottom-line. This notion of value added emanates from the concept of organisational capability (Nankervis, Compton, & Savery, 2002; Pfeffer, 1994; Ulrich, 1987), which recognises human resources and their management are a



potential source of sustained competitive advantage that is difficult to imitate. The value-added approach to HR competencies is also closely linked to the concept of HR business partnering (Ulrich, 1997). Proponents of business partnering argue that in order to add value to the business, HR practitioners need to focus more on collaborating with top management and line managers in strategy formulation and execution than in their operational activities (Ramlall, 2006; Ulrich, 1997; Wright, McMahan, Snell, & Gerhart, 2001). From the value-added perspective, HR competencies are the factors that define successful performance of HR practitioners in a business partner role (Long & Wan Ismail, 2008; Ramlall, 2006).

### **2.2.1 Strategic and Functional HR Competencies**

A distinction has also been drawn between strategic and functional HR competencies (Brewster et al., 2000; Teo, 1998). Strategic HR competencies are business-related competencies that enable HR practitioners to align HR strategies with business strategies, while functional HR competencies are related to the delivery of HR operations (e.g., recruitment, employee selection, and remuneration) (Huselid et al., 1997).<sup>2</sup> Strategic HR competencies also include strategic contribution and business knowledge (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005), the former referring to an active involvement in strategic activities (e.g., strategic decision-making, organisational change, and development) and an ability to relate to customers; the latter referring to knowledge of the company and the industry in which it operates. Functional HR competencies include personal credibility, HR delivery, and HR technology (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Personal credibility refers to the achievement of results, effective relationships, and communication skills. HR delivery refers to the ability to design and deliver basic and innovative HR practices. HR technology includes the ability to apply technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HR transactions.

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<sup>2</sup> In Huselid et al.'s (1997) study, strategic HR competencies are referred to as "business-related HRM capabilities" and functional HR competencies are referred to as "professional HRM capabilities".

Early HR competency research (e.g., Huselid et al., 1997; Ulrich, Brockbank, & Yeung, 1989b; Ulrich et al., 1995) has consistently demonstrated strategic HR competencies as the strongest predictor of successful performance in HR roles. Huselid et al. (1997) found that both strategic and functional HR competencies are positively related to the effectiveness of strategic HR activities, which in turn has a positive impact on employee productivity, cash flow, and market value. The 2002 global study by Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) is the most commonly cited work in the literature, involving 1,192 HR participants and 5,890 associates from North America, Latin American, Asia, and Europe. This study found that the strategic contribution competencies accounted for 43 % of HR's total impact on financial competitiveness, which is almost twice as much compared to other competencies (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). While HR practitioners were best at *personal credibility*, this competency had a much lower impact on the same performance outcome (23 %). It is this research by Ulrich and Brockbank that significantly contributed to the universalist perspective that strategic HR competencies are the critical differentiator of performance in a HR business partner role.

More recently, Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank and Ulrich (2013) identified six groups of HR competencies: strategic positioner, credible activist, capability builder, change champion, human resource innovator and integrator, and technology proponent. One of Ulrich et al.'s key findings was that while the competency *credible activist* demonstrated the greatest impact on the perceived effectiveness of the HR function, it had the lowest impact on business performance. The authors argue that greater emphasis should be placed on HR competencies that add the greatest value to the business, such as connecting people through technology; aligning strategy, culture, practices, and behaviour; and sustaining change. Although Ulrich et al.'s findings demonstrate that the requirements of HR competencies have evolved overtime, their research still reflects a universalist approach by focusing on identifying generic competencies in HR practitioners.

Further to the distinction between strategic and functional HR competencies, other researchers have argued that HR competencies are role-specific (e.g., Blancero et al., 1996; Long, Wan Ismail, & Amin, 2010; Schoonover, 2003; Yeung et al., 1996). Yeung et al. (1996), for example, relate strategic HR competencies with leadership HR roles and related functional HR competencies with consultation and specialist HR expertise roles. It has also been argued that there is a small set of generic competencies that are shared by multiple HR roles (Blancero et al., 1996; Schoonover, 2003; Yeung et al., 1996). Examples include communication skills, customer orientation, credibility and integrity, business acumen, systematic perspective, initiative, results orientation, and relationship building. Figure 2 illustrates an example of a role-specific HR competency model.



**Figure 2 Example of a role-specific HR competency model**

Source: Adapted from Yeung, A., Woolcock, P. & Sullivan, J. (1996). Identifying and developing HR competencies for the future: keys to sustain the transformation of HR functions. *Human Resource Planning*, 19(4), 48-58. p.51.

## **2.3 Situationalist Perspective of HR Competencies**

Although there is support for the use of generic HR competency models, HR practitioners also suggest that these models are ineffective in predicting job success in HR business partner roles (Caldwell, 2008, 2010). Indeed, HR business partner roles might not necessarily be desirable or feasible across all organisations (Caldwell, 2003; Guest & King, 2004) and the uptake does vary in the US and UK (CIPD, 2007; Lawler & Mohrman, 2003). Comparative research shows that, on average, only 40-60 % of HR departments in Western economies are involved with strategy issues from the outset (Rasmussen et al., 2010). Several researchers also argue that some settings are likely to engender a more strategic HR role, and in others, the HR role is likely to be predominantly functional and administrative (Brewster, Wood, Brookes, & van Ommeren, 2006; Truss, 2009a). From a situationalist perspective, the implication of the above is that more research is needed to differentiate between possible variations in HR competency requirements in different settings. This is expanded on in section 2.4.

While HR competency research points to the importance of strategic HR competencies for HR practitioners' job success, evidence suggests that many HR practitioners still perform better in their functional roles than when making a strategic contribution (Ramlall, 2006; Ulrich et al., 2013). What remains unclear is whether this lack of strategic success is because HR practitioners lack the competencies seen as necessary to be a business partner; or, that they have the competencies but are not required to use them; or, that there is a lack of clarity on the strategic competencies needed. Indeed, researchers have argued that most HR competency studies have focused on job-specific behaviours and there is little attention on the personal attributes underpinning job success (Buckley & Monks, 2004; Caldwell, 2010; Lounsbury, Steel, Gibson, & Drost, 2008). Buckley and Monks (2004), for example, found that self-confidence and self-knowledge are critical for successful performance in an HR business partner role, as well as in managing change and uncertainty more effectively. It is these personal attributes that influence the behavioural actions of HR practitioners.

There is also growing recognition that HR practitioners' job success is underpinned by their ability to build a reputation for HR delivery (Antila, 2006; Brown et al., 2009; Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, Stiles, & Zaleska, 2002). In particular, researchers have argued that HR practitioners need to possess high levels of moral and ethical standards, which are seen as crucial in maintaining trustworthy relationships with employees and line managers (Francis & Keegan, 2006; Hope-Hailey, Farndale, & Truss, 2005; Lowry, 2006). However, Graham and Tarbell (2006) found that little attention is paid to these employee-related HR competencies in the development of HR competency models, given their managerial focus on HR's strategic contribution. Taken altogether, these studies imply that there is disagreement on the perceived importance of HR competencies and that greater focus is needed on the interrelationships between strategic and functional HR competencies.

The dominant theme in HR competency research is that organisational competitiveness is the ultimate business goal (Huselid et al., 1997; Long & Wan Ismail, 2008; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Several researchers, however, argue that more research is needed in order to examine the contribution of HR competencies to organisational agility and social legitimacy (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Graham & Tarbell, 2006). Organisational agility (Dyer Jr, 1999) refers to the ability to create and maintain a workforce that is eager to learn, willing to change, and is adaptable and flexible to changing business conditions. Social legitimacy is concerned with establishing and maintaining trustworthy relationships with employee and other stakeholder groups. However, no research has been located which directly examines the relationship between HR competencies and organisational flexibility and social legitimacy HR goals, even though a number of researchers have emphasised the importance of these two dimensions in sustaining the long-term viability of a business (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Lowry, 2006; Paauwe & Boselie, 2005). Research evidence also shows that business context influences organisational strategy, which in turn determines the role of the HR department and the competencies required

(Khatri & Budhwar, 2002; Truss et al., 2002). However, very little research has directly focused on business contexts as a contextual determinant of HR competencies. This study therefore seeks to demonstrate the effect of organisational contexts on the perceived importance of HR competencies.

## **2.4 Contextual Variables that Influence HR Competency Requirements**

### **2.4.1 Public Sector Organisations**

Existing HR business partnering competency models are predominantly derived from the private sector version of strategic HRM (Roehling et al., 2005). The private sector model of strategic HRM is driven by a linkage between HRM and performance (Guest, 2011) and it tends to advocate a strategic focus for HR roles (Sheehan & Scafidi, 2005). However, researchers have argued that this strategic focus may not necessarily be appropriate for public sector organisations (Harris, 2004; Manning, 2010; Tompkins, 2002). Indeed, evidence shows that public sector HR functions are rarely involved in strategic planning ((Lindström & Vanhala, 2011; Teo & Rodwell, 2007) due to several contextual constraints. First, unlike private sector organisations that operate in a competitive market environment, public sector organisations are exposed to direct political interventions, and are accountable to multiple stakeholders and professional norms (Tompkins, 2002). In this context, the primary objective of the HR function is focused on delivering public policy rather than improving financial performance.

Second, public sector organisations are characterised by high levels of organisational bureaucracy, which has a tendency to restrict HR staff members' decision-making power as they are responsive to higher management policy initiatives (Kessler, Purcell, & Shapiro, 2000; Truss et al., 2002). These contextual factors often create constraints for strategic autonomy and innovation, which in turn confines the focus of the HR function to policy compliance and operational effectiveness (Teo & Rodwell, 2007; Truss, 2009a).

Third, there are historical expectations for public sector organisations to be “model employers” for private sector organisation practice (Lupton & Shaw, 2001). This means providing fair and generous employment conditions and adopting a more pluralist approach to employee relations (Parry, Kelliher, Mills, & Tyson, 2005). In these settings, the HR function tends to be employee and compliance oriented as it is working under consent decrees with trade unions in establishing standardised employment contracts and formal procedures for dealing with grievance and discipline (Klingner & Lynn, 1997; O'Donoghue, Stanton, & Bartram, 2011). Resulting from these specific expectations for public sector organisations, HR competencies in public sector organisations can be expected to strongly emphasise knowledge of HR operations and employment legislation, interpersonal awareness, employee advocacy, and counselling skills (Alfes et al., 2011; Klingner & Lynn, 1997). Against this backdrop, this thesis explores the similarities and differences in HR competency requirements between private and public sector organisations.

#### **2.4.2 Not-for-Profit Organisations**

Compared to private and public sector organisations, there is limited available research on the relevance of HR competencies for not-for-profit organisations. Indeed, given the fact that both not-for-profit and government organisations are driven by public purposes rather than the profit motive, it might be expected that these organisations are similar in terms of their approaches to HRM (Feeney & Rainey, 2010; Parry et al., 2005) and hence also in their competency requirements for HR practitioners. Yet, several researchers contend that not-for-profit organisations differ from government organisations due to the distinctive environment in which they operate (Akingbola, 2013; Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Moore, 2000; Parry et al., 2005).

First, not-for-profit organisations are often confronted with the need to demonstrate accountability to a variety of stakeholders, including the government and private funding providers who make large investments to fulfil the organisation's mission, as well as trustees, service recipients and volunteers (Akingbola, 2004; Matias-Reche,

Rubio-López, & Rueda-Manzanares, 2009; Ridder & McCandless, 2010). The goals and needs of these stakeholders are often diverse and conflicting, which may lead to complex decision-making processes for not-for-profit organisations (Cunningham, 2001; Parry et al., 2005). Second, funding for not-for-profit organisations often comes from multiple sources (Armstrong, 1992). In contractual terms this makes funding irregular and unpredictable, which may in turn create difficulty for long-term planning (Cunningham, 2001; Parry et al., 2005). To deal with these funding pressures, some not-for-profit organisations have become increasingly dependent on volunteer workers and employees who are hired on temporary and short-term contracts to cut costs (Ridder, Piening, & Baluch, 2012). This dual employment structure may present challenges in managing and retaining people within not-for-profit organisations as research findings suggest that volunteers and paid employees working in not-for-profit organisations have different needs, motivations, and reward preferences (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009). Thus, not-for-profit organisations operate in environments that are characterised by complexity, fluidity, and resource constraints, which may necessitate a more proactive and strategic approach to HRM compared to public sector organisations (Feeney & Rainey, 2010; Jäger & Beyes, 2010; Ridder et al., 2012).

Furthermore, research suggests that not-for-profit organisations are less likely to have a formalised and systematic HR system in place due to resource shortages and the low presence of HR specialists (Cunningham, 2010; Kelliher & Parry, 2011; Ridder & McCandless, 2010). This lack of HR formalisation is often associated with high levels of employment tribunal cases and employee turnover within the not-for-profit sector (Cunningham, 2001, 2010). Evidence also indicates that many not-for-profit organisations are faced with recruitment and retention problems as they are unable to provide competitive terms and conditions of employment compared to their private and public sector counterparts (Ban, Drahnak-Faller, & Towers, 2003; Nickson, Warhurst, Dutton, & Hurrell, 2008; Parry et al., 2005). In sum, these studies corroborate that HR practices in not-for-profit organisations tend to lack formalisation and sophistication,



resulting in weaker use of functional HR competencies, such as expertise in training and development and process improvement skills.

On the basis of the research reviewed, it could be expected that HR competencies will vary as a function of the types of organisations stated.

### **2.4.3 Domestic Firms versus Multinational Enterprises**

There is considerable debate in the strategic HRM literature on whether or not overseas-based multinational enterprises (MNEs) adopt HRM practices that differ from domestic firms (Brewster, Wood, & Brookes, 2008; Guthrie, Flood, Liu, & MacCurtain, 2008; Mellahi, Demirbag, Collings, Tatoglu, & Hughes, 2013). While there is no evidence for a common model of HRM for MNEs, studies have suggested that HRM practices in overseas-based MNEs are likely be more sophisticated than those in domestic firms due to different business contexts (Brewster et al., 2008; Edwards et al., 2013; Sheehan & Scafidi, 2005; Walsh, 2001). MNEs tend to be exposed to constant fluctuations in the global markets (Brewster et al., 2008; Kim & Gray, 2005) and are more likely to undergo extensive organisational change processes such as mergers, acquisitions, and takeovers (Antila, 2006; Björkman & Söderberg, 2006). Compared to domestic firms, business relationships in MNEs tend to be more complicated given their larger customer base and their interaction with the government and communities in multiple countries (Ulrich et al., 2008). These contextual factors necessitate a more strategic approach to HRM in MNEs and a greater focus on the requirements of strategic HR competencies (Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Smale, & John, 2011; Sumelius, Björkman, & Smale, 2008). Evidence also suggests that global HR leaders in MNEs tend to require a wider range of competencies such as strategic thinking, effective communication, cross-cultural awareness, and knowledge of international employment legislation (Antila, 2006; SHRM, 2010).

Another distinctive characteristic of MNEs relates to their competitive strength in transferring capabilities, resources, and information internally into different markets

(Edwards et al., 2013; Sumelius et al., 2008). With regard to HRM, subsidiaries of MNEs may seek to replicate the dominant approaches to HRM in their country of origin due to familiarity and superiority (Björkman & Yuan, 2001; Sumelius et al., 2008), resulting in greater emphasis on the internal consistency of HRM practices. For example, evidence shows that US owned MNEs are more likely to export significant elements of their HRM practices in their home country to subsidiaries in host countries, such as the provision of quality training, internal promotion, and greater employee autonomy in the work organisation (Almond, 2011; Fenton-O'Creevy, Gooderham, & Nordhaug, 2008). Furthermore, evidence shows that MNEs are more likely to utilise HR shared service centres and international HR information systems (Belizon, Gunnigle, & Morley, 2013; Farndale & Paauwe, 2005; Stiles et al., 2006) given their focus on central control and coordination of global HRM policies.

Given these contextual factors, it is expected that overseas-based MNEs are more likely to promote a strategically focused HR department and standardisation of HRM practices through internally shared learning across their subsidiaries and HR data reporting mechanisms (Farndale & Paauwe, 2005; Pudelko & Harzing, 2007).

Therefore, this thesis explores the contextual nature of HR competencies in domestic firms and MNEs.

#### **2.4.4 Firm Size**

Firm size for this thesis refers to the number of employees. Most strategic HRM theories and researches have focused on HRM practices for large firms and overlooked small firms (Bartram, 2005; de Kok & Uhlaner, 2001; Heneman, Tansky, & Camp, 2000; Tansky & Heneman, 2003). This has implications on the suitability of existing HR competency models for smaller firms, as it is established in the literature that their organisational structure and relationships differ from those of larger firms. Large firms tend to have greater economies of scale and access to greater resources, which facilitate the functioning of a strategically oriented HR function (Brewster et al., 2006; Sheehan & Scafidi, 2005). For example, large firms are more likely to have more

specialisation in their HR departments, allocate resources to HR technology, and outsource their HRM activities (Brewster et al., 2006; Giannantonio & Hurley, 2002; Ulrich et al., 2008). These approaches have the potential to free up time spent in routine HR operational and administrative tasks and enable the HR function to concentrate more on strategic activities (Cooke, Shen, & McBride, 2005; Lawler & Mohrman, 2003). The extant literature on HR competencies also points to a positive relationship between strategic HR competencies and firm size by employees (Giannantonio & Hurley, 2002; Long & Wan Ismail, 2009; Ulrich et al., 2008).

On the other hand, smaller firms tend to be under-resourced and lack the expertise required to develop a formal organisational strategy and formal HRM practices (Bartram, 2005; de Kok & Uhlaner, 2001; Storey, 2004; Wiesner & Innes, 2010; Wiesner & McDonald, 2001). Indeed, research evidence suggests that staffing and training practices in smaller firms are rather ad hoc and informal (Storey, 2004; Tanova, 2003), and smaller firms tend to practice informal systems of reward (e.g., recognition and reinforcement) and focus on monitoring and controlling rather than employee development (Cassell, Nadin, Gray, & Clegg, 2002). Smaller firms also tend to have low levels of union membership (Bacon & Hoque, 2005) and are less likely to adopt participatory HR practices (e.g., suggestion schemes and joint consultation committees) (Bartram, 2005; Wiesner & McDonald, 2001).

Furthermore, evidence shows that smaller firms tend to have a low presence of specialised HR managers (Bartram, 2005; Wiesner & Innes, 2010; Wiesner & McDonald, 2001) and it is often the owner or senior manager of the business who is responsible for the design and implementation of HRM practices (Hornsby & Kuratko, 2003). Where there is an HR presence, the role of the HR function tends to be predominantly reactive and administrative oriented (Brewster et al., 2006; Giannantonio & Hurley, 2002; Nankervis et al., 2002; Ulrich et al., 2008) and there is limited input of the HR function in the formulation of business strategies (Nankervis et al., 2002).

Given these specifications for smaller firms, it is expected that HR requirements in smaller firms will be primarily administrative oriented and focused on monitoring, controlling, and program implementation rather than strategically driven and employee focused. Therefore, this study proposes that HR competencies could vary as a function of firm size in terms of the number of employees.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the conceptual models of competency and positioned the approach for this thesis; that is, the situationalist perspective. The key research questions and objectives have been identified and four sets of research propositions have been generated to investigate the contextual nature of HR competencies in: 1) public sector organisations, 2) not-for-profit organisations, 3) domestic firms and multinational enterprises and 4) different firm size by employees. The research methodology adopted for this study is presented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

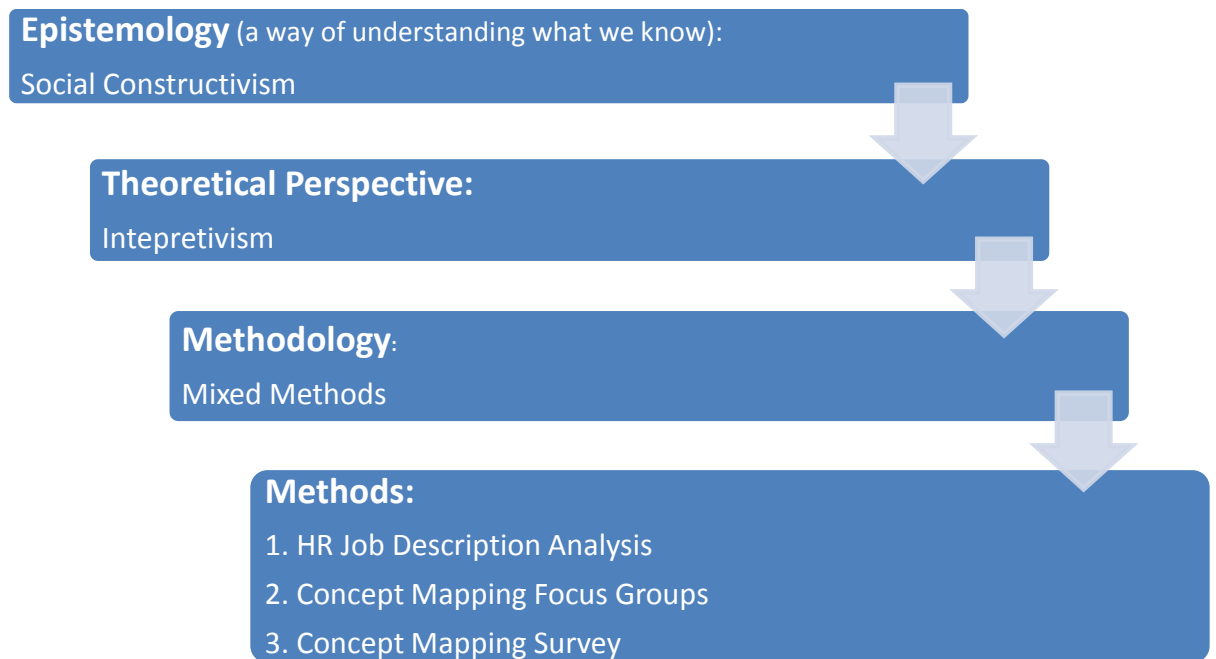
This chapter describes the methodology used in this thesis. The justification of the research approach chosen for this study is firstly described, then the rationale for selecting the three research phases – HR job description content analysis, concept mapping focus groups, and concept mapping online survey - is provided. This chapter ends with a statement on the integration of findings from each phase of the research.

### **3.1 Research Approach**

In designing the thesis, Crotty's (1998) framework provided a useful structure.

According to Crotty (1998), the research process comprises four elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. These four elements are important to the research process as they provide a ground for identifying the researcher's assumptions about the human world and social life within that world, which are embedded within the methods used to undertake the research. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge that informs what kinds of knowledge are possible and legitimate and governs the particular theoretical perspective selected. Theoretical perspective is implicit in research questions and it is the philosophical stance that grounds the logic and criteria of the methodology. Methodology is a plan of action which informs the choice of research methods employed. Finally, research methods are the techniques or procedures used to collect and analyse the data related to a research question. Thus, the research approach adopted for a particular study is dependent on the researcher's initial stance towards the nature of knowledge.

The visual diagram of the research approach adopted for this study is illustrated in Figure 3 on the following page and the rationale for choosing this approach is explained next.



**Figure 3 Research approach**

Source adapted from Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

The epistemological stance of this thesis is social constructivism. This theory of knowledge refers to the belief that people construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998). These meanings are often subjective and are negotiated within cultures, social setting and relationships with other people (Creswell, 2008). This leads to the researcher to look for complexity of views rather than accepting universalist world views and all-encompassing theory generalisation. As outlined in the Introduction (Chapter 1), the overarching research objective of this thesis was to investigate the contextual nature of HR competencies from a situationalist perspective. The main feature of the situationalist perspective is its phenomenological basis, which views person and world as internally related through the person's lived experiences (Sandberg, 2000; Schön, 1983) (see Chapter 2). This view is consistent with social constructivism which is grounded on the belief that the realities of individuals can only be explored through people's experiences of it by drawing on the interpretation of others (Stoof et al., 2002). Therefore, social constructivism is compatible with the research objective of this thesis.

The theoretical perspective adopted for this study is interpretivism. This perspective acknowledges that individuals' meanings about the world is subjective and multiple and therefore seeks to make sense of or interpret these meanings from individuals' lived experiences (Crotty, 1998). This perspective relies on the use of naturalistic inquiry and thematic analysis, such as use of observation, semi-structured interviews or other naturally occurring textual data, to make sense of the participants' experience. It also allows the researcher's own backgrounds and experiences to shape their interpretation and to position themselves in the research, drawing on common themes, shared understanding of experiences and nuanced differences between sub groups. As outlined in Chapter 1 (Introduction), the research questions of this thesis were concerned with differentiating between generic and context-specific HR competencies in a variety of organisational contexts (public sector organisations, not-for-profit organisations, multinational enterprises and firm size). Thus, an interpretivist perspective is suited to the present thesis as it allows the researcher to attend to interpretation, social contexts and possible variations in the contextual relevance of HR competency requirements.

The methodology adopted for this thesis is mixed methods. Mixed methods is the type of research that "combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p.123). This definition refers to the fundamental principle of mixed methods research, which considers the research questions as more important than either the method used or the paradigm that underlies the method (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The research questions of the present thesis were focused on identifying context-specific HR competencies from a situationalist perspective, an area that has been largely neglected in the HR competency literature. Indeed, most HR competency empirical studies to date have been either dominantly qualitative (e.g., Blancero et al., 1996; Buckley & Monks, 2004; Graham & Tarbell, 2006), or dominantly quantitative (e.g., Boselie & Paauwe, 2005;

Dainty, 2011; Han, Chou, Chao, & Wright, 2006; Long & Wan Ismail, 2009; Ramlall, 2006; Selmer & Chiu, 2004). Few have used mixed methods (except Caldwell, 2008). Although the global HR competency studies conducted by Ulrich and his associates (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005; Ulrich et al., 2008; Ulrich et al., 1989a; Ulrich et al., 1995; Ulrich & Eichinger, 1998; Ulrich et al., 2013) used mixed methods involving focus groups and large-scale questionnaires, their studies were underpinned by a universalist perspective and did not position the weight of HR competencies as a differentiator in different organisational contexts (see Chapter 2).

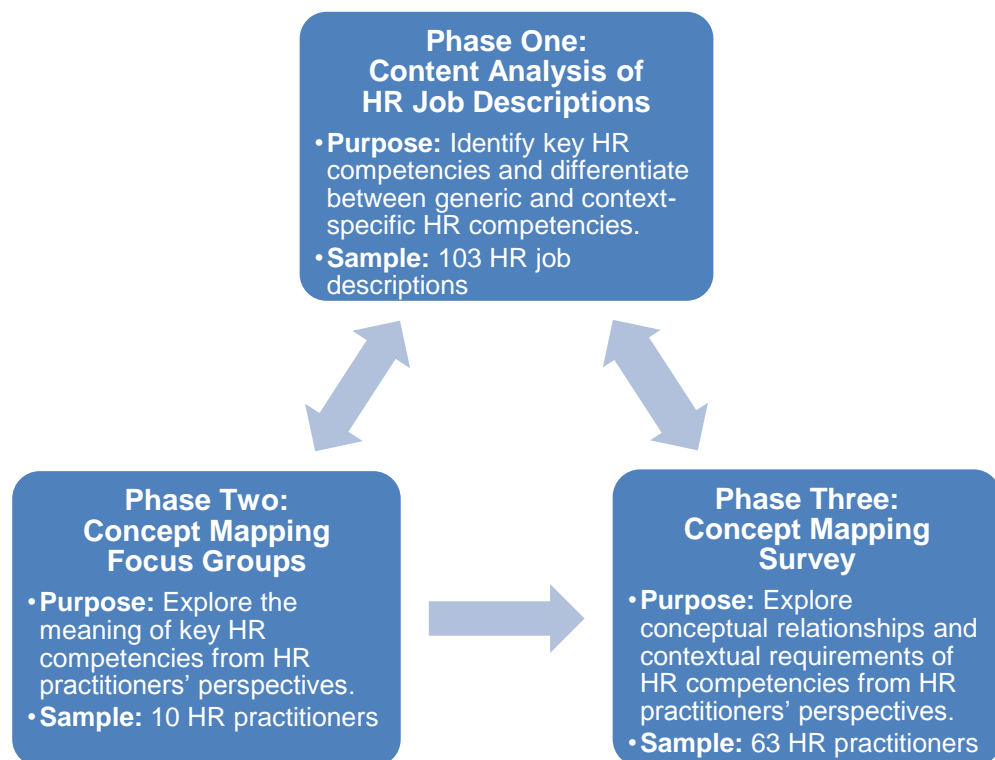
More recently, it has been pointed out that greater focus is needed on identifying the contextual factors that differentiate the critical HR competencies in various settings within HR competencies research (Caldwell, 2010; Roehling et al., 2005; Yeung, 2011). A competency research conducted by Soderquist et al. (2010) used mixed methods to differentiate between generic and organisation-specific competencies by integrating data analysed from job descriptions and interviews with job incumbents. Therefore, the current thesis used mixed methods research in order to provide richer data on the contextual nature of HR competencies than has been provided to date.

Furthermore, while critics of mixed methods research are sceptical about the paradigmatic compatibility of qualitative and quantitative approaches (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1994), a number of authors argue that mixed methods can offer strengths that offset its weaknesses of either qualitative and quantitative approaches used by itself (e.g., Creswell & Clark, 2011; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Johnson et al., 2007; Rossman & Wilson, 1985). According to these authors, there are four key advantages of using mixed methods. First, mixed methods provide stronger inferences of results through triangulation or convergence of results from the different methods. Second, mixed methods offer richer data by enabling elaboration or enhancement of the results from one method with the results from the other method. Third, mixed methods enable the researcher to initiate new interpretations by attending to paradoxes that emerge from two or more data sources and suggesting areas for further exploration. Lastly,



mixed methods is not limited to a prescribed range of designs as one can use all methods possible to address a research question (Cadieux, 2004). Thus, mixed methods was adopted for this thesis in order to address the weaknesses of prior HR competency studies, given that little attention has been paid to the multidimensional nature and contextual relevance of HR competencies.

The visual diagram of the mixed methods design chosen for this thesis is provided in Figure 4 on the following page. A sequential mixed methods design (Morse, 1991) was adopted which involved three phases: 1) content analysis of HR job descriptions, 2) concept mapping focus groups and 3) concept mapping survey (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Trochim, 1989). The objective of combining these three phases was to yield results that address the research objectives and questions of the thesis with regards to the investigation of the contextual nature of HR competencies.



**Figure 4 Visual diagram of the mixed method design for the current research**

In phase one, content analysis of HR job descriptions was used to identify the typical HR competencies required in a diverse range of organisational contexts. This method involved collection of textual data which are quantitatively analysed in terms of

frequency of mention. In phase two, concept mapping focus groups were used to explore HR practitioners' interpretations of the key HR competencies required for effective job performance. Phase three of the research involved collection of qualitative and quantitative data which are statistically analysed and graphically presented using concept maps. Lastly, data obtained from the three methods were triangulated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the contextual requirements of HR competencies. While content analysis and focus group data provide greater breadth to the range of HR competencies required, concept mapping survey data give greater depth on the interrelationships and contextual relevance of HR competencies. The rationale for using the three research phases is discussed next.

### **3.2 Phase One: Content Analysis of HR Job Descriptions**

In phase one of the research, a content analysis of HR job descriptions was used in order to identify the range of HR competency requirements and explore their relevance to various organisational contexts. Content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18). This unobtrusive method was chosen for investigation for the following reasons:

1. Job descriptions are a valid source that document the requirements of a job. They are often combined with a person specification which portrays the competencies a job incumbent needs to possess in order to perform the job competently.
2. Job descriptions are the outcome of job analysis. Job analysis is a systematic collection of information about a job and is usually conducted by consulting firms (Brannick, Levine, & Morgeson, 2007) and/or an internal HR department through interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, observations, participation and archival job analysis.
3. Job descriptions provide naturally occurring data that are context-specific to a company. They are developed for the purpose of employee recruitment and selection and they also form the basis of performance appraisal, training and

development, and remuneration (Brannick et al., 2007). Job descriptions therefore represent the “cumulative and path dependent experience” of job competency requirements (Soderquist et al., 2010, p.335).

Prior competency research conducted by Melaia, Abratt and Bick (2008) and Soderquist et al. (2010) applied a mixed method research design using content analysis of job descriptions and interviews with job incumbents. Although a number of studies have used job advertisements as a measure of competencies in demand (Gallivan, Truex III, & Kvasny, 2004; Kennan, Cecez-Kecmanovic, Willard, & Wilson, 2009; Sarajlic-Basic, 2010), job advertisements tend to be written to attract attention rather than to convey accurate information about the job (Gray, 1999). Moreover, job advertisements may be produced by those who lack experience in writing advertisements and/or lack clarity about what is required for the job (Kennan et al., 2009). HR job descriptions were therefore chosen as the source of data for the first research method of this study. The research procedures and findings for phase one are discussed in Chapter 4.

### **3.3 Phases Two and Three: Concept Mapping Focus Groups and Survey**

The methods chosen for phases two and three of the research were concept mapping focus groups and survey. These two research methods constitute an integrated concept mapping process which was used to verify the data collected from HR job description content analysis in phase one to achieve convergence of findings. Concept mapping is defined as a “systematic process that integrates structured group processes such as brainstorming, unstructured idea sorting, and rating tasks with sophisticated multivariate statistical methods to produce a well-defined, quantitative set of results” (Kane & Trochim, 2007, p.1). It is a useful technique for eliciting and visually presenting aggregated verbal/text statements with quantified relationships of ideas/concepts.

Although concept mapping was initially designed as a planning and evaluation package for business, it has also been used in a number of organisational studies both in New Zealand and internationally. For example, concept mapping has been applied in Page, Wilson and Kolb's (1994) study to gather perceptions on managerial effectiveness in terms of competency requirements, in Burchell and Kolb's (2003) research to analyse aspects of organisational cultures, and in Legget's (2009) study to compare stakeholder perspectives on museum performance and accountability. A meta-analysis of 33 concept mapping research projects conducted by Trochim (1993) found that concept mapping is a reliable method according to generally-recognised standards for acceptable reliability levels.

There were three advantages in adopting concept mapping to address the research questions of this thesis. First, concept mapping is a useful method of exploring social constructions of concepts (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Trochim, 1989). It draws on both participatory group brainstorming and individual sense-making of how ideas/concepts are related. From a situationalist perspective, concept mapping is particularly suitable for this thesis given that the research objective was to gain a contextually-based understanding of HR competency requirements.

Second, concept mapping has been found to avoid problems of researcher bias and respondent reactivity both in data collection and in analysis (Trochim, 1993). While the concept mapping process is facilitated by the researcher, the content of the ideas/concepts are determined entirely by participants. The concept mapping procedures chosen for this research involved using the participant input from HR practitioners to brainstorm the initial ideas in a focus group setting and to structure these ideas and interpret the concept mapping results in the extended survey study. This procedure ensured that original participant ideas were retained in data analysis.

Third, concept mapping enables a shared understanding of the concepts explored among the researcher, participants, and the wider population group (Kane & Trochim,

2007; Trochim, 1989). It uses statistical analysis to quantify the interrelationships and distance in thinking of ideas expressed. The results are visually depicted in a series of concept maps to allow for discovery of patterns or themes represented by the concepts. This approach is particularly suitable for this research as it provides an objective means for measuring the dynamics of HR competency concepts and consistency of perceptions between HR practitioners in different roles and organisations. Concept mapping was therefore chosen for this thesis on the basis that it would address the research objectives and questions of the thesis by identifying the competencies required of HR practitioners and the key similarities and differentiators in HR competency requirements for different organisational contexts.

While concept mapping allowed a combination of focus groups and survey approaches, the survey study received more attention in this research as it was used to extend the understanding of the contextual relevance of HR competencies with a broader sampling of opinions. The research procedures and findings for the concept mapping focus group and survey research are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

### **3.4 Integration of Findings**

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), integration of findings is fundamental in ensuring rigour in mixed methods research. A study that simply uses both quantitative and qualitative methods without integrating the data derived from each is just a collection of multiple methods. In the present study, the data collected from the three research phases were integrated sequentially during the program of study. This was crucial in order to provide a more elaborated understanding of the contextual relevance of HR competencies in addressing the research questions for the study. Descriptive data collected from the HR job description analysis (phase one) on the meanings and range of key competencies required of HR practitioners were compared and converged with those generated from the concept mapping focus groups (phase two). Key findings of these two phases were then aggregated (see Chapter 5) and the aggregated data were used to inform the concept mapping survey (phase three) which

examined HR practitioners' perceptions on the importance of HR competencies in various organisational contexts. Common themes regarding the contextual requirements of HR competencies from all of the research phases were also converged (see Chapter 6) and compared with the literature (see Chapter 7 – Discussion and Conclusions). The outcome was to develop an integrated HR competency framework that provides useful insight to the contextual nature of HR competencies.

## Chapter 4. HR Job Description Analysis

In this chapter, the data collection and analysis procedures for conducting the HR job description analysis are explained first. Key findings from this phase of the research are then presented, focusing on the range of HR competencies inferred from the HR job descriptions and their contextual relevance.

### 4.1 Data Collection

The data collection step of content analysis involved creating units of analysis; that is, unitising. Unitising is “the systematic distinguishing of segments of text that are of interest to an analysis” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.83). This process involved defining the sampling units (i.e., type of document) first, then the context units (i.e., relevant sections within the document) and recording units (i.e., relevant texts) for the study. The visual diagram of the unitising process is provided in Figure 5, and the procedures are discussed next.

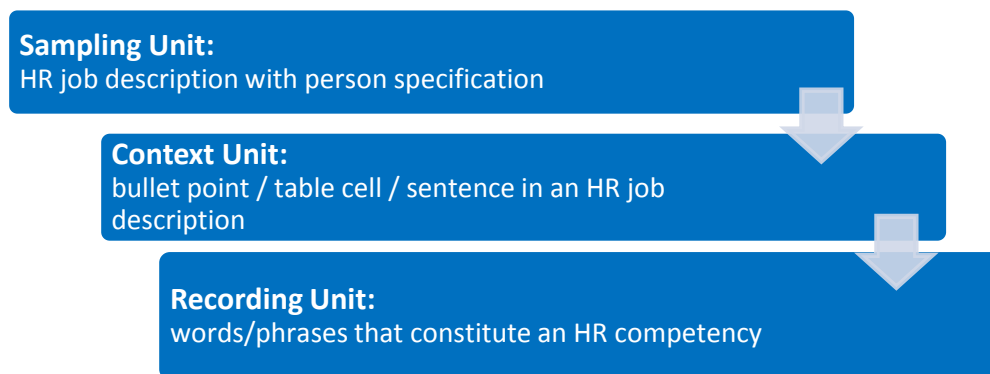


Figure 5 HR job description analysis unitising procedures

#### 4.1.1 Sampling Unit

The unit of sampling chosen for phase one of the study was job descriptions as these are more likely to be updated by the employer when the job is being advertised. Hence, this study collected job descriptions that were accessible via HR job advertisements to ensure currency effect. Given that the run-time of online job advertisements on popular job sites, such as SEEK and Monster, range from 14 to 60

days, it was expected that the job description for the advertised position was current during the recruitment period.

A purposive sampling technique (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) was employed for choosing sources for HR job advertisements and for selecting job descriptions from them. This was to ensure heterogeneity in the final sample with strategic and functional HR job roles from a broad range of industries and organisational settings. The procedures for collecting HR job descriptions involved three steps: 1) accessing online job sites, 2) searching for HR jobs, and 3) selection of HR job descriptions.

### ***Step 1: Accessing Online Job Sites***

The initial sampling step involved accessing online job sites in order to find HR jobs. The search was conducted by the researcher alone for a period of four months from January to April 2012. Since the researcher resided in New Zealand, the search process for HR jobs began with looking at New Zealand and Australian employee recruiting sites (e.g., SEEK New Zealand and Australia), online newspapers (e.g., Indeed) and HR professional body job sites (e.g., Human Resources Institute of New Zealand and Australian Human Resources Institute). The researcher was also registered for HR job email alerts with several large organisations (e.g., Auckland Council and Bank of New Zealand) and included these job advertisements in the HR job search. However, the use of New Zealand and Australian HR job sites resulted in a small sample of HR job descriptions that met the search criteria (see Step 2 Searching for HR Jobs and Step 3 Selecting HR Job Descriptions) and with proportionally more functionally oriented HR positions than strategically oriented ones. Therefore, the researcher extended the search to USA, UK and Asian job sites (e.g., Society of Human Resources Management, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, JobStreet, Classified Post). Although Monster is a popular international job site, it was uncommon for the advertised HR jobs to provide online access to a HR job description, and therefore this job site was not used for the purpose of this study. Table 2 on the following page provides the list of online job sites used to collect HR job descriptions.



**Table 2 Online Job Sites used to Collect HR Jobs by Country**

<b>Online Job Sites</b>	<b>(n = 103 HR jobs)</b>
<u>New Zealand</u>	
Auckland Council careers website	2
Bank of New Zealand careers website	1
Human Resources Institute of New Zealand	6
Indeed	2
SEEK (New Zealand)	13
<i>Total New Zealand</i>	24
<u>Australia</u>	
Adelaide City Council careers website	2
Australian National University	1
Australian Human Resources Institute	4
Government of Western Australia careers website	1
SEEK (Australia)	18
<i>Total Australia</i>	26
<u>USA</u>	
AECOM careers website (USA)	2
SEEK (USA)	2
SHRM (USA)	25
Workforce (USA)	10
<i>Total USA</i>	39
<u>UK</u>	
CIPD (UK)	9
Personneltoday Jobs (UK)	2
<i>Total UK</i>	11
<u>Asia</u>	
Classified Post (Hong Kong)	1
Jobstreet (Singapore)	1
SEEK (China)	1
<i>Total Asia</i>	3

Table 2 shows that of the 103 HR jobs selected, 50 were from New Zealand and Australian job sites, another 50 were from USA and UK job sites and the remaining three were from Asian job sites (China, Hong Kong and Singapore). One possible reason for this small number from Asian job sites is because it may not be a customary practice for recruiting organisations in these countries to provide a job description along with the advertised roles. Another reason is that this study only included HR job advertisements written in English whereas there may be a preference in these countries to advertise HR jobs in Asian language rather than in English and were therefore not captured in this study.

### ***Step 2: Searching for HR Jobs***

Step two of the sampling procedures involved a keyword search from the above job sites to generate an initial list of HR generalist and specialist job advertisements. Initially, general search terms were used in the online HR job sites (e.g., human resources, HR, people management and personnel management). Some job sites also provided HR job sub-classification (e.g., HR generalists and recruitment and selection). To ensure the final sample contained a wide variety of different HR roles and organisational backgrounds, more specific search terms were also utilised to select HR job types that were underrepresented in the sample (e.g., HR director /executive, health, safety and wellbeing, compensation and benefits). Table 3 on the following page provides a list of the search words used for selecting HR job advertisements:

**Table 3 Search Words used to select HR Job Advertisements**

<b>Search Words</b>	<b>(n = 103 HR jobs)</b>
Change management	2
Compensation and benefits	4
Employment relations	3
Finance industry	2
General HR / Generalist HR	3
Health, safety and wellbeing	1
Human resources information system (HRIS)	2
Human Resources Director / Executive	15
Human resources / Human resources management	42
Manufacturing	6
Organisational development and leadership	9
People management / Personnel management	11
Recruitment and selection	1
Training, learning and development	2

The following criteria were also applied in selecting HR job advertisements:

- Advertised for an internal HR position (e.g., HR Manager, HR Advisor)
- Provided access to the job description (e.g., a link to the company website where a job description can be downloaded, an invitation for a job description to be requested, an email contact for further information about the job to be requested)
- Provided demographic details about the employer (e.g., company name, industry/sector in which the company operates, ownership, firm size)

With reference to the second point, not all HR job advertisements provided direct access to the job description. Even for HR job advertisements that provided an email contact, the request for a current job description was often declined due to confidential reasons. Furthermore, some organisations had embedded their HR job descriptions

within the job advertisements. For example, it was relatively easy to find HR job descriptions from USA job sites because many of those were embedded within their job advertisements. Therefore, the final sample included some job descriptions that were extracted directly from the corresponding job advertisements.

### ***Step 3: Selection of HR Job Descriptions***

The following criteria were applied in selecting HR job descriptions for the final sample:

1. Contained a person specification / competency profile
2. Contained behavioural descriptors that define the meaning of each competency category

Once a job description was selected for inclusion it was downloaded together with the corresponding job advertisement. Any job description that was duplicate or had too little detail was excluded from the final sample.

The sample size for the job description analysis research was determined by the progress of analysis of the information obtained from the job descriptions in terms of how quickly it reached theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For the purposes of this study, theoretical saturation was reached when no new information on HR competencies and contextual variables (e.g., strategic orientation of HR role, position level, area of HR specialism) emerged from the data. The number of job advertisements and descriptions sampled in prior studies ranges from 49 to 400 (Gray, 1999; Kennan et al., 2009; Melaia et al., 2008). The final sample for this study consisted of 103 job descriptions.

#### **4.1.2 Context Unit**

The context unit for the current study was the bullet point, table cell, and/or sentence within an HR job description that identified a specific HR competency. Generally, this was contained in the *person specification* section of an HR job description. It was also found that additional references to HR competencies were made in other sections of

the HR job descriptions; for example, job tasks and company values. These sections contained phrases that described the HR competencies required; that is, behavioural descriptors. Therefore, the context unit for this study was extracted from the whole HR job description.

#### **4.1.3 Recording Unit**

The recording unit for the current study was the words/phrases that defined the meaning of a competency in an HR job description. The following job content was also recorded from a job description: job title, position level, primary area of HR specialism, and location of HR role. Demographic information about the employer was recorded from the job advertisement and the company website if provided.

The above mentioned unitising procedures were pilot tested on 30 HR job descriptions before being applied to the extended study. These HR job descriptions were collected from various job sites (e.g., SEEK, Indeed, Society of Human Resources Management) and were coded manually by the researcher. Also, a structured coding scheme was developed and pilot tested for identifying and recording HR competencies, and was proven to produce high quality data. The coding sheet is shown in Appendix A.

## 4.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis technique chosen for phase one of this study was *designation semantical content analysis* (Janis, 1965). Most prior competency studies have applied this technique to analyse job advertisements and job descriptions (Gallivan et al., 2004; Gray, 1999; Kennan et al., 2009; Sarajlic-Basic, 2010). Semantical content analysis involved classifying contents according to their meaning and designation analysis provided the frequency with which certain objects were referred to. Semantical content analysis was chosen because it was expected that different job descriptions used different phrases/terms to refer to the same HR competency. For example, the terms knowledge of business, organisational astuteness, and business savvy all refer to the competency: business acumen.

Data was initially coded by the researcher manually using a structured coding sheet (Appendix A) and stored in a database (Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet). It was later decided that using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (version 9.2) was more appropriate for the purposes of this study as it:

1. enabled the researcher to provide traces of evidence for the coding process,
2. enabled the researcher to merge or split categorisation more efficiently and therefore,
3. provided a more detailed analysis of the results.

Although NVivo provides an automated coding functionality for Word documents, inferences were made in order to ensure the contextual meaning of texts was captured.

This study used *frequency of mention* to measure the relevance of an HR competency category to a particular context; that is, by counting the number of HR job descriptions that mention a particular HR competency category. Frequency counts were then calculated as relative percentages for different HR roles and organisational settings for contextual analysis. A high percentage (50% or more) implied a high level of relevance of the HR competency relating to a particular context. In this study, HR competencies

that are highly relevant to a wider range of contexts were interpreted as *generic* HR competencies. HR competencies that were highly relevant to a narrower range of contexts were interpreted as *context-specific* HR competencies.

Consistent with prior job advertisement/description analysis studies (Gallivan et al., 2004; Gray, 1999; Kennan et al., 2009; Sarajlic-Basic, 2010), the initial data set obtained from recording and counting the occurrences of HR competencies was presented in tabulation. The results of the HR job description analysis were presented as absolute frequency (i.e., by counting the number of HR positions mentioning a particular HR competency category) and relative frequency (i.e., by calculating the percentages of HR positions mentioning a particular HR competency category) across the sample (see Appendix B). The emerging themes from the content analysis were then examined against the theoretical and empirical research obtained from the literature review.

Reliability and validity issues for this research phase are discussed next.

### **4.3 Reliability and Validity Issues**

Demonstrating the reliability and validity of the HR job description content analysis is important because unreliability limits the chance of validity and high reliability does not guarantee validity (Krippendorff, 2004). A research method is considered reliable when it “responds to the same phenomena in the same way regardless of the circumstances of its implementation” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.211). While reliability is a necessary condition for validity, there is no consensus on the most effective reliability measure for content analysis (Ahuvia, 2001; Holsti, 1969; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2004). Krippendorff (2004) identified three types of reliability in content analysis: stability, reproducibility and accuracy. *Stability* refers to the degree to which the same coder produces similar results from the same data at different times. *Reproducibility* refers to the degree to which different coders can reproduce similar results at different times and in different locations. *Accuracy* refers to the amount of error; for example,

deviation from the standard. However, achieving accuracy is often impossible in practice because it is limited to coder training and often relies on pre-established objective standards with which coders can comply (Krippendorff, 2004).

To ensure stability of the method, this study used test-retest procedures. This technique enables the research to detect ambiguities in the coding rules and revise the classification scheme (Holsti, 1969). Each HR job description was re-examined by the researcher after the whole sample was analysed to ensure the competency items identified met the operational definitions in the classification scheme. This allowed for a considerable time interval between each round of coding.

A common technique for measuring reproducibility is inter-rater reliability, which involves assessing the level of agreement between independent coders who follow the coding rules to code the text (Krippendorff, 2004). However, Ahuvia (2001) argued that inter-rater reliability does not reflect the diverse interpretation of texts, but merely provides evidence that the coding rules were followed. He contended that multiple coders work collaboratively rather than independently. Krippendorff (2004) added that reported inter-rater agreement measures are controversial as they are often based on two coders working cooperatively in the development of a coding scheme where classifications and disagreements are discussed. On the other hand, some authors have asserted that in principle a single coder is sufficient (Ahuvia, 2001), provided that a well-specified classification scheme is devised, thus reducing the need for multiple coders (Milne & Adler, 1999). For the purposes of this study, all the HR job descriptions in the sample were coded by the researcher alone and a sub-set of texts with ambiguous meanings was coded in consultation with five HR experts. These HR experts were selected from the researcher's social network based on their range of relevant HR experience, and included: two HR/recruitment consultants, an industrial/occupational psychology consultant, a senior HR advisor working in a university and an HR academic with HR managerial experience. To ensure the context of the text was fully taken into account, coders were instructed to code the selected



parts of the text in light of the rest of the text within the HR job description. Any disagreement between the researcher and the coders was resolved collaboratively either face-to-face or over the phone.

Validity is generally referred to as truth or a reality that the researcher constructs through their inferences or interpretations of a social phenomenon (Krippendorff, 2004; Silverman, 2004). Thus, the meaning of validity depends on the researcher's purposes and judgement (Holsti, 1969). Common types of validity in content analysis include: sampling validity, semantic validity, and structural validity (Krippendorff, 2004).

*Sampling validity* refers to the degree to which the sample of texts analysed represents the population of the phenomena concerned. *Semantic validity* refers to the degree to which analytical categories adequately describe the meanings of texts within the chosen context. *Structural validity* refers to the degree to which the analytical procedures correspond to what is known about the chosen context.

To ensure sampling validity, purposive sampling was employed in sourcing and selecting HR job descriptions (section 4.2). To ensure semantic validity, a structured coding scheme was developed to guide the selection of text for coding within the HR job descriptions (Krippendorff, 2004; Silverman, 2004; Weber, 1990). Key themes were extracted from the literature to develop an initial list of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions, and search words (see Appendix C). Examples of HR competency descriptors extracted from the HR job descriptions are provided in Appendix D. A preliminary sample of job descriptions was coded to test the clarity of category definitions (Weber, 1990). The coding scheme was revised three times during the extended study as new HR competencies emerged. The categories were also validated with the final list of HR competencies and descriptors that were brainstormed by a group of HR practitioners in phase two of the study (see Chapter 5). This served as a validity check for the researcher's inferences in the coding and recording process.

## 4.4 Findings

### 4.4.1 HR Job Description Demographics

A total of 103 HR positions were selected for the HR job description analysis and the demographics of the HR positions are summarised in Table 4 and Table 5. 41% of the sampled HR job descriptions were strategic oriented roles and 59% were functional oriented. About one third of the sample were HR managerial positions (31%), another third were intermediate and senior HR advisory positions (33%), and the remainder was HR executives (17%) and assistant/entry level HR advisory positions (18%). More than half of the sample were HR generalist roles (56%) and the remaining was HR specialist roles (44%). The majority of the selected HR positions was found in health care and social assistance (18%), public administration and safety (16%), manufacturing (12%), and professional, scientific and technical services industries (10%). Overall, there was quite an even spread of HR job descriptions from various types of organisations and firm sizes by employees.

**Table 4 HR Job Description Demographics – HR Role**

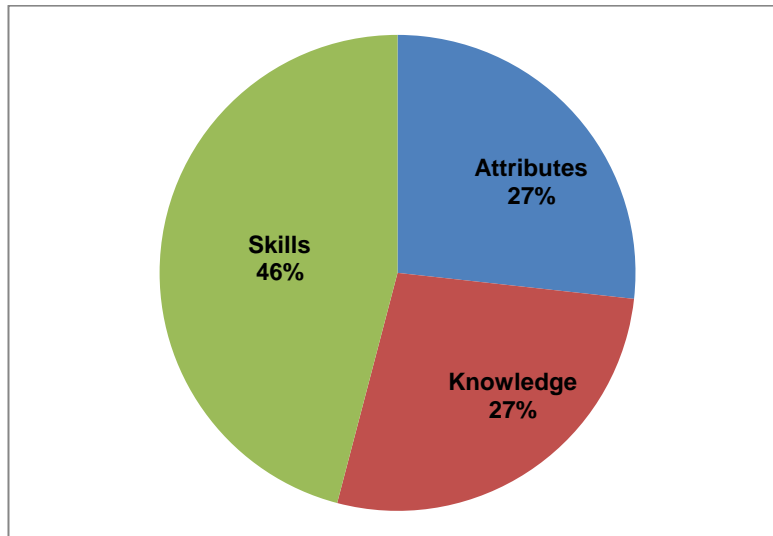
<b>A. Orientation of HR Role</b>	<b>n=103</b>	<b>C. Primary HR Role</b>	<b>n=103</b>
Strategic	42	General HR	58
Functional	61	Change Management	3
		Training and Development	12
<b>B. Position Level</b>	<b>n=103</b>	Recruitment and Selection	8
Executives	18	Remuneration and Rewards	6
Managers	32	Industrial/Employment Relations	5
Intermediate and Senior Advisors	34	Occupational Safety and Health	4
Assistants and Entry Level Advisors	19	HR Information System	7

**Table 5 HR Job Description Demographics – Organisational Contexts**

<b>D. Type of Organisation</b>	<b>n=103</b>	<b>E. Location of HR Role</b>	<b>n=103</b>
Privately owned organisations / trusts	14	Corporate functional HR	27
Local or central government	21	Corporate generalist HR	37
Publicly funded organisations	11	Regional generalist HR	21
State-owned enterprises	5	Regional functional HR	11
Not-for-profit organisations	12	Shared services centre	6
Domestically based multinational enterprises	17	Unknown	1
Overseas based multinational enterprises	6		
Publicly owned / company listed on stock exchange	13		
Unknown	4		
<b>F. Industry Sector</b>	<b>n=103</b>	<b>G. Firm Size (number of employees)</b>	<b>n=103</b>
Accommodation and food services	7	0-99	2
Arts and recreation services	3	100-499	17
Agriculture	2	500-999	13
Construction	2	1000-4999	22
Education and training	7	5000-9999	13
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	6	10000-24999	11
Financial and insurance services	7	25000-49999	10
Health care and social assistance	19	50000-74999	2
Information media and telecommunications	2	100000+	1
Manufacturing	12	Unknown	12
Mining	2		
Professional, scientific and technical services	10		
Public administration and safety	16		
Retail trade	2		
Wholesale trade	1		
Other services	5		

#### 4.4.2 HR Competency Dimensions

The HR job description analysis yielded a total of 2191 HR competencies from the 103 HR job descriptions. Figure 6 shows the breakdown of the key HR competencies by attribute, knowledge, and skill dimensions. Nearly half of the HR competencies identified were skills (46%), and the remaining half was equally split between attributes (27%) and knowledge (27%).

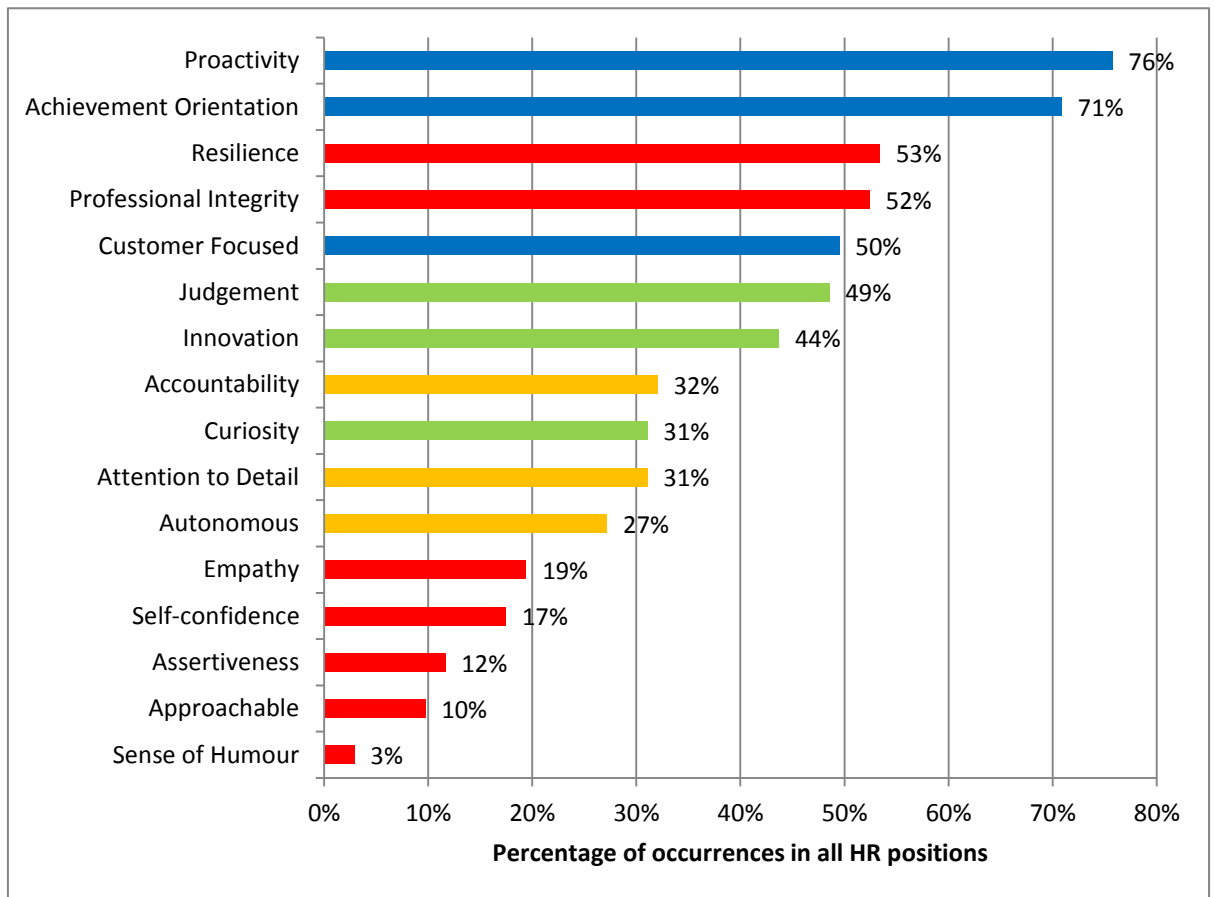


**Figure 6 Relative percentages of HR attributes, knowledge, and skills to total number of HR competencies**

The HR competencies identified in each dimension are described below.

##### ***HR Attribute Dimension***

586 HR attributes were identified from the HR job description content analysis. These HR attributes were grouped into four main categories by conceptual similarities, comprising business and performance oriented attributes (35%), personal attributes (28%), cognitive attributes (22%), and self-management attributes (16%). Occurrences of the HR attributes across the entire sample of HR job descriptions are presented in Figure 7 on the following page.



■ Business Oriented ■ Personal Attributes ■ Cognitive ■ Self-management

**Figure 7 Relevance of HR attributes to HR positions (Total N = 586)**

Figure 7 shows that business and performance oriented attributes (represented by the blue bars) were the most frequently mentioned attributes. HR attributes with the highest occurrences in this group were proactivity and achievement orientation, followed by customer focused. These attributes were found in more than half of the HR job descriptions sampled.

The second most frequently mentioned HR attributes were personal attributes (represented by the red bars), which included resilience, professional integrity, empathy, self-confidence, assertiveness, approachable, and sense of humour. Resilience and professional integrity had the highest frequency mention across the HR positions (53% and 52% respectively) compared to all the other attributes in the same group. Examples of phrases that describe resilience extracted from the HR job descriptions are shown below:

Ability to maintain a positive outlook in difficult situations

Proven track record of successfully managing multiple priorities in a fast paced work environment

Comfortable forging a new path

In particular, the attribute professional integrity was the hardest to code as it encompasses a broad range of conceptual meanings. Examples of phrases that constitute professional integrity extracted from the HR job descriptions are shown below:

Maintaining confidentiality and security of HR information

Champions equal and fair treatment and opportunity for all

Integrity: Adherence to moral and ethical principles, being honest and trustworthy and being authentic

The least frequently mentioned HR attributes were cognitive attributes and self-management attributes. The cognitive attributes group (represented by the green bars) comprised judgement, innovation, and curiosity to learn. These attributes were found in about one third of all the HR positions. The self-management group (represented by the yellow bars) comprised accountability, attention to details and ability to work autonomously.

Overall, the majority of the HR attributes inferred from the HR job descriptions are identical to those established in the literature, such as proactivity (Brockbank, 1999), professional integrity (Graham & Tarbell, 2006), judgement (Blancero et al., 1996; SHRM, 2010), self-confidence (Buckley & Monks, 2004) and empathy (Kulik, Cregan, Metz, & Brown, 2009). HR attributes that were added from the HR job description analysis include approachable, sense of humour, accountability, and ability to work autonomously. Examples of these attributes are shown below:

Approachable: A warm, welcoming and friendly disposition

Sense of Humour: Look out for each other and have fun on the way

Accountability: Accepts responsibility for own actions

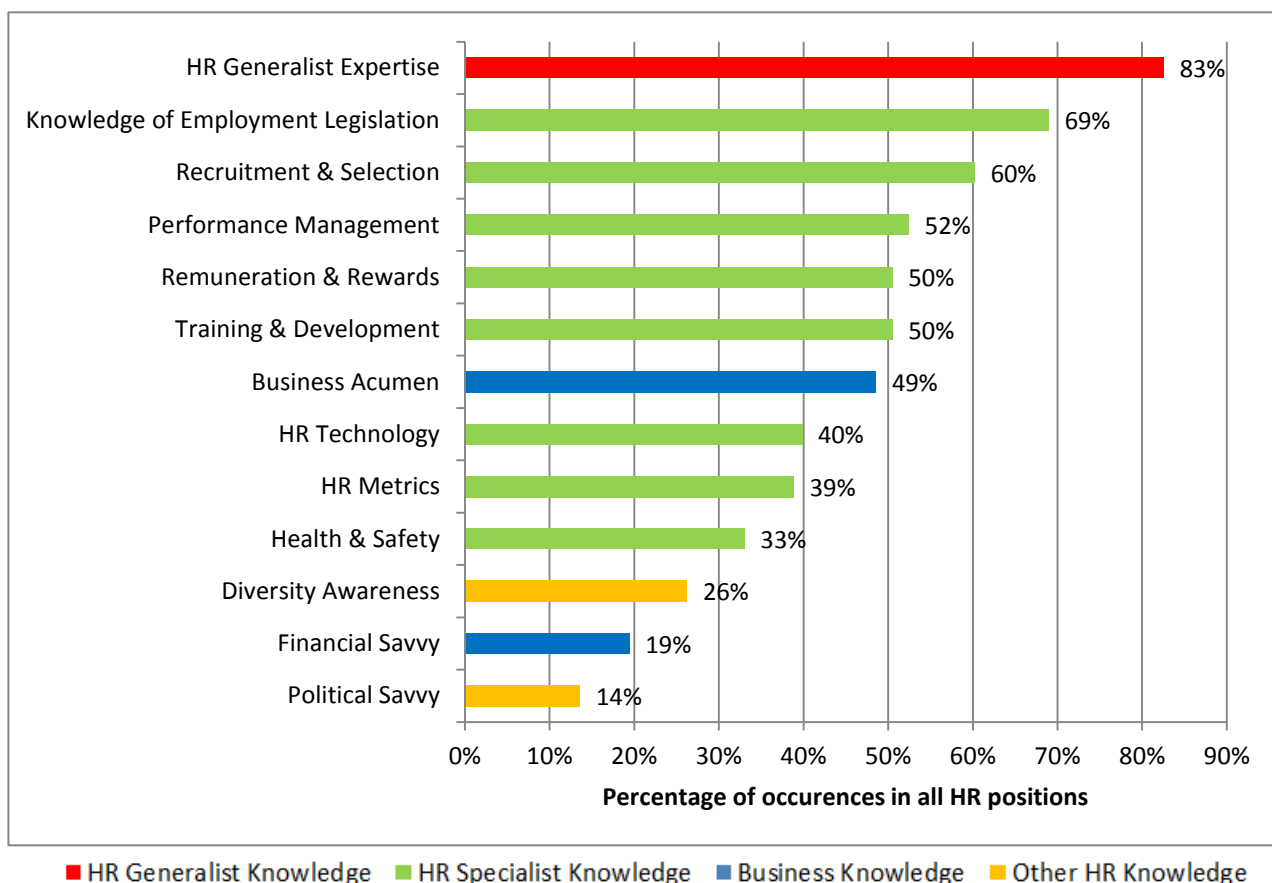
Ability to work autonomously: Ability to work independently and efficiently with little or no supervision

However, these attributes had fairly low frequency mentions across the HR positions.

### ***HR Knowledge Dimension***

602 HR knowledge competencies were identified from the HR job description content analysis. These competencies were classified into four main categories: HR generalist knowledge, HR specialist knowledge, business acumen, and other HR knowledge.

Occurrences of HR knowledge across the entire HR job description sample are presented in Figure 8.



**Figure 8 Relevance of HR knowledge to HR positions (Total N = 602)**

Figure 8 shows that the most frequently mentioned HR knowledge group is HR generalist knowledge (represented by the red bar). HR generalist knowledge included experience in the HR function and/or a qualification in human resource management. This competency was relevant to a great majority of the selected HR positions (83%),

indicating that it is an essential requirement for most HR positions, whether it is a generalist or specialist role. Examples of HR generalist knowledge are shown below:

Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, Human Resources or related field required

Thorough knowledge of all Human Resource disciplines and legal requirements; SPHR (Senior Professional in Human Resources) Certification

The second most frequently mentioned HR knowledge group was HR specialist knowledge (represented by the green bars), which comprised the broadest range of competencies. HR competencies with the most occurrences in this group were knowledge of employment legislation, recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development, and remuneration and rewards, which were found in more than half of the HR positions. The least frequently mentioned HR competencies in the same group were health and safety, HR metrics, and HR technology, which were found in about one third of the HR positions. The HR technology category mainly refers to knowledge and experience in the use of a specific HR information system software or a general data management software (e.g., Microsoft) at the advanced level. An emerging requirement for this competency is knowledge and experience in using social media (e.g., company/career websites, Facebook).

Business knowledge (represented by the blue bars) included business acumen and financial savvy. Business acumen was mentioned in under half of the selected HR positions (49%). This competency was initially recorded as separate categories, comprising an understanding of the industry in which the business operates (35%), the business strategy and priorities (28%), commercial astuteness (24%), and environmental impacts (13%). Examples of each of these different categories are shown below:

Call center or other technology or service-oriented human resources experience strongly preferred



Thorough understanding of the company's business challenges, and the ability to articulate the company's position in a positive and effective manner - excellent business acumen

Commercially astute

Understanding why it is important to make sustainable decisions by considering economic, environment and social impacts

However, an examination of the individual categories found very low levels of relevance to most of the selected contexts. Therefore, it was decided to aggregate the business acumen elements into one category. Furthermore, although financial savvy is regarded as an important tenet of business knowledge in the HR competency literature (Ulrich et al., 2013), this competency is treated as a separate category as it encompasses very broad meanings in the HR job descriptions. These meanings range from numerical literacy to an ability to interpret complex financial data in relation to a HR specialist area, for example, costings of proposed industrial settlements.

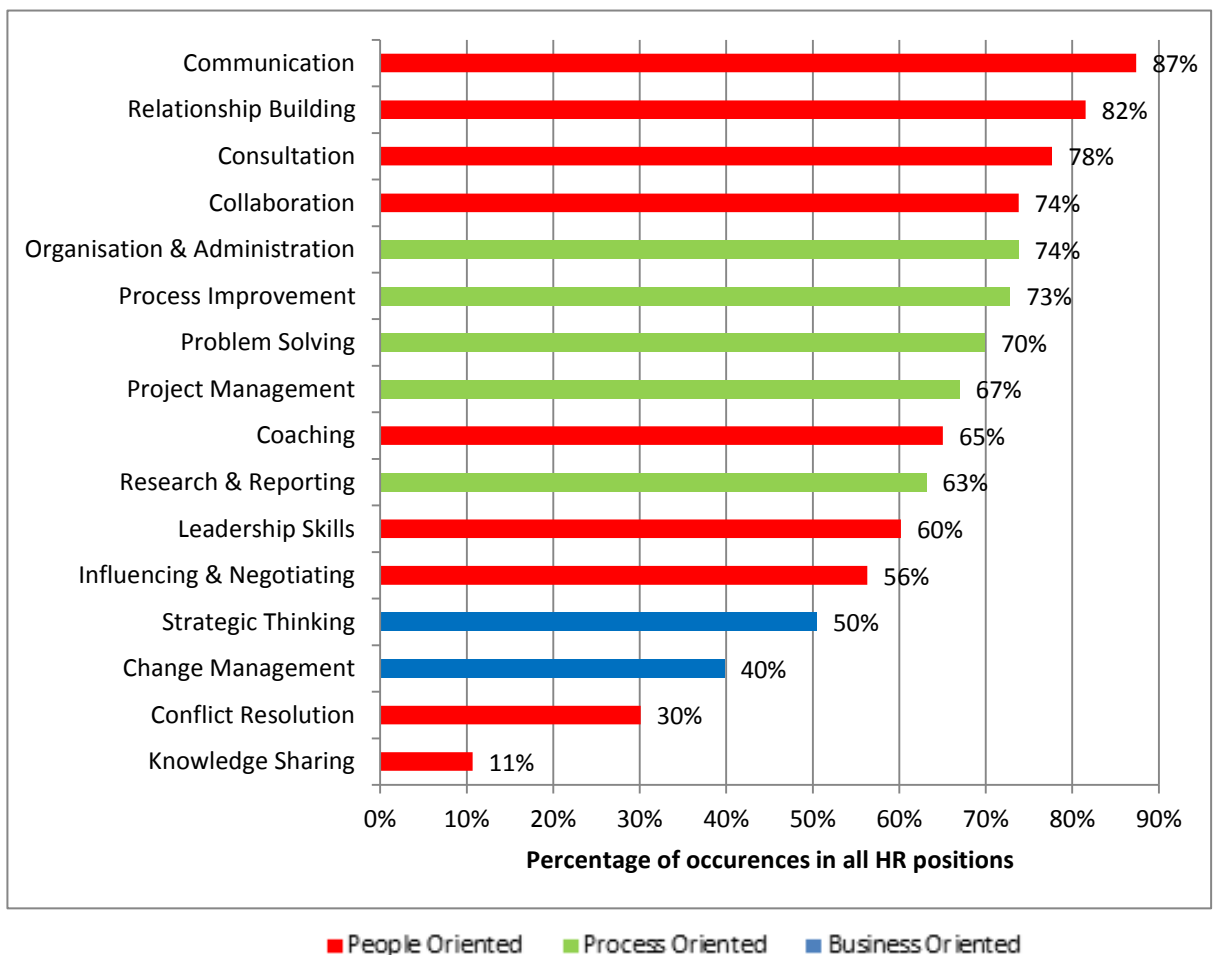
Other HR knowledge (represented by the yellow bars) was the least frequently mentioned group. This competency group included diversity awareness and political savvy. These competencies did not fall within the operational definition of business acumen abstracted from the literature and were therefore treated as separate categories for further contextual analysis. Examples of diversity awareness and political savvy competencies extracted from the HR job descriptions are shown below:

Diversity awareness: Welcomes and values diversity, and contributes to an inclusive working environment where differences are acknowledged and respected

Political savvy: Understanding of how organisational structures, politics and cultures work, and how to adapt them

## HR Skill Dimension

1009 HR skills were identified from the HR job description content analysis. There were three subcategories within the HR skill dimension: people, process, and business oriented skills. Occurrences of the HR skills across the entire HR job descriptions are presented in Figure 9.



**Figure 9 Relevance of HR skills to HR positions (Total N = 1009)**

People-oriented skills (represented by the red bars) encompassed the broadest range of HR competencies. HR skills with the highest occurrences in this group were communication, relationship building, consultation, collaboration, coaching, leadership, and influencing and negotiation, which were mentioned in more than half of the HR job descriptions. The least frequently mentioned HR skills in this group were conflict resolution and knowledge sharing, which were found in less than one third of the HR job descriptions.

Examples of the people-oriented competencies are shown below:

Communication: Excellent verbal and written communication skills (#107)

Consultation: Able to provide appropriate HR advice

Relationship building: Can quickly establish credibility and respect and build strong working relationships with senior managers

Collaboration: Teamworking and delivering in partnership

Coaching: Up-skilling and coaching managers on areas of people management

Leadership: Effective leadership skills to support and drive our business needs

Influencing and negotiation: Strong influence-management, negotiation

Conflict resolution: Capacity to de-escalate conflict and promote agreement

Knowledge sharing: Actively shares information and (assists others in team)

Process oriented skills (represented by the green bars) were more technical and included organisation and administration, process improvement, problem solving, project management, and research and reporting. These competencies were relevant to more than half of the HR positions. Examples of these competencies include:

Organisation and administration: Ensure the administration of employment packs, maintain an effective personnel filing system

Process improvement: Strong ability to develop processes and frameworks then work within these

Problem solving: Anticipates and adjust for problems roadblocks

Project management: Manage global HR projects geared towards moving forward the strategic focus and key initiatives of the HR department

Research and reporting: A proven ability to undertake investigations, analyse and produce coherent and comprehensive written reports

Business oriented skills (represented by the blue bars) included strategic thinking and change management. These skills are often cited as critical competencies for business partnering in the literature (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005; Yeung et al., 1996). Examples of these competencies include:

Strategic thinking: Conceptual thinking – considers how things fit together. Sees patterns or trends, makes the complex simple

Change management: Demonstrated ability to initiate, manage and deliver change

Overall, most of the HR skills were mentioned in 50% or more of the HR positions. The only two categories that had a relatively low level of frequency mentions were conflict resolution and knowledge sharing. While some authors argue that conflict resolution and knowledge sharing are critical competencies for managing employee concerns (Antila, 2006; Kulik et al., 2009) and fostering continuous learning in an organisation (Schoonover, 2003), these competencies have received little attention in the development of HR competency models (see Yeung et al., 1996 for an exception).

The generic and context-specific HR competencies identified are reported in the following sections.

### 4.4.3 Generic HR Competencies

The initial analysis of the HR job description findings involved identifying generic HR competencies. These competencies were relevant to multiple HR roles and organisational contexts and are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 HR Competencies relevant to Multiple HR Roles and Organisational Contexts**

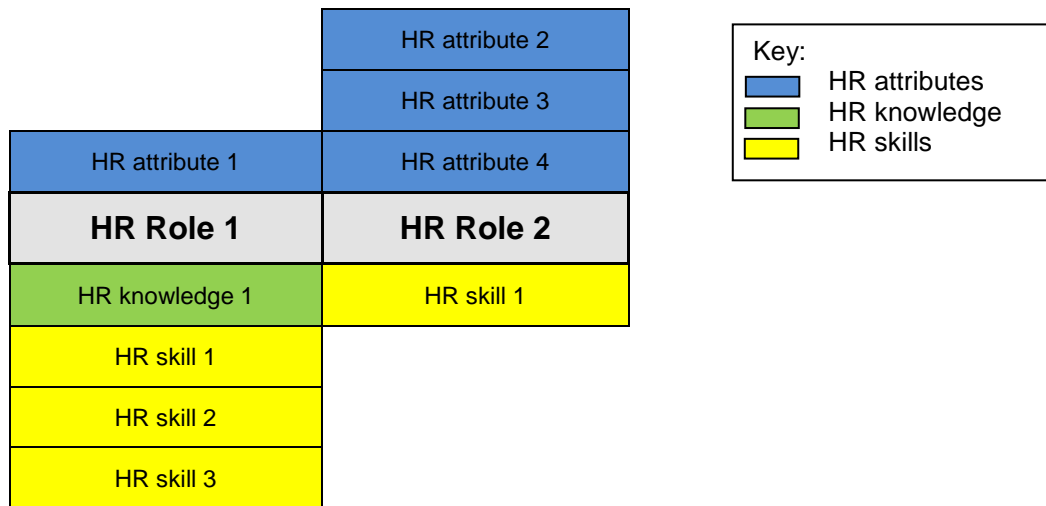
	HR Competencies	Relevance to HR Roles	Relevance to Organisational Contexts
<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Proactivity</b>	All	Lower for firms with 25000+ employees
	<b>Achievement Orientation</b>	Lower for change management and remuneration and rewards	Lower for construction
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>HR Generalist Expertise</b>	Lower for occupational health and safety	Lower for construction, firms with 100-499 employees
	<b>Employment Legislation</b>	Lower for change management and HR information system; not relevant to training and development	Lower for arts, recreation, education and training, publicly funded organisations
<b>Skills</b>	<b>Communication</b>	All	Lower for information, media and telecommunication
	<b>Relationship Building</b>	All	Lower for accommodation, food service, wholesale and retail trade
	<b>Consultation</b>	Lower for HR information system	Lower for firms with 25000+ employees, wholesale trade, professional, scientific and technical service
	<b>Collaboration</b>	Lower for remuneration and rewards	All
	<b>Coaching</b>	Lower for entry level advisor, remuneration and rewards, industrial/employment relations, HR information system	Lower for wholesale and retail trade, education and training services, firms with 1-99 employees
	<b>Problem Solving</b>	All	Lower for overseas-based MNEs
	<b>Project Management</b>	Lower for entry level advisor and HR information system	Lower for not-for-profit organisations
	<b>Process Improvement</b>	Lower for industrial/employment relations and HR information system	Lower for publicly funded organisations, accommodation and food, education and training, firms with 25000-49999 employees
	<b>Organisational and Administration</b>	Lower for remuneration and rewards	Lower for wholesale and retail trade

Note: see Appendix B for relative frequencies of all HR competencies in various contexts

Table 6 indicates that there were more generic HR competencies identified from the skill dimension than from other dimensions. Generic HR skills encompassed a combination of people and process oriented skills, ranging from communication to organisation and administration. Generic HR attributes included proactivity and achievement orientation and generic HR knowledge included HR generalist expertise and employment legislation. Table 6 also shows that some generic HR competencies had relatively lower levels of occurrences in several HR role and organisational contexts. For example, while proactivity was found to be relevant to all HR roles examined, this competency had a relative frequency of below 50% for organisations with more than 25,000 employees and organisations in the wholesale trade, arts, and recreation service sectors. This implies that some generic HR competencies may be more universally applicable than others.

#### **4.4.4 Role-Specific HR Competencies**

This section provides an overview on the relevance of HR competencies in various HR roles. The HR role dimensions investigated included the strategic orientation of the HR role, position level, and area of specialism. Figure 10 on the following page provides the conceptual framework used for exploring patterns emerging from the HR job description contextual analysis, which focused on HR competencies with an occurrence in 50% or more of the HR positions. Generic HR competencies have been addressed earlier and were therefore excluded from the contextual analysis.

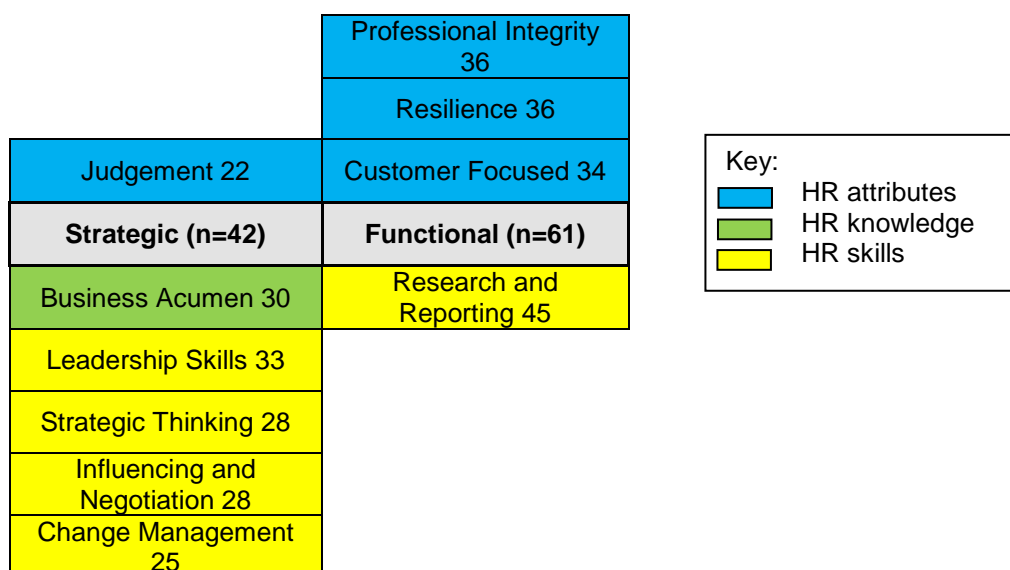


**Figure 10 Conceptual framework for comparing relevance of HR competencies in different HR roles**

To highlight the contextual relevance of HR competencies by different dimensions, HR attributes (blue cells) are located in the top part of the diagram and HR knowledge and skills (green and yellow cells) are located in the bottom part.

### ***Strategic Orientation of HR role***

Figure 11 compares the relevance of HR competencies between strategic and functional oriented HR roles.



**Figure 11 Relevance of HR competencies to strategic orientation of HR roles (Total N = 103)**

Figure 11 shows that strategic HR positions placed a greater focus on business oriented knowledge and skills. The most frequently mentioned HR competency for strategic HR positions was leadership skills (33 out of 42 HR positions), followed by business acumen, strategic thinking, influencing and negotiation, and change management. While 30 of the strategic HR positions required business acumen with a strong emphasis on industry knowledge/experience, only 20 of the functional HR positions required this knowledge.

On the other hand, functional HR positions tended to place greater emphasis on HR attributes. More than half of the functional HR positions required professional integrity, resilience and customer focus. While this finding implies that these HR attributes are more relevant to functional HR positions, they were also mentioned in 40% to 45% of the strategic HR positions. The most frequently mentioned HR skill for functional HR positions was research and reporting (45 out of 61 HR positions). This finding supports the general assumption that functional HR roles are more administrative and technical oriented compared to strategic HR roles (Yeung et al., 1996; Ramlall, 2006).

### ***Position Levels***

Figure 12 on the following page compares the relevance of HR competencies between HR executives, HR managers, intermediate/senior HR advisors (intermediate and senior advisors) and entry level HR advisors and HR assistants (entry level advisors and assistants).

The overall picture from Figure 12 is that senior HR positions placed greater emphasis on a wider range of HR competencies than did lower level HR positions. The findings show that HR executives had higher requirements for a mix of attributes, including innovation, professional integrity and resilience. On the other hand, lower level HR positions placed more emphasis on self-management attributes; for instance, attention to details and accountability.



Innovation 9		Customer Focused 23	
Professional Integrity 9		Innovation 18	
Resilience 9	Judgement 16	Accountability 17	Attention to Details 11
<b>Executives (n=18)</b>	<b>Managers (n=32)</b>	<b>Intermediate and Senior Advisors (n=34)</b>	<b>Entry Level Advisors and Assistants (n=19)</b>
Business Acumen 16	Business Acumen 16	Leadership 18	HR Technology 13
HR Metrics 10	Leadership 23	Influencing and Negotiation 25	Research and Reporting 14
Leadership 18	Influencing and Negotiation 20	Research and Reporting 22	
Strategic Thinking 15	Strategic Thinking 16		
Influencing and Negotiation 9			

Key:

HR attributes

HR knowledge

HR skills

**Figure 12 Relevance of HR competencies to position levels (Total N = 103)**

At the knowledge level, business acumen proved more relevant to HR executives and managers, while HR technology was more relevant to entry level HR advisors and HR administrators. Senior HR positions also placed more emphasis on business oriented skills, such as leadership, strategic thinking, and influencing and negotiation skills. On the other hand, HR advisors and assistants tended to have higher requirements for research and reporting skills.

The findings for HR position levels were similar to the results reported for the strategic orientation of HR roles (see Figure 11). However, one needs to be cautious when interpreting this finding as HR job descriptions for senior and advisory HR positions tended to be longer in content, thus containing a broader range of HR competencies compared to HR job descriptions for lower level HR positions.

### ***Areas of HR Specialism***

The relevance of HR competencies for different HR specialisms is presented in Figure 13 on the following page. It is important to note that the relative frequencies of specialist HR knowledge and skills was 100% for each of the corresponding specialist HR roles; for example, all of the training and development roles required knowledge in training and development and all of change management positions required change management skills. This served as a validity check for the HR job description analysis and further details are reported in Appendix B.

Several important themes emerge from Figure 13. First, while generalist HR roles required a broad range of HR attributes and behaviours, these competencies were not universally required for all other HR specialist roles. For instance, judgement had higher relevance for both HR generalist roles (30 out of 58) and industrial/employment relations roles (5 out of 5).

Second, industrial/employment relations and occupational safety and health specialists tended to have higher requirements for social attributes and values – for example, empathy and professional integrity – than did other roles. An important finding here was that IER specialists also had high requirements for strategic thinking skills, given the employee-focused nature of the role. Investigation of the coding indicated that the meaning of strategic thinking for industrial/employment relations specialists refers to an ability to align HR practices (including employment relations) with the goals of the organisation by “applying risk management principles” and “giving consideration to the impact of one’s own decisions now and in the future”.

Another finding was the high level of occurrences of business acumen for industrial/employment relations and occupational safety and health specialists. Examination of the business acumen competency coding for these two roles indicated that 50% of the coding was related to relevant experience in the industry sector.

				Judgement 5	Resilience 3		
				Professional Integrity 4	Professional Integrity 3		
Professional Integrity 35	Autonomous 2			Resilience 4	Innovation 3		
Resilience 33	Attention to Details 2	Innovation 8		Empathy 3	Empathy 2	Customer Focused 5	
Judgement 30	Innovation 2	Customer Focused 7	Autonomous 4	Accountability 3	Attention to Details 2	Resilience 4	Attention to Details 4
<b>HR Generalist (n=58)</b>	<b>Change Management (n=3)</b>	<b>Training and Development (n=12)</b>	<b>Recruitment and Selection (n=8)</b>	<b>Industrial/ Employment Relations (n=5)</b>	<b>Occupational Safety and Health (n=4)</b>	<b>HR Information System (n=7)</b>	<b>Remuneration and Rewards (n=6)</b>
Business Acumen 32	Business Acumen 2	Leadership 9	Business Acumen 5	Business Acumen 3	Business Acumen 3	HR Technology 6	HR Technology 3
Leadership 41	Training Development 3	Influencing and Negotiation 7	HR Metrics 5	Performance Management 3	Remuneration and Rewards 2		
Influencing and Negotiation 36	Performance Management 2		Leadership 5	Research and Reporting 4	HR Metrics 2		
Strategic Thinking 33	Conflict Resolution 2		Strategic Thinking 4	Strategic Thinking 4			
	Research and Reporting 2		Research and Reporting 4	Conflict Resolution 3			
			Influencing and Negotiation 4	Influencing and Negotiation 3			

Key:	
<span style="background-color: #00b0f0; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span>	HR attributes
<span style="background-color: #92d050; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span>	HR knowledge
<span style="background-color: #ffff00; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span>	HR skills

**Figure 13 Relevance of HR competencies to areas of HR specialism (Total N = 103)**

Lastly, HR information systems and remuneration and rewards specialists had fewer requirements for HR competencies given the narrow focus of these roles.

#### **4.4.5 Context-Specific HR Competencies**

This section discusses the relevance of HR competencies in different organisational contexts. The organisational contexts investigated include types of organisations, firm size, and industry sectors. However, only a brief summary is provided as the contextual patterns emerging from the HR job description analysis are less clear given the wide nature of contextual variables explored. More detailed accounts of HR competency contextual analysis is provided in the concept mapping survey phase of this study (see Chapter 6).

First, results relating to the contextual relevance of diversity awareness and HR metrics were very mixed. As reported in section 4.4.2, the requirements for these two HR knowledges across the sampled HR positions were fairly low (with a frequency occurrence of 39% and 26% respectively). However, results from the contextual analysis showed that diversity awareness was highly relevant to HR positions in publicly funded organisations (7 out of 11), public administration and safety (10 out of 16), and education and training service sectors (4 out of 7). HR metrics were found to be more relevant to HR positions in very large organisations (with 25,000-74,999 employees).

On the other hand, the contextual relevance of HR attributes and HR skills was less clear. One reason is that HR job descriptions sampled from some industry sectors (e.g., public administration and health care) tended to contain more detailed information about HR competencies and therefore inflated the HR competency requirements. On the other hand, HR job descriptions sampled from overseas-based MNEs tended to be shorter in content, partly because most of these HR job descriptions were embedded within the HR job advertisement.

A number of HR attributes appeared to be relevant to a wider range of organisational contexts. These included judgement, innovation, resilience, professional integrity, and customer focused. At the skill level, several HR competencies appeared to be relevant to a wider range of organisational contexts. These were leadership, influencing and negotiation, strategic thinking, and research and reporting skills.

This section has described the preliminary findings on the generic and role-specific nature of HR competencies from the HR job description analysis. Because there were no clear patterns concerning the contextual relevance of HR competencies, further analysis in the concept mapping research was done, with a particular focus on HR competencies with low relative frequency in the HR job description analysis.

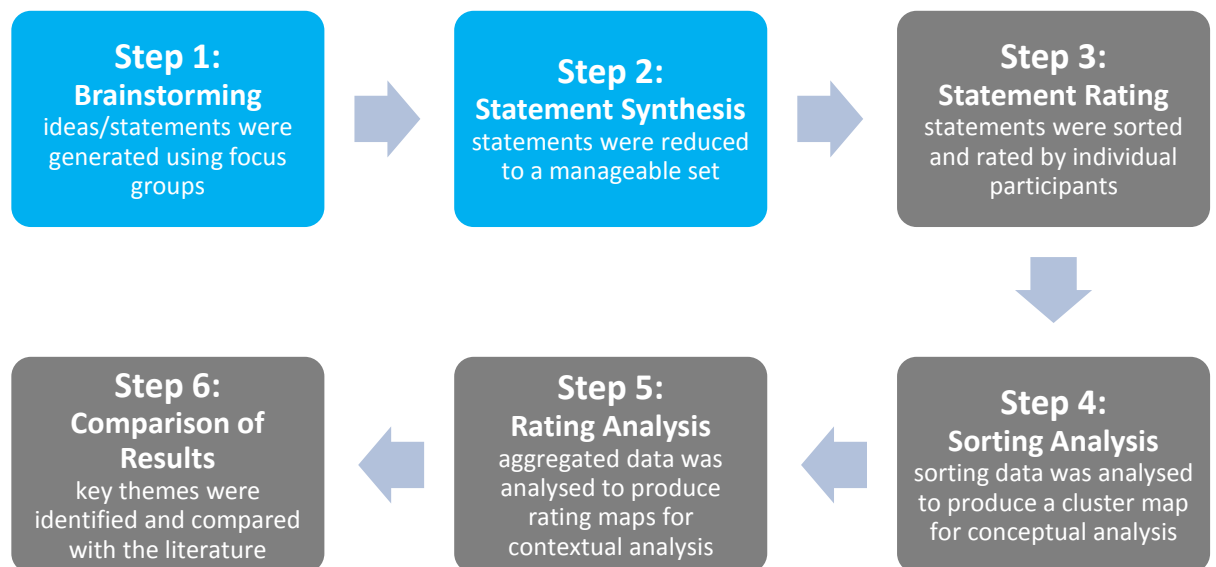
The next chapter will describe the procedure used in conducting the concept mapping focus groups and discuss the findings.

## Chapter 5. Concept Mapping Focus Groups

In this chapter, the procedures used for conducting the concept mapping focus groups are firstly explained. Key findings from the focus groups are then presented and compared with data collected from the HR job description analysis. Finally, ethical considerations of the concept mapping focus group are addressed.

### 5.1 Method

The objectives of the focus group research were: 1) to triangulate and verify the findings from the HR job description analysis in phase one of the research, and 2) to provide input data for the concept mapping survey research in phase three of the study. The visual diagram for the concept mapping focus group research is highlighted in blue in Figure 14 below. Step 1 (brainstorming) involved the convening of focus groups and Step 2 (statement synthesis) involved thematic analysis of the discussions. Steps 3 to 6 constituted the concept mapping survey research which is discussed in Chapter 6.



**Figure 14 Concept mapping focus group procedures**

Source: Adapted from Kane, M. & Trochim, W. (2007). *Concept mapping for planning and evaluation*. London: Sage Publications.

### **5.1.1 Step 1: Brainstorming**

The objective of the brainstorming step was to explore the conceptual meanings of the generally agreed HR competencies. This step was carried out using face-to-face focus groups with New Zealand HR practitioners. Participants were recruited from two sources: Human Resource Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ) and LinkedIn Discussion Boards. HRINZ is a New Zealand HR professional body that has 800 members in the HRINZ Research Participation Stream who have registered an interest to participate in New Zealand's HR research. In addition, an advertisement was posted on several New Zealand-based HR LinkedIn Discussion Boards to recruit HR practitioners who are not members of the HRINZ Research Participation Stream (see Appendix E).

Twelve New Zealand HR practitioners initially registered their interest to take part in the focus group research and eight of them attended three focus group sessions. The first two sessions consisted of three people each and the third session consisted of two people. Another two HR practitioners provided individual input to the brainstorming process as they were not able to attend the focus groups. The final sample consisted of five HR internal/external consultants, two HR managers, and three HR advisors, with experience(s) in different industry sectors, including private, public, and not-for-profit organisations. Given that the topic of interest is rather complex and controversial, the focus group sample and size chosen were appropriate for this study because it enabled a variety of opinions while still enabling good group discussion/interpretation.

According to Kane and Trochim (2007), the typical sample size of concept mapping is 40 or fewer and a minimum of 10 people is sufficient. A comparison of the focus group findings with data collected from the HR job description analysis confirmed a high level of consistency in the meaning and range of HR competencies identified (see section 5.2.3).

Considerable planning and care was taken in order to ensure high quality data and that the group's interaction provided insights into participants' perspectives and experiences

(Morgan, 1997; Patton, 1987). A brainstorming focus statement and a focus prompt were used to guide the discussion (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Trochim, 1989).

- *Brainstorming focus statement*: “Generate short phrases or sentences that describe the personal attributes, knowledge, and skills required for effective/successful performance in your role within your organisation.”
- *Focus prompt*: “One personal attribute, knowledge, or skill required for effective/successful performance in my role within my organisation is...”

To encourage the widest range of responses, participants were briefed about the concept of a competency along with examples of some typical HR competencies (see Instructions for Brainstorming Focus Groups in Appendix F). To ensure everyone had the opportunity to express their opinions, pens and notepads were provided for participants who wished to write down their ideas as they occurred and then share with the group later. The researcher recorded the statements on a whiteboard as they were generated so that all members of the group were aware of the discussion progress. Discussions ended when saturation of responses was reached, that is, when no new ideas were identified. The duration of each session was approximately 1.5 hours. A total of 104 HR competency statements were generated from the three focus group sessions, with a total time of approximately 4.5 hours.

### **5.1.2 Step 2: Statement Synthesis**

The objective of statement synthesis was to provide a list of clear, understandable, and relevant statements for participants in the concept mapping survey phase of the research (see Chapter 6). This involved reducing the HR competency statements generated from the brainstorming step to a manageable set and ensuring that there were no redundancies in meaning. Although the proprietary software Concept System can manage up to 125 statements, it is generally recommended that researchers limit the final number of statements to 100 or fewer to ensure research practicability and



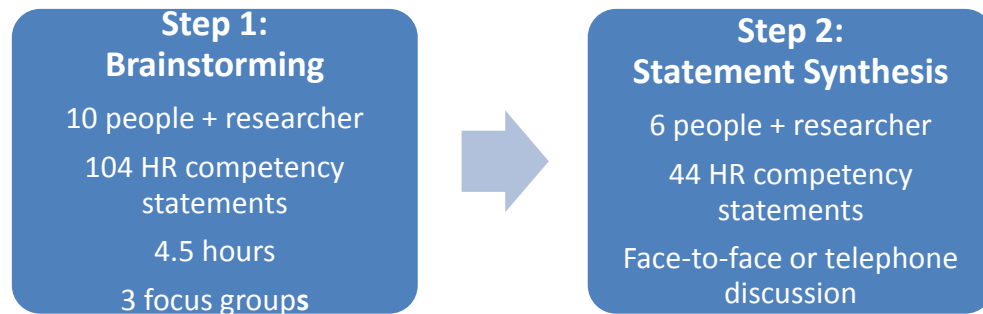
participant engagement (Kane & Trochim, 2007). A review of the original 104 statements revealed some overlapping as well as ambiguity in meaning, thus it was necessary to reduce and edit the statements. The statement synthesis procedures used are shown in Table 7:

**Table 7 Statement Synthesis Procedures**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Input</b>
1. Sort and reduce 104 statements	Group statements into attribute, knowledge, and skill dimensions and eliminate duplication and statements with overlapping meanings.	Researcher
2. Reduce 50 statements	Ensure the original language and meaning of the original statement are retained.	Researcher and three focus group participants
3. Analyse 37 statements	Integrate with HR job description analysis and literature review.	Researcher
4. Edit 44 statements	Ensure the wording is generic and neutral in meaning.	Researcher and three academics

The original 104 statements were initially sorted by the researcher into attribute (26), knowledge (29) and skill dimensions (49). Statements that duplicated in meanings were removed, resulting in 50 statements. In concept mapping, it is fundamental that the final statements express the original ideas of the participants in a way that they will be understood across the entire stakeholder group (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Three focus group participants from Step 1 Brainstorming were consulted to reduce any uncertainty about decisions to merge, split, or remove specific statements whilst ensuring that no key ideas were omitted. This reduced the list further to 37 statements, which were then integrated with the HR competency categories identified from the literature review and the HR job description analysis phase of the study, resulting in a final list of 44 statements. Because the meaning of an HR competency can be subject to widespread interpretation, it was necessary to include both the label and the descriptor for the HR competency in the final statements so that they were clear and comprehensible to all HR practitioners in the participant group. The last step involved

consulting with three HR academics from the Department of Management at AUT University to ensure the HR competency labels and descriptors were generic and neutral in meaning. The process of brainstorming and statement synthesis is summarised in Figure 15.



**Figure 15 Process of brainstorming and statement synthesis**

The findings from the focus group research are discussed in the next section.

## **5.2 Findings**

### **5.2.1 Emerging Themes from Concept Mapping Focus Groups**

In general, there was a high degree of consensus among brainstorming participants about the critical competencies required of HR practitioners for effective performance. HR competencies that were agreed to by all groups were predominantly focused on the knowledge and skills dimensions. Of the 104 HR competencies generated from the three brainstorming focus groups, 47% were HR skills (e.g., relationship building, effective communication skills, influencing and negotiation skills, strategic thinking) and 28% were HR knowledge (e.g., HR functional expertise and business acumen). Only 25% of the HR competencies were HR attributes. Most of the suggested attributes were related to having good business judgement and impartiality, professional credibility and integrity, and being empathetic, sociable, outgoing, and proactive.

Most of the HR competencies were straightforward and easy to define, but some were subject to multiple interpretations. The concepts that generated the most discussion were business acumen, professional credibility, and influencing and negotiation skills.

### ***Business Acumen***

For the term business acumen, there was a shared understanding that this competency refers to general awareness of both internal business operations and environmental impacts on the business, such as industry of the business, the financial environment, and the global economy. One participant described business knowledge as:

*'Keeping updated with even financial situation in the whole country, with the whole world, especially in the recession time, for example, we have to change something even in the...so many things...maybe that time you have to stop recruitment and just have some [employees] redundant....Even for a business which is not multinational, you have to know what's going on in the whole world, and then just fix it to be updated and not isolate it for your business.'*

Another participant from a not-for-profit organisation referred to business acumen as an understanding of the business strategy in terms of the challenges and risks the organisation is experiencing.

*'For me, it's (business acumen) understanding the numbers, organisational awareness, in terms of understanding the business of the organisation. What's going on currently? What's impacting the organisation and what are the risks? Or even internally, for us it's about marketing. What are the big campaigns that are coming up? It's knowing what's happening out of your HR "possie" [position]?''*

Despite the diversity of the descriptors suggested, the important implication is that HR practitioners need to have an organisational-wide perspective and a focus on organisational agenda in order to align HR strategies with business goals and make good business judgement.

*'So [business acumen is] not just thinking about [HR], I see a lot of managers who were thinking in terms of their own departments but not how their decisions will actually impact the organisation as a whole or other departments and therefore how the organisation will perform or not perform, whereas I feel that managers who do take a bigger picture view were also able to think strategically.'*

*'[HR] has to be looking out and anticipating the need...if you know your business really well, you will be able to say, actually if we were going into XYZ market, we need to increase our IT capability or we need to increase our capability in foreign exchange, and we need to start working on that now, so somebody in HR needs to be looking and saying, if this is where the company is going, these are the capabilities that we need in three or four years' time and we need to be thinking about that now.'*

After further consultation with HR practitioners, a decision was made to treat business acumen as a single HR competency category.

### ***Professional Credibility***

On the other hand, the concept of professional credibility was subjected to a broader range of meanings across the participant groups. The first group made a clear distinction between the terms *credibility* and *integrity* by referring to credibility as being professional and having the ability to demonstrate a contribution to the business, and integrity as setting examples, fair business, and transparency of policies and processes. A participant from a HR consulting firm explained:

*'[Integrity] is trust, fair business, transparency, those kind of things are good for business, not just morality, but the transparency of processes and policies, especially in the world at the moment, look at Europe and the finance world...what was missing was the key ingredient and the key driver of business is integrity.'*

*'[Credibility] is getting the respected confidence in people, it's more professional [than integrity], and being able to demonstrate the contribution the [HR] practitioner has made to the enterprise.'*

The second group had a different perspective on the concept of being credible. As one participant commented:

*'Adding value is different from being highly credible, not just very smart but able to implement something.'*

The third group referred to the concept of credibility as building trust, that is, an output of honesty, openness, and respect for appropriate boundaries and confidentiality.

Taken altogether, these results support the findings of Graham and Tarbell (2006) that the meaning of the competency personal credibility is multidimensional. To ensure that

this competency was comprehensible to a wider sample of HR practitioners in the concept mapping survey, the above mentioned ideas were regarded as separate HR competency categories: achievement orientation, professional integrity and relationship building.

### ***Influencing and Negotiation***

In terms of influencing and negotiation, participants highlighted that the application of this competency varies considerably.

*'Negotiation is a game...like a football team. Each coach in each situation and each match uses a strategy for according to his understanding of their opponent. So I use this strategy, sometimes I am offensive, sometimes I am defensive, sometimes I am neutral, it's everything. So that's why here the HR person here should know exactly different styles or strategies for negotiation. It's a huge area.'*

Nevertheless, there was general agreement that influencing and negotiation is an important competency for HR practitioners in all HR roles. One participant mentioned that the use of negotiation skills often involves managing relationships with different parties.

*'When you are doing your negotiation, you would often be using some service providers...but even for an operational HR person, they are dealing with the recruiters...training providers, so there's this whole network of relationships that needs to be managed.'*

Several participants even questioned about the nature of this competency and whether or not the different styles of influencing and negotiation required for HR practitioners in different position levels represent separate skills.

*'You change your [negotiation] approach in terms of how you utilise your competencies....I mean like if you go and try and persuade the manager to do something for you, or you go and try and persuade the unions to do something differently...you just use it with a different...with the language that you use it's just different but the competency itself would probably stay the same?'*

*'Or is it (different influencing and negotiation approaches) a different skill? Is it different? Is it the same competency but are there "ladders"? As a HR co-ordinator versus a General Manager of HR, I just don't think they are the same.'*

Whereas another participant suggested that the application of influencing and negotiation skills evolves throughout one's career.

*'Doesn't this (application of influencing and negotiation skills) come through life experience, or work experience? The more you use the skills the better you are in applying it.'*

This concept of evolving HR competencies throughout one's career has been discussed in detail in McEvoy et al.'s (2005) work using a career-based model. Such career-based models are also commonly adopted in professional development curricula (e.g., Human Resources Institute of New Zealand) but the focus is predominantly on the areas of competence (i.e., output) rather than the competency requirement (i.e., input). Given that the focus of the current research is on competency requirements, a decision was made to treat the variation in application and output of influencing and negotiation as one single HR competency category.

### **5.2.2 Contextual Relevance of HR Competencies**

Although the brainstorming focus groups concentrated mainly on exploring the conceptual meanings of the key HR competencies, several participants highlighted in their discussions that some HR competencies, such as business acumen, are specific to the HR role and type of business.

*'I think it's (organisational awareness) much for important in my current role, as a HR manager now, it's much more important now than I was an HR advisor or an HR administrator. I think it's important in terms of credibility, important in terms of the success of HR projects.'*

*'I think it's very necessary to know what are the differences between this kind of business [knowledge] or the other one. Like for example sometimes you have managers, or even human resource managers, who came from private sector, to governmental sector, which was totally different kind of [knowledge], they have to*

*totally change their attitudes, the way they behave, and everything, just it took so long time. If they didn't know that they couldn't do well in the organisation. So it was so necessary to know that what exactly the business here means or different.'*

Moreover, several participants mentioned that in addition to possessing HR functional expertise and empathy, having a business orientation is more important to the strategic success of HR practitioners in senior or leadership roles.

*'I think we haven't been able to demonstrate value...return on investments, we haven't been able to talk business number. And I wonder if we have overemphasised some of the empathy, coaching, rapport building skills at the expense of skills around, at the end of the day, this is a business and how does HR help me run a business. And we ask for money in HR, we often given large amounts of money and never asked to demonstrate it. And I just think it's recession has hit and things have gone tougher, so I think HR needs to become much more business oriented.'*

*'Executive experience from line management or functional leadership roles is an important competency for the very top person [in HR]...knowledge, experience....There are other examples of people who have gone to HR from line roles and to bring knowledge from other disciplines to bear on the [HR] practitioner role or the practitioner going forward.'*

### 5.2.3 Comparison of Findings from HR Job Description Analysis

This section compares the concept mapping focus group findings with data collected from the HR job description analysis. Table 8 below compares the range of HR competencies from these two research phases by HR attribute, knowledge and skill dimension.

**Table 8 Comparison of Raw Data from HR Job Description Analysis and Concept Mapping Focus Groups**

	HR Job Description Analysis (Total N = 2191)	Concept Mapping Focus Groups (Total N = 104)
HR Attributes	27% (586)	25% (26)
HR Knowledge	27% (602)	28% (29)
HR Skills	46% (1009)	47% (49)

Table 8 reveals a high level of consistency in the range of HR competencies collected from the two research phases. Overall, distribution of HR competency requirements across the different dimensions was similar in phases one and two of the study, where knowledge and skill dimensions received greater focus than did attributes.

Four HR attributes and three HR skills identified from the HR job description analysis and the literature were added to the final list of brainstormed statements:

1. Self-confidence (literature and HR job description)
2. Innovation (literature and HR job description)
3. Ability to Work Autonomously (HR job description)
4. Sense of Humour (HR job description)
5. Collaboration (literature and HR job description)
6. Organisation and Administration (HR job description)
7. Research and Reporting (HR job description)

One notable difference in the findings between the two phases of HR job description analysis and concept mapping focus groups is the definition given to the competency, attention to details that add value to the organisation. In the concept mapping focus groups this competency is found to denote a strategic oriented HR attribute, whereas a similar competency, attention to details, identified from the HR job description analysis, is referred to as a self-management HR attribute (see section 4.3.2).

The final set of HR competencies and descriptors is provided in Table 9 on the following page. This list consists of 16 HR attributes (1 to 16), 12 knowledges (17 to 28), and 16 skills (29 to 44). Each of the HR competencies was provided with a descriptor except for the competencies ability to work autonomously (1), attention to details that add value to the organisation (6), and HR specialist expertise (19 to 23). This was based on the assumption that the labels were clearly comprehensible to all HR practitioners and were sufficient without further explanation.



**Table 9 Synthesised List of 44 HR Competencies and Descriptors**

HR Competencies		Descriptors
1	Ability to Work Autonomously	no descriptor
2	Accountability	seeks to follow through on tasks/activities to ensure commitments/agreements have been fulfilled
3	Achievement Orientation	seeks to achieve goals/targets aligned with organisational objectives
4	Approachable	able to network with people in a business-focused context
5	Assertiveness	courage to voice opinion and challenge status quos/ideas
6	Attention to Details that add value to the organisation	no descriptor
7	Curiosity	actively explores a range of disciplines related to the effective delivery of HR strategies
8	Customer Focused	committed to fulfilling the needs of internal/external customers
9	Empathy	seeks to understand others' needs and feelings and how people interact
10	Innovation	receptive to new ideas/alternatives that will improve organisational results
11	Judgement	able to assess whether or not there is a business case for taking on initiatives
12	Proactivity	identifies opportunities that add value to the organisation and takes initiatives to achieve goals
13	Professional Integrity	honest, ethical, and respectful of appropriate boundaries/confidentiality
14	Resilience	able to sustain performance in high-stress situations
15	Self-confidence	has realistic confidence in own judgement, ability, and power
16	Sense of Humour	able to use humour to defuse stress in a crisis
17	Business Acumen	identifies and understands how internal/external issues (e.g. economic, political, social trends) impact the organisation
18	Diversity Awareness	understands how to optimise cultural differences to the organisation's benefit
19	Expertise in Health and Safety	no descriptor

**Table 9 continued**

	<b>HR Competencies</b>	<b>Descriptors</b>
20	Expertise in Performance Management	no descriptor
21	Expertise in Recruitment and Selection	no descriptor
22	Expertise in Remuneration and Reward	no descriptor
23	Expertise in Training and Development	no descriptor
24	Financial Savvy	ability to interpret and talk business numbers and demonstrate value and return on investment
25	HR Metrics	ability to measure and interpret HR performance and compare with overall organisational cost metrics
26	HR Technology	knows how to implement and leverage HR information systems to support organisational strategies
27	Knowledge of Employment Legislation	no descriptor
28	Political Savvy	knows who the formal/informal influencers, gatekeepers, or decision makers are and how to get things done through them
29	Change Management	ability to plan, facilitate, and communicate change initiatives and encourage staff to accept and resolve challenges
30	Coaching	ability to provide guidance and feedback to help others develop their ability to improve job performance
31	Collaboration	ability to develop cooperation and teamwork while participating in a group of people to achieve desired organisational outcomes
32	Communication	ability to convey messages verbally or in writing to individuals or groups, listen to others
33	Conflict Resolution	ability to use interpersonal skills and methods to reduce tension and resolve conflict
34	Consultation	ability to provide HR expertise to line managers using a facilitative, rather than a prescriptive, approach
35	Influencing and Negotiation	ability to represent own position on issues to gain support and buy-in from others
36	Knowledge Sharing	actively shares information and knowledge and encourages contribution from others in a team environment
37	Leadership	ability to express the strategic vision for the organisation, motivate and inspire others to accomplish organisational objectives

**Table 9 continued**

	<b>HR Competencies</b>	<b>Descriptors</b>
38	Organisation and Administration	ability to manage time, organise work priorities, and perform filing and data handling
39	Problem Solving	ability to identify the real causes of the problem and choose the best solution according to the situation
40	Process Improvement	ability to design and deliver a cost effective HR operational system
41	Project Management	ability to plan, coordinate, and manage resources for the project, track milestones and report critical success factors
42	Relationship Building	ability to foster long-term partnerships with stakeholders to facilitate the accomplishment of organisational goals
43	Research and Reporting	ability to collect, interpret, and evaluate information/data and create reports/presentations
44	Strategic Thinking	ability to foresee opportunities/risks relating to the long-term strategic needs of the organisation and come up with HR solutions

### 5.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was sought from the University's Ethical Committee for the concept mapping phase of the study (see Appendix G for the approval) as HR practitioners were invited to participate in group discussion and/or complete an online questionnaire. Focus group participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix H) and Consent Form (Appendix I) prior to the brainstorming session. No Koha was given to the participants apart from light refreshments and beverages during the focus group discussions. Written informed consent was sought from all focus group participants and they were advised that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Any critical information pertaining to the participants and their organisations obtained during the focus group has not been mentioned in the research in order to ensure the security and privacy of the participants. Signed consent forms are stored and locked securely in the supervisor's office.

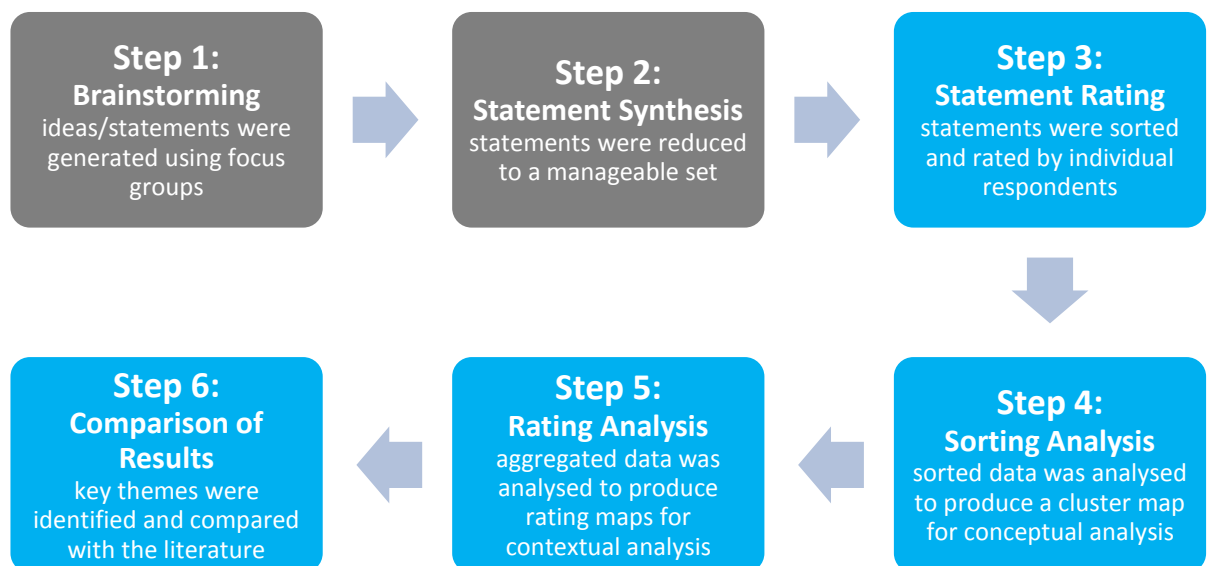
## Chapter 6. Concept Mapping Survey

In this chapter, the procedures for conducting the concept mapping survey are firstly explained. Key findings from the survey are then presented and compared with data collected from the HR job description analysis. Lastly, reliability and validity issues of the concept mapping survey are addressed.

The objectives of the concept mapping survey research were: 1) to discover conceptual relationships and contextual relevance of HR competencies from HR practitioners' perspectives, and 2) to converge these with data collected from the HR job description analysis in phase one of the research.

### 6.1 Method

The concept mapping survey research consisted of four steps which are highlighted in blue in Figure 16.



**Figure 16 Concept mapping survey procedures**

Source: Adapted from Kane, M. & Trochim, W. (2007). *Concept mapping for planning and evaluation*. London: Sage Publications.

Step 3 (statement rating) involved individuals alone and was conducted electronically.

Steps 4 (sorting analysis), 5 (rating analysis) and 6 (comparison of results) were

carried out by the researcher alone. The main steps of the concept mapping survey are discussed next.

## **6.2 Statement Rating**

The purpose of the statement rating step was to explore individual HR practitioners' perception on the interrelationships and importance of the HR competencies identified from the concept mapping focus groups in phase two of the research. This involved conducting an on-line survey. The design of the questionnaire is first explained in this section, then the pilot test and sampling procedures are outlined.

### **6.2.1 Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire design was adapted from the proprietary software Concept System, and is provided in Appendix J. The online project introduction screen provided a brief overview of the purpose of the questionnaire, the researcher's background, and potential research contributions to theory and practice. It also assured respondents of anonymity if they wished to take part in the research. The informed consent screen then asked respondents to indicate their informed participation in this research, as required by AUT's Human Research Ethics Policy. The project home page provided respondents with links to three activities: 1) role and organisational context questions, 2) sorting activity, and 3) rating activity.

The first activity addressed the demographics of the respondents. Respondents were asked to answer eight questions relating to their position level, primary area of HR specialism, secondary area of HR specialism, location of HR role, strategic orientation of HR role, type of organisation, industry, and firm size in terms of number of employees. These questions were drawn from the reviewed literature and were designed to provide the researcher with role and organisational context information on the respondents as well as to act as general and easy to answer questions.

The sorting activity addressed the respondents' perception of common themes among the HR competencies. Respondents were asked to read through the 44 HR

competencies and descriptors first, then sort these competencies into clusters/piles in a way that made sense to them and then name each cluster.

The rating activity addressed individual respondent's perception of the relative importance of each HR competency item. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the 44 HR competency items for effective performance in their current role and organisation on a 7-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = not at all important, 4 = moderately important, and 7 = highly important.

When designing the questionnaire, consideration was given to question content, layout, and modes of responses to increase interest in the survey and thus encourage completion. In particular, it was fundamental that respondents completed the sorting activity *before* the rating activity because each activity required different sets of judgement (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The sorting activity asked respondents to group HR competency items into thematic clusters, regardless of how they might feel about the importance of each item. On the other hand, the rating activity addressed each respondent's perception of an HR competency's importance for effective performance in their role. If the rating activity was completed first, it was likely that it would affect how the respondents grouped the HR competencies, because they would already have formed their own judgement on the importance of each item. Consequently, respondents would be likely to group their most important items together and their least important items together, without considering thematic similarities among the items. To avoid respondents completing the rating activity first, they were instructed to complete the activities in the exact sequence as they were listed on the project main screen. This screen was designed to appear after each activity was completed to inform the respondent of completion status.

### **6.2.2 Pre-testing the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire's length was a potential concern. In draft format, the timing took approximately 30 minutes. The sorting activity was the most demanding as it

contained detailed instructions and required respondents to read through the 44 HR competencies and their descriptors before grouping them into clusters. Respondents who were reluctant to complete this activity were able to withdraw from the questionnaire without completing the rating activity. To assess the questionnaire's length and the clarity of the instructions, a pilot study was organised. For the pilot study, four HR practitioners and four academics were selected using the researcher's social network. All those involved provided feedback on length for completion and ambiguities and the questionnaire was refined accordingly. The estimate of 30 minutes for completion was confirmed as reasonable.

### **6.2.3 Sampling Procedures**

To ensure that the sample selected for the online questionnaire was representative of the diverse range of HR roles and organisational backgrounds in New Zealand, a purposive sampling procedure was adopted to recruit questionnaire respondents. According to Kane and Trochim (2007), purposive sampling ensures heterogeneity in the final sampling of ideas. Snowball sampling was also used to increase the response rate. However, there is no theoretical basis to support the sample size calculation for performing concept mapping using an online questionnaire (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Therefore, the sample size determined for this study was based on prior empirical studies of similar research focus as well as on theoretical saturation of information obtained from the concept mapping online questionnaire (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For the purposes of this study, theoretical saturation was reached when further respondents would not have added nuances to the comparison of HR competencies perceived importance by HR practitioners in different organisational contexts. The number of HR survey respondents in prior HR competency studies ranged from 87 to 197 (Dainty, 2011; Long & Wan Ismail, 2009; Ramlall, 2006). Given the range of contextual variables under investigation, it was decided that approximately 100 questionnaire respondents were required for triangulation with data obtained from HR job descriptions (phase one) and concept mapping focus groups (phase two).

The selection criteria for the final sample were that the respondent must have completed:

- Activity 1: role and organisational context questions and
- Activity 2: sorting, and/or,
- Activity 3: rating

The sources used for recruiting questionnaire respondents are provided in Table 10.

**Table 10 Recruitment Sources for Concept Mapping Research**

Source	Description	Members/ Subscribers	Involvement
<b>Focus Group Participants and Networks</b>	HR practitioners who participated in the brainstorming focus groups and their respective HR colleagues and clients	Approx. 50	Online questionnaire
<b>HRINZ Research Participation Stream</b>	A research committee that sends out regular email invitations to HRINZ members who have registered an interest to participate in New Zealand's HR research	Approx. 800	Focus group and online questionnaire
<b>HR Discussion Groups on LinkedIn</b>	Various members-only LinkedIn discussion forums: (e.g., New Zealand HR and Recruitment Network, New Zealand Human Resources, Talent Management New Zealand)	Approx. 3000	Focus group and online questionnaire
<b>HRINZ Newsletter</b>	A paid subscription monthly electronic newsletter for HRINZ members	Approx. 4000	Online questionnaire
<b>Alert24 People Management</b>	A paid subscription electronic news service for HR practitioners in New Zealand	Approx. 200	Online questionnaire
<b>Safeguard forum</b>	A free discussion forum on New Zealand's health and safety issues, hosted by Safeguard Magazine	Several hundred	Online questionnaire
<b>EEO Trust Diversity Group on LinkedIn</b>	Consists of HR practitioners and managers who are interested in employee wellbeing and diversity and/or are members of the Equal Employment Opportunity Trust.	105	Online questionnaire

An invitation email was sent out to the 10 HR practitioners who participated in the concept mapping brainstorming focus groups in phase two of the research. This served as a check to ensure the questionnaire content was comprehensible to the broader sample of HR practitioners, thus minimising potential threats to reproducibility



of the questionnaire (Jackson & Trochim, 2002; Kane & Trochim, 2007). One of the original focus group participants kindly forwarded the invitation to another four dozen HR practitioners through his professional network and a majority of them responded with confirmation that they had completed the questionnaire. The HRINZ Research Participation Stream and various HR LinkedIn Discussion Boards were also used to generate more interest. The advertisement used is provided in Appendix K.

The above mentioned sources yielded 70 responses, with 40 of those responses meeting the selection criteria. This was below the expected sample size of 100. A review of the respondent demographics also showed that respondents from employee wellbeing and occupational health & safety disciplines were under represented. According to Trochim (1993), the number of sorters is positively correlated to reliabilities of concept mapping. To increase the response rate, additional recruitment sources were used, including HRINZ online newsletter, Alert24 People Management online newsletter, Safeguard online discussion forum, and the EEO Trust Diversity Group on the LinkedIn website. These sources successfully increased the final number of responses to 119, with 63 of those responses (53%) meeting the selection criteria. The number of completed responses for each questionnaire activity is provided in Table 11.

**Table 11 Responses Completed for Each Questionnaire Activity**

<b>Activities Completed</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Role & Organisational Context	63
Sorting (Cluster Map)	62
Rating (Cluster Rating Map & Pattern Matches)	60

More respondents completed the sorting activity (62) than those who completed the rating activity (60), even though the former activity was more demanding.

## 6.2.4 Concept Mapping Respondent Demographics

The HR role and organisational backgrounds of respondent demographics are provided in Table 12 and Table 13. The final sample comprised a variety of HR roles and organisational contexts.

**Table 12 Concept Mapping Survey Respondent Demographics – HR Role**

<b>A. Strategic Orientation of HR Role</b>	<b>n=63</b>	<b>B. Position Level</b>	<b>n=63</b>
Mostly functional	6	Executive	11
Fairly functional	7	Manager	21
Slightly more functional	12	Advisor - senior level	11
Even mix between functional/strategic	17	Advisor - intermediate level	7
Slightly more strategic	5	Advisor - entry level	1
Fairly strategic	9	Administrator	3
Mostly strategic	6	Consulting	5
Did not respond	1	Other	4
<b>C. Primary HR Specialism</b>	<b>n=63</b>	<b>D. Secondary HR Specialism</b>	<b>n=63</b>
Change Management	6	Change Management	14
Consulting	9	Consulting	6
Employee Wellbeing	0	Employee Wellbeing	2
HR Information Systems	2	HR Information Systems	3
Industrial & Employment Relations	18	Industrial & Employment Relations	2
Occupational Health & Safety	3	Occupational Health & Safety	2
Recruitment & Selection	7	Recruitment & Selection	11
Remuneration & Benefits	1	Remuneration & Benefits	1
Training & Development	7	Training & Development	10
Other	10	Other	8
Not Applicable/Did not respond	0	Not Applicable/Did not respond	4

**Table 13 Concept Mapping Respondent Demographics – Organisational Context**

<b>E. Type of Organisation</b>	<b>n=63</b>	<b>F. Location of HR Role</b>	<b>n=63</b>
Privately owned organisations / trusts	17	Centre of expertise	12
Local or central government	6	Corporate headquarters HR	15
Publicly funded organisation (e.g., District Health Board)	8	HR business partner/generalist operating in a business unit	19
Not-for-profit organisations	5	Functional HR (specialist in technical areas)	6
State-owned enterprises	1	Shared services centre	5
Co-operative organisations	2	Other	6
Domestically based multinational enterprises	5		
Overseas-based multinational enterprises	13		
<b>G. Firm Size (number of employees)</b>	<b>n=63</b>	<b>H. Industry Sector</b>	<b>n=63</b>
1-99	12	Accommodation and food services	1
100-499	20	Administrative and support services	1
500-999	6	Agriculture	1
1,000-4,999	15	Construction	4
5,000+	6	Education and training	9
Did not respond	1	Electricity, gas, water and waste services	1
Minimum	5	Financial and insurance services	6
Maximum	120,000	Health care and social assistance	7
Median	451	Information media and telecommunications	3
Average	3,403	Manufacturing	8
Standard Deviation	15,229	Professional, scientific and technical services	7
		Public administration and safety	3
		Retail trade	1
		Transport, postal and warehousing	3
		Other	8

The sample included both HR generalists and specialists in various roles, with 39% in mainly functional HR roles, 26% in evenly mixed functional and strategic roles, and the balance (35%) weighted towards strategic HR roles. While all HR position levels were represented in the survey, there were more respondents at the executive, managerial and senior advisory levels (68%) than at lower position levels (17%). The majority of respondents (94%) were HR generalists with more than one HR specialism. The most common HR specialisms were change management, industrial/employment relations, recruitment and selection and training and development. HR practitioners working in corporate HR headquarters and HR business partners/ generalists working in a business unit constituted 54% of the sample. All types of organisations were represented in the survey and the largest two groups of organisations were privately owned organisations/trusts (27%) and overseas-based MNEs (21%). Except for three industries (Arts and Recreation Services, Mining, Wholesale Trade), all industries were represented in the survey.

Following the study of Ulrich et al. (2008), the firm size was operationalised in the present study by using a breakdown of 1-99 (19%), 100-499 (32%), 500-999 (10%), 1000-4,999 (24%) and 5000+ (10%) employees to facilitate the comparison. The size of respondents' organisations ranged from 5 to 120,000 employees and the median was 451 employees, implying an even spread.

This section has explained the questionnaire design and sampling procedures for the statement rating step. The reliability and validity issues of concept mapping are discussed next.

### 6.3 Reliability and Validity Issues

Demonstrating reliability and validity for concept mapping is complex because this method involves a series of group and individual activities. Furthermore, very few concept mapping studies actually address how reliability and validity are managed. An exception is the work of Jackson and Trochim (2002) which applied Krippendorff's (1980) framework of content analysis in discussing the reliability and validity for a concept mapping analysis of open-ended survey responses. Krippendorff's (2004) framework is therefore chosen for assessing the concept mapping phase of this study, given that this framework was also applied to the content analysis phase, thus ensuring consistency and comparability of analysis.

A fundamental principle of concept mapping involves reducing the original ideas of participants into statements that are understood by the wider population of interest. To ensure stability, the original list of statements was synthesised in consultation with original focus group participants and academics. The online questionnaire was pilot tested with HR experts and peers to ensure clarity of instructions and categories. Furthermore, the final cluster map (see section 6.4.1 Figure 17), cluster rating map (see section 6.5.1 Figure 18) and the pattern match for strategic and functional oriented HR roles (see section 6.6.1 Figure 19) were presented to a group of 80 HR academics and HR practitioners at the HRINZ Research Forum 2012. This research forum was a one-day conference which provided opportunities for HR academics to engage with HR practitioners through presentations of their HRM research, as well as discussion and debate on the practical implications of their research findings. Based on the feedback from the audience, the concept maps presented to them were positively received and the HR competency cluster labels and content were proven to be comprehensible and of high relevance to them.

According to Jackson and Trochim (2002), there is no need for concept mapping respondents to discuss how they sorted the statements or to reach a greater agreement on their sorting. Respondents were asked to create as many or as few

clusters as required to group the statements by similarity and place statements that did not relate to any others into standalone clusters. This allowed respondents to create their own categories and place statements that were difficult to sort in whichever cluster they felt appropriate.

According to Jackson and Trochim (2002), accuracy of each coder is not a concern for concept mapping as there is no pre-established categorisation scheme to which to conform. Given that the objective of the sorting activity is to generate diverse conceptualisations of ideas, the sorting results (i.e., category number, content and labels) will differ across respondents, depending on each person's own judgements. During the concept mapping analysis, it was noted that one of the respondents sorted all HR competencies into one single cluster. Thus this respondent's sorting data was removed from the findings to avoid distortion of the final grouping of the HR competencies.

The sorting analysis step is described next.

## **6.4 Sorting Analysis**

Step 4 of the concept mapping survey involved analysing the HR competency sorting data and exploring thematic concepts of HR competencies from the HR practitioners' perspective. The sorting data was analysed using the Concept System analysis tool, CS Global MAX. The statistical processes used by Concept System are *multi-dimensional scaling* and *hierarchical cluster analysis* (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Concept System initially aggregated each respondent's sorting data into a similarity matrix as the input for further analysis. Multi-dimensional scaling was then used to locate each HR competency item as a separate point on a two-dimensional map. Competencies sorted together most often are located adjacent to each other on the map while those sorted together less frequently are further apart. Finally, hierarchical cluster analysis was used to isolate the points on the map into clusters. The output is a *cluster map*

which represents the conceptual elements of key HR competencies. The interpretation of the cluster map is reported next.

#### **6.4.1 Interpreting the Cluster Map**

The input data for the cluster map comprised the 62 completed sorting responses from the online questionnaire. The sorting data was manipulated by the Concept System software through 15 iterations, with a stress value of 0.2325. This was within the average range reported by most concept mapping studies (Trochim, 1993), implying a good fit of the map to the original input data. Thus, the cluster map generated for this study was deemed adequate for useful interpretation.

According to Kane and Trochim (2007), there are no criteria for selecting the number of clusters for a cluster map, and different analysts are likely to arrive at different numbers. According to Jackson and Trochim (2002), the process of choosing a final cluster solution involves examining all of the cluster solutions produced by the Concept System software within a specified range and the “best” number of clusters depends on the level of detail desired and the context of the research project. Given that the present study involved 44 HR competency statements, it was decided by the researcher in consultation with the Concept System provider that it was not practical to have more than eight clusters and less than five clusters. After examining the 5 to 8 cluster solutions, the 7-cluster solution was judged by the researcher to be the most useful as it showed a clear distinction between strategic and functional HR competencies as well as between HR attributes, knowledge and skills.

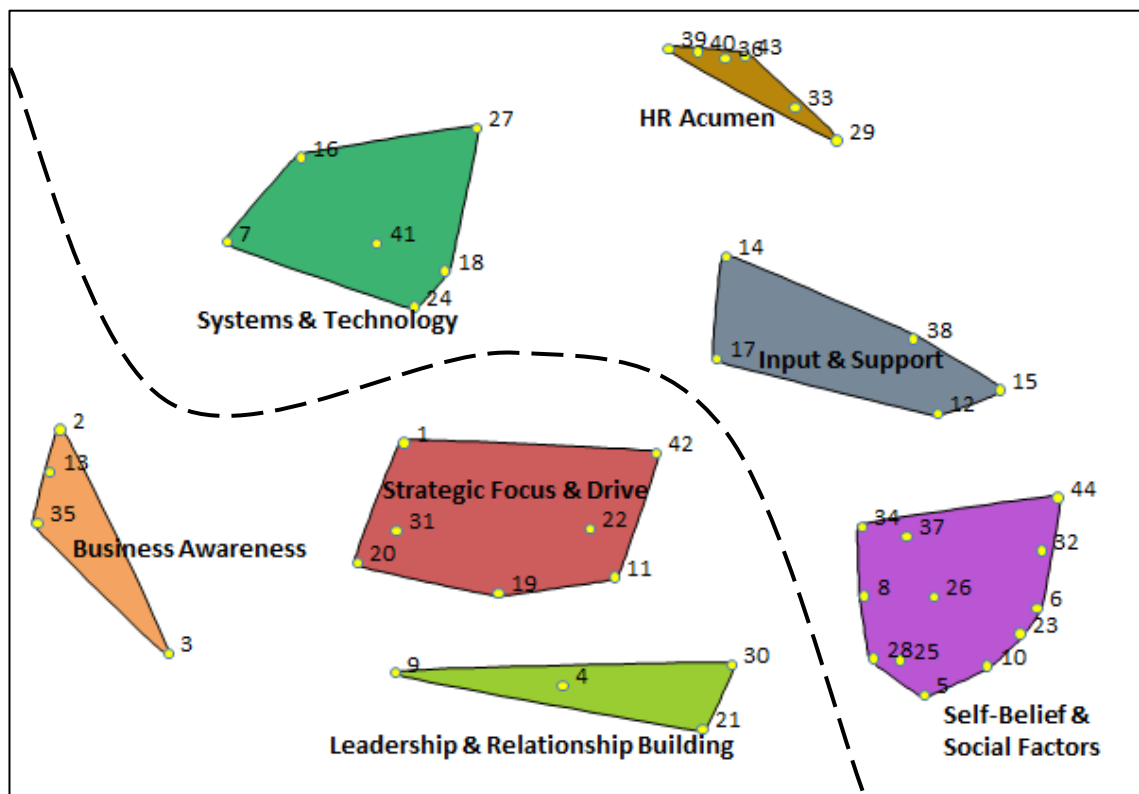
The interpretation of the cluster map drew on the content of the HR competencies sorted within each cluster and the cluster labels suggested by the survey respondents. This in part involved the researcher’s interpretation. Table 14 on the following page summarises the cluster labels and content analysis. The final cluster map is shown in Figure 17 on the subsequent page.

**Table 14 Cluster Labels and Content Analysis Using the 7-Cluster Solution**

<b>Cluster Labels</b>	<b>Relevant Cluster Labels suggested by Concept Mapping Respondents</b>	<b>Cluster Content Summary</b>	<b>Number of HR Competencies</b>
<b>Strategic Focus and Drive</b>	Business Partnering Critical Thinking Delivering Results Future Planning Problem-Solving Strategic Focus Strategy & Innovation Achiever / Futuristic Value Add Knowing Business	Mostly attributes required for achieving results that add value to the business	7
<b>Leadership and Relationship Building</b>	HR Leadership Influencing Interpersonal Skills Negotiation Organisational Influencer/Thought Leader Relationship Building and Influencing Stakeholder Mgt	Interpersonal skills related to reaching agreements with senior executives and other stakeholders	4
<b>Business Awareness</b>	Business Acumen Business Awareness Business Knowledge Environmental Awareness Strategy Strategic Competencies Strategic Orientation Strategic Thinking	An awareness of the internal and external business environment, political dynamics, financial savvy, and strategic thinking skills	4
<b>Systems and Technology</b>	Administration Skills Analytical Data Savvy HR Metrics Operational/Analytical Project Management Systems & Technology Technical	Technical HR competencies (e.g., knowledge of HR metrics, HR technology, project management, and organisation & administration skills)	6
<b>Input and Support</b>	Employee Advocacy ER Generalist Input Management Support Partnerships Staff Development and Training Support Talent	Coaching and consultation skills required for providing support to line managers and employees	5
<b>HR Acumen</b>	Expert HR Skills Grass Roots HR HR Acumen HR Tool Kit Knowledge Specialist Technical Expertise Technical Expertise	HR specialist knowledge, ranging from recruitment & selection, training & development, to performance management	6
<b>Self-Belief and Social Factors</b>	Belief in Self Expressing Self Interpersonal Skills Necessary EQ Factors Personality Self Confidence Social Skills Underpinning Requirements	Mostly self-development and social attributes required for building a reputation for HR delivery	12



The cluster map in Figure 17 represents the distribution of the HR competencies into seven concepts resulting from the sorting activity. Clusters of HR competencies that were most frequently sorted together by respondents are displayed as “islands”. HR competencies contained in each cluster are displayed as numbered points and are listed in Table 15 on the following page.



**Figure 17 Cluster map for HR competency sorting**

The size of the clusters indicates the variety of competencies they contain and the conceptual coherence of these competencies. For example, the largest cluster, Strategic Focus and Drive, contains the broadest range of competencies and therefore has less coherence compared to smaller clusters such as HR Acumen. The location of clusters in the map indicates perceptual links between concepts. For example, the proximity of the Strategic Focus and Drive and Leadership and Relationship Building clusters indicates that these competencies are conceptually independent but also perceptually linked by respondents.

**Table 15 HR Competencies Contained in Each Cluster**

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>HR Competency</b>
<b>1. Strategic Focus and Drive</b>	1.	Attention to Details that Add Value to the Organisation
	11.	Achievement Orientation
	19.	Proactivity
	20.	Innovation
	22.	Customer Focused
	31.	Judgement
<b>2. Leadership and Relationship Building</b>	42.	Problem Solving
	4.	Influencing & Negotiation
	9.	Leadership
	21.	Relationship Building
<b>3. Business Awareness</b>	30.	Collaboration
	2.	Financial Savvy
	3.	Political Savvy
	13.	Business Acumen
<b>4. Systems and Technology</b>	35.	Strategic Thinking
	7.	Research & Reporting
	16.	HR Metrics
	18.	Project Management
	24.	Organisation & Administration
	27.	HR Technology
<b>5. Input and Support</b>	41.	Process Improvement
	14.	Change Management
	15.	Coaching
	12.	Knowledge Sharing
	17.	Diversity Awareness
<b>6. HR Acumen</b>	38.	Consultation
	29.	Expertise in Performance Management
	33.	Knowledge of Employment Legislation
	36.	Expertise in Remuneration & Reward
	39.	Expertise in Recruitment & Selection
<b>7. Self-Belief and Social Factors</b>	40.	Expertise in Health & Safety
	43.	Expertise in Training & Development
	5.	Empathy
	6.	Resilience
	8.	Conflict Resolution
	10.	Sense of Humour
	23.	Approachable
	25.	Assertiveness
	26.	Professional Integrity
	28.	Self-confidence
	32.	Accountability
	34.	Communication
	37.	Curiosity
	44.	Ability to Work Autonomously

The shape of each cluster is different as some clusters can be merged together to form a bigger geometric shape. For instance, the clusters Strategic Focus and Drive and Leadership and Relationship Building are merged together in the 6-cluster solution, while HR Acumen and Input and Support are merged together in the 5-cluster solution.

The substantive picture emerging from the cluster map is the segregation of strategic and functional HR competencies as indicated by the dashed line. Competencies clustered in the lower left region of the map relate to strategic involvement (Strategic Focus and Drive, Leadership and Relationship Building, and Business Awareness). Drilling down into the data, the Strategic Focus and Drive cluster contained a number of attributes required for achieving results that add value to the business (e.g., achievement orientation, proactivity, customer focused, and judgement). This is consistent with those attributes as suggested by proponents of business partnering (Brockbank, 1999; Ulrich, 1997). Competencies contained in the Leadership and Relationship Building cluster include leadership, influencing and negotiation, collaboration, and relationship building skills, which are frequently cited as important for reaching agreements with senior executives and other stakeholders (Schoonover, 2003; Yeung et al., 1996). The Business Awareness cluster includes an awareness of the internal and external business environment, political dynamics, financial savvy, and strategic thinking skills, resembling the business knowledge competency dimension, as outlined by Ulrich and Brockbank (2005).

The competencies clustered in the upper right region relate to the delivery of HR practices (Self-Belief and Social Factors, Input and Support, HR Acumen, and Systems and Technology). The Self-Belief and Social Factors cluster contains the broadest range of competencies. Some resemble the key elements contained in Ulrich and Brockbank's (2005) personal credibility dimension (e.g., communication and accountability), while other competencies reflect self-development and employee-related attributes (e.g., self-confidence, professional integrity, empathy, and conflict resolution) (Lounsbury et al., 2008). The location of the Self-Belief and Social Factors cluster suggests that it has strong perceptual links with the adjacent clusters of Leadership and Relationships Building and Input and Support. This is consistent with the findings of Buckley and Monks (2004), that there are higher-order competencies that enable HR practitioners to acquire and develop other job-specific competencies.

The Input and Support cluster represents coaching and consultation competencies related to providing support to line managers and employees during organisational change and crisis as suggested by Antila (2006) and Kulik et al. (2009). Competencies sorted within the HR Acumen cluster relate to specialist HR knowledge, ranging from recruitment and selection, training and development, to performance management. The Systems and Technology cluster contains fairly technical HR competencies, such as knowledge of HR metrics, HR technology, project management, and process improvement skills. This cluster resembles the HR technology competency dimension as suggested by Ulrich and Brockbank (2005).

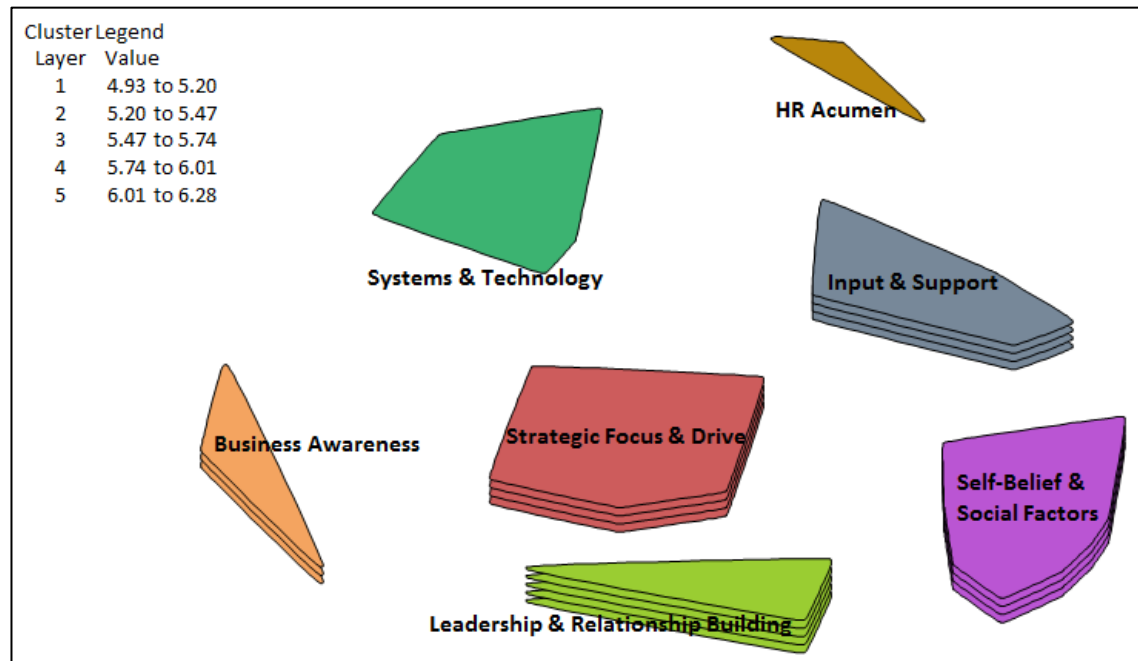
This section has explained the sorting analysis procedures and interpretation of the cluster map. The rating analysis procedures and key findings are described in the next section.

## **6.5 HR Competency Rating Analysis – An Overview**

The objective of the rating analysis was to investigate the contextual relevance of HR competencies. The data set for this step comprised the responses for the role and organisational context questions, the sorting activity, and the rating activity. The outputs are a *cluster rating map* and a series of *pattern matches*. A cluster rating map was used to display the average HR competency cluster ratings given by the entire sample. Pattern matches were then used to assess consensus and disagreements on average cluster ratings between HR practitioner groups in various roles and organisational contexts. The interpretation of the cluster rating map is explained in section 6.5.1 and the key findings from the contextual analysis are provided in section 6.6 using pattern matches.

### 6.5.1 Interpreting the Cluster Rating Map

The cluster rating map in Figure 18 displays the average importance of ratings for each cluster as “layer cakes” based on the cluster map input. Clusters with more layers contain more HR competencies with higher ratings by respondents.



**Figure 18 Cluster rating map showing overall importance ratings of HR competencies**

\* Note: Average importance ratings of HR competencies contained in each cluster are provided in Appendix L.

It is clear from the rating cluster map that all of the seven HR competency clusters were perceived as critical for HR job success (ratings above 4). Competency clusters with the highest average ratings were Leadership and Relationship Building (6.28) and Self-Belief and Social Factors (5.92). The top two competencies within each of these clusters were relationship building (6.60) and influencing and negotiation (6.27), and professional integrity (6.50) and communication (6.37) respectively. This indicates that the respondents perceived influencing and building trustworthy relationships with stakeholders as highly important to HR job success, a finding consistent with several other studies (Francis & Keegan, 2006; Graham & Tarbell, 2006; Lowry, 2006). In addition, it is worth noting that four other competencies contained in the Self-Belief and Social Factors cluster also achieved ratings over 6: approachable (6.28), accountability

(6.17), resilience (6.00), and self-confidence (6.00). These findings contradict results from the HR job description analysis, which reported relatively low relevance to HR positions for these competencies (See Chapter 4 section 4.3.2).

The next two most important clusters were Strategic Focus and Drive (5.88) and Input and Support (5.75). The top two competencies within these clusters were customer focused (6.27) and problem solving (6.20), and coaching (6.20) and change management (6.05) respectively. This shows that the HR respondents considered commitment to fulfilling customers' needs and supporting line managers and employees during organisational change were important for effective performance in their roles (Antila, 2006; Kulik et al., 2009; Ulrich, Younger, & Brockbank, 2012).

The Business Awareness cluster (5.64) was ranked in the middle of the seven clusters. Political savvy and strategic thinking were the most important competencies (5.88 and 5.83 respectively) within the Business Awareness cluster. Knowledge of power dynamics and key relationships within the organisation, as well as the ability to provide HR solutions that relate to business strategy, clearly emerge as important to HR practitioners' performance.

Although the HR Acumen (4.93) and Systems and Technology (5.18) clusters had the lowest ranking, they scored above mid-point on the rating scale. This indicates that HR functional knowledge and technical skills remain central to effective HR job performance (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Teo & Rodwell, 2007). However, there was a wide spread of ratings amongst the HR Acumen competencies, indicating that some functional HR areas, for example, performance management (5.45) and knowledge of employment legislation (5.38), are seen as more important than others, for example, health & safety (4.35).

A comparison of the overall findings from the concept mapping sorting analysis and the HR job description analysis is provided in Table 16 on the following page. For the concept mapping analysis column, HR competency clusters with an importance rating

of 5.66 or above are referred to as highly important (highlighted in yellow). For the HR job description analysis column, HR competency clusters with a frequency percentage of 50% or above are referred to as highly relevant (highlighted in yellow).

**Table 16 Comparison of HR Competency Cluster Importance Ratings with HR Job Description Analysis Findings**

		Concept Mapping Analysis (Importance)	HR Job Description Analysis (Frequency)
1	Strategic Focus and Drive*	5.88	59%
2	Leadership and Relationship Building	6.28	68%
3	Business Awareness	5.64	33%
4	Systems and Technology	5.18	59%
5	Input and Support	5.76	44%
6	HR Acumen	4.93	57%
7	Self-Belief and Social Factors*	5.92	31%
	Average	5.66	50%

\* Note: In the concept mapping analysis, the competency – attention to details that add value to the organisation – is sorted in the Strategic Focus and Drive cluster, indicating a strategic connotation. However, the competency – attention to details – identified in the HR job description analysis is referred to as a self-management attribute. Therefore, the results for this competency in the HR job description analysis are aggregated into the Self-Belief and Social Factors cluster rather than the Strategic Focus and Drive cluster.

There are some clear similarities and differences in the overall findings from the two sources. First, Strategic Focus and Drive and Leadership and Relationship Building competencies were consistently seen as highly important and relevant to HR practitioners in the concept mapping analysis and the HR job description analysis. Although the perceived importance for the Business Awareness cluster was moderately high in the concept mapping analysis, these competencies were only relevant to one third of the HR positions in the HR job description analysis.

Second, Self-Belief and Social Factors and Input and Support competencies were perceived as highly important to HR job success, but they were relevant to less than half of the HR positions in the HR job description analysis. On the other hand, the

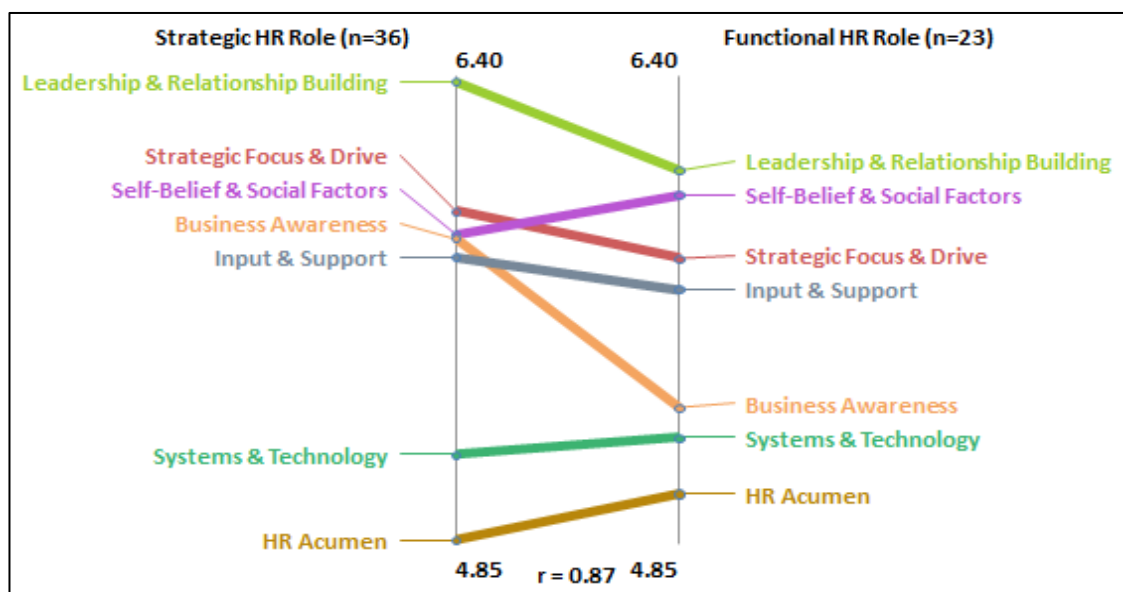
lowest-rated competencies in the concept mapping analysis were Systems and Technology and HR Acumen, whereas the HR job description analysis showed that these competencies were relevant to more than half of the sampled HR positions.

## 6.6 HR Competency Ratings by HR Roles

This section presents the perceived importance of HR competency clusters by strategic orientation of HR role and positions levels using a series of pattern matches. Detailed information about the intra-cluster HR competency ratings given by different HR respondent groups is provided in Appendix M.

### 6.6.1 Strategic Orientation of HR Role

The pattern match in Figure 19 represents a visual comparison of the absolute average cluster ratings between the strategic and functional HR groups. When any line between clusters is parallel, there is no absolute difference between those clusters. The greater the slope of the line between two clusters, the greater the absolute difference between them. The Concept System software also generated a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) for the pattern match. A high  $r$  value indicates strong correlation of overall ratings between the two HR groups.



**Figure 19 Pattern match for strategic and functional HR groups**

\* Note: The strategic HR group included respondents who rated their HR roles as mostly strategic (n=6), fairly strategic (n=9), and slightly more strategic (n=5). The functional HR group included those who rated their HR roles as mostly functional (n=6), fairly functional (n=7), and slightly more functional (n=12).



Figure 19 shows that there are four lines at steep angles in the pattern match – Leadership and Relationship Building, Business Awareness, Self-Belief and Social Factors, and HR Acumen – indicating differences in absolute importance ratings between the two groups of HR respondents. While Leadership and Relationship Building was perceived as the top HR competencies by both HR groups, this cluster was rated higher by strategic HR practitioners (6.36) than by functional HR practitioners (6.10). This finding supports the general assumption in the literature that leadership and influential skills are key to success for HR practitioners in general, particularly for those in strategic and leadership roles (Yeung et al., 1996). Business Awareness competencies were rated second highest by strategic HR practitioners (6.03) but were below moderate ratings for functional HR practitioners (5.30). This finding implies that business knowledge and strategic thinking skills are seen as more relevant to strategic HR roles.

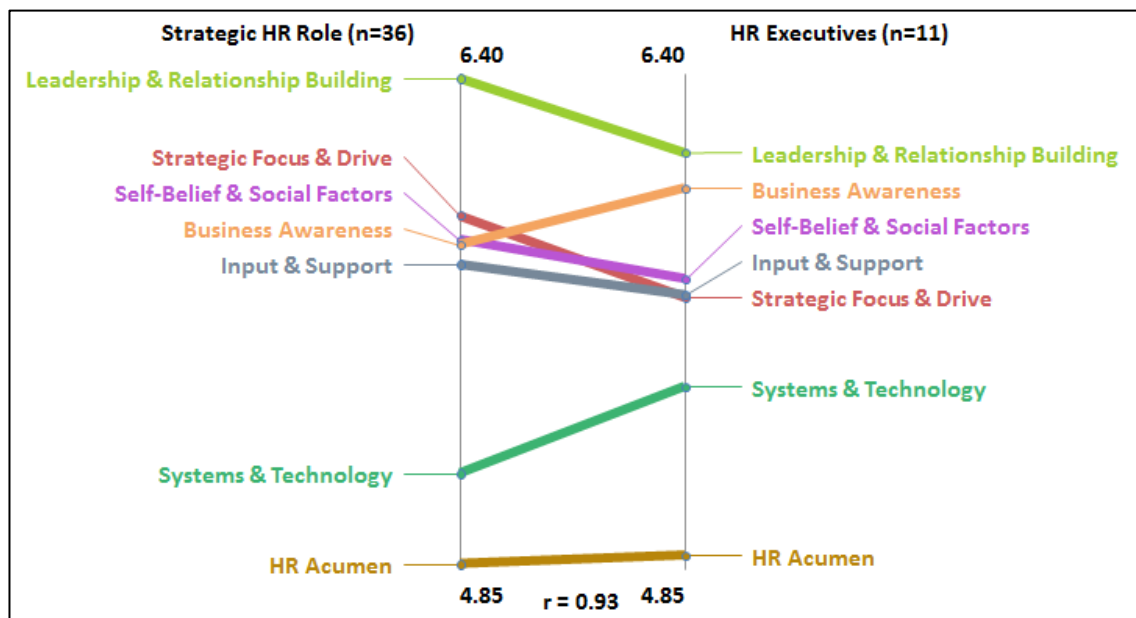
Another area of disagreement is the importance of the Self-Belief and Social Factors cluster, with these competencies rated as second highest by functional HR practitioners (6.01) but fourth for strategic HR practitioners (5.67). One possible reason is that this cluster contains a large number of employee-related competencies (e.g., empathy and approachable), which are seen as more relevant to the interpersonal nature of functional HR roles. While HR Acumen was rated lowest by both HR groups, these competencies were viewed as more important by functional HR practitioners (5.01) than by strategic HR practitioners (4.60).

The pattern match also shows that strategic and functional HR practitioners shared similar views on the importance ratings for Strategic Focus and Drive, Input and Support, and Systems and Technology. This is an interesting finding given that the Strategic Focus and Drive clusters are conceived of as strategic and futuristic oriented, and Input and Support and Systems and Technology clusters are conceived of as functional oriented as indicated by our sorting results. This implies that these

competencies are not necessarily important differentiators between strategic and functional HR roles.

## 6.6.2 HR Position Levels

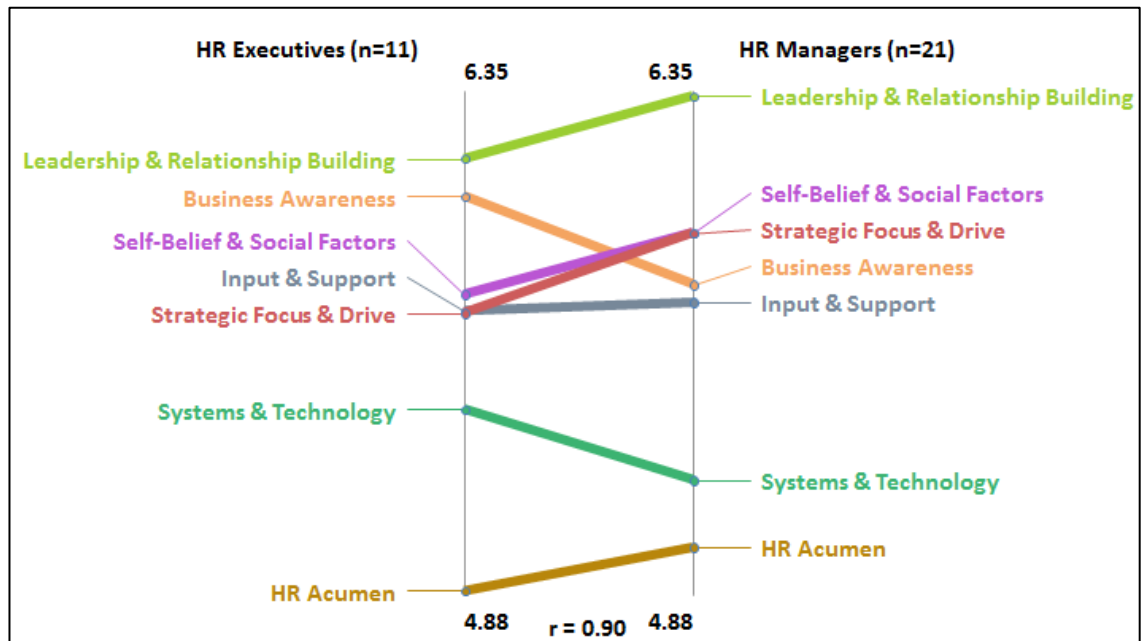
This section examines the HR competency importance ratings for HR executives, managers, consultants, senior advisors, intermediate advisors, and administrators. When the ratings were compared between strategic HR roles and HR executives (Figure 20), very similar patterns emerged ( $r=0.98$ ). This confirms that HR executives in the sample also had high levels of strategic involvement.



**Figure 20 Pattern match for strategic HR roles and HR executives**

Figure 21 on the following page shows the pattern match for HR executives and HR managers. One striking disagreement is the ratings given to Business Awareness, with this cluster rated second highest by HR executives (6.05) and fourth by HR managers (5.79). This finding supports the HR job description analysis results that business acumen is more relevant to senior level HR positions (see Chapter 4). On the other hand, Strategic Focus and Drive achieved higher ratings from HR managers (5.94) than from HR executives (5.70). A closer look at the results show that while HR managers rated customer focused as the top competency for this cluster (6.24 compared to 5.91), HR executives placed more emphasis on judgement (6.18

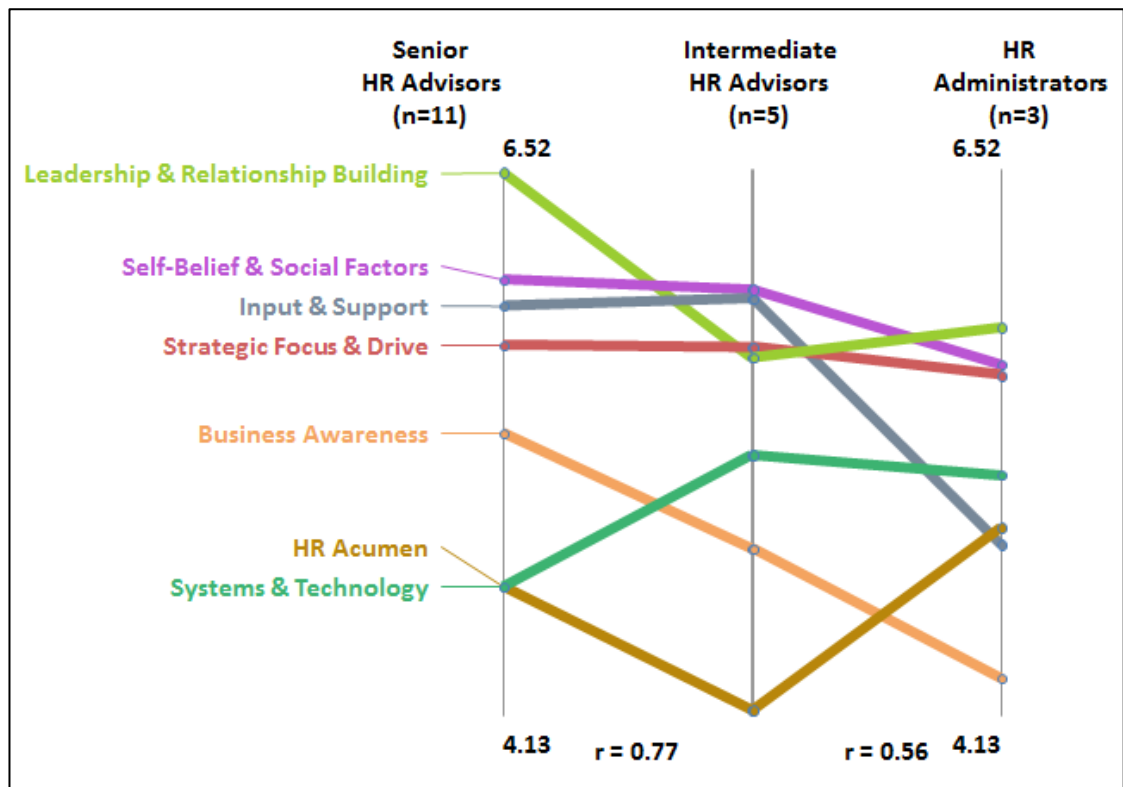
compared to 6.05). This suggests that HR executives focus more on making strategic decisions, whereas HR managers focus more on fulfilling the needs of internal/external customers.



**Figure 21 Pattern match for HR executive and manager groups**

Furthermore, Self-Belief and Social Factors were seen as more important by HR managers than by HR executives (5.94 compared to 5.76), with accountability, self-confidence and ability to work autonomously, rated relatively higher by HR managers. This finding suggests that HR managers tend to rely more on their self-management attributes for effective HR performance. Lastly, the low ratings of HR Acumen and Systems and Technology were common to both groups, indicating a moderate importance level of these competencies.

When the HR competency importance ratings were compared between HR advisors and administrators, wide discrepancies were immediately apparent (see Figure 22 on the following page).



**Figure 22 Pattern matches for HR advisory and administrator groups**

First, the steep line for Business Awareness suggests that the lower the level of the HR position, the less important this competency is for HR job success. This finding further reinforces the role-specific nature of business acumen competencies for HR practitioners. Second, Input and Support competencies were rated significantly lower by HR administrators (4.87). In particular, this group gave lower ratings for diversity awareness (3.67), change management (4.67), and coaching (4.67), indicating a low level of involvement in people development activities.

While respondents in all three groups agreed that professional integrity is the most critical competency within the Self-Belief and Social Factors cluster, senior HR advisors placed greater emphasis on being approachable, intermediate HR advisors focused more on resilience and HR administrators focused more on accountability. The top competency within the Strategic Focus and Drive cluster also varied considerably across the three groups. Senior and intermediate HR advisors both rated customer focused as the top competency, while HR administrators rated attention to details that add value to the organisation and proactivity as most important. These findings

suggest that Business Awareness and Input and Support competencies are important differentiators between senior and lower level HR positions.

Third, Leadership and Relationship Building competencies were perceived as less important by intermediate HR advisors and HR administrators. However, it is worth noting that these competencies were still ranked the highest by HR administrators. This finding is interesting given the general assumption in the literature that leadership skills are more relevant to strategic and senior HR roles (Long & Wan Ismail, 2008; Yeung et al., 1996). A closer look at the results reveals that HR administrators placed greater emphasis on the interpersonal aspect of this cluster, with higher ratings for relationship building (6.67) and collaboration (6.67) than for leadership (5.33) and influencing & negotiation skills (4.67).

On the other hand, Systems and Technology competencies achieved higher ratings from intermediate HR advisors and HR administrators, with these competencies rated above Business Awareness and HR Acumen by these two groups. This finding supports the general assumption that HR practitioners in junior position levels are more functional and administrative oriented (Ramlall, 2006).

Lastly, it is important to note that Self-Belief and Social Factors and Strategic Focus and Drive were rated among the top competencies by all three groups. This finding provides support for the argument that there is a set of core competencies that are shared among HR practitioners in different roles (Blancero et al., 1996; Schoonover, 2003).

## 6.7 HR Competency Ratings by Organisational Contexts

This section reports on the perceived importance of HR competency clusters in the organisational contexts in relation to the research propositions generated in Chapter 2. The key findings are presented in four parts: 1) public sector organisations, 2) not-for-profit organisations, 3) domestic firms versus multinational enterprises and 4) firm size.

### 6.7.1 Public Sector Organisations

For the purposes of this study, private sector organisations included privately owned companies/trusts (n=17), but excluded co-operative organisations. For public sector organisations, two types of organisations were identified: local/central government organisations, for example, local authority council (n=6), and publicly funded organisations, for example, District Health Boards (n=8). This distinction is important as very few researches (except Kessler et al., 2000; Truss, 2008) have focused on the possible variations in HRM practices between different types of public sector organisations. The pattern match for private sector organisations and local/central government organisations (referred to as government organisations from now on) is presented first (Figure 23), followed by the analysis for government and publicly funded organisations (Figure 24).

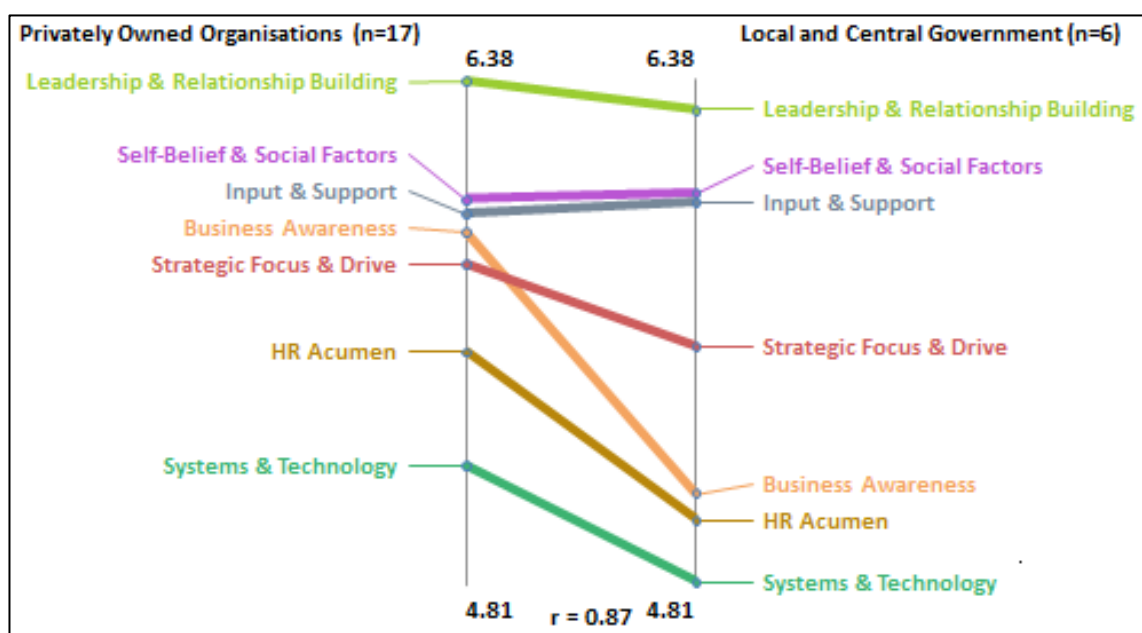


Figure 23 Pattern match for private and government organisations

First, Business Awareness was rated noticeably lower by government organisations (5.08), compared to private organisations (5.91). In particular, government organisation respondents rated political savvy (6.17) as the most important Business Awareness competency but financial savvy as least important with a below average rating of (3.83). This suggests that government organisations have a stronger focus on stakeholder agendas than they do on organisational agenda.

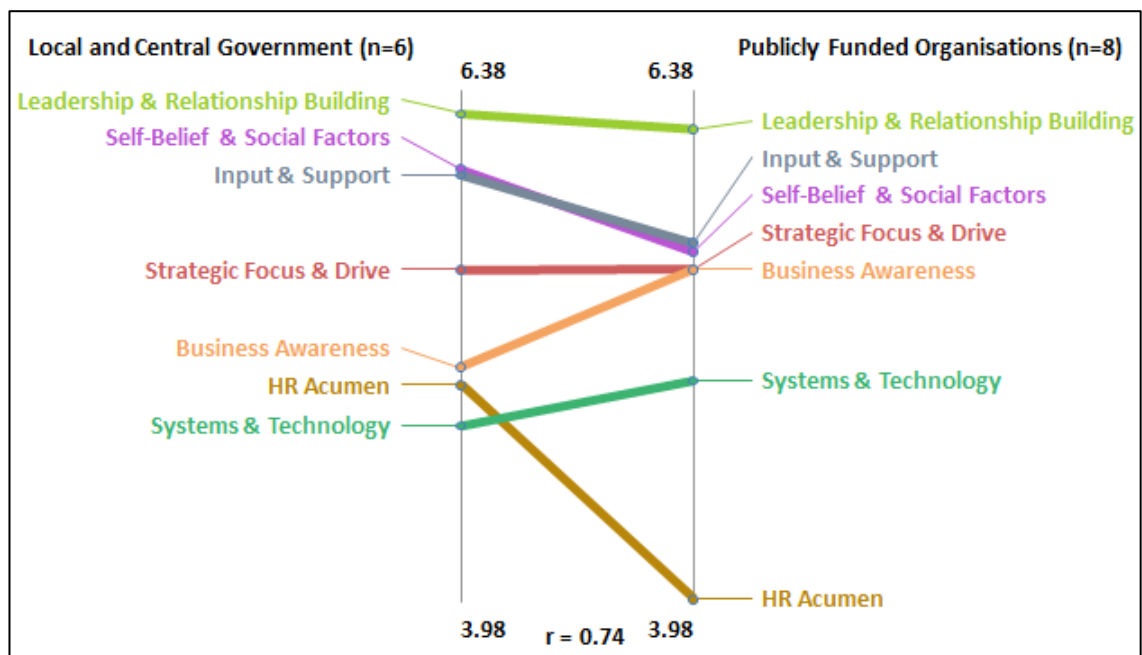
Moreover, government organisations gave lower ratings for Strategic Focus and Drive competencies (5.55) than did their private counterparts (5.81). The biggest differences are the ratings for proactivity and judgement, which were lower for government organisation respondents (4.67 and 5.00 respectively) than for private organisation respondents (5.53 and 5.76 respectively). This suggests that government organisations have lower requirements for their HR functions to participate in strategic decision making.

Another difference relates to the lower ratings of HR Acumen and Systems and Technology clusters by government organisations. Such low ratings run contrary to the expectation that public organisation HR practitioners require higher competencies in HR expertise knowledge and technical skills given their bureaucratic and administrative nature (Lupton & Shaw, 2001; Sheehan & Scafidi, 2005; Truss, 2009b).

Self-Belief and Social Factors, Leadership and Relationship Building, and Input and Support competencies achieved similar ratings from private and government organisations. However, several within-cluster differences emerge. For Self-Belief and Social Factors, government organisation respondents gave higher ratings for communication (6.83), empathy (6.50) and curiosity (5.83) competencies than did private organisations (6.35, 5.88 and 4.82 respectively). Furthermore, the data also shows that government organisations tended to place a greater emphasis on knowledge sharing (6.33) and diversity awareness (5.83) than did private organisations (5.65 and 4.88 respectively); whereas, private organisations focused more on

leadership (6.53) and change management (6.18) than did government organisations (5.50 and 5.67 respectively). These findings suggest that HR practitioners in government organisations are more likely to make stronger use of affective competencies and adopt a collective and participatory approach to HRM.

The pattern match for government and publicly funded organisations is provided in Figure 24 below. Again, wide differences are apparent between the two groups.



**Figure 24 Pattern match for government and publicly funded organisations**

The most striking difference is the perceived importance of HR Acumen, which was rated below average by publicly funded organisations (3.98 compared to 5.00 by government organisations). One possible explanation is that the publicly funded organisations in the sample were mainly District Health Boards and tertiary education institutions with firm sizes ranging from 2,500 to 6,000 employees. These organisations tend to have larger and more compartmentalised HR departments given their large and bureaucratic organisational structure. In this context, there are lower requirements for generalist HR expertise given the specialised nature of the HR roles (Brewster et al., 2006).



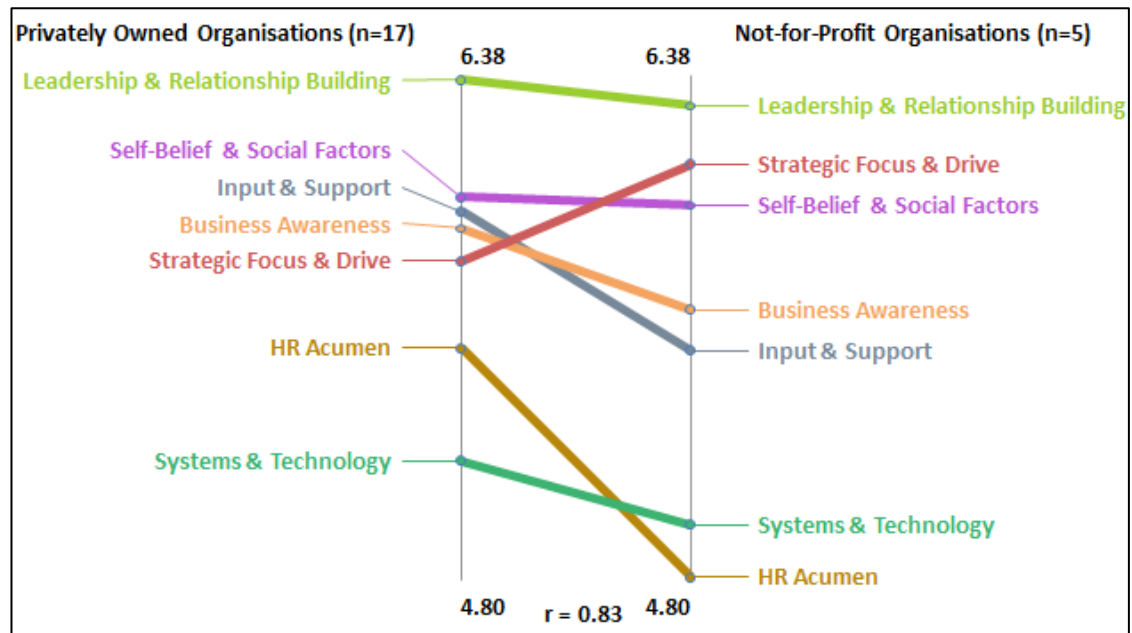
Another major difference is related to Business Awareness, with this cluster rated higher by publicly funded organisations (5.55) than by government organisations (5.08). The difference is more pronounced for financial savvy and business acumen, which were rated higher by publicly funded organisations (5.13 and 5.50 respectively) than by government organisations (3.83 and 4.67 respectively). Moreover, while Strategic Focus and Drive competencies achieved the same ratings for both groups (5.55), the requirements of these competencies varied. Government organisations rated customer focused (6.67) and innovation (5.67) higher than did publicly funded organisations (6.00 and 4.50 respectively); whereas, publicly funded organisations gave higher ratings to judgement (6.38) and proactivity (5.25) than did government organisations (5.00 and 4.67 respectively).

Lastly, there are no major differences on the overall perceived importance of Leadership and Relationship Building and Systems and Technology competencies for both groups. However, it is worth noting that publicly funded organisations gave higher ratings for a number of competencies within the Systems and Technology cluster, particularly HR technology and HR metrics (5.25 and 4.75 respectively) compared to government organisations (4.67 and 4.17 respectively). Taken altogether, these findings suggest that HR practitioners in publicly funded organisations are more business and results driven than government organisations.

### **6.7.2 Not-for-Profit Organisations**

This section explores the HR competency importance ratings in not-for-profit organisations and compares them with those reported by private and government organisations. For the purposes of this study, not-for-profit organisations refers to voluntary and religious organisations (n=5), but excludes government and publicly funded organisations. This distinction is important as very few researches (except Parry et al., 2005) have focused on the possible variations in HRM practices between not-for-profit and public sector organisations. The pattern match comparing not-for-

profit and private organisations is presented first (Figure 25), followed by the comparison of not-for-profit organisations with government organisations (Figure 26).



**Figure 25 Pattern match for private sector organisations and not-for-profit organisations**

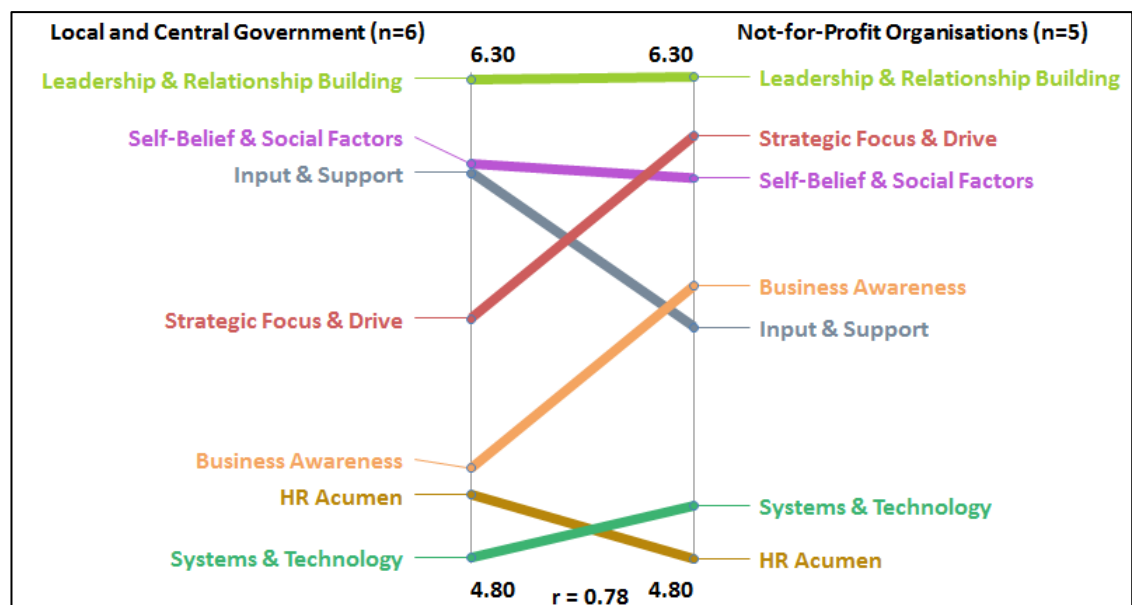
The initial picture from Figure 25 is that not-for-profit organisations have lower competency requirements for HR practitioners in general, when compared to private organisations. This is consistent with several other studies that report a lack of formalised HR policies and practices in not-for-profit organisations (e.g., Cunningham, 2001; Prins & Henderickx, 2007). The most striking discrepancy is the higher rating of Strategic Focus and Drive competencies by not-for-profit organisations (6.11) compared to private organisations (5.81). This is opposite to what was expected. Closer examination reveals that not-for-profit organisations respondents considered problem solving (6.60) and customer focused (6.60) as the most important competencies in this cluster, followed by judgement (6.20) and innovation (6.20). This implies that HR attributes related to initiatives and decision making are highly important for not-for-profit organisations.

Moreover, although not-for-profit organisations gave lower ratings for Business Awareness competencies than did private organisations, the two groups shared the same view that strategic thinking is the most critical competency within this cluster

(6.20 and 6.18 respectively). This indicates that HR practitioners in not-for-profit organisations are also required to focus on aligning HRM strategies with organisational goals, despite their non-monetary orientation.

Lastly, the pattern match shows that Input and Support and HR Acumen competencies were given lower ratings by not-for-profit organisations (5.52 and 4.80 respectively) than by private organisations (5.96 and 5.53 respectively). However, not-for-profit organisations respondents still considered coaching (6.40), change management (5.60), knowledge of employment legislation (5.40), and expertise in recruitment and selection (5.60) as highly critical to effective performance, with ratings above 5. This suggests that not-for-profit organisations HR practitioners are required to focus on attracting prospective employees and ensuring that they are treated fairly and recognised for their contribution in their jobs.

The pattern match for not-for-profit and government organisations is provided in Figure 26. Again, clear differences are apparent between the two groups.



**Figure 26 Pattern match for government and not-for-profit organisations**

The most striking differences are the perceived importance of Strategic Focus and Drive and Business Awareness, which were rated higher by not-for-profit organisations (6.11 and 5.65 respectively) than by government organisations (5.55 and 5.08

respectively). Closer examination reveals that not-for-profit organisations gave higher ratings for the competencies proactivity and financial savvy (6.00 and 5.40 respectively) than did government organisations (4.67 and 3.83 respectively). This suggests that not-for-profit organisations' HR practitioners have greater requirements to demonstrate initiatives in achieving the financial objectives of their organisations.

On the other hand, Input and Support competencies were given lower ratings by not-for-profit organisations (5.52) than by government organisations (6.00). These two groups also had different perceptions of the top competency within this cluster. While not-for-profit organisations considered coaching as most critical (6.40), government organisations placed greater emphasis on knowledge sharing (6.33). These findings imply that HR practitioners in not-for-profit organisations make greater use of competencies related to employee development than do government organisations.

Lastly, the pattern match shows that government and not-for-profit organisations shared similar views on the importance of Leadership and Relationship Building (6.29 and 6.30) and Self-Belief and Social Factors (6.03 and 5.98), with these competencies ranked among the top three clusters. Yet, further analysis showed that not-for-profit organisation respondents considered leadership (6.60 compared to 5.50) as the most important competency within the Leadership and Relationship Building cluster, while government organisation respondents rated collaboration (6.67 compared to 5.80) as the top competency. Not-for-profit organisations also gave higher ratings for self-confidence within the Self-Belief and Social Factors cluster (6.40 compared to 5.83), whereas government organisations placed greater emphasis on accountability (6.17 compared to 5.60). These findings further reinforce the strategic orientation of not-for-profit organisations as previously mentioned and the political and bureaucratic nature of government organisations.

The two groups also gave similar ratings to the bottom two clusters, which are HR Acumen and Systems and Technology. However, several within-cluster differences

emerged. For the HR Acumen cluster, not-for-profit organisations rated expertise in recruitment and selection as the top competency (5.60 compared to 4.83) while government organisations rated expertise in performance management as most important (5.83 compared to 4.80). For the Systems and Technology cluster, not-for-profit organisations also gave higher ratings to research & reporting (5.40) than did government organisations (3.83).

Overall, the above findings suggest that private, government and not-for-profit organisations have different requirements for HR competencies.

### 6.7.3 Domestic Firms versus Multinational Enterprises

This section focuses on the HR competency ratings in domestic firms and multinational enterprises (MNEs). For the purposes of this study, domestic firms refer to privately owned organisations / trusts in New Zealand. This study also draws a distinction between domestically and overseas-based MNEs as research has suggested MNEs of different nationalities exhibit different characteristics (Almond, 2011; Fenton-O'Creevy et al., 2008; Ferner et al., 2011). The pattern matching analysis for private organisations and overseas-based MNEs is presented first (Figure 27), followed by the analysis for domestically and overseas-based MNEs (Figure 28).

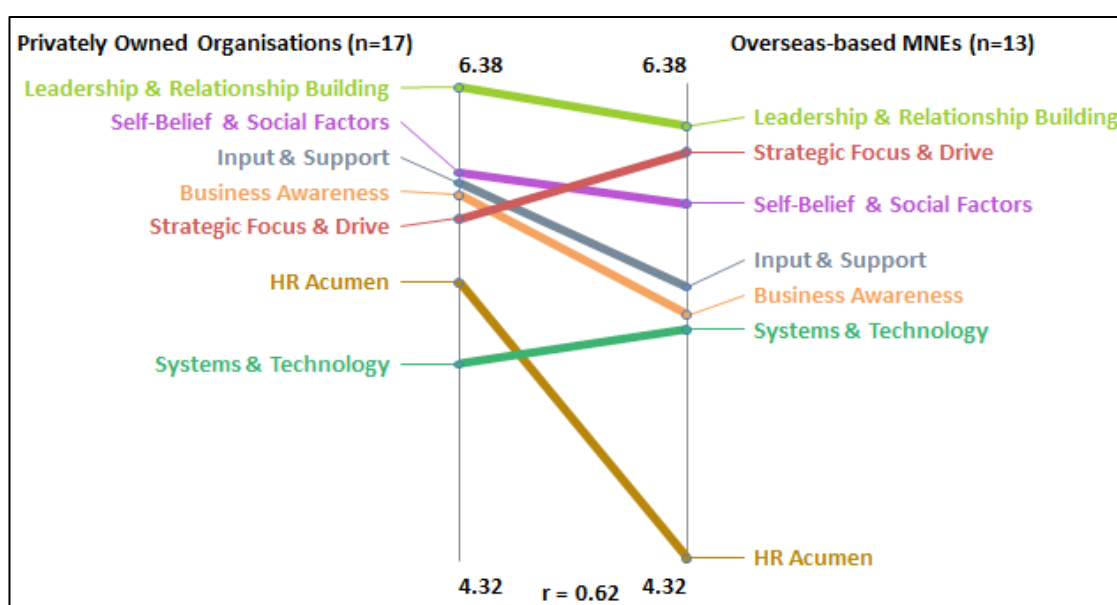


Figure 27 Pattern match for private organisations and overseas-based MNEs

Figure 27 shows several major discrepancies in HR competency ratings between the two groups. The most striking discrepancy relates to HR Acumen, with this cluster rated lower by overseas MNEs (4.32) than by domestic firms (5.53). One reason that contributed to this low rating by overseas MNEs is the widespread nature of the ratings within this cluster, with a rating of 5.08 for expertise in performance management compared to a rating of 3.31 for expertise in health & safety. In addition, there are substantial differences in the perceived importance of expertise in recruitment and selection and knowledge of employment legislation, which were rated relatively lower by overseas MNEs (4.38 and 4.54 respectively) than by domestic firms (6.18 and 5.82 respectively).

Another discrepancy relates to Strategic Focus and Drive competencies, with this cluster rated fifth by private organisations (5.81) but second highest by overseas MNEs (6.10). The perceived gap is most pronounced for innovation (6.23), attention to details that add value to the organisation (6.15) and proactivity (6.00), which were rated higher by overseas MNEs than by private organisations (5.35, 5.65 and 5.53 respectively). This finding suggests that HR competency requirements in MNEs are more strategic oriented than in domestic firms.

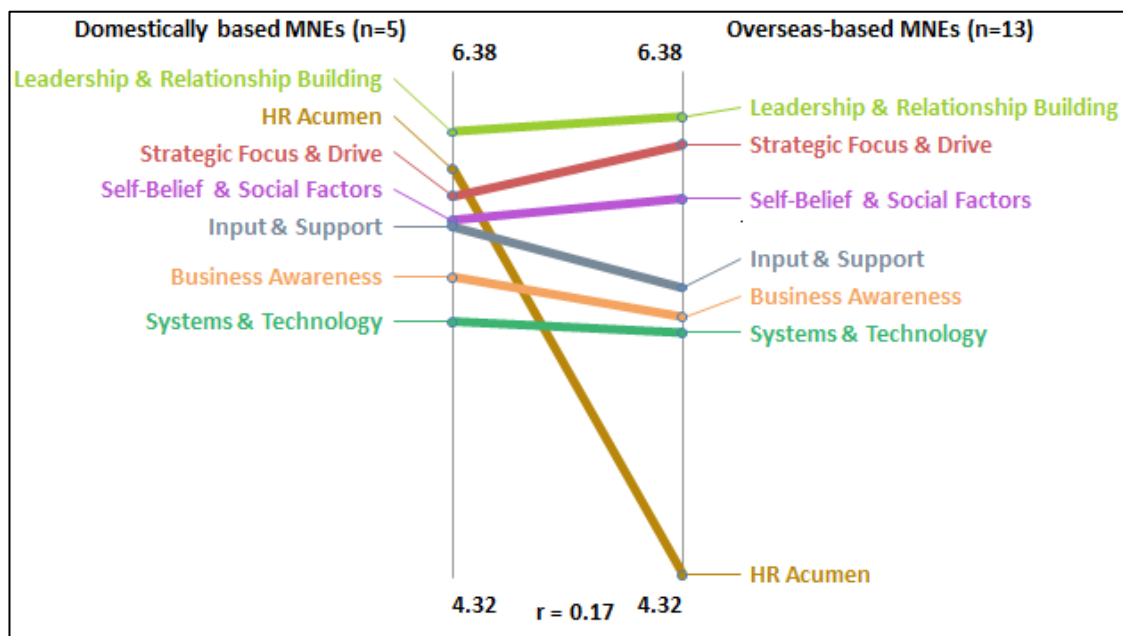
In contrast, overseas MNEs gave lower ratings to Business Awareness and Leadership and Relationship Building competencies (5.38 and 6.21 respectively), compared to domestic firms (5.91 and 6.38 respectively). These findings are opposite to what was expected, though the differences are not very substantial. However, the two groups shared the same view on the highest competencies within these two clusters: political savvy and business acumen for the Business Awareness cluster, and relationship building and leadership for the Leadership and Relationship Building cluster.

In addition, Input and Support competencies were rated lower by overseas-based MNEs (5.51) than by domestic firms (5.96). Further analysis showed that the discrepancy is more pronounced for coaching and consultation, which were rated lower

by overseas-based MNEs (5.69 and 5.23 respectively) than by domestic firms (6.65 and 6.47 respectively).

Lastly, the data provides evidence that overseas-based MNEs make stronger use of Systems and Technology competencies (5.32) than domestic firms (5.17), but the perceived gap is small. However, it is worth noting that the difference is more pronounced for HR technology, which was rated higher by overseas-based MNEs (5.62) than domestic firms (4.71).

The pattern matching comparing HR competency ratings for domestically based MNEs and overseas-based MNEs is presented in Figure 28.



**Figure 28 Pattern match for domestically based MNEs and overseas-based MNEs**

Figure 28 shows that the competency requirements for HR practitioners are fairly similar in domestically and overseas-based MNEs, except for HR Acumen. This cluster was rated second highest by domestically based MNEs (6.00), but lowest by overseas-based MNEs (4.32). This finding is opposite to what was expected. Moreover, domestically based MNEs gave very higher ratings to knowledge of employment legislation (6.60) and expertise in recruitment and selection (6.60). However, it is important to note that overseas-based MNEs still considered expertise in performance

management and training and development as crucial to effective HR performance with moderately high ratings (5.08 and 4.85 respectively).

However, caution must be taken when interpreting the above findings pertaining to the perceived importance of HR Acumen competencies as there were only five respondents in the domestically based MNEs group. Moreover, it is important to note that most of the overseas-based MNEs in the sample are larger (mean = 10,751 employees) than the domestically based MNEs (mean = 571 employees). It is unclear if the discrepancy in HR Acumen competency ratings was inflated by firm size, which is explored in the next section.

Lastly, the data suggests that domestically and overseas-based MNEs share similar views on the requirements of Systems and Technology competencies (5.37 and 5.32 respectively). As in the case of overseas-based MNEs, domestically based MNEs gave moderately high ratings for HR technology (5.62 and 5.60 respectively). However, it is worth noting that domestically based MNEs considered HR metrics as the most important competency within this cluster with a rating of 6.0 compared to 5.31 for overseas-based MNEs.

#### **6.7.4 Firm Size**

This section explores the influence of firm size on HR competency ratings. Initial pattern matching analyses found broadly similar patterns across the different firm size, with high correlations ranging from 0.90 to 0.97 (see Figure 29). Figure 29 on the following page shows that there is a clear difference in the perceived importance of HR Acumen competencies, with these competencies rated lower by larger firms than smaller firms. This result is more pronounced for firms with 5000 or more employees (referred to as large firms from now on), with a rating below 4 (3.50), when compared to firms with 1-99 employees (referred to as small firms from now on) (5.46). This finding is interesting as HR Acumen was also rated lower by overseas-based MNEs (4.32) compared to domestic firms (see section 6.7.3).



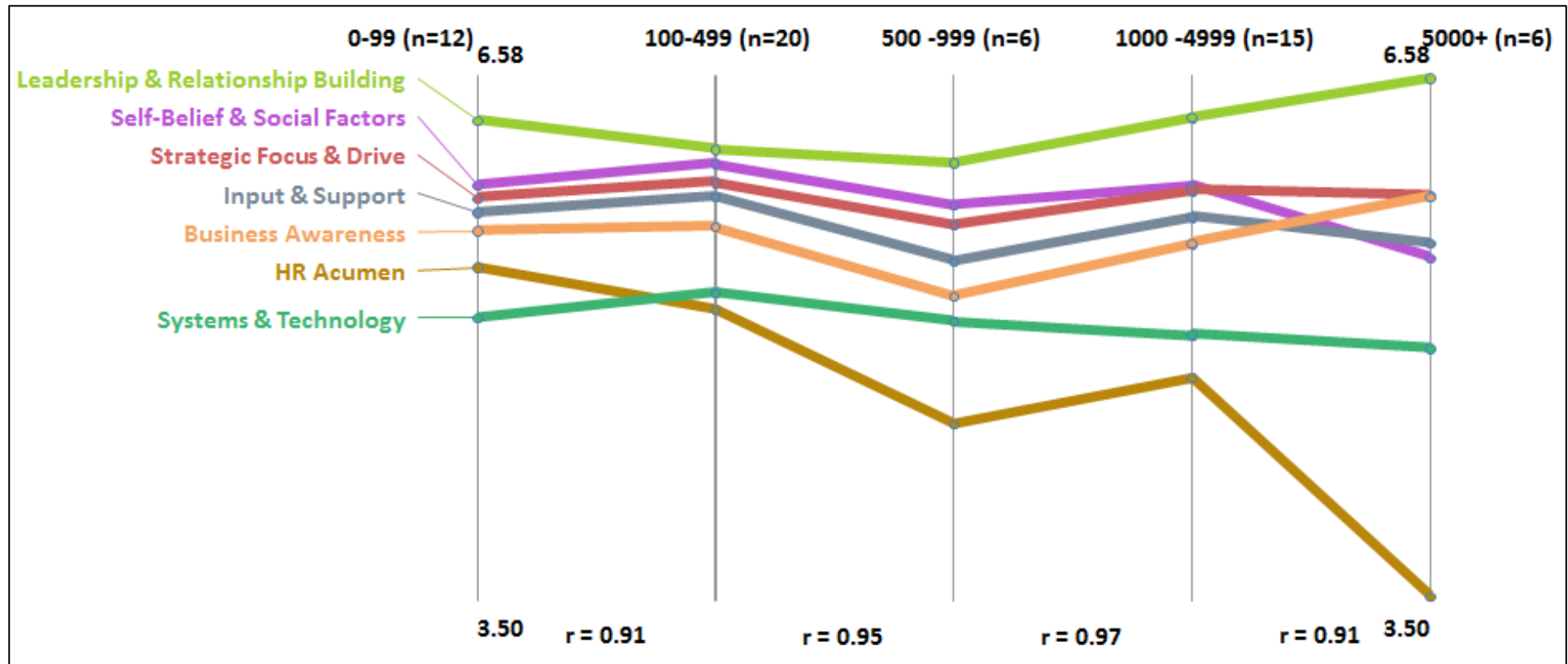


Figure 29 Pattern match for different firm size

A closer look at the respondent demographics shows that while one of the six respondents from the large firms group belonged to an overseas-based MNE, the remaining respondents were from publicly funded organisations (n=3) and local/central government (n=2). Furthermore, about one third of the respondents' organisations in the small firms group are from high technology industries: professional, scientific, and technical services (n=3), information media and telecommunications (n=1). In comparison, only one of the seven respondents' organisations in the large firms group is involved in information media and telecommunications. These data provide validation for the low rating of HR Acumen in overseas-based MNEs in the previous analysis.

One reason for the high ratings of HR Acumen in the small firms group is that half of their respondents (6 out of 12) had a background in HR consulting, including three who held an HR consulting position and another three who had a primarily specialisation in HR consulting. There is also a mixture of strategic and functional orientation amongst these respondents' roles, indicating a variety of HR services in which they are specialised. Whereas only one of the five respondents from the large firms group held an HR consulting position. Further analysis revealed that HR consultants (n=4) gave the highest ratings to HR Acumen competencies (5.88) than other HR positions (e.g., HR executives and HR advisors), particularly for the competencies expertise in recruitment and selection (7.00) and expertise in training and development (6.50). Respondents who specialised in HR consulting (n=14) also gave the highest ratings to HR Acumen competencies (5.37) when compared to other HR specialist roles.

Another reason that contributed to the low requirements for HR Acumen in large firms is that two of the respondents in this group had a primary specialisation in HR information system. Further analysis showed that HR information system specialists tended to give lower ratings for HR Acumen competencies (4.17) given their narrow focus in HR (see Appendix M for HR competency ratings given by HR respondents with different specialism). However, removing these two respondents' ratings from the data

set found similar results. Indeed, other respondents in the large firms group also gave below moderate importance ratings (i.e., less than 4) to a number of HR Acumen competencies, specifically expertise in training and development, expertise in health and safety, and expertise in remuneration and rewards.

Another discrepancy relates to the Business Awareness ratings, with these competencies rated the lowest by firms with 500-999 employees (referred to as medium firms from now on) (5.29), when compared to small firms (5.67) and large firms (5.88). Again, this finding is opposite to what was expected. The ratings differed more greatly for political savvy, which was perceived as more important by large firms (6.67) than by small and medium firms (5.80 and 5.33 respectively). This suggests that HR practitioners in large firms have to deal with more complex political relationships both internal and external to the business (Ulrich et al., 2008). This finding is further reinforced by higher ratings for Leadership and Relationship Building competencies by large firms, particularly for influencing and negotiation (7.0), compared to small firms (6.42). Moreover, HR respondents in small and medium firms considered financial savvy (5.08 and 5.00 respectively) as more important than did large firms (4.50). This finding suggests HR functions in smaller firms have higher pressure to improve organisational performance.

In addition, the pattern match shows that medium firms gave lower ratings for Leadership and Relationship Building and Input and Support competencies (6.08 and 5.50 respectively) than did small firms (6.33 and 5.78 respectively) and large firms (6.58 and 5.60 respectively), albeit the difference is small. However, closer examination shows that the difference is more pronounced for diversity awareness and consultation skills, which were viewed as less important by medium firms (4.17 and 5.50 respectively) when compared to small firms (4.92 and 6.33 respectively).

Lastly, the ratings for Strategic Focus and Drive and Systems and Technology were similar across all firm size, with moderately high ratings from small, medium and large

firm groups. However, further analysis revealed some interesting differences. For the Strategic Focus and Drive cluster, small firms gave higher ratings for judgement (5.83) compared to medium firms (4.83). For the Systems and Technology cluster, both medium and large firms gave higher ratings for HR technology (5.33 and 5.50 respectively) than did small firms (4.67). This finding suggests that larger firms have higher requirements for using technology to improve HR efficiency and effectiveness than do smaller firms. However, small and medium firms gave higher ratings for organisation and administration (5.60 and 6.00) than did large firms (4.00).

Overall, the above findings paint a positive picture for the requirements of both strategic and functional HR competencies in small firms.

The next section summarises the key findings on the relationships between the key HR competency and the contextual variables investigated.

### **6.7.5 Summary of the Contextual Nature of HR Competencies**

The previous sections have compared the perceived importance of HR competencies between different types of organisations, domestic firms and multinational enterprises, and different firm size. The key findings from the pattern matching analysis are summarised in Table 17 on the following page.

Several themes emerge from Table 17. First, Leadership and Relationship Building competencies achieved the highest importance ratings across all organisational contexts, with ratings of 6.0 and above. Although Business Awareness competencies were also perceived as highly important in all organisational contexts, these competencies differed the greatest between private (5.91) and government organisations (5.08), indicating considerable variation in their requirements.

Second, there appears to be greater variation in the perceived importance of HR competencies among private, government, publicly funded, and not-for-profit organisations. This suggests that some HR competencies are sector-specific. The variation is more pronounced for HR Acumen, which was rated very high by domestically based MNEs (6.0) but was rated below moderate level by very large firms (3.50). Third, Self-Belief and Social Factors attained a fairly high level of perceived importance across all organisational contexts, with ratings ranging from 5.0 and above. This finding contradicts the results reported in the HR job description analysis that self-management competencies have low relevance to HR positions.

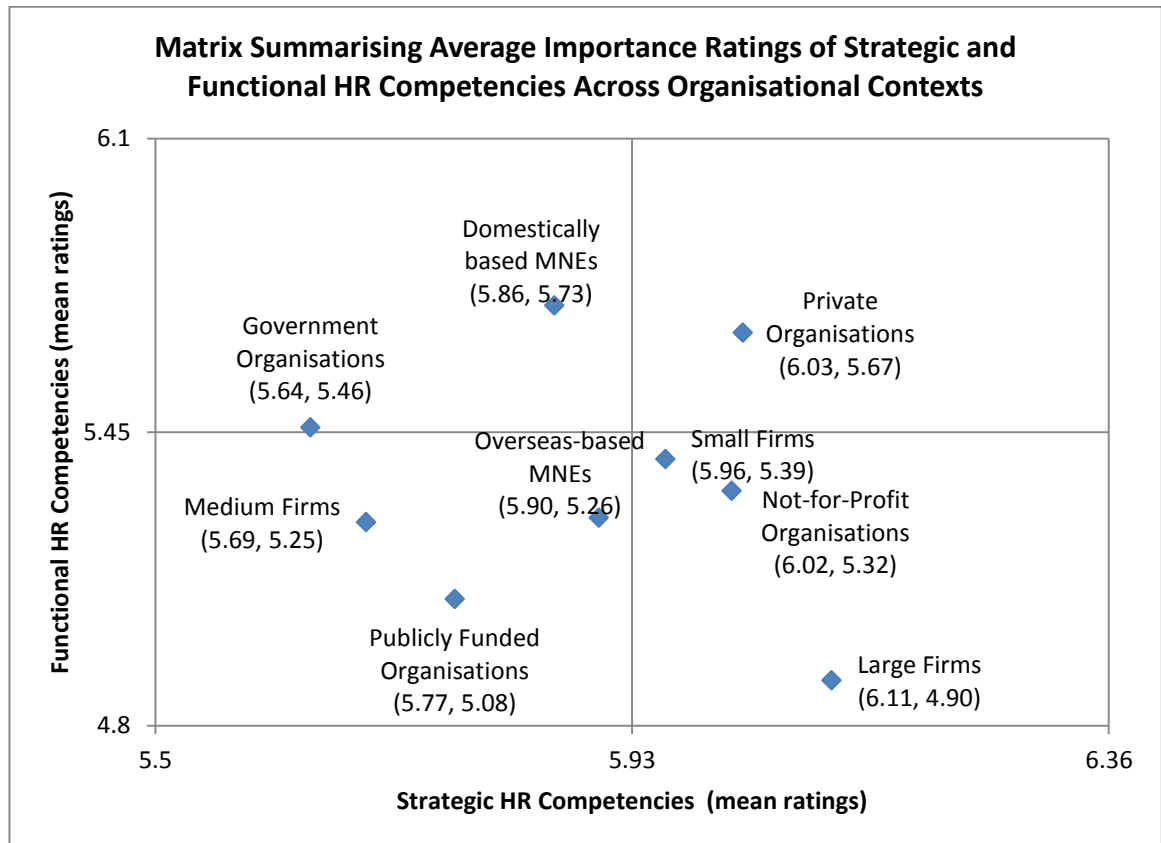
**Table 17 Summary of HR Competency Cluster Ratings for Different Organisational Contexts**

	Privately Owned Organisations	Government Organisations	Publicly Funded Organisations	Not-for-Profit Organisations	Domestically based MNEs	Overseas-based MNEs	Small Firms (1-99 employees)	Medium Firms (500-999 employees)	Large Firms (50000+ employees)
Strategic Focus and Drive	H	H*	H*	VH**	H	VH	H	H	H
Leadership and Relationship Building	VH**	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH*	VH
Business Awareness	H**	H*	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Systems and Technology	H	M*	H	M	H**	H	H	H	H
Input and Support	H	VH**	H	H	H	H	H	H*	H
HR Acumen	H	H	L	M	VH**	M	H	M	L*
Self-Belief and Social Factors	VH	VH**	H	H	H	H	H	H	H*

Note: VH = 6.0 or above; H = 5.0 – 5.9; M = 4.0 – 4.9; L = 4.0 or below

\*\* = highest importance ratings of all organisational contexts, \* = lowest importance ratings of all organisational contexts.

Finally, the pattern matching results are further summarised Figure 30. This matrix provides a clear representation of the relationship between strategic and functional HR competencies.



**Figure 30 Matrix summarising average importance ratings of strategic and functional HR competencies across organisational contexts**

Note: The horizontal axis represents the average importance ratings of all strategic HR competencies (i.e., Leadership and Relationship Building, Strategic Focus and Drive, and Business Awareness). The vertical axis represents the average importance ratings of all functional HR competencies (i.e., Self-Belief and Social Factors, Input and Support, HR Acumen, and Systems and Technology).

Of note is that private sector organisations are the only group located in the upper-right-hand corner, indicating that they have the strongest requirements for both strategic and functional HR competencies; whereas government organisations, publicly funded organisations, and not-for-profit organisations are each located in different quadrants of the matrix, indicating wide variation in HR competency requirements across the different sectors. Of interest is that not-for-profit organisations and very small firms exhibit HR competency ratings that are closest to private organisations,

indicating a high degree of similarity in terms of both strategic and functional HR competency requirements.

In summary, this section has presented the findings on the organisation-specific nature of HR competencies.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the main concept mapping research phase and presented detailed findings pertaining to the role-specific and organisation-specific nature of HR competencies. More specifically, the concept mapping analysis has provided insights into the interrelationships of key HR competencies and identified key similarities and differentiators in HR competency requirements across different organisational contexts. The analysis has also extended the understanding of the contextual relevance of HR competencies that had low relevance in the HR job description analysis, such as curiosity, sense of humour, diversity awareness and knowledge sharing. The overall findings of this study are further discussed in Chapter 7.



## **Chapter 7. Discussion and Conclusions**

As stated in the Introduction (see Chapter 1), the primary purpose of this thesis was to explore the contextual nature of HR competencies from a situationalist perspective.

The principle research question for this study was:

What are the generic and context-specific HR competencies?

The subsidiary research questions were:

- What are the key competencies required of HR practitioners?
- What HR competencies are context-specific?
- What organisational contexts are relevant to HR competencies?

In answer to the first subsidiary question, this thesis identified seven conceptual clusters of HR competencies that are critical to HR practitioners' effective performance (listed in descending order of overall perceived importance): Leadership and Relationship Building, Self-Belief and Social Factors, Strategic Focus and Drive, Input and Support, Business Awareness, HR Acumen and Systems and Technology. In answer to the second and third subsidiary questions, these HR competencies were examined for their relevance to a range of contextual variables: public sector organisations; not-for-profit organisations; domestic firms and multinational enterprises; and different firm size. Details of these findings are discussed next.

### **7.1 Public Sector Organisations**

#### **7.1.1 Contextual Nature of Strategic HR Competencies**

There is clear evidence from the concept mapping survey data within this study that public sector organisations had different requirements for strategic HR competencies when compared to private sector organisations. Of note is the lower perceived importance ratings of Business Awareness and Strategic Focus and Drive competencies in government and publicly funded organisations when compared to private sector organisations. These findings confirm that the HR functions of public

sector organisations are less business and strategically driven than those of private sector organisations. Prior research findings have suggested that strategies in public sector organisations are largely driven by public policies and stakeholder demands rather than financial pressures (Harris, 2004; Klingner & Lynn, 1997; Tompkins, 2002). The results of the present study confirm these findings with markedly higher ratings for political savvy than financial savvy and business acumen competencies for government and publicly funded organisations. These findings are consistent with that of Ulrich et al. (2008) that HR practitioners in government organisations are better at interpreting the social context of the business, than understanding the value chain (i.e., competition and market demands) and the value proposition of the organisation (i.e., the appeal of the organisations' products/services). Similarly, a study by Lupton and Shaw (2001) found that HR practitioners in both private and public sector organisations feel that there is relatively less financial pressure working in the public sector.

Furthermore, researchers have suggested that the potential for public organisation HR managers to be strategic and innovative is limited by central government imperatives and central control of resources (Harris, 2004; Kessler et al., 2000; Lupton & Shaw, 2001; Sheehan & Scafidi, 2005). The results of the present study suggest that HR practitioners in both government and publicly funded organisations are less involved in strategic decision-making than their private counterparts, albeit this perceived gap is not substantial. However, the data does provide some insights into the strategic focus of HR practitioners in government and publicly funded organisations. On the one hand, government organisations respondents considered having an innovative mind set and strong problem-solving skills as highly critical to effective HR performance. This supports the argument of Klingner and Lynn (1997) that the ability to resolve conflicts arising from diverse interests of multiple stakeholders is inevitable for public sector HR practitioners. On the other hand, some of the strategic oriented HR attributes emphasised by publicly funded organisation respondents are fairly similar to those required for private sector organisations, such as good judgement and proactivity in

taking on business initiatives. These findings reflect those of Truss (2008, 2009a) who argue that there is considerable scope for strategic choice and innovation for public sector HR practitioners, thus providing a counterbalance to the more pessimistic findings of earlier studies such as those of Harris (2004) and Kessler et al. (2000).

With regards to Leadership and Relationship Building competencies, there is clear evidence from the data that these competencies are generic to both private and public sector organisations. The need for HR functions in public organisations to build relationships with diverse stakeholders is well documented in the public sector literature (Harris, 2008; Parry et al., 2005; Truss, 2008, 2009a). For instance, Truss (2009a) highlighted that getting buy-in from elected councillors is vital in ensuring that HR strategies that are developed are approved at the executive level. Developing trust relationships with trade union representatives, line managers, and employees is also cited as crucial for maintaining employee commitment in government organisations (Harris, 2008; Parry et al., 2005; Truss, 2008). The present study reinforces this stakeholder focus for government and publicly funded organisations with high ratings for relationship building skills within the Leadership and Relationship Building cluster.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Business Awareness is clearly a differentiating factor between private and public organisations.

### **7.1.2 Contextual Nature of Functional HR Competencies**

With regards to functional HR competencies, the results indicate that HR Acumen and Systems and Technology competencies were considered as less important by public sector respondents than private sector respondents. This is contrary to other research that suggests public sector organisations place a stronger emphasis on legal compliance and administrative and standardised forms of work (Klingner & Lynn, 1997; Truss, 2009b). Further analysis revealed that the low rating was most pronounced for knowledge of employment legislation for government organisations.

Different reasons could be behind this low rating. First, as mentioned in the concept mapping analysis (see Chapter 6), the data suggests that this perceived gap in employment relations expertise is partly because none of the government organisations respondents were specialised in this area, thus reducing the representativeness of this respondent group. Another possible explanation is that the government and publicly funded organisations in the sample had adopted a decentralised and devolved self-service model of HR service provision (Harris, 2008; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010). In this model, the responsibility for handling operational HR matters resides with line managers and the role of the HR function becomes one of an adviser providing written guidance to line managers on HR policy matters (Harris, 2008; Oswick & Grant, 1996). As a result, the need for HR practitioners to possess strong HR functional expertise and transactional skills becomes redundant as they are reliant on line managers for their understandings on the application of HR policies and employment legislation. However, more research is needed as the degree of decentralisation and devolution varies considerably in the public sector (Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010) and very few researches have focused on the subsequent impact on the competency requirements of HR practitioners.

On the other hand, the results of the present study show that the requirements for Self-Belief and Social Factors and Input and Support competencies are broadly similar for private and public sector organisations. Yet, there are some notable differences between government and publicly funded organisations. First, there is a recurring theme of a supportive and collaborative approach to employment relations in government organisations, with higher requirements on empathy and diversity awareness competencies. This reflects the argument of Tompkins (2002) as well as Truss (2009b) that government organisations have a historical expectation to be a “good employer” by focusing on employee welfare and diversity initiatives. However, these competencies attained relatively lower ratings for publicly funded organisations.

The second theme relates to the encouragement of shared learning and continuous improvement within government organisations, with greater emphasis on knowledge-based competencies such as communication, curiosity and knowledge sharing. As Tompkins (2002) argues most government jobs are knowledge-intensive, that is, either directly involved in creating knowledge or managing knowledge in order to create a product. In this context, knowledge or intellectual capital of employees is viewed as an important source of competitive advantage for the public sector. Similarly, a study of local councils in the UK by Truss (2009b) found that in addition to other performance criteria such as legal compliance, it is fundamental for the HR function to develop a capable and committed workforce through the implementation of employee development and retention HR practices. The present study also confirms this focus on employee development with expertise in performance management perceived as the top competency within the HR Acumen cluster for government organisations.

Therefore, it can be concluded that HR Acumen and Systems and Technology are clear differentiators between private and public sector organisations.

## **7.2 Not-for-Profit Organisations**

### **7.2.1 Contextual Nature of Strategic HR Competencies**

It is clear from the concept mapping survey results that the strategic HR competencies required for not-for-profit organisations differ from those required for private and government organisations. The first difference relates to the perceived importance of Strategic Focus and Drive competencies, which were rated higher by not-for-profit organisation respondents than by private and government organisation respondents. In addition, although not-for-profit organisation respondents reported weaker use of Business Awareness than did private organisation respondents, they gave higher ratings for these competencies when compared to government organisation respondents. Despite these differences, HR respondents in both groups shared the same view that Leadership and Relationship Building competencies are highly critical

to the success of their roles. Overall, these findings suggest that not-for-profit organisations have higher requirements for strategic HR competencies.

Several factors may contribute to this. Not-for-profit organisations may be adopting a proactive and strategic approach to HRM in order to deal with increasingly uncertainty in their environment due to resource shortages (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Jäger & Beyes, 2010; Ridder et al., 2012). For example, a single longitudinal case study by Jäger and Beyes (2010) provided support for more efficient and productive management of scarce resources in not-for-profit organisations. Similarly, Parry et al. (2005) noted in their study that not-for-profit organisations face increasing recruitment and retention problems because they are unable to offer pay and benefits equivalent to the private and public sector. In order to combat the relatively low wages and conditions that they offer, not-for-profit organisations are implementing innovative HR practices, such as offering a higher degree of flexible working arrangements to employees.

Another possible explanation is that funding bodies such as the government may exercise influence over the way in which employees are managed in some not-for-profit organisations by requiring adherence to certain employment standards to ensure effective spending of their funding (Alatrasta & Arrowsmith, 2004; Cunningham, 2010; Kelliher & Parry, 2011). Such influence may exert stringent reporting and accountability requirements on not-for-profit organisations, resulting in the adoption of a more outcome-driven approach to HRM (Feeney & Rainey, 2010; Hwang & Powell, 2009). This is further supported by the high ratings of financial savvy and research and reporting skills for not-for-profit organisations in the present study.

However, further research is needed with a larger sample size as this study only involved five respondents in the not-for-profit organisations group.

### **7.2.2 Contextual Nature of Functional HR Competencies**

With regards to functional HR competencies, the results indicate that HR Acumen and Input and Support competencies are regarded as less important by not-for-profit

organisations than by private and government organisations. This is consistent with the findings of prior studies that have reported not-for-profit organisations are under-resourced and lack the expertise required to develop formalised HRM systems and to provide operational support to line managers (Cunningham, 2010; Kelliher & Parry, 2011; Ridder & McCandless, 2010). These findings are supported by the lower ratings given by respondents in not-for-profit organisations for the competencies expertise in performance management, training and development, consultation, and process improvement.

However, there is evidence in this study that HR practitioners in not-for-profit organisations still consider expertise in recruitment and selection, knowledge of employment legislation and diversity awareness competencies as critical to effective HR performance within their organisations. This may be indicative of the recruitment and retention problems that not-for-profit organisations encounter as a result of lower wages and poor employment conditions in the not-for-profit sector (Cunningham, 2001; Nickson et al., 2008; Parry et al., 2005).

In summary, the findings in this study confirm that the type of firm is an important contextual variable for HR competency requirements.

## **7.3 Domestic Firms versus Multinational Enterprises**

### **7.3.1 Contextual Nature of Strategic HR Competencies**

Results relating to strategic HR competency requirements for domestic firms and MNEs are very mixed and without any clear pattern. On the one hand, the findings suggest that overseas-based MNEs have stronger requirements for Strategic Focus and Drive competencies than do domestic firms. This is in line with the findings of Walsh (2001) and Sheehan and Scafidi (2005) that HR practitioners in overseas-based MNEs tend to have more active involvement in strategic activities than domestic firms, albeit the difference identified in the present study is rather small.

On the other hand, findings show the reverse for Business Awareness, with these competencies perceived as less important by overseas-based MNEs than by domestic firms. This finding contradicts that of Ulrich et al. (2008) who argue that overseas-based MNEs require greater business knowledge because they have more interaction with the business environment. One explanation is that the corporate HR headquarters of overseas-based MNEs may seek to retain tighter control over HR strategy planning at the international level. For example, organisational change and movement of expatriates, whilst allowing the subsidiary greater autonomy in setting local HRM policy (Björkman & Yuan, 2001; Sumelius et al., 2008). This reduces the pressure for local operations of overseas-based MNEs to possess strong business knowledge, as they are dependent on the corporate HR headquarters for their understandings on the international market and competition. While this partially explains the lower ratings of strategic oriented HR competencies for overseas-based MNEs, the above findings merit further investigation as there is no consensus on a common model of HRM in MNEs in the existing literature (Brewster et al., 2008; Edwards et al., 2013; Guthrie et al., 2008).

### **7.3.2 Contextual Nature of Functional HR Competencies**

The concept mapping survey findings show that overseas-based MNEs and domestically based MNEs differ substantially in their requirements concerning HR Acumen competencies, with a moderate perceived importance rating of 4.32 reported by the former group and a very high rating of 6.0 reported by the latter group. This finding is surprising as it contradicts the expectation that overseas-based MNEs are more likely to adopt a more sophisticated approach to HRM (Brewster et al., 2008; Edwards et al., 2013).

Two explanations are possible for such diverse ratings. First, overseas-based MNEs may look to their own parent organisations for models of HRM practices that they can implement in their domestic operations based on the view that parent HRM practices are superior, or alternatively, there is uncertainty about the suitability of various HRM



practices in the domestic context (Björkman & Yuan, 2001; Sumelius et al., 2008). This reduces the requirement for HR practitioners in local operations of overseas-based MNEs to possess strong HR Acumen competencies as they are reliant on their parent organisations to provide written guidance and support on HRM policies. Likewise, domestically owned MNEs may be responsible for providing their overseas subsidiaries with access to information and guidance on the MNEs' central HRM policies, and are therefore required to possess stronger functional HR expertise.

Second, parent organisations of overseas-based MNEs may exert influence over the setting of local HRM policies by transferring parts of their home country or global HRM policies and practices to their domestic workplace (Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005; Farndale & Paauwe, 2005). For instance, it is well established in the literature that US MNEs are more likely to adopt a formalised and centralised approaches to HRM, which in turn may reduce the discretion their subsidiaries have over HRM policy formulation (Almond, 2011; Fenton-O'Creevy et al., 2008; Ferner et al., 2011).

Furthermore, this study provides some evidence that HR practitioners in overseas-based MNEs have lower requirements for Input and Support competencies, particularly in coaching and consultation, when compared to domestic firms. This suggests that HR practitioners in overseas-based MNEs have less involvement in employee-oriented activities than do domestic firms. This finding may be indicative of the high level of HR expertise and functional skills possessed by line managers in MNEs as other research has suggested that MNEs are more likely to invest in quality management training given their competitive strength in terms of shared internal network and resources across multiple operations (Almond, 2011; Fenton-O'Creevy et al., 2008; Tregaskis, 2003). Future research could fruitfully explore the distribution of HR responsibilities between HR practitioners and line managers within MNEs and the HR competencies required of these two groups.

Lastly, there is clear evidence that both domestically and overseas-based MNEs have higher requirements for HR technology (5.60 and 5.62) when compared to domestic firms (4.71). This finding is consistent with researchers who have reported a widespread use of HR information systems among MNEs (e.g., Belizon et al., 2013; Meijerink, Bondarou, & Maatman, 2013; Stiles et al., 2006).

## **7.4 Firm Size**

### **7.4.1 Contextual Nature of Strategic HR Competencies**

Results derived from comparing ratings of strategic HR competencies across different firm size reveal very diverse patterns between very small firms (1-99 employees), medium firms (500-999 employees), and very large firms (5000+). Leadership and Relationship Building and Business Awareness competencies were found to be more important in very large firms when compared to very small firms. These findings are consistent with those of Long and Wan Ismail (2009) and Ulrich et al. (2008) who found that larger firms place a greater emphasis on external business conditions as they have a more complex set of interrelationships with the government, business partners, and customers, and a greater impact on society. However, it is interesting to note that very large firms gave lower ratings for financial savvy (4.50) than did smaller firms (5.08). One possible reason is that five of the six respondents in the very large firms group belong to government and publicly funded organisations, where there is less pressure in improving financial performance. However, further research is needed with a larger sample size.

Although the above findings support the fact that Business Awareness increases in salience with firm size, there is evidence that medium firms (500-999 employees) have lower requirements for Business Awareness competencies when compared to very small firms. One possible explanation is that very small firms are more vulnerable to mistakes and changes in their organisational performance than larger firms given their limited size and lack of resources and legitimacy in the market place (Aldrich & Fiol,

1994; Martin & Staines, 1994), and therefore are required to be more responsive to changing business conditions.

On the other hand, the findings of the present study suggest that small and large firms share the same view on the importance of Strategic Focus and Drive competencies with moderately high ratings (5.87 and 5.88 respectively). While this finding contradicts the expectation that larger firms are more strategically oriented than smaller firms, several other studies have found that strategic and innovative HRM practices are gaining prevalence among small firms (Aït Razouk & Bayad, 2009; Bartram, 2005; Nankervis et al., 2002). One possible reason is that a majority of the small firms in the sample are from high technology sectors. Indeed, a study by Bacon and Hoque (2005) found that small firms that hire a high proportion of skilled labour are more likely to develop their employees as a basis of competitive advantage and adopt innovative HRM practices. Future research could further explore the competency requirements of HR practitioners in different industry sectors within the small business context.

#### **7.4.2 Contextual Nature of Functional HR Competencies**

Contrary to expectation, the results of the present study show that the perceived importance of HR Acumen competencies decreases with firm size. This finding is surprising given that previous research findings have suggested that smaller firms are less likely to implement formal HR practices (Bacon & Hoque, 2005; Bartram, 2005; Wiesner & McDonald, 2001).

One possible explanation is that the small firms group comprised relatively more HR respondents with an HR consulting background than the large firms group. This finding may be indicative of the tendency of smaller firms in New Zealand to outsource their HR services (e.g., recruitment and training) to external HR consultants due to lack of internal resources and expertise in the area of HRM (Gilbert & Jones, 2000). The New Zealand Cranet study also found that smaller organisations are less likely to have a HR

specialist department and that the person in charge of HRM is usually the Chief Executive Officer or the Financial Director (Rasmussen et al., 2010). Indeed, the findings of the present thesis show that HR consultant respondents in the small firms group gave very high importance ratings to HR Acumen competencies particularly in the areas of recruitment and selection and training and development.

Another reason is that HR practitioners in smaller firms tend to be involved in a wide variety of HR and administrative activities despite resource constraints and an informal organisational structure (Ulrich et al., 2008), and are therefore more likely to require generalist HR expertise. This is further supported by the higher rating of organisation and administration skills for small firms, whereas larger firms tend to have more specialisation in their HR functions and a narrower focus of HRM (Brewster et al., 2006; Wiesner & Innes, 2010). Another reason is that larger firms tend to have greater access to resources, such as the application of HR technology, and outsource some specific HR activities (Brewster et al., 2006; Giannantonio & Hurley, 2002), which reduces HR's involvement in operational and administrative HR activities and the requirements for HR expertise. This is further supported by the high rating of HR technology knowledge and the low rating of organisation and administration skills for very large firms.

It is also evident from the present study that very small firms make stronger use of Input and Support competencies, particularly for coaching, diversity awareness and consultation, when compared to medium and large firms. This indicates the critical importance of HR practitioners in providing HR guidance and support to managers in small firms, which is further supported by their high requirements of HR Acumen as mentioned earlier. These findings are consistent with those of Wiesner and Innes (2010), who found that the presence of HR staff member(s) in small firms has substantial influence on the adoption of formal HR practices. Research evidence also suggests that owners and managers of small businesses are realising the potential benefits of adopting high performance HRM practices through improving employee

commitment and involvement (Aït Razouk, 2011; Allen, Ericksen, & Collins, 2013; Patel & Cardon, 2010).

The context-specific and generic HR competencies identified for the contextual variables stated are summarised in Table 18 on the following page.

**Table 18 Context-specific and Generic HR Competencies identified for each Contextual Variable**

<b>Contextual Variables</b>	<b>Context-Specific HR Competencies</b>	<b>Generic HR Competencies</b>
Private sector organisations	Business Awareness Input and Support HR Acumen System and Technology	Leadership and Relationship Building  Self-Belief and Social Factors
Public sector organisations	Input and Support	
Not-for-profit organisations	Strategic Focus and Drive	
Domestic Firms	Business Awareness HR Acumen	
Domestically based MNEs	HR Acumen	
Overseas-based MNEs	Strategic Focus and Drive	
Small Firms	HR Acumen	
Medium Firms		
Large Firms		

Taken as a whole, the findings indicate that HR practitioners require both generic and context-specific competencies, thus providing support for the situationalist perspective. It is clear that Leadership and Relationship Building and Self-Belief and Social Factors competencies are highly critical to effective HR performance regardless of the context; thus, they are generic in nature. In contrast, findings show that Business Awareness, Strategic Focus and Drive, HR Acumen and Input and Support competencies are more amenable to change in importance across organisational contexts. The significance of these findings are further discussed in the next section.

## **7.5 Significance of Findings**

### **7.5.1 Generic HR Competencies**

First, results derived from the HR job description analysis, concept mapping focus groups and concept mapping survey verify that Leadership and Relationship Building competencies are not necessarily important differentiators across different HR roles and organisational settings. This finding is contrary to the expectation that HR practitioners in strategist/leadership roles make stronger use of leadership and influencing skills to partner with senior and line managers (Blancero et al., 1996; Schoonover, 2003; Yeung et al., 1996). It also highlights the critical importance for HR practitioners in setting shared visions and building effective interpersonal relationships with stakeholders regardless of the context. This is further supported by the high ratings of political savvy within the Business Awareness cluster, which suggests that understanding the dynamics of political relationships provides one with interpersonal relationships power (Swan & Scarbrough, 2005).

Indeed, recent research suggests that HR practitioners are becoming increasingly involved in various phases of organisational change processes (Alfes et al., 2011; Antila, 2006; Long, Wan Ismail, & Amin, 2013; Ulrich et al., 2013). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argue that conveying clear and consistent HRM messages to employees is crucial to creating a strong HR system in which individuals share common understanding regarding expected and valued behaviours within the organisation. Other research also points to the important role of HR leadership in developing employee commitment to organisational goals and its subsequent impact on organisational outcomes (Guest & Conway, 2011; McDermott, Conway, Rousseau, & Flood, 2013; Stanton, Young, Bartram, & Leggat, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings of the present study suggest that collaborating with multiple and diverse stakeholders is seen as crucial to effective performance in human resources. While Ulrich et al. (2013) argue that the ability to influence and relate to others has low impact on business results, other research is supportive of adopting a

stakeholder perspective of HRM as it enables HR practitioners to reconcile the divergent and often conflicting interests of different stakeholders and gain the support and legitimacy necessary for successful implementation of HR initiatives (Ferrary, 2009; Graham & Tarbell, 2006; Guest & Woodrow, 2012; Truss, 2009b). Future research on HR competencies could fruitfully explore the utilisation of Leadership and Relationship Building competencies by HR practitioners in relation to different stakeholder groups.

The findings of the present study also highlight the need to consider identifying both attribute and behavioural dimensions of HR competencies, as both are seen as important for HR job success and adding value to the organisation (Buckley & Monks, 2004; Lounsbury et al., 2008). Most importantly, this study confirms that the critical competencies required of HR practitioners are related to a wider array of underlying qualities than those suggested by the proponents of business partnering (Dainty, 2011; Long & Wan Ismail, 2011). Of note is the competency concept, Self-Belief and Social Factors, which was perceived as highly relevant in both strategic and functional HR roles. In addition to having a strategic and deliverable focus, it is also important for HR practitioners to realise and develop their self-confidence and interpersonal awareness for development purposes as these competencies are key to effective performance in both strategic and functional roles. Other research is also supportive of including Self-Belief and Social Factors in the development of HR competency models, as they enable HR practitioners to develop their full potential rather than targeting a narrow set of job-specific competencies (Buckley & Monks, 2004; Crouse, Doyle, & Young, 2011; Lounsbury et al., 2008). Self-confidence and resilience are important for dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty during organisational change and crisis (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Buckley & Monks, 2004; Selmer & Chiu, 2004). Recent work of Ulrich et al. (2013) confirms these findings by including self-awareness in their revised HR competency model.

Further to the above, the identification of professional integrity and social skills as critical HR competencies is important given the growing attention to ethical issues in

the HRM literature (Gama, McKenna, & Peticca-Harris, 2012; Greenwood, 2013; Guest & Woodrow, 2012). Empathy and ethical consideration for others are key to maintaining trustworthiness and respect from line managers and employees, especially during organisational change and crisis (Francis & Keegan, 2006; Kulik et al., 2009; Lowry, 2006). Research by Brown et al. (2009) confirms these findings and reaffirms the importance of the employee-oriented role, which is perceived by HR practitioners as compatible to their strategic HR roles. The authors found that HR's involvement in employee-oriented activities can generate long-term benefits for the organisation through improving employee engagement, productivity, and retention.

### **7.5.2 Context-Specific HR Competencies**

The HR literature is replete with evidence which suggest that HR practitioners need to develop a more active role and business focus in order to make a strategic contribution (Brockbank, 1999; Dainty, 2011; Long & Wan Ismail, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2010). Other research also points to the importance of business knowledge and analytical skills in developing HR strategies that are linked to the strategic aims of the business (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Guest & King, 2004; Ulrich et al., 2013). In contrast to these assertions, the present study demonstrates that Strategic Focus and Drive and Business Awareness competencies are important differentiators between private, public and not-for-profit organisations, and between domestic firms and multinational enterprises. Most importantly, it provides support to the assertion that HR practitioners in certain business contexts may not necessarily benefit from focusing on financial competitiveness as the ultimate business goal (Han et al., 2006; Teo & Rodwell, 2007).

On the other hand, prior research contends that HR practitioners should reduce time spent on operational and transactional HR activities as they distract them from acquiring strategic HR competencies required for operating in a business partnering role (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003; Long & Wan Ismail, 2011; Sheehan & Scafidi, 2005). As indicated by the concept mapping results, the present study demonstrates that HR Acumen competencies are clear differentiators between domestically based and



overseas-based MNEs, and between smaller and larger firms. This supports the argument that functional HR competencies can be as important as the strategic HR competencies required for adding value in certain contexts (Brown et al., 2009; Graham & Tarbell, 2006). Furthermore, this study provides some insights into the HR generalist-specialist debate (Caldwell, 2010; CIPD, 2007; Wright, 2008) by highlighting the relevance of generalist HR knowledge to multiple contexts (e.g., knowledge in employment legislation, performance management, and recruitment and selection). This further supports the contention that HR practitioners' ability to contribute to the business is underpinned by their expertise in operational matters (Khatri & Budhwar, 2002; Truss et al., 2002).

In addition, while the findings indicate that the requirements of Input and Support competencies vary to a lesser extent, it is clear that knowledge sharing and diversity awareness are recognised as critical competencies by the government organisations. This confirms the important role of HR practitioners in engaging knowledge workers by creating environments that support employee creativity, autonomy, and responsibility and maximising employee contributions in terms of all aspects of diversity (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Felin, Zenger, & Tomsik, 2009; McDermott et al., 2013). Other research is also supportive of focusing on knowledge management as a means of building a capable and committed workforce to support organisational agility and sustainability (Gloet, 2006; Hsu-Hsin, Han, & Ju-Sung, 2011; Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz-Valle, 2013).

Lastly, the results from the concept mapping survey reveal a lower ranking for Systems and Technology competencies compared to other HR competencies, despite the recognition of their moderate importance. This indicates that HR technical skills, such as process improvement, project management, and organisation and administration skills, remain central to effective HR job performance (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Teo & Rodwell, 2007). Results from the HR job descriptions analysis (see Chapter 5) further support the belief that HR administration skills are pre-requisites for working in human

resources with high relevance across multiple settings. This is consistent with the findings of several other researches that have reported that administrative efficiency in HR delivery is crucial to building credibility (Han et al., 2006), thus improving the positioning of the HR function within an organisation (Guest & King, 2004; Khatri & Budhwar, 2002). However, it is worth noting that HR technology and HR metrics emerged as context-specific for multinational enterprises and larger firms. This suggests that the use of HR data reporting mechanisms is not as widespread as expected, a finding consistent with Boselie and Paauwe (2005) and Ulrich et al. (2013).

## **7.6 Contribution to Knowledge**

HR competency models have been researched and developed for over two decades; however, evidence suggests HR practitioners are still sceptical about the effectiveness of generic and role-specific HR competency models in predicting effective performance in business partnering roles (Caldwell, 2008, 2010). One major issue is the use of a universalist approach to HR competencies, which assumes a universal set of competencies is relevant to all HR practitioners irrespective of the context (e.g., Ulrich et al., 2013). This approach has tended to use large-scale quantitative surveys involving predominantly large firms to investigate the relationship of HR competencies and organisational performance (e.g., Dainty, 2011; Ulrich et al., 2013). However, the universalist approach has been criticised for its managerial focus on HR's contribution and failure to recognise the relevance of HR competencies to other organisational strategies (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Caldwell, 2010; Graham & Tarbell, 2006). At the same time, both HR practitioners and researchers find it difficult to sustain the claim that having a set of strategic HR competencies or an understanding of the business will guarantee effective individual or organisational performance (Brown et al., 2009; Han et al., 2006; Teo & Rodwell, 2007; Yeung, 2011). Other researchers have argued that generating universal lists of competencies understates the complex and evolving nature of HR roles and discourages the integrative learning necessary for effective performance in new and emerging situations (e.g., Antonacopoulou & FitzGerald, 1996;

Buckley & Monks, 2004; Caldwell, 2010; Soderquist et al., 2010). Another important issue is that HR competency studies have predominantly focused on job-specific behaviours (Huselid et al., 1997; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005), and overlooked the underlying qualities, for example, the self-confidence and empathy that a person should bring to their job to achieve desirable performance (Buckley & Monks, 2004; Graham & Tarbell, 2006; Lounsbury et al., 2008).

This thesis makes three theoretical contributions. First, it contributes to the growing discussion on the requirements of HR competencies by adopting a situationalist approach to differentiate generic HR competencies from those that are context-specific. This differentiation has important implications for the HR competency literature as it provides a nuanced perspective on the competencies required by HR practitioners in minority organisations, such as not-for-profit organisations and small firms. The findings of the present study also indicate that context-specific HR competencies have been a neglected area in HR competency research and require greater attention. Future research should move away from the one-size-fits-all universalist approach advocated by Ulrich et al. (2013) and adopt a situationalist approach to enable more nuanced understandings on what shapes HR competency expectations. Following on from the above, there is also scope to extend the situationalist approach into other occupations as the dominant approach in the competency literature has been the personal attribute and behavioural models (see Chapter 2).

Second, this research has shed light on the nature of HR competencies required for achieving job success in human resources. As mentioned earlier, the findings of this study reveal that underlying qualities in Self-Belief and Social Factors are crucial for the effective performance of HR practitioners in general. This finding highlights the critical importance of HR practitioners to focus on the whole person's development rather than adhering to a prescribed list of job-specific HR competencies.

Third, this thesis provides new grounds for identifying the competency requirements for HR practitioners using a mixed-method research design, involving content analysis of HR job descriptions, an integrated concept mapping process, and review of the HR competency literature. More specifically, the contribution of this research to theory lies in the analysis of HR competency conceptual relationships and their perceived importance in the eyes of HR practitioners. The outcome is a series of concept maps that depict key similarities and differentiators for HR competency requirements in different organisational contexts, which can be easily interpreted by both HR researchers and practitioners. The concept mapping process also confirms the contextual nature of HR competencies with low relevance to HR jobs as reported in the HR job description analysis, such as curiosity, sense of humour, knowledge sharing, and diversity awareness.

## **7.7 Practical Implications**

This thesis has several implications for the selection and development of HR practitioners which are of benefit to HR practitioners themselves as well as recruiting managers and HR professional bodies.

### **7.7.1 Recruitment and Selection of HR Practitioners**

This thesis provides insights into the quest for recruiting HR practitioners from outside the HR occupation. As mentioned earlier, this study found that Business Awareness is the main differentiator between private, public, and not-for-profit organisations. This finding provides support to the assertion that generalist business-knowledge is more important than specialist HR expertise in the private sector as argued by proponents of strategic HRM (Guest, 2011). On the one hand, this supports the rationale of hiring non-HR specialists for private sector HR positions to the extent that HR practitioners lack business acumen and financial savvy. However, focusing on business knowledge may risk undermining other relevant and valuable competencies that HR practitioners from outside the private sector may bring into their jobs.

For instance, the findings suggest that public sector HR practitioners make stronger use of knowledge-based competencies (e.g., knowledge sharing and curiosity) and social skills (e.g., empathy and conflict resolution) than those working in the private sector. These competencies are critical for organisations that are focused on developing a capable and committed workforce (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Paauwe & Boselie, 2005). Similarly, this study provides some evidence that not-for-profit organisations have high requirements for strategic focus, business judgement, and innovative thinking given the high levels of uncertainty and complexity in this sector, which are all relevant to the private sector setting. Therefore, it is recommended that organisations should select HR practitioners with competencies that best align with their organisational strategy and business environment.

This thesis found that HR Acumen (e.g., knowledge of employment legislation, expertise in performance management) is one of the most highly context-specific competencies. This means that certain types of organisations, such as domestically based MNEs, are still highly dependent on HR generalist knowledge for effective performance in human resources. Equally, publicly funded organisations and larger firms consider HR functional knowledge to be a pre-requisite for entering into an HR career, although it does not necessarily predict superior performance in an HR role within that setting. This study also found that Systems and Technology (e.g., process improvement, organisation & administration) competencies are seen as moderately important for effective HR performance. Therefore, it is recommended that organisations use these competencies as a benchmark for selecting HR practitioners (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Hunt & Boxall, 1998; Mäkelä, Sumelius, Höglund, & Ahlvik, 2012).

The identification of Self-Belief and Social Factors as generic HR competencies has implications for the recruitment of HR practitioners. Research evidence suggests that underlying qualities, for example, self-confidence, empathy, and professional integrity, reflect the innate disposition of a person and are more difficult to assess and less

amenable to cultivate in comparison to knowledge and behaviours (Boyatzis, 2008; Caldwell, 2010; SHRM, 2010). However, as indicated by the HR job description analysis (see Chapter 5), many organisations predominantly focus on the knowledge and skill dimensions of HR competencies and overlook the personal attributes required. Therefore, it is recommended that recruiting managers also target underlying attributes when recruiting and selecting HR practitioners (e.g., by using personality assessment) (Lounsbury et al., 2008).

### **7.7.2 Training and Development**

This thesis also has implications for the development of HR practitioners and the assessment of their performance. As indicated by the findings, Leadership and Relationship Building and Self-Belief and Social Factors are the most important predictors of job success in human resources regardless of the role and context. Therefore, these competencies should form the basis of the development of HR practitioners during their course of study and throughout their career development. For instance, the design of HRM related courses could incorporate group assessments (e.g., group assignment, presentation and peer evaluation) that facilitate the development of self-confidence, collaboration, conflict resolution, communication and presentation skills. Similarly, HR professional bodies should place a greater emphasis on promoting self-awareness and interpersonal skills through providing mentoring and guidance. Organisations may consider using performance measures that reflect the contribution of these competencies to business objectives, such as stakeholder judgements of effectiveness, employee retention, and absence (Guest & Conway, 2011; Guest & Peccei, 1994).

It is also clear that Business Awareness is a main differentiator between strategic and functional HR roles as well as across sectors. This suggests that knowledge of the business environment, having a strategic focus and the ability to interpret these in financial terms, are the key factors that hinder the occupational mobility of HR practitioners within an organisation and across sectors, a finding consistent with that of

Lupton and Shaw (2001) and Sheehan and Scafidi (2005). This also supports the need for HR practitioners to broaden their business understanding through gaining cross-functional or line management experience (e.g., Guest & Peccei, 1994; Kelly & Gennard, 2000). In the classroom setting, students studying HRM should be encouraged to select a balanced mixture of strategic and functional HRM courses (e.g., Strategic HRM, Employment Relations, Organisational Behaviour), as well as other contextually focused management courses (e.g., Gender and Diversity, Management in Small Businesses and Enterprises and HRM in Not-for-Profit Organisations). In fact, a study by Kelly and Gennard (2000) found that many HR practitioners have acquired a strong customer focus and a wider business understanding via a “zig-zag” career pathway, that is, undertaking vertical and horizontal occupational movement in and out of the HR function. Building networks inside (e.g., with managers in other functions) and outside the organisation (e.g., consultation with management clubs, attending HR seminars) is also cited as useful for gaining an all-rounded understanding of the business (Kelly & Gennard, 2000; Sumelius et al., 2008).

Lastly and importantly, the findings suggest that HR Acumen competencies are the main differentiator between smaller and larger firms while other competencies are not. This contradicts the view that “large is beautiful” as smaller firms may offer the ideal environment for HR practitioners to develop both strategic and functional HR competencies.

## **7.8 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

This thesis has a number of limitations which need addressing in future research. First, the use of HR job descriptions and advertisements was limited to publicly available information collected from electronic job sites. This had limitations in that it excluded other potential sources such as newspapers and online discussion forums (e.g., LinkedIn). Though attempts were made to obtain HR job descriptions directly from recruiting organisations and external recruitment consultants, such requests were often

turned down due to privacy reasons. Future research could examine a larger scope of HR job descriptions and advertisements over a longer time frame.

Second, the definition of HR practitioner used in this thesis focused exclusively on in-house HR staff members and excluded external HR consultants (see Chapter 1 section 1.4.3). Although this definition is consistent with those used in other HR competency studies (Ulrich et al., 2013), it does not recognise the role of HR consultants particularly in the context of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in New Zealand. Indeed, New Zealand is predominantly a country of SMEs, with 97 percent of enterprises employing 19 or fewer people (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014). Often, SMEs may not have established HR departments and may rely on external HR consultants for the provision of HR services due to resource shortages and lack of HRM expertise. While the present thesis included HR consultants' inputs and perspectives in the concept mapping focus groups and online survey, these findings could not be verified with the data collected from the HR job description analysis which focused on in-house HR jobs only. Therefore, future HR competency research could include HR consultants in the definition of HR practitioners and further explore their perspectives in HR competency requirements.

Third, the concept mapping results were based on HR practitioners' perceptions only, rather than multiple stakeholder perspectives (Han et al., 2006; Selmer & Chiu, 2004; Wright et al., 2001). This may have provided a distorted picture of HR competency requirements as HR practitioners may have exaggerated the importance of specific HR competencies or their roles within their organisations due to self-interest bias (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Wright et al., 2001). Future research should include the opinions of other stakeholders, for example, line managers, employees and trade unions. As Graham and Tarbell (2006) and Han et al. (2006) argue, employees and line managers have different views from senior managers on what characterises an effective or reputable HR function given their divergent interests in the organisations.



Fourth, although the findings of this thesis confirm the contextual nature of HR competencies in contexts that have received little attention in the strategic HRM literature (public sector organisations, not-for-profit organisations, domestically based MNEs and small firms), the sample size used for these groups was rather small, thus limiting the generalisability of the findings. Future research should use bigger samples. Also, more examination is needed to understand whether other organisational factors, such as organisational strategy, structure, and resources, affect the salience of HR competencies. For instance, it may be particularly interesting to examine the HR competency requirements within a multi-divisional firm by exploring whether there are variations at the corporate and business unit levels. There is evidence that corporate HR functions are more likely to place greater emphasis on strategic involvement than on operational effectiveness given their interaction with senior executives (Caldwell, 2008; Truss, 2008; Truss et al., 2002; Ulrich et al., 2008).

Finally, it is recommended that future research examine current shortcomings of HR practitioners in terms of the HR attributes identified in the present study and suggest appropriate development processes. As this thesis suggests, Self-Belief and Social Factors are seen as highly relevant to job success in multiple HR roles and business contexts. Future research could fruitfully explore whether or not organisations are targeting these competencies when selecting and developing HR practitioners.

## **7.9 Conclusion**

Most HR competency researches to date that have applied a universalist approach have suggested that strategic HR competencies are important for aligning HR actions with business strategy and they have greater impact on business performance than functional HR competencies. This thesis adds to this body of research by pointing to the possibility that some HR competencies are context-specific, thus supporting the situationalist perspective of competency. Most notably, the findings reported here demonstrate that the requirements of Business Awareness and Strategic Focus and Drive competencies shift in perceived importance across different sectors. While this

provides insights into the factors that hinder the occupational movement of HR practitioners from the public or not-for-profit sectors, further research is required into other contextual factors that shape strategic HR competency expectations.

It is also evident that domestically based MNEs and smaller firms are still heavily reliant on functional HR competencies with particularly higher requirements for HR Acumen competencies. This confirms the contention that functional HR competencies can be as important as strategic HR competencies in certain contexts. Thus, there is scope to extend the situationalist approach into the MNE and SME domains. Furthermore, the findings of the present thesis suggest that HR consultants and line / operational managers also make use of HR competencies in the MNE and SME contexts and therefore should be included in the definition of HR practitioners in future HR competency research.

It is also clear that Leadership and Relationship Building competencies are regarded as most important by HR practitioners regardless of the focus of their roles or the business context. Indeed, it is well documented in the literature that this is an area in which HR practitioners are generally good at performing. While this finding suggests that there is a shift away from focusing on implementing HR transactions to facilitating change processes for HR practitioners in general, further research is required into the transferability of Leadership and Relationship Building competencies across wider range of business settings.

Finally, this thesis illustrates that the established HR competency models need to encompass a wider set of HR attributes than is currently typical, and to consider their relevance for effective performance in different business contexts. This finding extends our current understanding on the contextual nature of HR competencies and offers a more balanced approach to the selection and development of HR practitioners. The challenge for HR practitioners is to understand how to integrate the range of HR competencies required and translate them into appropriate action.

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## Appendix A: HR job description coding sheet

Position Title  
Company Name  
Job Role (see note 1)  
Role Specification (see note 2)  
Position Level (see note 3)  
Employment Status (see note 4)  
Industry Sector  
Type of Organisation  
Firm Size (number of employees)

Website  
Date of Adv  
Date downloaded  
Classification / Search Word  
Country  
Number of Direct Reports  
Reports To (see note 5)

Code	HR Competency Items	
ATTR	ATTRIBUTE	
AWA	1 Ability to Work Autonomously	
Acc	2 Accountability	
AO	3 Achievement Orientation	
App	4 Approachable	
Ass	5 Assertiveness	
AD	6 Attention to Detail	
CL	7 Curiosity	
CF	8 Customer Focused	
E	9 Empathy	
I	10 Innovation	
J	11 Judgement	
P	12 Proactivity	
PI	13 Professional Integrity	
R	14 Resilience	
SC	15 Self-confidence	
SH	16 Sense of Humour	
	TOTAL FOR ATTRIBUTE	

Code	KNOWLEDGE	
KNOW		
BO	1 Business Acumen	
DA	2 Diversity Awareness	
H&S	3 Expertise in Health & Safety	
PM	4 Expertise in Performance Management	
R&S	5 Expertise in Recruitment & Selection	
R&R	6 Expertise in Remuneration & Rewards	
T&D	7 Expertise in Training & Development	
BS	8 Financial Savvy	
EL	9 Knowledge of Employment Legislation	
HRG	10 HR Generalist Expertise	
HRM	11 HR Metrics	
HRT	12 HR Technology	
PD	13 Political Savvy	
	TOTAL FOR KNOWLEDGE	

Code	SKILLS	
SKILLS		
CM	1 Change Management	
Coac	2 Coaching	
Coll	3 Collaboration	
CS	4 Communication	
CR	5 Conflict Resolution	
Cons	6 Consultation	
IN	7 Influencing & Negotiation	
KS	8 Knowledge Sharing	
Lead	9 Leadership	
OA	10 Organisation & Administration	
PS	11 Problem Solving	
PI	12 Process Improvement	
PMS	13 Project Management	
RB	14 Relationship Building	
RR	15 Research & Reporting	
ST	16 Strategic Thinking	
	TOTAL FOR SKILLS	

### Notes:

1. Job role indicated as: S = Strategic, F = Functional
2. Role specification indicated as: Gen = Generalist, Spe = Specialist
3. Position level indicated as: E = Executive, M = Manager, Adv = Advisor, Adm = Administrator
4. Employment status indicated as: FT = Full-time, PT = Part-time, C = Contract
5. Reports to indicated as: HR = HR Executive/Manager, LE = Line Executive

## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts

	HR Attributes					
	Total N	Ability to Work Autonomously	Accountability	Achievement Orientation	Approachable	Assertiveness
Strategic	42	9	10	34	2	9
Functional	61	19	23	39	8	3
	103					
Executive	18	3	5	15	1	4
Manager	32	8	4	22	4	6
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	11	17	26	3	2
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	6	7	10	2	0
	103					
General HR	58	12	22	46	5	9
Change Management	3	2	1	1	0	0
HR Information System	7	3	3	5	0	0
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	2	3	5	2	1
Occupational Safety & Health	4	1	0	3	1	1
Recruitment & Selection	8	4	1	5	0	0
Remuneration & Rewards	6	2	0	2	1	0
Training & Development	12	2	3	6	1	1
	103					
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	4	2	10	3	2
Local or Central Government	21	6	8	14	1	2
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	6	7	8	1	0
State-Owned Enterprise	5	1	4	5	0	2
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	4	2	7	1	1
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	3	2	12	0	1
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	0	2	4	3	0
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	4	6	11	1	3
	48					
0-99	2	2	1	1	1	0
100-499	17	5	3	12	3	3
500-999	13	4	4	11	0	3
1000-4999	22	4	8	18	4	2
5000-9999	13	5	9	9	1	0
10000-24999	11	3	1	6	0	1
25000-49999	10	3	2	6	0	2
50000-74999	2	0	1	2	0	0
100000+	1	0	1	1	0	0
	91					
Accommodation and Food Services	7	2	0	5	1	0
Agriculture	2	1	1	2	0	0
Arts and Recreation Services	3	0	0	3	0	0
Construction	2	0	0	0	0	0
Education and Training	7	4	2	5	1	0
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	1	4	5	0	2
Financial and Insurance Services	7	0	2	5	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	6	9	13	1	0
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	0	1	2	0	1
Manufacturing	12	2	0	8	2	2
Mining	2	0	1	2	1	1
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	3	5	7	1	1
Public Administration and Safety	16	6	6	10	0	1
Retail Trade	2	1	1	1	0	1
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	1	1	0
Other Services	5	2	1	4	1	2
	103					

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%





## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts (continued)

	Total N	HR Attributes				
		Attention to Detail	Curiosity	Customer Focused	Empathy	Innovation
Strategic	42	7	12	17	8	19
Functional	61	25	20	34	12	26
	103					
Executive	18	3	3	6	4	9
Manager	32	9	6	13	5	11
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	9	16	23	9	18
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	11	7	9	2	7
	103					
General HR	58	18	17	27	10	23
Change Management	3	2	1	1	0	2
HR Information System	7	1	3	5	1	3
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	2	2	4	3	2
Occupational Safety & Health	4	2	1	2	2	3
Recruitment & Selection	8	2	1	2	1	4
Remuneration & Rewards	6	3	2	3	0	1
Training & Development	12	2	5	7	3	7
	103					
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	4	4	7	1	7
Local or Central Government	21	7	11	15	6	13
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	5	4	9	3	8
State-Owned Enterprise	5	1	3	5	0	2
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	4	3	1	1	2
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	3	6	6	2	5
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	3	1	1	3	2
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	5	0	6	4	4
	48					
0-99	2	2	1	0	0	1
100-499	17	6	6	7	4	6
500-999	13	4	5	6	1	7
1000-4999	22	6	10	14	3	9
5000-9999	13	5	3	11	2	8
10000-24999	11	1	3	5	1	4
25000-49999	10	3	2	3	1	3
50000-74999	2	1	0	0	2	1
100000+	1	0	0	1	1	0
	91					
Accommodation and Food Services	7	2	2	3	1	1
Agriculture	2	2	2	1	0	0
Arts and Recreation Services	3	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	2	1	0	0	0	0
Education and Training	7	5	3	4	0	3
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	1	3	5	0	3
Financial and Insurance Services	7	3	2	4	1	4
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	3	6	11	4	10
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	0	0	1	1	1
Manufacturing	12	3	3	4	2	5
Mining	2	1	0	1	0	0
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	4	1	2	3	3
Public Administration and Safety	16	4	9	11	4	11
Retail Trade	2	0	0	2	1	1
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	1	0	1
Other Services	5	3	1	1	2	1
	103					

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%



## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts (continued)

	HR Attributes					
	Total N	Judgement	Proactivity	Professional Integrity	Resilience	Self-confidence
Strategic	42	22	31	18	19	8
Functional	61	27	45	36	36	10
	103					
Executive	18	8	13	9	9	1
Manager	32	16	22	14	15	5
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	17	28	20	20	9
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	8	13	11	11	3
	103					
General HR	58	30	44	35	33	12
Change Management	3	0	3	1	1	0
HR Information System	7	3	4	3	4	2
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	5	5	4	4	1
Occupational Safety & Health	4	3	4	3	3	0
Recruitment & Selection	8	4	7	3	2	0
Remuneration & Rewards	6	2	2	3	2	0
Training & Development	12	2	7	2	6	3
	103					
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	8	12	10	8	2
Local or Central Government	21	12	17	12	14	4
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	4	9	7	10	4
State-Owned Enterprise	5	3	4	3	3	1
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	4	10	4	4	3
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	8	6	4	4	4
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	3	5	3	3	0
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	6	12	9	7	0
	48					
0-99	2	1	2	2	2	1
100-499	17	10	11	12	11	5
500-999	13	6	12	7	6	1
1000-4999	22	10	18	11	15	4
5000-9999	13	5	11	8	8	3
10000-24999	11	4	8	3	3	0
25000-49999	10	6	3	3	2	0
50000-74999	2	0	1	2	1	0
100000+	1	0	1	0	1	1
	91					
Accommodation and Food Services	7	4	2	2	2	0
Agriculture	2	2	1	2	1	2
Arts and Recreation Services	3	1	1	2	1	0
Construction	2	0	2	0	1	0
Education and Training	7	2	7	3	3	0
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	3	4	3	3	1
Financial and Insurance Services	7	3	6	3	3	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	6	16	10	12	6
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	1	2	2	1	0
Manufacturing	12	6	7	6	5	0
Mining	2	1	2	0	1	1
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	5	7	6	5	0
Public Administration and Safety	16	9	12	9	10	4
Retail Trade	2	1	2	1	2	2
Wholesale Trade	1	1	1	1	1	0
Other Services	5	4	4	4	4	1
	103					

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%



## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts (continued)

	Total N	HR Knowledge				
		Sense of Humour	Business Acumen	Diversity Awareness	Financial Savvy	Health and Safety
Strategic	42	2	30	11	12	12
Functional	61	1	20	16	8	22
103						
Executive	18	0	16	0	6	5
Manager	32	2	16	8	5	12
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	1	13	13	5	12
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	0	5	6	4	5
103						
General HR	58	3	32	18	13	24
Change Management	3	0	2	1	0	0
HR Information System	7	0	1	1	1	0
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	0	3	1	2	2
Occupational Safety & Health	4	0	3	1	0	4
Recruitment & Selection	8	0	5	1	1	1
Remuneration & Rewards	6	0	1	0	2	0
Training & Development	12	0	3	4	1	3
103						
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	2	7	2	1	3
Local or Central Government	21	0	6	10	5	10
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	0	4	7	3	1
State-Owned Enterprise	5	1	2	1	0	4
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	0	5	3	3	3
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	0	11	2	5	3
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	0	2	1	0	4
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	0	9	1	3	4
48						
0-99	2	0	0	1	0	1
100-499	17	1	8	5	4	9
500-999	13	1	7	2	2	3
1000-4999	22	1	10	9	5	7
5000-9999	13	0	3	3	4	0
10000-24999	11	0	8	2	3	4
25000-49999	10	0	7	0	2	2
50000-74999	2	0	0	0	0	1
100000+	1	0	1	0	0	0
91						
Accommodation and Food Services	7	0	4	0	2	1
Agriculture	2	0	2	0	1	1
Arts and Recreation Services	3	1	2	0	0	1
Construction	2	0	1	0	0	1
Education and Training	7	0	3	4	2	0
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	1	2	2	0	4
Financial and Insurance Services	7	0	5	1	2	0
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	0	7	6	5	3
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	0	2	0	1	0
Manufacturing	12	0	6	0	2	5
Mining	2	0	1	1	0	2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	0	6	1	1	4
Public Administration and Safety	16	0	4	10	2	10
Retail Trade	2	0	2	0	0	0
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other Services	5	1	3	2	2	2
103						

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%



## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts (continued)

	HR Knowledge					
	Total N	HR Functional Expertise	HR Metrics	HR Technology	Employment Legislation	Performance Management
Strategic	42	36	17	16	32	27
Functional	61	49	23	25	39	27
	103					
Executive	18	18	10	7	17	11
Manager	32	27	12	11	20	20
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	26	9	10	24	20
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	14	9	13	10	3
	103					
General HR	58	55	26	20	50	40
Change Management	3	2	1	1	1	2
HR Information System	7	5	1	6	2	2
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	5	1	3	5	3
Occupational Safety & Health	4	1	2	2	4	2
Recruitment & Selection	8	5	5	4	5	0
Remuneration & Rewards	6	5	2	3	4	0
Training & Development	12	7	2	2	0	5
	103					
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	12	4	5	10	7
Local or Central Government	21	14	8	5	14	14
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	8	2	6	4	3
State-Owned Enterprise	5	5	2	1	4	3
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	12	7	7	8	6
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	14	8	8	12	6
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	6	1	1	5	4
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	10	6	7	11	7
	48					
0-99	2	2	0	0	1	1
100-499	17	16	6	6	14	13
500-999	13	10	5	5	8	9
1000-4999	22	20	8	9	14	12
5000-9999	13	10	2	4	8	4
10000-24999	11	9	5	5	8	4
25000-49999	10	7	6	6	8	2
50000-74999	2	2	2	1	1	0
100000+	1	0	0	0	0	0
	91					
Accommodation and Food Services	7	6	3	3	6	2
Agriculture	2	2	1	2	2	1
Arts and Recreation Services	3	3	3	1	1	2
Construction	2	0	1	1	2	0
Education and Training	7	6	2	5	3	1
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	6	3	1	5	4
Financial and Insurance Services	7	7	4	3	4	4
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	16	8	8	10	7
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	2	1	1	2	2
Manufacturing	12	11	5	4	11	6
Mining	2	1	0	0	1	2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	8	4	7	7	5
Public Administration and Safety	16	10	5	3	10	13
Retail Trade	2	1	0	0	1	1
Wholesale Trade	1	1	0	0	1	0
Other Services	5	5	0	2	5	4
	103					

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%





## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts (continued)

	Total N	HR Knowledge			HR Skills	
		Political Savvy	Recruitment and Selection	Remuneration and Rewards	Training & Development	Change Management
Strategic	42	8	29	26	27	25
Functional	61	5	33	26	25	15
103						
Executive	18	2	16	15	13	8
Manager	32	3	22	18	18	15
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	8	16	11	15	15
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	0	8	8	6	2
103						
General HR	58	8	48	38	34	27
Change Management	3	0	1	1	2	3
HR Information System	7	0	0	2	2	2
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	1	1	2	1	0
Occupational Safety & Health	4	1	0	2	1	1
Recruitment & Selection	8	1	8	0	0	3
Remuneration & Rewards	6	0	1	6	0	1
Training & Development	12	2	3	1	12	3
103						
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	2	8	8	7	5
Local or Central Government	21	5	10	8	11	7
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	3	2	2	5	5
State-Owned Enterprise	5	1	3	2	2	2
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	0	8	5	6	4
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	0	11	13	9	8
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	1	6	4	4	2
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	1	10	8	7	5
48						
0-99	2	0	2	2	0	0
100-499	17	2	14	10	13	7
500-999	13	3	9	6	7	8
1000-4999	22	4	10	9	9	10
5000-9999	13	1	5	3	6	4
10000-24999	11	1	6	7	4	4
25000-49999	10	0	6	5	3	4
50000-74999	2	0	2	1	2	0
100000+	1	0	0	0	1	0
91						
Accommodation and Food Services	7	0	5	4	3	2
Agriculture	2	0	2	2	1	2
Arts and Recreation Services	3	0	2	2	2	0
Construction	2	0	0	1	0	0
Education and Training	7	1	3	4	2	2
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	1	3	3	2	3
Financial and Insurance Services	7	0	4	4	5	4
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	4	7	4	9	8
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	1	2	2	0	2
Manufacturing	12	1	9	10	4	5
Mining	2	0	2	2	1	2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	0	8	5	7	1
Public Administration and Safety	16	4	10	6	10	6
Retail Trade	2	0	1	1	2	0
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	1	0
Other Services	5	1	4	2	3	3
103						

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%



## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts (continued)

	Total N	HR Skills				
		Coaching	Collaboration	Communication Skills	Conflict Resolution	Consultation
Strategic	42	35	32	34	18	37
Functional	61	32	44	56	12	43
103						
Executive	18	15	15	14	8	17
Manager	32	27	21	26	11	23
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	22	27	32	9	29
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	3	13	18	2	11
103						
General HR	58	42	44	51	21	48
Change Management	3	3	3	3	2	3
HR Information System	7	2	5	7	0	3
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	1	5	5	3	5
Occupational Safety & Health	4	2	3	3	2	4
Recruitment & Selection	8	7	6	5	0	4
Remuneration & Rewards	6	1	2	4	0	3
Training & Development	12	9	8	12	2	10
103						
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	8	11	12	7	11
Local or Central Government	21	13	14	20	6	17
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	7	10	11	2	8
State-Owned Enterprise	5	4	4	4	1	5
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	9	10	10	7	11
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	10	10	14	2	11
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	4	4	6	2	4
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	9	11	9	2	9
48						
0-99	2	0	2	1	1	1
100-499	17	13	11	16	8	15
500-999	13	10	12	12	3	11
1000-4999	22	14	20	20	8	20
5000-9999	13	8	10	12	3	8
10000-24999	11	7	6	7	1	10
25000-49999	10	6	6	8	2	2
50000-74999	2	1	2	2	1	1
100000+	1	1	1	1	0	1
91						
Accommodation and Food Services	7	3	5	5	1	2
Agriculture	2	1	1	2	0	2
Arts and Recreation Services	3	3	2	3	2	2
Construction	2	0	1	1	0	2
Education and Training	7	2	6	6	1	6
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	4	4	5	1	6
Financial and Insurance Services	7	6	6	6	1	5
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	12	18	16	7	15
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	2	2	0	1	2
Manufacturing	12	7	6	11	3	12
Mining	2	2	2	1	1	1
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	6	7	10	1	4
Public Administration and Safety	16	12	10	16	4	13
Retail Trade	2	2	1	2	1	2
Wholesale Trade	1	0	1	1	1	1
Other Services	5	5	4	5	5	5
103						

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%



## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts (continued)

	HR Skills					
	Total N	Influencing & Negotiation	Knowledge Sharing	Leadership Skills	Organisation and Administration	Problem Solving
Strategic	42	28	5	33	30	32
Functional	61	30	6	29	46	39
103						
Executive	18	9	2	18	14	12
Manager	32	20	2	23	23	21
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	25	5	18	21	27
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	4	2	3	18	11
103						
General HR	58	36	7	41	47	39
Change Management	3	3	0	1	1	2
HR Information System	7	1	0	2	3	5
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	3	1	2	5	4
Occupational Safety & Health	4	2	1	1	3	4
Recruitment & Selection	8	4	1	5	2	5
Remuneration & Rewards	6	2	0	1	6	4
Training & Development	12	7	1	9	9	8
103						
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	7	2	7	10	7
Local or Central Government	21	14	3	12	20	16
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	5	0	5	6	10
State-Owned Enterprise	5	5	2	4	4	3
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	7	1	8	7	8
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	7	2	10	13	13
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	5	1	5	5	2
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	8	0	8	7	10
48						
0-99	2	1	1	1	2	1
100-499	17	14	3	10	14	9
500-999	13	9	2	9	7	10
1000-4999	22	13	1	13	20	17
5000-9999	13	6	0	7	10	9
10000-24999	11	2	1	9	6	8
25000-49999	10	4	0	4	6	6
50000-74999	2	1	0	1	2	2
100000+	1	0	0	1	0	1
91						
Accommodation and Food Services	7	2	0	2	6	5
Agriculture	2	2	1	0	2	1
Arts and Recreation Services	3	0	0	1	3	3
Construction	2	1	0	0	1	2
Education and Training	7	2	1	2	6	3
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	5	2	5	4	4
Financial and Insurance Services	7	5	1	6	5	6
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	11	1	14	10	16
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	2	0	2	1	2
Manufacturing	12	4	3	9	10	8
Mining	2	2	0	2	2	1
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	6	0	6	7	5
Public Administration and Safety	16	10	2	8	15	11
Retail Trade	2	1	0	2	0	1
Wholesale Trade	1	1	0	0	1	0
Other Services	5	4	0	3	3	3
103						

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%



## Appendix B: Relative frequencies of HR competencies in various contexts (continued)

	HR Skills					
	Total N	Process Improvement	Project Management	Relationship Building	Research & Reporting	Strategic Thinking
Strategic	42	35	29	33	20	28
Functional	61	40	39	50	45	24
	103					
Executive	18	15	14	12	10	15
Manager	32	28	19	28	19	16
Advisor - Intermediate to Senior	34	22	27	30	22	15
Assistant / Advisor - Entry	19	10	8	13	14	6
	103					
General HR	58	43	39	46	32	33
Change Management	3	2	2	3	2	1
HR Information System	7	3	3	2	5	3
Industrial/Employment Relations	5	2	2	4	4	4
Occupational Safety & Health	4	2	3	4	4	1
Recruitment & Selection	8	7	5	7	7	4
Remuneration & Rewards	6	4	4	5	6	2
Training & Development	12	12	10	12	5	4
	103					
Privately Owned Organisation/Trust	14	11	8	13	6	5
Local or Central Government	21	17	17	19	17	14
Publicly Funded Organisation	11	5	9	8	8	3
State-Owned Enterprise	5	4	3	4	2	3
Not-for-Profit Organisation	12	9	3	12	8	5
Domestically Based Multinational Enterprise	17	13	12	12	7	9
Overseas-based Multinational Enterprise	6	5	5	5	5	4
Publicly owned / Company listed on Stock Exchange	13	7	10	7	10	7
	48					
0-99	2	1	0	2	1	0
100-499	17	13	11	16	10	8
500-999	13	10	7	13	5	8
1000-4999	22	14	14	19	13	11
5000-9999	13	10	9	8	9	5
10000-24999	11	10	9	8	9	6
25000-49999	10	4	7	4	7	5
50000-74999	2	1	1	1	1	0
100000+	1	1	1	1	0	1
	91					
Accommodation and Food Services	7	3	5	2	4	2
Agriculture	2	1	2	2	1	1
Arts and Recreation Services	3	3	2	3	3	0
Construction	2	1	2	2	2	1
Education and Training	7	5	5	7	5	1
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6	5	3	5	3	3
Financial and Insurance Services	7	6	4	6	3	4
Health Care and Social Assistance	19	11	11	16	13	9
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	2	2	1	1	2
Manufacturing	12	10	7	10	8	7
Mining	2	2	2	2	0	2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	6	7	6	7	6
Public Administration and Safety	16	14	13	14	12	10
Retail Trade	2	2	1	2	0	1
Wholesale Trade	1	1	0	0	1	1
Other Services	5	3	2	5	2	2
	103					

Key:

Relative frequency = 100%

Relative frequency > 50%

Relative frequency = 50%





## Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words

### HR ATTRIBUTES

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Ability to Work Autonomously (AWA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not mentioned in the literature</li> </ul>	
<b>Accountability (Acc)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment - demonstrates initiative and personal accountability to meet work demands according to the highest standards (Schoonover , 2003)</li> </ul>	Accountability
<b>Achievement Oriented (AO)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earning trust through results (Ulrich et al., 2013)</li> <li>Getting important things done; making progress, facilitating progress toward the organisation's success (Becker et al., 2001; Ulrich &amp; Brockbank, 2005)</li> <li>Results orientation - knows how to work to get results (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>Results orientation/ drive for performance - The ability to link processes and practices to positive outcomes and to demonstrate the value that HR brings to the organization (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>Standards of quality - has high performance expectations for self and others (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Achievement/results oriented Drive for performance Standards of quality
<b>Assertiveness (Ass)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courage - willingness to stand up for correct principles (McEvoy et al., 2005; Lowry, 2006)</li> <li>Credible activist - offers a point of view, takes a position, challenges assumptions (Ulrich et al., 2008)</li> </ul>	Courage to challenge
<b>Attention to Details (ATD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not mentioned in the literature</li> </ul>	
<b>Curiosity (C)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous learning - proactively seek performance feedback and identify approaches to improve own and others' performance and learning (Schoonover, 2003),</li> <li>Mental agility (Buckley &amp; Monks, 2004),</li> <li>Quick study (McEvoy et al., 2005)</li> </ul>	Continuous learning Mental agility Quick study
<b>Customer Focused (CF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer focus - ability in viewing issues from the perspective of customers (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>Relationship orientation - understands both internal and external customers and their needs (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Customer focus Relationship orientation

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Empathy (E)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy - sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns (Boyatzis, 2009)</li> <li>• Empathy /caring - empathy and social awareness of colleagues emotional reactions, the ability to dissipate or buffer the toxins and help colleagues to extricate themselves from distress and pain-causing situations (Kulik, 2009)</li> <li>• Interpersonal awareness - sensitivity to other people's feelings and concerns, positioning one's ideas to address their concerns (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Positive regard - a positive belief that people are good, ability to demonstrate verbal and nonverbal skills that cause others to feel valued (optimist) (Boyatzis, 1982)</li> <li>• Respect for people and alternative viewpoints (McEvoy et al., 2005)</li> </ul>	Empathy, caring Interpersonal awareness/ sensitivity Positive regard Respect for alternative viewpoints
<b>Innovation (I)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity - ability to invent, explore, imagine new approaches, frameworks, or solutions; ability to stimulate ideas in self or others (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Innovation /crisis management - flexible and creative to handle volatility and sudden change (Selmer &amp; Chiu, 2004)</li> </ul>	Creativity, innovation
<b>Judgement (J)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analytical skills - ability to systematically and rationally approach tasks, situations, or problems (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Judgement - ability to make rational and realistic decisions based on logical assumptions which reflect factual information (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Critical/analytical thinking - seeking information and using that information to inform decision and resolve problems (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>• Objectivity - able to recognize the merits of different positions in conflict situations (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Perceptual Objectivity - relatively objective and not limited in view by excessive subjectivity or personal biases, prejudices, or perspectives consider multiple perceptions or conflicting views of a particular event or issue (Boyatzis, 1982)</li> </ul>	Analytical/critical thinking Objectivity Judgement

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Proactivity (P)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enthusiasm / energy (McEvoy et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Persistence - able to go beyond the obvious requirements for a situation; ability to make repeated efforts to overcome obstacles (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Initiative - finding or creating opportunities (Spencer &amp; Spencer, 1993)</li> <li>• Proactivity - a disposition toward taking action to accomplish something (Boyatzis, 1982)</li> <li>• Risk-taking - takes appropriate risks to accomplish tasks (McEvoy et al., 2005; Yeung et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Enthusiasm Energy Initiative Proactivity Persistence Risk-taking
<b>Professional Integrity (PI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credibility - being perceived by others as having the knowledge and experience to back up one's authority (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>• Credibility and integrity - to walk what you talk, act with integrity in all business transactions, and honor personal commitments (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Credible - respected and admired (Ulrich et al. 2008)</li> <li>• Ethical behaviour - perception of the moral appropriateness of individual and/or group conduct or behaviour (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>• Ethics - possesses fidelity to fundamental values (respect for the individual, responsibility of purpose &amp; to constituencies, honesty, reliability, fairness, integrity, respect for property) (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Fair and consistent treatment of employees (Graham &amp; Tarbell, 2006)</li> <li>• Integrity - honesty and doing the right thing (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>• Trustworthiness, establish a reliable track record (McEvoy et al., 2005)</li> </ul>	Ethics, Fairness Integrity, Honesty Reliable Professionalism Respected by others Track record Trusted

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Resilience (R)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional self-control - keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check (Boyatzis, 2009)</li> <li>• Flexibility – can adapt positively to change (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Personal resiliency - ability to adapt to change or stress by articulating and committing to a personal vision, generating realistic alternatives to problems/ situations, and exercising appropriate control (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Tolerance for stress - maintain stability of performance under pressure/opposition (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Emotional self-control Flexibility/ Adaptability Resiliency Tolerance for stress
<b>Self-confidence (SC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving through self-awareness (Ulrich et al., 2013)</li> <li>• Self-confidence - possesses a high degree of confidence in own abilities (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Self-confidence (Yeung et al., 1996; Buckley &amp; Monks, 2005)</li> <li>• Self-esteem / self-worth / self-confidence (McEvoy et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Sense of efficacy (Boyatzis, 1982)</li> <li>• Accurate self assessment - recognise one's strengths/weaknesses, emotions and their effects (Boyatzis, 1982)</li> <li>• Self knowledge - an ability that enables a person to translate their new-found knowledge into action (Buckley &amp; Monks, 2004, p.51)</li> <li>• Self-reflection - weighing up the consequences of a range of possible actions before making decisions (Schon, 1983, cited in Cheetham &amp; Chivers, 1996; 1998)</li> </ul>	Self-confidence Sense of efficacy Self-esteem, Self-worth Self-assessment Self-knowledge
<b>Sense of Humour (SOH)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not mentioned in the literature</li> </ul>	

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

**HR KNOWLEDGE**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Business Acumen (BA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business acumen – focuses activities and decision on opportunities that produce significant, strategic business impact (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>• Business ally who contributes to the success of a business by knowing the social context or setting in which their business operates (Ulrich et al. 2008)</li> <li>• Business knowledge - understanding of financial, strategic, technological capabilities of an organisation (Ulrich et al., 1995)</li> <li>• Business strategy - understanding of the organisation's mission, vision, and management style (Brewster et al., 2000)</li> <li>• HR strategy - knowledge of how to achieve strategic contribution to organisation success and alignment with organisation needs and goals (Brewster et al., 2000)</li> <li>• Industry trends - knowledge of industry/sector standards and stakeholder perspectives (Brewster et al., 2000)</li> <li>• Organisational design - understanding of the basic principles, methodologies, and processes of organizational analysis and change (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Organisational design - understanding of change interventions (e.g. merger and acquisitions) and organisational structure (i.e. job designs and role expectations) (Ulrich et al., 2008)</li> <li>• Organizational knowledge - Understanding the business issues that are specific to the organization and having empathy for and an awareness of the impact of human capital issues on the organization as a system (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>• Social context - knowledge of the impact of social, economic and political environment on the business, e.g. product and labour markets, legislation, regulations (Brewster et al., 2000)</li> <li>• Part of 'strategic positioner' (Ulrich et al., 2013) - interpreting global business context, decoding customer expectations</li> <li>• Value chain - understanding of how the business creates profit and ability to view issues from the perspective of customers (Ulrich &amp; Brockbank, 2005)</li> </ul>	<p>Business acumen/knowledge Business operations/strategy HR strategy Industry knowledge Organisational analysis/ change/ structure Profit, customers Market, competition Social, economic, political environment</p>
<b>Diversity Awareness (DA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-cultural intelligence - knowledge of and sensitivity to differences among cultures (SHRM, 2010)</li> </ul>	Cultural diversity

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

<b>HR Competency Item</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Search Words</b>
<b>Expertise in Health and Safety (HS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not mentioned in the literature</li> </ul>	Health and safety
<b>Expertise in Performance Management (PM)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance management and rewards - designing performance-based measurements and reward systems and providing competitive benefit packages (Brockbank et al., 2002; Boselie &amp; Paauwe, 2005)</li> </ul>	Performance management
<b>Expertise in Recruitment and Selection (RS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent management - attracting, promoting, retaining, and outplacing appropriate people (Brockbank et al., 2002; Boselie &amp; Paauwe, 2005)</li> <li>Talent management – generates consistent approaches across the enterprise for hiring, selecting, retaining, valuing and leveraging key talent (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>Talent manager/organization designer - focuses on how individuals enter and move up, across, or out of the organization and on how a company embeds capability into the structure and processes that shape an organization (Ulrich et al., 2008)</li> </ul>	HR planning Recruitment, staffing Talent management
<b>Expertise in Remuneration and Rewards (RR)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance management and rewards - designing performance-based measurements and reward systems and providing competitive benefit packages (Brockbank et al., 2002; Boselie &amp; Paauwe, 2005)</li> </ul>	Remuneration Rewards
<b>Expertise in Training and Development (TD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training and development - designing developmental programs and challenging work experiences, offering career planning services, and facilitating internal communicational processes (Brockbank et al., 2002; Boselie &amp; Paauwe, 2005)</li> </ul>	Training and development; Organisational development
<b>Financial Savvy (FS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part of 'business knowledge' (Ulrich et al., 1995) - understanding of financial, strategic, technological capabilities of an organisation</li> </ul>	Financial skills
<b>Knowledge of Employment Legislation (EL)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compliance – applies an understanding of key legal precedents, policies and practices to protect the interests of the organisation and individual employees (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>Employment relations - knowledge of legal precedents, policies, and practices to protect the interests of the organisation and individual employees (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>Global employment relations - understanding of and sensitivity to cultural differences among workers in other countries and legal issues inherent in operating a business multi-nationally (SHRM, 2010)</li> </ul>	Compliance Employment relations/ legislation

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>HR Generalist Expertise (HRG)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of human resources - the extent to which an HR professional delivers high quality HR practices (Ulrich et al., 1989)</li> <li>• HR functional expertise - knowledge and ability to deliver “state-of-the-art”, innovative HR practices in staffing, development, appraisal, rewards, organisation design, and communication (Ulrich et al., 1995)</li> <li>• HR Innovator and Integrator - optimizing human capital through workforce planning and analytics, developing talent, shaping organization and communication practices, driving performance, building leadership brand (Ulrich et al., 2013)</li> <li>• Operational executor who executes the operational aspects of managing people and organizations (Ulrich et al., 2008)</li> </ul>	HR policy/ best practice/ operations HR generalist experience
<b>HR Metrics (HRM)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and measurement skills - demonstrates the ability to determine key needs, diagnose and address problems, identify key metrics, and accurately monitor progress of important initiatives and activities (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>• HR performance measurement - knowledge of how to analyse HR data in a way that provides strategic performance results (Brockbank et al., 2001)</li> <li>• HR measurement - measuring impact of HR practices, and managing global implications of HR practices (Brockbank et al., 2002; Boselie &amp; Paauwe, 2005)</li> </ul>	HR measurement/ metrics
<b>HR Technology (HRT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR technology – able to leverage technology for HR practices and use e-HR/web-based channels to deliver value to their customers (Ulrich &amp; Brockbank, 2005)</li> <li>• Technology expertise - able to use HR technology and Web-based channels to deliver services to employees; proficient with HR information systems (HRIS) and able to teach others how to use such systems (Lawson &amp; Limbrick, 1996; Bell et al., 2006)</li> <li>• Technology expertise - helps to identify technology needs and mobilize technologies that provide easy access to HR services and methods for enhancing learning and personal productivity (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>• Technology proponent - Improving utility of HR operations, connecting people through technology, leveraging social media tools (Ulrich et al., 2013)</li> </ul>	HR information system (HRIS) HR technology
<b>Political Savvy (PD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power dynamics - understanding of individual sensitivities, power dynamics and relationships (Brewster et al., 2000)</li> </ul>	Political/power dynamics

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

**HR SKILLS**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Change Management (CM)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change champion - initiating and sustaining change (Ulrich et al., 2013)</li> <li>• Change facilitation and implementation skills - the ability to conceive, design and implement programs in spite of resistance (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Change management – consistently applies change best practices to ensure impact of key programs (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>• Organisational change - the skill to facilitate, initiate, support and/or manage effective organizational change consistent with organizational needs (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Management of change processes - the extent to which an HR professional is able to increase an organization's capability for change through creating meaning, problem solving, relationship influence, innovation, transformation, and role influence (Ulrich et al., 1989)</li> <li>• Part of 'strategic contribution' (Ulrich &amp; Brockbank, 2005) – manage culture, facilitate fast change</li> </ul>	<p>Change/culture management Change facilitation / implementation</p>
<b>Coaching (Coac)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching - knowing how to use effective approaches to help individuals in their job tasks (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Coaching and developing others - helping others to reach their potential (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>• Coaching and consulting - provides appropriate advice, feedback and development resources to improve the effectiveness of individuals and teams (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>• Development of others - able to develop the competencies of teams or individuals, using a wide variety of methods and tools (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Feedback - able to provide information to individuals about their behavior and performance so that they can act on it (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Individual counselling - knowledge of how to help individuals recognize and understand personal needs, values, problems, action alternatives and goals (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Performance development – consistently coaches and develops team members by articulating key expectation, identifying strengths and development needs and providing ongoing support to maximize performance (Schoonover, 2003)</li> </ul>	<p>Coach, Counsel Mentor Develop others Feedback</p>



**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Collaboration (Coll)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration and team building skills - the ability to motivate team members in working toward common goals (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Teamwork - understanding how to collaborate and foster collaboration among others (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Collaboration Teambuilding, Teamwork
<b>Communication Skills (CS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication - the ability to provide both verbal and written information clearly, consistently and persuasively (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Communication – uses language, style and effective expression (including nonverbal) in speaking and writing so that others can understand and take appropriate action (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Effective communication - being able to verbally or in writing convey messages in terms that make sense, and also to actively listen to others' interpersonal communications SHRM (2010)</li> <li>• Listening – able to interpret and use information extracted from oral communications (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Presentation - knows how to effectively present information in diverse circumstances (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Questioning – ability to gather and interpret objective information through skilful questioning of individuals and groups (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Effective communication, Questioning, Listening Formal/public presentation
<b>Conflict Resolution (CR)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee advocacy skills - maintains focus on supporting a fair and empowering work environment for all employees (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>• Negotiation and conflict resolution skills – the capacity to reach agreements and consensus in spite of different goals and priorities (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Conflict resolution Employee advocacy
<b>Consultation (Cons)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation - the ability to diagnose/solve problems, and contract with clients (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Internal consultation - combination of diagnostic and behavioural skills that enable professionals in support functions to collaborate with line managers to develop solutions to business performance problems (Green 2008; Long et al., 2010)</li> </ul>	Consulting skills

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Influencing and Negotiation (IN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence - ability and skill to cause an effect in indirect ways (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Influence skills - ability to help others accept your viewpoint or proposal (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Part of 'credible activist' (Ulrich et al., 2008; 2013) - influencing and relating to others</li> <li>• Persuasiveness/influencing others - using interpersonal skills to convince others to share one's perspective or way of thinking (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>• Negotiation and conflict resolution skills – the capacity to reach agreements and consensus in spite of different goals and priorities (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Strategic influence - collaborates with others to build buy-in and support for critical initiatives (Schoonover, 2003)</li> </ul>	Influencing others, Negotiation Persuasiveness
<b>Knowledge Sharing (KS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge management – demonstrates a conceptual and practical understanding of approaches and tools to help organisation groups, units (team, functions, divisions, regions, subsidiaries) capture, share and exploit knowledge to support achieving objectives (Spoonover, 2003)</li> </ul>	Knowledge management/sharing
<b>Leadership (L)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common vision - ability to show how one's ideas support the organization's broader goals or values, or appeal to higher principles such as fairness (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Culture and change steward - appreciates, articulates and helps shape a company's culture and also facilitates change throughout the organization (Ulrich et al. 2008)</li> <li>• Inspiring and guiding individuals and groups; uses appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to guide and inspire individuals or groups toward task and goal accomplishment (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Leadership skills - the ability to develop and articulate vision, lead change and sell ideas (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> <li>• Visioning and alignment - creates and communicates a vision of the organization that inspires and aligns the workforce (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>• Leading change - charting the course for organization's stakeholders to navigate a shift in business processes, priorities, roles and expectations (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>• Capability Builder - capitalizing organizational capability, aligning strategy, culture, practices, and behaviour, creating a meaningful work environment (Ulrich et al., 2013)</li> </ul>	Common vision/ goals Inspiring Leadership Leading change Visionary, Visioning

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Organisation and Administration (OA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and organising - ability to identify options, and establish courses of action, goals, methods, and resources for self and others; able to effectively manage own time, and to manage demands on others so as to respect the value of their time (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>Goal setting - develops and tracks challenging goals aligned with organization strategies (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>Use of time - is able to effectively manage own time, and to manage demands on others so as to respect the value of their time (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Administration Goal setting Organising Planning Time management
<b>Problem Solving (PS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem solving - ability to define problems, identify the cause, give accurate and relevant advice to top management (Long et al., 2010)</li> </ul>	Problem solving
<b>Process Improvement (PI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process excellence – continuously improves processes and work products (Schoonover, 2003)</li> </ul>	Process improvement
<b>Project Management (PMS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project management - know how to lead, plan, organize, prioritize, and monitor work projects (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>Project and product management – plans and implements projects, programs, and product development efforts</li> <li>Vendor management – selects and manages vendors in a manner that maximises benefit to the organisation (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>Resource management - identifies, mobilizes and tracks resources to fulfil key objectives and plans (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>Utilization of resources - able to find, acquire and leverage appropriate resources, inside or outside the organization (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	Project/resource management
<b>Relationship Building (RB)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking - creates and leverages a diverse range of key relationships to improve access to resources and expertise (Schoonover, 2003)</li> <li>Relationship building - able to establish rapport, relationships and networks across a broad range of people &amp; groups (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>Relationship management – develops positive relationships by demonstrating respect for others' perspectives and attention to their needs</li> <li>Part of 'personal credibility' (Ulrich &amp; Brockbank, 2005) - forming good relationships with both individuals and teams</li> </ul>	Credibility Networking Relationship building

**Appendix C: List of HR competencies with specifically coded categories, operational definitions and search words (continued)**

HR Competency Item	Operational Definition	Search Words
<b>Research and Reporting (RR)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not mentioned in the literature</li> </ul>	
<b>Strategic Thinking (ST)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conceptual - understands the likely consequences or implications of actions or events; ability to conceive ideas, patterns, images, or relationships from limited data or elements (Blancero et al., 1996)</li> <li>Part of 'strategic contribution' (Ulrich &amp; Brockbank, 2005) – involved in the strategic decision-making and create market-driven connectivity</li> <li>Part of 'strategic positioner' (Ulrich et al., 2013) - co-crafting a strategic agenda</li> <li>Strategy architect - plays an active part in the establishment of the overall strategy to deliver on the vision (Ulrich et al., 2008)</li> <li>Strategic thinking - seeing the big picture, having a long-term line of sight and understanding the interconnectedness of decisions and activities within the various lines of the business (SHRM, 2010)</li> <li>Systematic perspective – the ability to view problems and issues in the context of the bigger picture and understand the interrelationships among subcomponents (Yeung et al., 1996)</li> </ul>	<p>Conceptual thinking Long-term perspective Seeing the big picture Strategic thinking</p>

## Appendix D: Examples of HR competencies inferred from HR job descriptions

### HR ATTRIBUTES

HR Competency Item	Search Words (generated from literature)	Addition to Search Words (generated from HR job descriptions)	Examples from HR job descriptions
<b>Ability to Work Autonomously (AWA)</b>	Autonomous	Disciplined, Independent Minimal/without supervision Self-directed, Sole charge	Ability to think and act independently (#30); Ability to work independently and efficiently with little or no supervision (#54)
<b>Accountability (Acc)</b>	Accountability	Follow-through skills Reliable, Trusted Taking ownership	Accepts responsibility for own actions (#29) Enjoy actively working to see things through to completion (#39)
<b>Achievement oriented (AO)</b>	Achievement/results oriented Drive for performance Standards of quality	Action oriented Outcome focused	Drive for Results: Can be counted on to exceed goals successfully; is constantly and consistently one of the top performers; very bottom-line oriented; steadfastly pushes self and others for results (#21)
<b>Approachable* (App)</b>		Friendly, Open, Outgoing Personable, Warm, Welcoming	Open and honest communication approach (#18); A warm, welcoming and friendly disposition (#49)
<b>Assertiveness (Ass)</b>	Assertive Courage to challenge	Courage Challenge	Challenges important issues (#8); Managerial courage (#60)
<b>Attention to Detail* (AD)</b>		Accuracy, Attention to detail Focused approach	An eye for detail (#40); Focused approach to your tasks (#43)
<b>Curiosity (C)</b>	Continuous learning Quick study Mental agility	Commitment to learning Enquiring mind Learning agility Personal growth Self-development	Maintain own continuing professional development keeping abreast of innovations in organisational development (#15); Actively participating in HR networks across the University to build knowledge, skills and expertise (#76);
<b>Customer Focused (CF)</b>	Customer focus Relationship orientation	Client service Customer centric/orientation Stakeholder focus Support customers	Deliver reliable and effective customer care (#18); Consulting & Advice Focus - Provides expert and valued advice to support customers (internal and external) and build trust (#109)

\* HR competency generated from HR job descriptions content analysis

**Appendix D: Examples of HR competencies inferred from HR job descriptions (continued)**

<b>HR Competency Item</b>	<b>Search Words (generated from literature)</b>	<b>Addition to Search Words (generated from HR job descriptions)</b>	<b>Examples from HR job descriptions</b>
<b>Empathy (E)</b>	Caring, Empathy Interpersonal awareness, Positive regard, Respect for alternative viewpoints	Emotional intelligence Emotionally aware Diplomatic/tactful manner	Ability to handle complex and emotional issues (#58) Ability to respond effectively to the most sensitive inquiries or complaints (#65)
<b>Innovation (I)</b>	Creativity Innovation		Demonstrable creative and innovative problem solving skills (#20)
<b>Judgement (J)</b>	Analytical/critical thinking Objectivity, Judgement	Common sense, Pragmatic Decisive, Discretion Maturity, Open minded	Presents a balanced view (#5); Demonstrated skill in business case development to include return on invested capital (ROIC) (#94)
<b>Proactivity (P)</b>	Enthusiasm, Energy Initiative, Proactivity Persistence, Risk-taking	Hands on / tactical Optimistic, Upbeat Positive attitude/outlook	Upbeat, positive attitude, optimistic (#3); Hands on / tactical (#4); Self-starter (#5)
<b>Professional Integrity (PI)</b>	Ethics, Fairness Integrity, Honesty Track Record, Trusted Professionalism Respected by others	Confidentiality Courteousness Personal conviction Professional image Truthful	Able to handle confidential information with the utmost level of professionalism (#54) Ability to uphold and demonstrate the highest level of integrity in all situations and recognize standards required by a regulated business(#58)
<b>Resilience (R)</b>	Emotional self-control Flexibility/ Adaptability Resiliency Tolerance for stress	Calm, Stable, Complex/difficult situations Multiple priorities/tasks Positive outlook/attitude Work well under pressure	Ability to maintain a positive outlook in difficult situations (#28); Proven track record of successfully managing multiple priorities in a fast paced work environment (#54); Comfortable forging a new path (#57)
<b>Self-confidence (SC)</b>	Self-confidence Sense of efficacy Self-esteem, Self-worth Self-assessment Self-knowledge	Self-awareness/insight Self-reflection	Display self knowledge: Shows self control and deals effectively with pressure (#44); The ability to have a high level of self awareness, the ability to manage ones emotions, whilst also exhibiting self belief and self care (#74)
<b>Sense of Humour* (SH)</b>		Fun Sense of humour	Look out for each other and have fun on the way (#5) Self-deprecating sense of humor (#7)

\* HR competency generated from HR job descriptions content analysis

## Appendix D: Examples of HR competencies inferred from HR job descriptions (continued)

### HR KNOWLEDGE

HR Competency Item	Search Words (generated from literature)	Addition to Search Words (generated from HR job descriptions)	Examples from HR job descriptions
<b>Business Acumen (BA)</b>	Business acumen/knowledge Business operations/strategy HR strategy Industry knowledge Organisational analysis/ change/ structure Profit, customers Market, competition Social, economic, political environment	Business Ally Organisational Designer Strategic Agility Strategic Architect	Commercially astute (#5); Understanding why it is important to make sustainable decisions by considering economic, environment and social impacts (#26); Call center or other technology or service-oriented human resources experience strongly preferred (#64) Thorough understanding of the company's business challenges, and the ability to articulate the company's position in a positive and effective manner - excellent business acumen (#83)
<b>Diversity Awareness (DA)</b>	Cultural diversity	Different culture Diversity Equality	Welcomes and values diversity, and contributes to an inclusive working environment where differences are acknowledged and respected (#105) Demonstrate commitment and application to Equality & Diversity and the Society's Statement of Values to all aspects of daily work and interaction with service users, team members and professionals (#106)
<b>Expertise in Health and Safety (HS)</b>	Health and safety	Injury management Occupational health & safety (OH&S) Risk assessment/management Welfare/Wellness/Environmental Worker compensation	Good understanding of Workers' Compensation and Injury Management regulations (#1); Health, Safety and Welfare (#20); Thorough knowledge of safety legislation and regulations in Australian construction (#79)
<b>Expertise in Performance Management (PM)</b>	Performance management	Employee/people development Career/personal development Performance review Workforce development	Promote people development initiatives and tools (#66); Solid experience designing and implementing a performance management system (#85); Performance optimisation systems, and recognition programs are managed (#102)

**Appendix D: Examples of HR competencies inferred from HR job descriptions (continued)**

<b>HR Competency Item</b>	<b>Search Words (generated from literature)</b>	<b>Addition to Search Words (generated from HR job descriptions)</b>	<b>Examples from HR job descriptions</b>
<b>Expertise in Recruitment and Selection (RS)</b>	HR planning Recruitment, staffing Talent management	Attraction New employee orientation Talent acquisition Succession planning	Demonstrated ability to search, select, recruit, and place talented staff that support a high-performing work place (#84); Good understanding of principals of behavioural interviewing (#108)
<b>Expertise in Remuneration and Rewards (RR)</b>	Remuneration/Rewards	Compensation and benefits Payroll Salary/wage administration	Strong understanding and experience in the administration and design of compensation programs, salary structures, job evaluation and variable incentive systems including sales compensation programs (#83); Strong knowledge of current trends and practices relating to benefits and benefits administration (#88)
<b>Expertise in Training and Development (TD)</b>	Training and development Organisational development	Training needs assessment	Knowledge of organization development concepts and models such as team effectiveness, change management, facilitation, and leadership development (#86) Ability to design and deliver courses which reflects strategic and operational need and makes use of multiple methods of delivery (#106)
<b>Financial Savvy (FS)</b>		Financial skills Mathematical abilities Numeracy/quantitative skills	Applies key financial concepts and analysis to decision making (#74); Strong quantitative skills with the ability to gather key insights from HR/Financial data (#83);
<b>Knowledge of Employment Legislation (EL)</b>	Compliance Employment relations/ legislation	Industrial/labour relations	Sound Industrial Relations skills (#35); Ensuring compliance to relevant legislative requirements (#79)
<b>HR Generalist Expertise (HRG)</b>	HR policy/ best practice/ operations HR generalist experience		Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, Human Resources or related field required (#58) Thorough knowledge of all Human Resource disciplines and legal requirements; SPHR (Senior Professional in Human Resources) Certification (#65)



**Appendix D: Examples of HR competencies inferred from HR job descriptions (continued)**

<b>HR Competency Item</b>	<b>Search Words (generated from literature)</b>	<b>Addition to Search Words (generated from HR job descriptions)</b>	<b>Examples from HR job descriptions</b>
<b>HR Metrics (HRM)</b>	HR measurement/metrics		Responsible for the tracking and trending of HR data in areas of responsibility (#29); Pro-actively evaluates human resource metrics and makes recommendations to improve organizational effectiveness (#59)
<b>HR Technology (HRT)</b>	HR technology	Employee database HR information systems (HRIS) Social media	Extensive knowledge of program management tools and procedures (#28); Expertise in social media and internet recruitment tools and advanced proficiency in Applicant Tracking Systems, and MS Office Suite of products (#71)
<b>Political Savvy (PD)</b>	Political/power dynamics	Political awareness/sensitivity	Understanding of how organisational structures, politics and cultures work, and how to adapt them (#17); The ability to understand the political context, including the Treaty of Waitangi, and how to use this knowledge to uphold the interests of the organisation (#39)

## Appendix D: Examples of HR competencies inferred from HR job descriptions (continued)

### HR SKILLS

HR Competency Item	Search Words (generated from literature)	Addition to Search Words (generated from HR job descriptions)	Examples from HR job descriptions
<b>Change Management (CM)</b>	Change/culture management Change facilitation / implementation	Organising change	Demonstrated ability to initiate, manage and deliver change (#10); Extensive and demonstrable experience in developing strategies and programs to support culture change programs (#51)
<b>Coaching (Coac)</b>	Coach, Counsel, Mentor Developing others Feedback	Empowers others People development	Recognise and support employees, assist them to strive for high standards and achievements (#13); Up-skilling and coaching managers on areas of people management (#107)
<b>Collaboration (Coll)</b>	Collaboration Teambuilding, Teamwork	Partnership	Teamworking and delivering in partnership (#20); Collaborate with the HR team (#63)
<b>Communication Skills (CS)</b>	Effective communication Questioning, Listening Formal /public presentation		Ability to question and facilitate discussions to achieve the best outcome (#27); Strong presentation skills (#28); Excellent verbal and written communication skills (#107)
<b>Conflict Resolution (CR)</b>	Conflict resolution Employee Advocacy	Dispute/grievance resolution Mediating	Capacity to de-escalate conflict and promote agreement (#7); Grievance/unfair labor practice resolution (#31) Experience of dealing with complex disciplinary, capability and grievance casework (#106)
<b>Consultation (Cons)</b>	Consulting skills	Advice, Recommend, Support Business solutions Collaborative problem solving Consultative/counselling	Able to provide appropriate HR advice (#1); Provide direction and strategic HR support (#61); Able to deliver pragmatic solutions to business issues (#107)
<b>Influencing and Negotiation (IN)</b>	Influencing others Negotiation Persuasiveness		Communicating influentially - uses reasoning and persuasiveness to gain acceptance (#2); Strong influence-management, negotiation (#28)

**Appendix D: Examples of HR competencies inferred from HR job descriptions (continued)**

<b>HR Competency Item</b>	<b>Search Words (generated from literature)</b>	<b>Addition to Search Words (generated from HR job descriptions)</b>	<b>Examples from HR job descriptions</b>
<b>Knowledge Sharing (KS)</b>	Knowledge management/ sharing		Encourage contribution – utilising each others' skills and knowledge (#2) Actively shares information and (assists others in team) (#108)
<b>Leadership (L)</b>	Common vision/goals Inspiring Leadership Leading change Visionary, Visioning	Engaging/motivating others	Effective leadership skills to support and drive our business needs (#27); Drives commitment and trust through change by engaging individuals/teams (#83) Assisting the HR Director to drive the company vision and values and implement the HR strategy (#107)
<b>Organisation and Administration (OA)</b>	Administration Organising, Planning Time management		Ensure the administration of employment packs, maintain an effective personnel filing system (#1) Meet deadlines (#1)
<b>Problem Solving (PS)</b>	Problem solving	Analytical skills Strategic decision-making Systematic thinking	Anticipates and adjust for problems roadblocks (#3) Assess and diagnose problems to identify appropriate organizational initiatives and implement solutions (#68)
<b>Process Improvement (PI)</b>	Process improvement	Evaluation HR processes	Strong ability to develop processes and frameworks then work within these (#12); Driving process improvements in HR through lean principles (#66)
<b>Project Management (PMS)</b>	Project/resource management	Project/program delivery	Budget monitoring skills (#20); Manage global HR projects geared towards moving forward the strategic focus and key initiatives of the HR department (#21)
<b>Relationship Building (RB)</b>	Credibility Interpersonal Skills Relationship Building Trust	Manage stakeholders Rapport	Operating as a trusted partner (#68); Can quickly establish credibility and respect and build strong working relationships with senior managers (#105); Able to quickly establish rapport (#107)

\* HR competency generated from HR job descriptions content analysis

**Appendix D: Examples of HR competencies inferred from HR job descriptions (continued)**

<b>HR Competency Item</b>	<b>Search Words (generated from literature)</b>	<b>Addition to Search Words (generated from HR job descriptions)</b>	<b>Examples from HR job descriptions</b>
<b>Researching and Reporting* (RR)</b>		HR records Research, Report	A proven ability to undertake investigations, analyse and produce coherent and comprehensive written reports (#10) Provides accurate reporting by: maintaining HR records as appropriate (#104)
<b>Strategic Thinking (ST)</b>	Conceptual thinking Long-term perspective Seeing the big picture Strategic thinking	Joined up thinking Risk assessment	Conceptual thinking – considers how things fit together. Sees patterns or trends, makes the complex simple (#14); Organisational Awareness and Joined Up Thinking (#22); Carries out appropriate risk assessment before selecting courses of action that best achieve the goals for operational outcomes (#103)

\* HR competency generated from HR job descriptions content analysis

## Appendix E: Invitation to participate in concept mapping research

Dear [participant's first name]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in HRINZ's research option.

You are invited to participate in the research survey that Karen Lo, PhD student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is undertaking towards her doctoral thesis.

**Research Title:**

*"HR Competency"*

**Background:**

Karen's study involves a concept mapping group process that incorporates a range of group activities which are analysed to produce visual concept maps.

Karen seeks interested participants to participate in all phases if possible:

- Focus Group (Brainstorming and Statement Synthesis): participants will be asked to brainstorm and generate a list of short statements relating to the key HR competencies.
- Online Questionnaire (Statement Rating): participants will be asked to perform sorting and rating tasks individually using the Web-based interface on the key HR competencies generated from the first focus group. Karen will analyse the data using the Propriety software Concept System to produce a series of concept maps.

If you are willing to help Karen in her research, please email [Karen Lo](mailto:klo@aut.ac.nz) (klo@aut.ac.nz) or go to Karen's research [website](http://hrcompetency.blogspot.co.nz/) (http://hrcompetency.blogspot.co.nz/) to record your expression of interest.

Participants will receive a summary report on the findings.

Kind regards,

[name]

HRINZ Research & Education Manager

## Appendix F: Instructions for brainstorming focus group

Hi everyone,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the brainstorming focus group session for the “**HR competency**” research project.

The aim of this activity is to generate a list of statements pertaining to the generally agreed HR competencies. I would greatly appreciate your input, as you will be providing valuable information for HR practitioners / academics and my PhD study being undertaken at AUT.

The following brainstorming focus statement and focus prompt will be used to guide the focus group discussion:

- **Brainstorming Focus Statement:** “Generate short phrases or sentences that describe the personal attributes, knowledge and skills required for effective/successful performance in your role within your organisation...”
- **Focus Prompt:** “One personal attribute, knowledge or skill required for effective/successful performance in my role within my organisation is...”

Any statement can be a single word or a phrase of up to 15 words. Each statement should only refer to a **single** competency based on your HR experience. There are no limits to the number of statements you can write, although typically you might record 10 – 40. All the statements from the focus group members’ will be aggregated into a single list that will form the basis of the sorting and rating exercise for the online survey.

To complete the HR competency statements:

- First think of the **general competencies** that you think are critical for HR practitioners, this includes both strategist/leadership and functional/operational roles and generalist and specialist roles.
- Next what are the **specific competencies** you must possess in order to achieve superior performance in your **organisation**.
- Also list some key competencies that you think are important for **career development** in the HR career.

Write down these ideas as they occur in your head.

Examples of the style for writing the statements are shown below:

- Self-starter
- Respect for others
- Understanding of key challenges facing the business
- Employment legislation
- Effective communication
- Ability to manage stakeholders at all levels

Note: Competency is different from competence.

Competence is more concerned with “aspects of the **job** at which the person is competent” (i.e. job roles, outputs and deliverables) whereas competency is more concerned with “aspects of the **person** which enable him/her to be competent” (i.e. personal attributes and behaviours). In other words, competence is what people must be able to do (i.e. an output) and competency is what they need to do it effectively (i.e. an input).

If you have more statements you wish to add after the brainstorming focus group session, please feel free to email them to me by Friday 1 June 2012.



## MEMORANDUM

### Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

To: Keith Mackay  
From: **Dr Rosemary Godbold** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 21 February 2012  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 12/33 **Contextualising the requirements of human resource competencies.**

Dear Keith

I am pleased to advise that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) approved your ethics application at their meeting on 13 February 2012, subject to the following conditions:

1. Amendment of the Information Sheet as follows:
  - a. Inclusion of more detailed advice to participants in the section entitled 'What will happen in this research';
  - b. Removal of the section on counselling. AUTEC considered that given the focus and context of the research counselling was not required.

AUTEC commends the researcher and yourself on the overall quality of this application. AUTEC noted that this approval is for the focus group stage of the research only and that the questionnaire will be submitted to AUTEC for approval once it is developed.

I request that you provide me with a written response to the points raised in these conditions at your earliest convenience, indicating either how you have satisfied these points or proposing an alternative approach. AUTEC also requires written evidence of any altered documents, such as Information Sheets, surveys etc. Once this response and its supporting written evidence has been received and confirmed as satisfying the Committee's points, you will be notified of the full approval of your ethics application.

When approval has been given subject to conditions, full approval is not effective until *all* the concerns expressed in the conditions have been met to the satisfaction of the Committee. Data collection may not commence until full approval has been confirmed. Should these conditions not be satisfactorily met within six months, your application may be closed and you will need to submit a new application should you wish to continue with this research project.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all written and verbal correspondence with us. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact me by email at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 6902. Alternatively you may contact your AUTEC Faculty Representative (a list with contact details may be found in the Ethics Knowledge Base at <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>).

Yours sincerely

Dr Rosemary Godbold  
**Executive Secretary**  
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Karen Lo [klo@aut.ac.nz](mailto:klo@aut.ac.nz), Edwina Pio

## Appendix G: Ethics approval (continued)

To: **Dr Rosemary Godbold** Executive Secretary, AUTC  
From: Keith Macky  
Date: 21 February 2012  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 12/33 **Contextualising the requirements of human resource competencies.**

---

Subject: Ethics Application Number 12/33 Contextualising the requirements of human resource competencies

Dear Rosemary

Thank you for your written response regarding my ethics application to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTC). I am pleased to provide you with the following response to the points raised by AUTC:

1. Amendment of the Information Sheet as follows:
  - a. Inclusion of more detailed advice to participants in the section entitled 'What will happen in this research'

Your suggestion has been adopted. This section has been modified to include a more detailed advice on the concept mapping group process. See the attached Participant Information Sheet (in Appendix A) with the inclusion made in meeting the above requirement.

- b. Removal of the section on counselling

Your suggestion has been adopted. See the attached Participant Information Sheet (in Appendix A) with the removal made in meeting the above requirement.



# Participant Information Sheet



**Date Information Sheet Produced:**

30/01/2012

**Project Title**

Contextualising the requirements of human resource competencies.

**An Invitation**

My name is Karen Lo and I am a doctoral student at AUT University. I am conducting research to understand the contextual relevance of human resource (HR) competencies. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Choosing to participate or not in this study will neither advantage nor disadvantage you.

**What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the generally agreed competencies for HR practitioners and determine whether their requirements vary across different organisations and within complex organisations.

**How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You have been identified as a potential participant because you are a HR generalist / specialist and are currently working in a HR / personnel department of an organisation in New Zealand. You have also been invited to participate in this research because you have given permission to take part in research in your HRINZ membership or have been referred by a HRINZ member.

**What will happen in this research?**

This study involves a concept mapping group process that incorporates a range of group activities which are analysed to produce visual concept maps. Should you choose to participate you will be invited to take part in the following activities:

- Focus Group 1 (Brainstorming and Statement Synthesis): you will be invited to a focus group session to brainstorm and generate a list of short statements relating to the key HR competencies.
- Online Questionnaire (Statement Rating): you will be asked to perform sorting and rating tasks individually using the Web-based interface on the key HR competencies generated from the first focus group. The researcher will then analyse the sorting and rating data using the Propriety software Concept System to produce a series of concept maps.
- Focus Group 2 (interpretation of concept maps): you will be presented the concept maps in the second focus group session where you will be asked to interpret them and name the clusters of statements.

Although participation in every step of the concept mapping process is voluntary, it is found that concept maps are better understood (during the interpretation phase) by people who have participated in all phases of the process than those who have taken part in only one or two steps. The data collected and its analysis will provide an insight into the contextual nature of HR

## **Appendix H: Participant information sheet (continued)**

competencies. The findings will be published in my doctoral thesis, academic journals and presented at conferences.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

There are no significant risks involved in taking part in the concept mapping group process and participation is entirely voluntary. You will NOT be asked questions relating to your values, beliefs, cultures or work performance. Please be assured that your responses are entirely confidential and for study purposes only. Your identity and the name of your organisation will not be disclosed in writings, journal publications, conferences or in the thesis. All information provided shall be treated with strict confidentiality.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If you feel uncomfortable, you may choose to discontinue or withdraw your participation at any time.

### **What are the benefits?**

This study has the potential to explore competency requirements of HR practitioners in different organisational contexts. By understanding the contextual requirements of HR competencies, organisations can focus on improving the effectiveness of their HR functions which could contribute to sustained competitive advantage of the organisation. This research also provides a more integrated approach to competency modelling, which is of benefit to both industry and academia within and beyond the HR discipline (e.g. executives and marketing). The researcher will publish the key findings in her doctoral thesis, journal articles and conferences.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Please be assured that any information you share in the focus groups and the questionnaire will be treated as confidential and your name and organisation will not be identified in any form resulting from this project. All data will be held in secure locations within AUT University and will be destroyed after a period of six years. However, complete confidentiality could not be guaranteed as focus group members will be able to identify each other.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There are no costs and money in participating in this research. The concept mapping group process consists of a brainstorming focus group session, an online questionnaire (which involves idea sorting and rating tasks) and an interpretation of maps focus group session. Should you agree to participate, we envisage that it will take a maximum of:

- 60-90 minutes to conduct the first focus group,
- 30 minutes to complete the online questionnaire and
- 60-90 minutes to conduct the second focus group.

Participation in all three steps of the process is entirely voluntary; however, it has been found that concept maps are better understood during the interpretation phase by people who have participated in all phases of the process than those who have taken part in only one or two steps.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Please take one week to consider this invitation. If you need further information or clarification, please contact the researcher (email and contact number below).

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you agree to participate in this research, an information sheet and consent form will be given to you. By signing the consent form, you indicate your consent to participate in the focus group

## Appendix H: Participant information sheet (continued)

sessions. After the first focus group session, you will be emailed a link to access an electronic questionnaire which you can logon and complete at your own time.

### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

A summary of the key findings may be sent to you after all data has been analysed if you wish. You may access the findings of the research through the AUT University Library data base at [www.researchgateway.ac.nz](http://www.researchgateway.ac.nz).

### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Keith Macky, [kmacky@aut.ac.nz](mailto:kmacky@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext.5035.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Dr Rosemary Godbold, [rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6902.

### **Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

#### ***Researcher Contact Details:***

Karen Lo, [klo@aut.ac.nz](mailto:klo@aut.ac.nz), 021-681-381.

#### ***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Dr Keith Macky, [kmacky@aut.ac.nz](mailto:kmacky@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext.5035.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27 February 2012,  
AUTEK Reference number 12/33.

## Consent Form

Participation in focus groups



**Project title:** *Contextualising the requirements for human resource competencies*

**Project Supervisor:** *Dr Keith Macky*

*Dr Edwina Pio*

**Researcher:** *Karen Lo*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 14 May 2012.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the online discussion group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ☐ I understand that the online discussion will be recorded.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the online discussion of which I was part, the relevant information about myself, or parts thereof, will not be used.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Signature: .....

Participant's Name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27 February 2012 AUTEK Reference number 12/33**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Contextualising HR Competencies Information

Hi, my name is Karen Lo and I am a PhD student from AUT University. You are invited to participate in my doctoral thesis research - 'Contextualising HR Competencies'.

Over the last 25 years, HR has been pressured to deliver greater value for their organisations by becoming strategic and future-oriented business partners. A number of HR competency models have been researched and developed including those by a number of HR professional bodies, e.g. the Human Resources Institute of New Zealand. Although there is a general assumption that some HR competencies are necessary and desirable for *all* organisations, there is evidence that existing HR competency models are ineffective in predicting job success. Therefore, this project aims to explore the competency requirements for HR practitioners in different organisational contexts.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The research findings will help to design more targeted selection and development programmes for HR practitioners.

This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It involves sorting and importance rating activities. Once you start, please complete the survey as you will not be able to log out and then login as the same anonymous participant.

Please click on the *Continue Anonymously* button to commence this survey.


- [Sorting](#)
- [Importance](#)

Continue Anonymously

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Contextualising HR Competencies Informed Consent

You have been asked to participate in an online survey. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from this survey at any time.

Please be assured that your input in this project is entirely anonymous and confidential and for study purposes only.

Please click on the *Accept* button to give your consent to participate in this project.


Accept

Reject

Project Administrator: Karen Lo  
Organization: AUT University  
Phone: (09) 921-9999 extn 5339  
E-Mail Address: [karen.lo@aut.ac.nz](mailto:karen.lo@aut.ac.nz)

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: OPEN ?

Sorting  
status: OPEN ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Contextualising HR Competencies

You have accepted this project.

This text will show up each time you return to the project home page.

You can always return to this page by clicking on the *Home* button. Do not use the *Go Back* button on the Internet Explorer Toolbar.

Please click on the steps in the exact sequence as they are listed below:

NEXT STEPS:

1. [Role and Organisational Contexts](#) OPEN ?

2. [Sorting](#) OPEN ?

3. [Rating: Importance](#) OPEN ?

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Project Home

Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: OPEN ?

Sorting  
status: OPEN ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Role and Organisational Contexts

In this section, you will be asked eight questions relating to the contextual setting of your role and organisation. This information will not be used to personally identify you. Please choose one answer for each question, then click on the *Continue* button to continue.

**Q1: What level is your HR position?**

☒ Executive  
☐ Manager  
☐ Advisor - senior level  
☐ Advisor - intermediate level  
☐ Advisor - entry level  
☐ Administrator  
☐ Consulting  
☐ Other

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies

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Role and Organisational Contexts  
 status: STARTED ?

Sorting  
 status: OPEN ?

Rating: Importance  
 status: OPEN ?

Role and Organisational Contexts

**Q2: What is your primary area of specialism?**

- ☐ Change Management
- ☐ Consulting
- ☐ Employee Wellbeing
- ☐ HR Information Systems
- ☐ Industrial & Employment Relations
- ☐ Occupational Health & Safety
- ☐ Recruitment & Selection
- ☐ Remuneration & Benefits
- ☐ Training & Development
- ☐ Other

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: STARTED ?

Sorting  
status: OPEN ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Role and Organisational Contexts


**Q3: What is your secondary area of specialism?**

- ☐ Change Management
- ☐ Consulting
- ☐ Employee Wellbeing
- ☐ HR Information Systems
- ☐ Industrial & Employment Relations
- ☐ Occupational Health & Safety
- ☐ Recruitment & Selection
- ☐ Remuneration & Benefits
- ☐ Training & Development
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Not Applicable

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: STARTED ?

Sorting  
status: OPEN ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Role and Organisational Contexts

Q4: Where do you work in HR?

☐ Center of Expertise (consults with business units in providing HR expertise)

☐ Corporate Headquarters HR

☐ Embedded HR Business Partner / Generalist operating in a business unit

☐ Functional HR (specialist in technical areas)

☐ Shared Services Centre (where transactional HR work e.g. payroll, benefits administration is processed)

☐ Other


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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Role and Organisational Contexts  
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Sorting  
status: OPEN ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Role and Organisational Contexts

**Q5: Rate the level of strategic orientation of your role on a seven point Likert scale, where '1' means 'mostly operational', '4' means 'an even mix between operational and strategic' and '7' means 'mostly strategic'.**

- **Strategic means the degree to which your role is focused on linking HR activities to long-term business success.**
- **Operational means the degree to which your role is focused on day-to-day HR transactional / administrative work.**


(Note for independent HR consultants: select one of the roles that you have previously consulted on or you have previously held as an internal HR practitioner)

☐ 1 Mostly operational  
☐ 2 Fairly operational  
☐ 3 Slightly more operational  
☐ 4 An even mix between operational and strategic  
☐ 5 Slightly more strategic  
☐ 6 Fairly strategic  
☐ 7 Mostly strategic

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: STARTED ?

Sorting  
status: OPEN ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Role and Organisational Contexts

**Q6: What type of organisation do you work for?**

(Note for independent HR consultants: select one of the organisations you have consulted previously or you have previously worked for in an internal HR role)


- ☐ Co-operative organisation
- ☐ Domestically based multinational enterprise
- ☐ Local or central government organisation
- ☐ Not-for-profit organisation
- ☐ Overseas based multinational enterprise
- ☐ Privately owned company / Trusts
- ☐ Publicly funded organisation (e.g. District Health Board)
- ☐ State-owned enterprise
- ☐ Other

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies

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**Role and Organisational Contexts**  
status: **STARTED** ?

**Sorting**  
status: **OPEN** ?

**Rating: Importance**  
status: **OPEN** ?

**Role and Organisational Contexts**

**Q7: What industry does your organisation operate in?**

(Note for independent HR consultants: select one of the organisations you have consulted previously or you have previously worked for in an internal HR role)


- ☐ Accommodation and Food Services
- ☐ Administrative and Support Services
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Arts and Recreation Services
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Education and Training
- ☐ Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
- ☐ Financial and Insurance Services
- ☐ Health Care and Social Assistance
- ☐ Information Media and Telecommunications
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Mining
- ☐ Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- ☐ Public Administration and Safety
- ☐ Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
- ☐ Retail Trade
- ☐ Transport, Postal and Warehousing
- ☐ Wholesale Trade
- ☐ Other

**Continue** **Cancel**

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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Sorting  
status: **OPEN** ?

Rating: Importance  
status: **OPEN** ?

Role and Organisational Contexts

**Q8: Approximately how many staff are employed by your organisation?**


If you work for a multidivisional organisation, please give the numbers for just the division you work in.

(Note for independent HR consultants: give the numbers for one of the organisations you have consulted previously or you have previously worked for in an internal HR role)

Continue    Cancel

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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 Project Home

Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: COMPLETED ?

Sorting  
status: OPEN ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Contextualising HR Competencies

Thank you for your answers. You can always come back and edit them later from the menu on the left.

This text will show up each time you return to the project home page.

You can always return to this page by clicking on the *Home* button. Do not use the *Go Back* button on the Internet Explorer Toolbar.


Please click on the steps in the exact sequence as they are listed below:

NEXT STEPS:

1. [Sorting](#) OPEN ?
2. [Rating: Importance](#) OPEN ?

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

The screenshot displays the 'Contextualising HR Competencies' web application. The interface includes a top navigation bar with the 'Concept Systems Global MAX' logo, a 'sign out' button, and links for 'home' and 'help'. Below this is a toolbar with icons for 'Instructions', 'Create a pile', 'Save', 'Arrange all', 'Minimize all', 'Maximize all', 'Edit pile name', and 'Switch to'. The main content area is divided into two sections. On the left, under the heading 'PROJECT FOCUS PROMPT:', there is a 'Progress Bar' showing '0 out of 44 sorted.' and a list of 'Unsorted statements:' including 'ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION', 'PROACTIVITY', 'ACCOUNTABILITY', 'ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY', 'PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY', 'CURIOSITY', 'EMPATHY', and 'APPROACHABLE'. On the right, a pop-up window titled 'Instructions' provides detailed guidance on the activity, stating that users will be presented with a list of 44 HR competencies and are requested to sort them into clusters/piles based on how they go together. The instructions also mention that usually 5 to 20 piles work well for this activity and provide specific steps for reading through the competencies, creating individual piles, and dragging each competency over a pile.

Contextualising HR Competencies

sign out

home help

Instructions Create a pile Save Arrange all Minimize all Maximize all Edit pile name Switch to

PROJECT FOCUS PROMPT:

Progress Bar

0 out of 44 sorted.

Unsorted statements:

ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION: seeks to achieve goals/targets aligned with organisational objectives

PROACTIVITY: identifies opportunities that add value to the organisation and takes initiatives to achieve goals

ACCOUNTABILITY: seeks to follow through on tasks/activities to ensure commitments/agreements have been fulfilled

ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY

PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY: honest, ethical and respectful for appropriate boundaries/confidentiality

CURIOSITY: actively explores a range of disciplines related to the effective delivery of HR strategies

EMPATHY: seeks to understand others' needs and feelings and how people interact

APPROACHABLE: able to network with people in a business focused context

JUDGEMENT: able to assess

Instructions


In this activity, you will be presented with a list of **44 HR competencies**. These competencies were summarised by a group of New Zealand HR practitioners and developed from an in-depth analysis of the literature and HR job descriptions.

You are requested to **sort all of the competencies** according to how you think they go together. This is done by putting the competencies into clusters/piles in a way that makes sense to you and naming each cluster. People vary in how many piles they create. Usually, 5 to 20 piles work well for this activity.

**Read through the 44 HR competencies** on the left hand side first, then decide on the types/number of piles you deem fit. Next, **create individual piles** and label them. **Drag each competency** over a pile and release when a green dashed line is visible. Put a competency alone in its own pile if it does not relate to all the other ones. Once you start, you will need to finish sorting. Do not use the Go Back button.

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)



### Contextualising HR Competencies

sign out

Instructions
Create a pile
Save
Arrange all
Minimize all
Maximize all
Edit pile name
Switch to

**PROJECT FOCUS PROMPT:**

---

**Progress Bar**

44 out of 44 sorted.

**Unsorted statements:**

---

Congratulations, you have sorted all the statements!

[Save and Finish](#)

**Attributes**

- ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION: seeks to achieve goals/targets aligned with organisational objectives
- PROACTIVITY: identifies opportunities that add value to the organisation and takes initiatives to achieve goals
- ACCOUNTABILITY: seeks to follow through on tasks/activities to ensure commitments/agreements have been fulfilled
- ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY
- PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY: honest, ethical and respectful for appropriate boundaries/confidentiality
- CURIOSITY: actively explores a range of disciplines related to the effective delivery of HR strategies
- SENSE OF HUMOUR: able to use humour to defuse stress in crisis
- EMPATHY: seeks to understand others' needs and feelings and how people interact
- APPROACHABLE: able to network with people in a business focused context
- JUDGEMENT: able to assess whether or not there is a business case for taking on initiatives
- RESILIENCE: able to sustain performance in high stress situations
- CUSTOMER FOCUSED: committed to fulfilling the needs of internal/external customers
- ASSERTIVENESS: courage to voice opinion and challenge status quos/ideas
- ATTENTION TO DETAILS that add value to the organisation

**HR Knowledge**

- BUSINESS ACUMEN: identifies and understands how internal/external issues (e.g. economic, political, social trends) impact the organisation
- KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION
- EXPERTISE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY
- EXPERTISE IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION
- EXPERTISE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
- EXPERTISE IN REMUNERATION AND REWARD
- EXPERTISE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT
- DIVERSITY AWARENESS: understands how to optimise cultural differences to the organisation's benefits
- POLITICAL SAVVY: knows who the formal/informal influencers, gatekeepers or decision makers are and how to get things done through them
- FINANCIAL SAVVY: ability to interpret and talk business numbers and demonstrate value and return on investment
- KNOWLEDGE OF HR METRICS: ability to measure and interpret HR performance and compare with overall organisational cost metrics
- KNOWLEDGE OF HR TECHNOLOGY: knows how to implement and leverage HR information system to support organisational strategies

**Skills**

- COMMUNICATION: ability to convey messages verbally or in writing to individuals or groups; write documents (e.g. job description); listen to others
- RELATIONSHIP BUILDING: ability to foster long-term partnerships with stakeholders to facilitate the accomplishment of organisational goals
- LEADERSHIP: ability to express the strategic vision for the organisation, motivate and inspire others to accomplish organisational objectives
- INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATION: ability to represent own position on issues to gain support and buy-in from others
- CONFLICT RESOLUTION: ability to use interpersonal skills and methods to reduce tension and resolve conflict
- CONSULTATION: ability to provide HR expertise to line managers using a facilitative, rather than a prescriptive, approach
- COLLABORATION: ability to develop cooperation and teamwork while participating in a group of people to achieve desired organisational outcomes
- COACHING: ability to provide guidance and feedback to help others develop their ability to improve job performance
- STRATEGIC THINKING: ability to foresee opportunities/risks relating to the long-term strategic needs of the organisation and come up with HR solutions
- PROBLEM SOLVING: ability to identify the real causes of the problem and choose the best solution according to the situation
- RESEARCH AND REPORTING: ability to collect, interpret and evaluate information/data and create reports/presentations
- KNOWLEDGE SHARING: actively shares information and knowledge and encourage contribution from others in a team environment
- ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION: ability to manage time, organise work priorities and perform filing and data handling
- CHANGE MANAGEMENT: ability to plan, facilitate and communicate change initiatives and encourage staff to accept and resolve challenges

Attributes
HR Knowledge
Skills

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



hide menusign outhomehelp

 Project Home

Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: COMPLETED ?

Sorting  
status: COMPLETED ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Statement Sorting

Your sorting data has been submitted.  
You can come back and edit them later from the menu on the left.  
Please click on the *Return to Project Page* button to proceed to the rating activity.

Return to Project Page

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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 Project Home

Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: COMPLETED ?

Sorting  
status: COMPLETED ?

Rating: Importance  
status: OPEN ?

Contextualising HR Competencies

This text will show up each time you return to the project home page.

You can always return to this page by clicking on the *Home* button. Do not use the *Go Back* button on the Internet Explorer Toolbar.

Please click on the steps in the exact sequence as they are listed below:

NEXT STEPS:

1. [Rating: Importance](#)    OPEN ?

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

hide menu

sign out

save cancel home help

Progress:

Project Home

Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: COMPLETED ?

Sorting  
status: COMPLETED ?

Rating: Importance  
status: STARTED ?

Importance Rating

**Important: Please make sure you have completed the sorting activity before you start rating.**

In this activity, you are requested to rate the 44 HR competencies that were presented to you in the sorting activity.

Please rate the importance of each HR competency for successful performance in your job within your organisation on a seven point Likert scale, where '1' means 'Not important at all', '4' means 'Moderately important', and '7' means 'Extremely important'.

\*Note for external HR consultants: Please give your rating based on the role and organisational contexts you have previously selected.

**Project Focus Prompt:**


☐ Show unrated statements only   ☒ Show all statements

Rating	Statement
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION: seeks to achieve goals/targets aligned with organisational objectives
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	PROACTIVITY: identifies opportunities that add value to the organisation and takes initiatives to achieve goals
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	ACCOUNTABILITY: seeks to follow through on tasks/activities to ensure commitments/agreements have been fulfilled
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY: honest, ethical and respectful for appropriate boundaries/confidentiality
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	CURIOSITY: actively explores a range of disciplines related to the effective delivery of HR strategies
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	EMPATHY: seeks to understand others' needs and feelings and how people interact
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	APPROACHABLE: able to network with people in a business focused context
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	JUDGEMENT: able to assess whether or not there is a business case for taking on initiatives
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	RESILIENCE: able to sustain performance in high stress situations
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	ASSERTIVENESS: courage to voice opinion and challenge status quos/ideas
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	SELF-CONFIDENCE: has realistic confidence in own judgement, ability and power


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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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 Project Home

Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: COMPLETED ?

Sorting  
status: COMPLETED ?

Rating: Importance  
status: COMPLETED ?

Importance Rating

Your rating data has been submitted.


You can come back and edit them later from the menu on the left.

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## Appendix J: Concept mapping online questionnaire design (continued)

Contextualising HR Competencies



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 Project Home

Role and Organisational Contexts  
status: COMPLETED ?

Sorting  
status: COMPLETED ?

Rating: Importance  
status: COMPLETED ?

Contextualising HR Competencies

This text will show up each time you return to the project home page.

You can always return to this page by clicking on the *Home* button. Do not use the *Go Back* button on the Internet Explorer Toolbar.

Please click on the steps in the exact sequence as they are listed below:

**Congratulations! You have completed the survey!**


**Thank you for your time and participation.**

**If you are happy to be contacted for participation in further part of this project or would like to request for a summary report on the findings, please email Karen Lo, [klo@aut.ac.nz](mailto:klo@aut.ac.nz).**

**Please click on the *Sign Out* button to exit the project.**

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## **Appendix K: Invitation to participate in concept mapping online questionnaire**

Dear [participant's first name]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in HRINZ's research option.

You are invited to participate in the research project that Karen Lo, PhD student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is undertaking towards her doctoral thesis.

### **Research Title:**

*"Contextualising HR Competencies"*

### **Background:**

Karen's study involves a concept mapping approach which looks at the requirements of HR competencies across different role and organisational contexts. Karen seeks interested participants to take part in an anonymous online questionnaire. Participants will be asked to sort and rate a list of key HR competencies. Data collected will be analysed to produce a series of visual concept maps.

Participants who are residing in Auckland will have the opportunity to be invited to a focus group to interpret the concept maps.

If you are willing to help Karen in her research, please email [Karen Lo](mailto:Karen.Lo@aut.ac.nz) or click on this link (<http://www.conceptsystemsglobal.com/HRCCompetencies/sort/rate>) to open the online survey.

The findings will help to design more targeted recruitment, selection and training and development programmes for HR practitioners.

Kind regards,

[name]  
HRINZ Research & Education Manager



## Appendix L: Average importance ratings of HR competencies contained in each cluster

Cluster	HR Competency and Descriptor	Average Rating
<b>1. Strategic Focus &amp; Drive</b>		<b>5.88</b>
22.	CUSTOMER FOCUSED: committed to fulfilling the needs of internal/external customers	6.27
42.	PROBLEM SOLVING: ability to identify the real causes of the problem and choose the best solution according to the situation	6.20
31.	JUDGEMENT: able to assess whether or not there is a business case for taking on initiatives	5.93
11.	ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION: seeks to achieve goals/targets aligned with organisational objectives	5.80
1.	ATTENTION TO DETAILS that add value to the organisation	5.78
19.	PROACTIVITY: identifies opportunities that add value to the organisation and takes initiatives to achieve goals	5.62
20.	INNOVATION: receptive to new ideas/alternatives that will improve organisational results	5.55
	<b>Count Std. Dev. Variance Min Max Average Median</b>	
	7 0.25 0.06 5.55 6.27 5.88 5.80	
<b>2. Leadership &amp; Relationship Building</b>		<b>6.28</b>
21.	RELATIONSHIP BUILDING: ability to foster long-term partnerships with stakeholders to facilitate the accomplishment of organisational goals	6.60
4.	INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATION: ability to represent own position on issues to gain support and buy-in from others	6.27
9.	LEADERSHIP: ability to express the strategic vision for the organisation, motivate and inspire others to accomplish organisational objectives	6.18
30.	COLLABORATION: ability to develop cooperation and teamwork while participating in a group of people to achieve desired organisational outcomes	6.05
	<b>Count Std. Dev. Variance Min Max Average Median</b>	
	4 0.20 0.04 6.05 6.60 6.28 6.23	
<b>3. Business Awareness</b>		<b>5.64</b>
3.	POLITICAL SAVVY: knows who the formal/informal influencers, gatekeepers or decision makers are and how to get things done through them	5.88
35.	STRATEGIC THINKING: ability to foresee opportunities/risks relating to the long-term strategic needs of the organisation and come up with HR solutions	5.83
13.	BUSINESS ACUMEN: identifies and understands how internal/external issues (e.g. economic, political, social trends) impact the organisation	5.65
2.	FINANCIAL SAVVY: ability to interpret and talk business numbers and demonstrate value and return on investment	5.20
	<b>Count Std. Dev. Variance Min Max Average Median</b>	
	4 0.27 0.07 5.20 5.88 5.64 5.74	
<b>4. Systems &amp; Technology</b>		<b>5.18</b>
18.	PROJECT MANAGEMENT: ability to plan, coordinate and manage resources for the project, track milestones and report critical success factors	5.40
24.	ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION: ability to manage time, organise work priorities and perform filing and data handling	5.28
16.	HR METRICS: ability to measure and interpret HR performance and compare with overall organisational cost metrics	5.15
7.	RESEARCH AND REPORTING: ability to collect, interpret and evaluate information/data and create reports/presentations	5.13
41.	PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: ability to design and deliver a cost effective HR operational system	5.08
27.	HR TECHNOLOGY: knows how to implement and leverage HR information system to support organisational strategies	5.05
	<b>Count Std. Dev. Variance Min Max Average Median</b>	
	6 0.12 0.01 5.05 5.40 5.18 5.14	
<b>5. Input &amp; Support</b>		<b>5.76</b>
15.	COACHING: ability to provide guidance and feedback to help others develop their ability to improve job performance	6.20
14.	CHANGE MANAGEMENT: ability to plan, facilitate and communicate change initiatives and encourage staff to accept and resolve challenges	6.05
38.	CONSULTATION: ability to provide HR expertise to line managers using a facilitative, rather than a prescriptive, approach	5.90
12.	KNOWLEDGE SHARING: actively shares information and knowledge and encourage contribution from others in a team environment	5.82
17.	DIVERSITY AWARENESS: understands how to optimise cultural differences to the organisation's benefits	4.85
	<b>Count Std. Dev. Variance Min Max Average Median</b>	
	5 0.48 0.23 4.85 6.20 5.76 5.90	
<b>6. HR Acumen</b>		<b>4.93</b>
29.	EXPERTISE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	5.45
33.	KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION	5.38
39.	EXPERTISE IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	5.12
43.	EXPERTISE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	4.80
36.	EXPERTISE IN REMUNERATION AND REWARD	4.45
40.	EXPERTISE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY	4.35
	<b>Count Std. Dev. Variance Min Max Average Median</b>	
	6 0.43 0.18 4.35 5.45 4.93 4.96	
<b>7. Self Belief &amp; Social Factors</b>		<b>5.92</b>
26.	PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY: honest, ethical and respectful for appropriate boundaries/confidentiality	6.50
34.	COMMUNICATION: ability to convey messages verbally or in writing to individuals or groups; write documents (e.g. job description); listen to others	6.37
23.	APPROACHABLE: able to network with people in a business focused context	6.28
32.	ACCOUNTABILITY: seeks to follow through on tasks/activities to ensure commitments/agreements have been fulfilled	6.17
6.	RESILIENCE: able to sustain performance in high stress situations	6.00
28.	SELF-CONFIDENCE: has realistic confidence in own judgement, ability and power	6.00
25.	ASSERTIVENESS: courage to voice opinion and challenge status quos/ideas	5.98
44.	ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY	5.95
8.	CONFLICT RESOLUTION: ability to use interpersonal skills and methods to reduce tension and resolve conflict	5.85
5.	EMPATHY: seeks to understand others' needs and feelings and how people interact	5.72
10.	SENSE OF HUMOUR: able to use humour to defuse stress in crisis	5.13
37.	CURIOSITY: actively explores a range of disciplines related to the effective delivery of HR strategies	5.03
	<b>Count Std. Dev. Variance Min Max Average Median</b>	
	12 0.43 0.18 5.03 6.50 5.92 5.99	

## Appendix M: Average importance ratings of HR competencies by HR role and organisational context

Cluster	Statement	Strategic HR Role (n=36)	Functional HR Role (n=23)	HR Executives (n=11)	HR Managers (n=21)	Senior HR Advisors (n=11)
<b>1. Strategic Focus &amp; Drive</b>	1 ATTENTION TO DETAILS that add value to the organisation	5.96	5.80	5.70	5.94	5.75
	11 ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION	5.72	5.83	5.64	5.81	5.64
	19 PROACTIVITY	6.08	5.57	5.82	5.71	5.64
	20 INNOVATION	5.61	5.70	5.09	5.67	5.18
	22 CUSTOMER FOCUSED	5.64	5.48	5.18	5.90	5.36
	31 JUDGEMENT	6.33	6.22	5.91	6.24	6.55
	42 PROBLEM SOLVING	6.00	5.78	6.18	6.05	5.55
		6.33	6.04	6.09	6.19	6.36
<b>2. Leadership &amp; Relationship Building</b>	4 INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATION	6.40	6.10	6.16	6.35	6.52
	9 LEADERSHIP	6.42	6.00	6.36	6.29	6.73
	21 RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	6.42	5.87	6.36	6.43	6.18
	30 COLLABORATION	6.58	6.61	6.27	6.62	6.82
		6.17	5.91	5.64	6.05	6.36
<b>3. Business Awareness</b>	2 FINANCIAL SAVVY	5.87	5.30	6.05	5.79	5.36
	3 POLITICAL SAVVY	5.50	4.70	6.09	5.52	4.45
	13 BUSINESS ACUMEN	6.00	5.68	5.80	5.95	5.82
	35 STRATEGIC THINKING	5.97	5.22	6.09	5.62	5.82
		6.00	5.61	6.18	6.05	5.36
<b>4. Systems &amp; Technology</b>	7 RESEARCH AND REPORTING	5.14	5.20	5.42	5.21	4.68
	16 HR METRICS	5.08	5.13	5.64	4.90	4.64
	18 PROJECT MANAGEMENT	5.14	5.13	5.73	5.14	4.00
	24 ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION	5.44	5.30	5.18	5.43	5.36
	27 HR TECHNOLOGY	5.00	5.73	5.10	5.10	5.18
	41 PROCESS IMPROVEMENT	5.03	5.00	5.36	5.33	4.36
		5.14	4.91	5.45	5.33	4.55
<b>5. Input &amp; Support</b>	12 KNOWLEDGE SHARING	5.81	5.70	5.71	5.73	5.93
	14 CHANGE MANAGEMENT	5.86	5.78	5.64	5.81	6.00
	15 COACHING	6.31	5.70	6.36	6.19	6.18
	17 DIVERSITY AWARENESS	6.36	5.91	6.27	6.19	6.45
	38 CONSULTATION	4.61	5.13	4.55	4.71	4.82
		5.89	5.96	5.73	5.76	6.18
<b>6. HR Acumen</b>	29 EXPERTISE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	4.85	5.01	4.88	5.01	4.68
	33 KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION	5.44	5.43	5.09	5.48	5.55
	36 EXPERTISE IN REMUNERATION AND REWARD	5.14	5.74	5.55	5.71	4.73
	39 EXPERTISE IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	4.50	4.30	4.82	4.43	3.82
	40 EXPERTISE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY	5.00	5.26	5.00	5.57	4.18
	43 EXPERTISE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	4.47	4.17	4.55	4.24	4.91
		4.56	5.13	4.27	4.62	4.91
<b>7. Self Belief &amp; Social Factors</b>	5 EMPATHY	5.88	6.01	5.76	5.94	6.05
	6 RESILIENCE	5.83	5.65	5.55	5.57	6.18
	8 CONFLICT RESOLUTION	5.86	6.30	6.18	5.95	5.64
	10 SENSE OF HUMOUR	5.72	6.09	5.91	5.57	6.00
	23 APPROACHABLE	5.17	5.13	5.09	5.05	5.64
	25 ASSERTIVENESS	6.28	6.26	6.00	6.33	6.64
	26 PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY	5.86	6.13	6.00	6.10	6.00
	28 SELF-CONFIDENCE	6.50	6.61	6.36	6.57	6.45
	32 ACCOUNTABILITY	5.92	6.22	5.55	6.33	5.64
	34 COMMUNICATION	6.19	6.22	5.64	6.38	6.27
	37 CURIOSITY	6.33	6.43	6.27	6.33	6.55
	44 ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY	5.14	4.78	5.09	5.00	5.36
		5.78	6.35	5.45	6.10	6.18

Key:

Highest rating within cluster



**Appendix M: Average importance ratings of HR competencies by HR role and organisational context (continued)**

Cluster	Statement	Intermediate HR Advisors (n=7)	HR Administrators (n=3)	Change Management (n=19)	Industrial/ Employment Relations (n=20)
<b>1. Strategic Focus &amp; Drive</b>		<b>5.74</b>	<b>5.62</b>	<b>5.73</b>	<b>5.97</b>
	1 ATTENTION TO DETAILS that add value to the organisation	6.20	6.33	5.63	6.05
	11 ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION	5.40	5.67	5.89	5.90
	19 PROACTIVITY	5.60	6.33	5.37	5.75
	20 INNOVATION	4.60	4.67	5.21	5.50
	22 CUSTOMER FOCUSED	6.40	5.67	6.11	6.30
	31 JUDGEMENT	6.00	4.67	5.89	6.00
	42 PROBLEM SOLVING	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.30
<b>2. Leadership &amp; Relationship Building</b>		<b>5.70</b>	<b>5.83</b>	<b>6.18</b>	<b>6.35</b>
	4 INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATION	5.60	4.67	6.42	6.35
	9 LEADERSHIP	4.80	5.33	6.21	6.30
	21 RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	6.80	6.67	6.32	6.70
	30 COLLABORATION	5.60	6.67	5.79	6.05
<b>3. Business Awareness</b>		<b>4.85</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>5.48</b>	<b>5.65</b>
	2 FINANCIAL SAVVY	3.80	4.00	5.05	5.40
	3 POLITICAL SAVVY	6.20	3.50	5.50	5.70
	13 BUSINESS ACUMEN	4.40	4.33	5.58	5.75
	35 STRATEGIC THINKING	5.00	5.00	5.79	5.75
<b>4. Systems &amp; Technology</b>		<b>5.27</b>	<b>5.18</b>	<b>4.96</b>	<b>5.14</b>
	7 RESEARCH AND REPORTING	5.00	6.33	4.58	4.95
	16 HR METRICS	5.60	5.00	4.89	5.10
	18 PROJECT MANAGEMENT	5.00	5.00	5.05	5.40
	24 ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION	6.00	7.00	4.72	5.40
	27 HR TECHNOLOGY	5.80	3.33	5.37	5.15
	41 PROCESS IMPROVEMENT	4.20	5.00	5.11	4.85
<b>5. Input &amp; Support</b>		<b>5.96</b>	<b>4.87</b>	<b>5.52</b>	<b>5.95</b>
	12 KNOWLEDGE SHARING	6.00	6.00	5.53	5.80
	14 CHANGE MANAGEMENT	6.00	4.67	6.53	6.15
	15 COACHING	6.20	4.67	5.95	6.35
	17 DIVERSITY AWARENESS	5.20	3.67	4.05	5.15
	38 CONSULTATION	6.40	5.33	5.53	6.30
<b>6. HR Acumen</b>		<b>4.13</b>	<b>4.94</b>	<b>4.33</b>	<b>5.07</b>
	29 EXPERTISE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	6.00	4.67	5.11	5.65
	33 KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION	5.20	4.67	5.11	6.25
	36 EXPERTISE IN REMUNERATION AND REWARD	3.60	4.33	3.74	4.50
	39 EXPERTISE IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	3.80	5.00	4.53	5.30
	40 EXPERTISE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY	2.80	4.67	3.74	4.35
	43 EXPERTISE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	3.40	6.33	3.79	4.35
<b>7. Self Belief &amp; Social Factors</b>		<b>6.00</b>	<b>5.67</b>	<b>5.70</b>	<b>6.27</b>
	5 EMPATHY	6.00	4.67	5.74	6.25
	6 RESILIENCE	6.60	5.67	5.68	6.45
	8 CONFLICT RESOLUTION	6.40	4.67	5.58	6.40
	10 SENSE OF HUMOUR	5.00	5.00	4.89	5.60
	23 APPROACHABLE	6.20	6.33	6.16	6.45
	25 ASSERTIVENESS	5.80	5.00	5.79	6.20
	26 PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY	6.80	6.67	6.32	6.95
	28 SELF-CONFIDENCE	6.20	5.33	5.58	6.50
	32 ACCOUNTABILITY	5.80	7.00	5.89	6.35
	34 COMMUNICATION	6.40	6.67	6.16	6.50
	37 CURIOSITY	4.20	4.33	4.79	5.10
	44 ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY	6.60	6.67	5.79	6.45

Key:

Highest rating within cluster



**Appendix M: Average importance ratings of HR competencies by HR role and organisational context (continued)**

Cluster	Statement	Recruitment and Selection (n=17)	Training and Development (n=16)	Occupational Safety and Health (n=5)	HR Information System (n=5)
<b>1. Strategic Focus &amp; Drive</b>		<b>5.93</b>	<b>5.77</b>	<b>5.89</b>	<b>5.97</b>
	1 ATTENTION TO DETAILS that add value to the organisation	5.59	5.25	6.00	6.60
	11 ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION	5.65	5.69	5.80	5.80
	19 PROACTIVITY	5.82	5.50	5.80	5.80
	20 INNOVATION	5.76	5.88	5.80	5.40
	22 CUSTOMER FOCUSED	6.35	6.13	6.20	6.40
	31 JUDGEMENT	6.06	5.94	5.60	5.80
	42 PROBLEM SOLVING	6.29	6.00	6.00	6.00
<b>2. Leadership &amp; Relationship Building</b>		<b>6.22</b>	<b>6.30</b>	<b>6.10</b>	<b>6.05</b>
	4 INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATION	6.24	6.13	5.80	5.60
	9 LEADERSHIP	6.29	6.31	6.00	5.80
	21 RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	6.59	6.50	6.60	6.80
	30 COLLABORATION	5.76	6.25	6.00	6.00
<b>3. Business Awareness</b>		<b>5.67</b>	<b>5.73</b>	<b>5.10</b>	<b>5.30</b>
	2 FINANCIAL SAVVY	5.18	5.31	4.60	5.00
	3 POLITICAL SAVVY	6.25	5.88	5.20	5.60
	13 BUSINESS ACUMEN	5.41	5.75	5.20	5.20
	35 STRATEGIC THINKING	5.88	6.00	5.40	5.40
<b>4. Systems &amp; Technology</b>		<b>5.35</b>	<b>5.14</b>	<b>5.20</b>	<b>5.10</b>
	7 RESEARCH AND REPORTING	5.12	5.00	5.40	5.80
	16 HR METRICS	5.35	5.13	4.80	5.40
	18 PROJECT MANAGEMENT	5.53	5.44	5.00	4.60
	24 ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION	5.56	5.31	5.80	5.60
	27 HR TECHNOLOGY	5.47	4.69	4.80	5.00
	41 PROCESS IMPROVEMENT	5.06	5.25	5.40	4.20
<b>5. Input &amp; Support</b>		<b>5.65</b>	<b>5.80</b>	<b>5.84</b>	<b>5.68</b>
	12 KNOWLEDGE SHARING	5.76	5.81	6.00	6.60
	14 CHANGE MANAGEMENT	5.76	5.75	5.40	5.60
	15 COACHING	6.12	6.13	6.20	6.00
	17 DIVERSITY AWARENESS	5.06	5.19	5.40	4.40
	38 CONSULTATION	5.53	6.13	6.20	5.80
<b>6. HR Acumen</b>		<b>4.95</b>	<b>5.11</b>	<b>5.27</b>	<b>4.17</b>
	29 EXPERTISE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	5.00	5.63	5.40	4.80
	33 KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION	5.35	4.81	5.40	4.40
	36 EXPERTISE IN REMUNERATION AND REWARD	4.53	4.63	4.60	3.20
	39 EXPERTISE IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	6.06	5.13	4.60	3.40
	40 EXPERTISE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY	4.06	4.44	6.20	4.20
	43 EXPERTISE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	4.71	6.06	5.40	5.00
<b>7. Self Belief &amp; Social Factors</b>		<b>5.94</b>	<b>5.69</b>	<b>6.03</b>	<b>5.87</b>
	5 EMPATHY	5.53	5.63	5.60	5.60
	6 RESILIENCE	6.24	5.56	6.00	6.20
	8 CONFLICT RESOLUTION	5.88	5.38	6.60	5.00
	10 SENSE OF HUMOUR	5.12	4.56	5.60	4.80
	23 APPROACHABLE	6.35	6.13	6.40	6.40
	25 ASSERTIVENESS	6.29	5.63	5.40	6.00
	26 PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY	6.65	6.13	6.80	7.00
	28 SELF-CONFIDENCE	6.41	5.94	5.60	5.40
	32 ACCOUNTABILITY	6.00	6.00	6.80	6.20
	34 COMMUNICATION	6.29	6.38	6.60	6.80
	37 CURIOSITY	4.76	5.25	5.20	4.60
	44 ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY	5.76	5.69	5.80	6.40

Key:

Highest rating within cluster





## Appendix M: Average importance ratings of HR competencies by HR role and organisational context (continued)

Cluster	Statement	Privately Owned Organisations (n=17)	Local and Central Government (n=6)	Publicly Funded Organisations (n=8)	Not-for-Profit Organisations (n=5)
<b>1. Strategic Focus &amp; Drive</b>		<b>5.81</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>6.11</b>
	1 ATTENTION TO DETAILS that add value to the organisation	5.65	5.33	5.63	5.80
	11 ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION	5.76	5.33	5.25	5.80
	19 PROACTIVITY	5.53	4.67	5.25	6.00
	20 INNOVATION	5.35	5.67	4.50	6.20
	22 CUSTOMER FOCUSED	6.35	6.67	6.00	6.20
	31 JUDGEMENT	5.76	5.00	6.38	6.20
	42 PROBLEM SOLVING	6.24	6.17	5.88	6.60
<b>2. Leadership &amp; Relationship Building</b>		<b>6.38</b>	<b>6.29</b>	<b>6.22</b>	<b>6.30</b>
	4 INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATION	6.29	6.17	6.50	6.40
	9 LEADERSHIP	6.53	5.50	5.88	6.60
	21 RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	6.76	6.83	6.88	6.40
	30 COLLABORATION	5.94	6.67	5.63	5.80
<b>3. Business Awareness</b>		<b>5.91</b>	<b>5.08</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>5.65</b>
	2 FINANCIAL SAVVY	5.53	3.83	5.13	5.40
	3 POLITICAL SAVVY	6.00	6.17	6.14	5.60
	13 BUSINESS ACUMEN	5.94	4.67	5.50	5.40
	35 STRATEGIC THINKING	6.18	5.67	5.50	6.20
<b>4. Systems &amp; Technology</b>		<b>5.17</b>	<b>4.81</b>	<b>5.02</b>	<b>4.97</b>
	7 RESEARCH AND REPORTING	5.00	4.33	5.00	5.40
	16 HR METRICS	5.12	4.17	4.75	4.80
	18 PROJECT MANAGEMENT	5.35	5.50	5.13	5.60
	24 ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION	5.47	5.00	5.43	5.40
	27 HR TECHNOLOGY	4.71	4.67	5.25	4.00
	41 PROCESS IMPROVEMENT	5.41	5.17	4.63	4.60
<b>5. Input &amp; Support</b>		<b>5.96</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>5.68</b>	<b>5.52</b>
	12 KNOWLEDGE SHARING	5.65	6.33	6.00	5.20
	14 CHANGE MANAGEMENT	6.18	5.67	6.13	5.60
	15 COACHING	6.65	6.17	6.25	6.40
	17 DIVERSITY AWARENESS	4.88	5.83	4.63	5.00
	38 CONSULTATION	6.47	6.00	5.38	5.40
<b>6. HR Acumen</b>		<b>5.53</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>4.80</b>
	29 EXPERTISE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	5.88	5.83	5.13	4.80
	33 KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION	6.18	4.67	5.00	5.40
	36 EXPERTISE IN REMUNERATION AND REWARD	5.24	4.33	3.00	4.20
	39 EXPERTISE IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	5.82	4.83	4.00	5.60
	40 EXPERTISE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY	5.00	5.00	3.50	4.00
	43 EXPERTISE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	5.06	5.33	3.25	4.80
<b>7. Self Belief &amp; Social Factors</b>		<b>6.01</b>	<b>6.03</b>	<b>5.64</b>	<b>5.98</b>
	5 EMPATHY	5.88	6.50	4.88	6.20
	6 RESILIENCE	6.35	5.67	5.50	5.80
	8 CONFLICT RESOLUTION	5.82	6.00	5.63	6.60
	10 SENSE OF HUMOUR	5.29	5.50	4.50	4.60
	23 APPROACHABLE	6.41	6.50	6.13	6.40
	25 ASSERTIVENESS	6.06	5.67	6.13	6.00
	26 PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY	6.47	6.50	6.50	6.60
	28 SELF-CONFIDENCE	6.18	5.83	5.75	6.40
	32 ACCOUNTABILITY	6.24	6.17	5.75	5.60
	34 COMMUNICATION	6.35	6.83	6.25	6.20
	37 CURIOSITY	4.82	5.83	4.63	5.40
	44 ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY	6.24	5.33	6.00	6.00

Key:

Highest rating within cluster



**Appendix M: Average importance ratings of HR competencies by HR role and organisational context (continued)**

Cluster	Statement	Domestically based MNEs (n=5)	Overseas- based MNEs (n=13)	Small Firms (1-99 employees) (n=12)	Medium Firms (500-999 employees) (n=6)	Large Firms (5000+ employees) (n=6)
<b>1. Strategic Focus &amp; Drive</b>		<b>5.89</b>	<b>6.10</b>	<b>5.87</b>	<b>5.71</b>	<b>5.88</b>
	1 ATTENTION TO DETAILS that add value to the organisation	6.20	6.15	5.83	5.67	5.17
	11 ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION	6.20	5.85	5.83	6.00	5.83
	19 PROACTIVITY	5.80	6.00	5.75	5.50	5.17
	20 INNOVATION	5.60	6.23	5.33	5.83	5.50
	22 CUSTOMER FOCUSED	5.80	6.38	6.33	6.17	6.17
	31 JUDGEMENT	5.60	6.00	5.83	4.83	6.83
	42 PROBLEM SOLVING	6.00	6.08	6.17	6.00	6.50
<b>2. Leadership &amp; Relationship Building</b>		<b>6.15</b>	<b>6.21</b>	<b>6.33</b>	<b>6.08</b>	<b>6.58</b>
	4 INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATION	6.00	6.23	6.42	5.83	7.00
	9 LEADERSHIP	6.00	6.08	6.25	6.17	6.33
	21 RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	6.40	6.38	6.58	6.17	6.83
	30 COLLABORATION	6.20	6.15	6.08	6.17	6.17
<b>3. Business Awareness</b>		<b>5.55</b>	<b>5.38</b>	<b>5.67</b>	<b>5.29</b>	<b>5.88</b>
	2 FINANCIAL SAVVY	5.80	4.92	5.08	5.00	4.50
	3 POLITICAL SAVVY	5.60	5.54	5.80	5.33	6.67
	13 BUSINESS ACUMEN	5.40	5.69	5.75	5.50	6.00
	35 STRATEGIC THINKING	5.40	5.38	6.08	5.33	6.33
<b>4. Systems &amp; Technology</b>		<b>5.37</b>	<b>5.32</b>	<b>5.16</b>	<b>5.14</b>	<b>4.97</b>
	7 RESEARCH AND REPORTING	5.40	5.38	5.25	4.83	5.00
	16 HR METRICS	6.00	5.31	5.08	4.50	5.00
	18 PROJECT MANAGEMENT	5.00	5.62	5.25	5.67	5.17
	24 ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION	5.00	4.92	5.60	6.00	4.00
	27 HR TECHNOLOGY	5.60	5.62	4.67	5.33	5.50
	41 PROCESS IMPROVEMENT	5.20	5.08	5.17	4.50	5.17
<b>5. Input &amp; Support</b>		<b>5.76</b>	<b>5.51</b>	<b>5.78</b>	<b>5.50</b>	<b>5.60</b>
	12 KNOWLEDGE SHARING	5.40	6.08	5.58	6.00	6.50
	14 CHANGE MANAGEMENT	5.80	6.08	5.83	5.83	6.50
	15 COACHING	6.00	5.69	6.25	6.00	5.83
	17 DIVERSITY AWARENESS	5.40	4.46	4.92	4.17	4.00
	38 CONSULTATION	6.20	5.23	6.33	5.50	5.17
<b>6. HR Acumen</b>		<b>6.00</b>	<b>4.32</b>	<b>5.46</b>	<b>4.53</b>	<b>3.50</b>
	29 EXPERTISE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	5.60	5.08	5.50	5.33	4.50
	33 KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION	6.60	4.54	6.00	4.50	3.50
	36 EXPERTISE IN REMUNERATION AND REWARD	5.60	3.77	5.25	3.83	2.83
	39 EXPERTISE IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	6.60	4.38	5.67	4.50	4.00
	40 EXPERTISE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY	5.60	3.31	4.75	3.33	3.00
	43 EXPERTISE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	6.00	4.85	5.58	5.67	3.17
<b>7. Self Belief &amp; Social Factors</b>		<b>5.78</b>	<b>5.87</b>	<b>5.94</b>	<b>5.83</b>	<b>5.51</b>
	5 EMPATHY	5.40	5.54	5.67	6.00	5.33
	6 RESILIENCE	6.20	5.77	6.25	5.83	4.33
	8 CONFLICT RESOLUTION	6.40	5.38	6.42	4.83	4.50
	10 SENSE OF HUMOUR	5.60	5.08	5.75	4.17	4.33
	23 APPROACHABLE	5.80	6.31	6.08	6.17	6.50
	25 ASSERTIVENESS	5.40	6.15	6.08	5.50	6.67
	26 PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY	6.80	6.38	6.25	6.83	6.00
	28 SELF-CONFIDENCE	5.80	6.00	5.75	5.67	5.83
	32 ACCOUNTABILITY	6.20	6.46	6.17	6.50	5.67
	34 COMMUNICATION	6.20	6.23	6.25	6.67	6.00
	37 CURIOSITY	4.80	5.08	4.75	5.33	5.17
	44 ABILITY TO WORK AUTONOMOUSLY	4.80	6.08	5.92	6.50	5.83

Key:

Highest rating within cluster

