
Public Services and Performance Management: The High Performance Working Inventory

Andrew Armitage
Anglia Ruskin University
Ashcroft International Business School

Diane Keeble-Allen
Anglia Ruskin University
Ashcroft International Business School

Abstract

The advent of performance metrics over the past two decades has heralded a cultural shift in the way public service bodies and institutions have been managed. As a result, all public service provision is now subjected to government led performance indicators, standards of service delivery and practice. At the heart of such mechanisms, aspirations towards excellence within the provision of services sit with strategic leadership and people centered issues. High Performance Working (HPW) is an approach that enshrines the need for organisations to embrace an adaptive strategy in the selection and application of different organisational variables and the people resources they employ; aspirations public sector institutions have had to meet in the face of central government calls for efficiency gains and accountability. The “bundles of practice” that public service organisations choose potentially determine whether they meet the needs of their mission, vision and values in their quest for public accountability. This paper will therefore discuss the issue of performance management and measurement in the public sector. It will then present the HPW Inventory that can be used to assist public sector organisations assess their current performance against core HPW “bundles of practice”.

Key words: Bundles of practice, performance measures, strategy, High Performance Working.

Introduction

With the advent of the New Labour Government in 1997, there has been a growing interest in improving public services and the creation of a performance led culture. This is a response to what Norman (2001:82) notes as 'the attempt to move away from the considerable perceived inequalities of provision of services around the country, which include low levels of customer satisfaction'. As such, the measurement of performance in the public services has attracted the attention of various governmental bodies, for example HM Treasury, in order to ensure the improvement of the provision they provide (Norman, 2002; Harris, 2006a/2006b, Greatbanks and Tapp, 2007). This paper reviews the approaches adopted since the advent of New Labour in 1997 and the claim that public service provision is still falling short of governmental aspirations to improve their performance and the aspirations to adopt High Performance Working (HPW) practices (DTI, 2003). In reviewing the quest for HPW practices in the public services it develops a rationale for the High Performance Working Inventory (HPWI), which is an instrument whereby public sector organisations can identify their current management and performance practices against the core values of a HPW culture.

Performance measurement in the public services

Interest in performance measurement within the public services has attracted attention from government bodies since the 1980's and is seen as being essential to ensure improvements in public sector performance (Norman, 2002; Harris, 2006a and 2006b; Greatbanks and Tapp, 2007). Wisniewski and Olafsson (2004) have also noted that the growing interest in the performance measurement of public services has been articulated in various initiatives instigated by New Labour reform policies since 1997. This has been exemplified in the National Health Service (NHS) and various government departments such as HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office (see also Fairhurst, 1983; Scott *et al*, 2002). In their study of Scottish Local Authorities, Wisniewski and Stewart (2004:224) note also that 'performance information is

essential for managerial control, informed decision making and the public accountability of any organisation in any sector'. Further to that, 'effective performance measurement is increasingly high on the agenda for both practitioners and researchers' (Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004:222). However, performance measurement only provides a "snapshot" of current performance levels and outputs, whereas performance management systems, which hold the potential to mould and control performance outcomes, have been largely ignored until recently. As Franco-Santos and Bourne (2005:114) note 'In the last two decades, significant effort has been directed at the development of processes for the design and implementation of performance measurement systems, though only recently has a more critical literature developed'. This is despite the earlier comments by Norman (2001:66) who states that 'Performance management systems provide a particular kind of organisational control system' and that 'control systems are formal, information-based routines and procedures managers use to maintain or alter patterns in organizational activities'. However, Norman acknowledges that performance management is not only concerned with "hard measures". He notes that performance management systems operate 'beyond the rhetoric about what these systems were supposed to achieve, to explain their realities as perceived by people for whom the systems are a major part of their work life' (Norman, 2001:71). He advocates that 'we tackle what are largely "how" questions (qualitative measures), rather than "what" questions (quantitative measures) and as such the former should be central to performance management and measurement' (Norman, 2001:71). This suggests there is a need to move towards qualitative outcomes rather than derive "statistical significance" from a randomized sample of measurable outputs, and that this shift in emphasis provides a rich description of "work life experiences". Moreover, Lawrie and Cobbald (2004:620) recognise that such a refinement is central in the understanding of management behavior and advocate a need to examine the ways qualitative performance reporting is reconciled with the "traditional" quantitative performance target setting approaches. As Lawton *et al* (2000) suggest this should be the focus of attention for any future UK government initiatives. A "deluge" of guidance from the UK Government can evince public service performance management frameworks since 1997 (Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2006 and 2007). This is exemplified for example by Dowdy (1999) who provides five main elements of a performance framework, developed by the Public Service Productivity Panel (PSPP) in co-operation with the Defence Logistics Organisation (DLO) within the Ministry of Defence. The fundamental principles of this framework are to:

'Improved productivity is predicated on a well functioning performance management system. In order to function optimally all of the basic building blocks must be in place. If essential parts of the system are not robust, others are not likely to work well either'
(Dowdy, 2007)

However, the current economic environment, which calls for greater accountability and transparency of public service spending as the UK economy enters a period of recession, is paradoxical. This is because of the need for the public sector to be able to respond to the

rapidly changing economic circumstances the UK is currently experiencing. For example, the growing reliance on governmental bodies by various sectors of the economy and society might prove problematic if spending is capped or cut thus putting a strain on an overburdened workforce.

Target setting, however, is not a new phenomenon (see for example Simons, 1995). Under Prime Minister Blair, HM Treasury espoused the delegation of performance management from “the centre” to “local” levels of government and was unveiled in their publication “Delivering decision-making: Delivering better public services” (Cabinet Office, 2004). Here, HM Treasury set out their agenda to modernize the public services and 'to explore how best to achieve a decentralized delivery, responsive to local and regional services in a way that is consistent with equity and efficiency, yet against a clear framework of national standards' (Cabinet Office:1). Further, it advocated that improvements in performance have resulted from Public Service Agreements (PSA's), which led to increased investment and rising standards of service. New Labour has adopted an agenda however, that, through the availability of transparent performance measurement data and a devolved performance management approach, performance improvement will continue through clear national standards embedded within the PSA framework (Delivering better public services, 2004). Such an agenda has been a constant feature throughout the Blair and Brown premierships and remains central to the UK Government (see for example, Cabinet Office, 2004; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005).

Moves to increase public sector investment in return for performance and efficiency gains have continued unabated since 1997 (see for example Martinez *et al*, 2004). Moreover, the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announced the implementation of 30 Public Sector Agreements (PSA). The PSAs set out the key priority outcomes the UK Government want to achieve in the next spending period of 2008-2011. A single Delivery Agreement (DA) shared across all contributing departments and developed in consultation with delivery partners and frontline workers underpins each PSA. Delivery Agreements set out plans for delivery and the role of key delivery partners. They also describe a “basket” of national outcome-focused performance indicators used to measure progress towards each PSA and a sub-set of indicators has been specified. National targets, or minimum standards, are included within the details of these Delivery Agreements and they will show service delivery improvements during the course of the spending period 2008-2011.

A Government-wide commitment to build public services to meet the needs of citizens and businesses is integral to the achievement of each PSA outcome. The Government has also published a Service Transformation Agreement (STA) that underpins the delivery of the new PSA framework. As such, this sets out the Government's vision for public service provision by providing specific actions for each department in taking forward this challenging agenda (see Table 1).

Categories	PSA Delivery Agreements
Sustainable growth and prosperity (PSAs 1-7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the productivity of the UK economy • Improve the skills of the population, on the way to ensuring a world class skills base by 2020 • Ensure controlled, fair migration that protects the public and contributes to economic growth • Promote world class science and innovation in the UK • Deliver reliable and efficient transport networks that support economic growth • Deliver the conditions for business success in the UK • Improve the economic performance of all English regions and reduce the gap in economic growth rates between regions
Fairness and opportunity for all (PSAs 8-17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise employment opportunity for all • Halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-11, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020 • Raise the educational achievement of all children and young people • Narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers • Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people • Improve children and young people's safety • Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success • Address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief • Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training • Tackle poverty and promote greater independence and wellbeing in later life
Stronger communities and a better quality of life (PSAs 18-26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote better health and wellbeing for all • Ensure better care for all • PDF file of 20. Increase long term housing supply and affordability • Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities • Deliver a successful Olympic Games and Paralympics Games with a sustainable legacy and get more children and young people taking part in high quality PE and sport • Make communities safer • Deliver a more effective, transparent and responsive Criminal Justice System for victims and the public • Reduce the harm caused by Alcohol and Drugs • Reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism
A more secure, fair and environmentally sustainable world (PSAs 27-30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change • Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future • Reduce poverty in poorer countries through quicker progress towards the Millennium Development Goals • Reduce the impact of conflict through enhanced UK and international efforts

Table 1 PSA Delivery Agreements

However, Trofino (2000) has suggested that the UK Government has a history of public service reform across a range of departments and sectors and that the “yard stick” for measuring the effectiveness of performance indicators is a “political affair”. It has been argued this “political dimension” has implications that go beyond the internalities of public sector organisations having to cope with change management strategies in order to implement and manage measurement systems and it can be argued that people centered management approaches have not featured in government edicts. Rather, public accountability, within the context of performance measurement has been undertaken using quantitative indicators (Powell, 2000; Scott *et al*, 2002). However, the call for a people centered approach to the management and performance of public sector organisations has now found a foothold in recent thinking. The acknowledgement that human resources are central to the competitiveness of the UK economy have been espoused in the “People and the Bottom Line” research project, which represents the third part of a larger study exploring the link between the way employees are managed and resulting organisational performance. The project, which commenced in 2004, as collaboration between Investors in People UK (IIP UK), the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) draws together links between skills and organisational performance. The project was conducted in two phases that identified two key dimensions in the expression and improvement of human capability in the workforce. The first dimension considered the development of capability and deployment on and the roles of individuals and organisations on one continuum and on another continuum, the way in which capability depends upon partnership coupling (see Tamkin, 2005). These are presented as four quadrants, which is called the 4A model that encapsulates the four dimensions of access, ability, attitude, and application (Tamkin *et al*, 2004) as follows:

Access: The effective resourcing of roles within the organisation by way of initial recruitment, ongoing job moves and succession activity. The focus here lies upon deliberate organisational activity, to include policies and practice.

Ability: The skills and abilities of the workforce. In essence, the quality of people that the organisation has at its disposal and the ongoing development activity of those individuals that maintains and further develops their organisational capabilities.

Attitude: It is clear that skills are not the totality of excellent activities. There is engagement, motivation and morale of the workforce also to include the meaning found in work, worker beliefs about the workplace and a willingness to put in additional effort.

Application: This recognizes that people need an appropriate working environment to prosper. This is provided through information, job design, organisational structure and business strategy.

The study concurs with the earlier work of Tamkin *et al* (2004), which indicated that there would be limited benefits to firms creating recruitment and succession practices if they do not attend to staff development and motivation. In its second phase, it applied 40 measures related to skills development and people management practices to suggest that “bundles” of HR practice have more impact upon performance than singular HR practices and concurs with the work of Ashton and Sung (2003 and 2004) in the adoption of HPW practices. However, the study identifies that there remains some distance to go before those, who are currently managing performance management systems embrace truly holistic sets of measurements and recognise that maintaining and increasing employee engagement is central to organisational success. Thus, potentially, the adoption of HPW practices in the public services provides a mechanism whereby organisations can consider their strategic and operational needs within the management of continuous improvement and performance (Tamkin *et al*, 2004).

High Performance Working (HPW): An overview

According to Lloyd and Payne (2004:13), defining HPW remains problematic since 'there is no clear definition or model and there remains a fundamental lack of agreement about what specific practices might be incorporated in such a definition'. However, there is a general agreement that HPW encompasses terms such as "high commitment" and 'high involvement' and 'bundles' of organizational practices which might leverage work activities towards intended business outcomes (Sung and Ashton, 2005). Thus, HPW management practices have included, according to Jones and Wright (1992):

'comprehensive and performance management systems, and extensive employee involvement and training, that can improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of a firm's current and potential employees, increase their motivation, reduce shrinkage, and enhance retention of quality employees'.

It can be argued that HPW should be considered the successor or an extension of the Total Quality Management (TQM) movement, which was at its zenith in the 1980's and 1990's (Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2006 and 2007) and HPW like TQM, focuses upon high performance practices and people centered work systems. It offers a route to sales and revenue growth through quality tools and techniques such as statistical process control, problem solving teams for example quality circles, job design and employee empowerment these being the popular mantras of the quality gurus, Juran, Crosby, Deming and Feigenbaum.

In their quest for productive flexibility, the control and management of process variation and the striving for service and product excellence, organisations used these problem-solving approaches in conjunction with quality management tools and techniques, such as statistical process control, and process variation to monitor and manage the production process within the wider context of what is known as TQM. Catch phrases such as "right first time", "zero defects", "quality is what the customer says it is" and "if it can't be measured it can't be managed" are mantra's associated with the philosophy of TQM. Whilst the underlying tenets of TQM has resonance with HPW practices the subtleties that define these two management approaches are separated by HPW's more "human face" that emphasizes the qualitative nature of organisational environments and not the "hard" statistical tools and procedures that pervade TQM approaches (Table 2 gives an overview of these approaches).

High Performance Working	Total Quality Management
Decentralised and devolved decision-making to made by those closest to the customer. Need to constantly renew and improve the offer to customers.	Leadership “champion” appointed centrally engender commitment to policy and mission statements. The explicit need to create or change the organisational culture. Focus upon excellence in and through leadership.
Development of people capacities through learning at all levels, with particular emphasis on self-management, team capabilities and project-based activities - to enable and support performance improvement and organisational potential.	Planning, integrating TQM into the policy and strategy, the development of policies and strategies, partnerships and resources, design for quality, innovation and improvement, quality Function Deployment, Failure Mode and Effect Analysis. Statistical tools used to evaluate and monitor performance.
Performance, operational and people management processes aligned to organisational objectives to build trust, enthusiasm and commitment to support direction taken by the organisation.	Performance measurement frameworks and the improvement cycle cost of quality, performance measurement systems and frameworks, self-assessment, audits andthe reviews, benchmarking. An emphasis on process management, quality management systems, continuous improvement and Business Process Re-engineering to streamline processes.
Fair treatment for those who leave the organisation as it changes. Engagement with the needs of the community outside the organisation - this is an important component of trust and commitment-based relationships both within and outside the organisation.	People and human resource management, employee empowerment, training and development, teams and teamwork, effective communication, culture change through teamwork, communication, innovation and learning.

Table 2 Comparison of HPW and TQM Core Principles

The essential features of HPW represent a move from the reliance of management controls towards

flatter, non-hierarchical structures, team working or autonomous working based on high levels of trust, communication and involvement (Kettley, 1995). Individuals who work within HPW environments are regarded as being highly valued, skilled and having the intellectual resources to engage in lifelong learning to master new skills and behaviours (see for example Bach, 2005). Thus, the importance of the workforce towards achieving competitive advantage remains critical and it is people's actions that "make it happen" (Philpott, 2006). Therefore, rather than represent an alternative to other management strategies, for example financial investment, "lean practices" or continuous improvement, HPW is considered as a catalyst and binding agent that underpins the employer-employee relationship (Huselid, 1995; Philpott, 2006). As such, HPW can be perceived as a challenge to the traditional "command and control" attitudes of performance management practices that pervade the public services (Lawton, 2007).

Therefore, whilst the historical roots of HPW may be set in the commercial and private sectors in the guise of TQM (Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2006 and 2007) the applicability of HPW to public service institutions cannot be ignored. In their publication, "Devolving decision making: Delivering better public services", HM Treasury (2004) issues a call for the consolidating and simplification for setting national targets for PSA's so as to refine further the PSA framework to ensure that targets are rigorously focused only on outcomes reflecting the Governments key priorities. Equally, they need to be part of a more integrated approach to performance management all the way along the delivery chain (*ibid*). Whilst this suggests hard and measurable target setting, there nevertheless are undertones of continuous improvement initiatives as being a central feature for any future performance improvements. It is notable that this document is wrapped within the notion of continuous improvement, an integrated approach and the use of the phrase "high performers". The espousal of exhortations such as "reward", "autonomy", "flexibility", "efficiency" and "resources" is language borrowed from the roots of the TQM movement and their metamorphous within HPW practices.

This is further articulated by the introduction of a "can do" culture inspired by "strong leadership", that is part of five critical factors that support an effective and transparent performance measurement and management system. The remaining four being: the collection of robust performance data; agreed lines of accountability; clear performance mismanagement reviews; and transparent sets of performance rewards (see also HM Treasury Choosing the Fabric, 2004). These hold a resonance with the works of Ramsay *et al* (2000), and Sparham and Sung (2005) regarding High Performance Working Practices (HPWP's). Whilst acknowledging that HPW has Fordist roots and influences of TQM its application within the private and public sectors have not resulted in any differences of approach. This is because HPW deals with principles rather than pre-defined recipes, leaving its implementation and use to the discretion of individual organisations (Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2006 and 2007). Beardwell (2001:12) notes that 'competitive advantage is derived not from the formal organization and shaping of work per se; but the constituent workforce via both functional flexibility and commitment to organizational business plans and goals' (see also Baird, 2002; Harmon *et al*, 2003; Danford *et al*, 2004).

The essential characteristics of HPW include decentralisation, devolvement to inclusive decision-making by those closest to the customer, such as, process owners. This enables a constant renewal and improvement of service and product offerings to customers (CIPD, 2007). HPW also focuses on people centred issues, such as the development of education and training programmes at all levels of the organisation, individual empowerment, autonomy and team working skills. Also central to its philosophy is the use of problem solving tools and techniques such as process

mapping and analysis, and project management skills in order to enhance performance improvement of the individual and organisational effectiveness (CIPD, 2007) and as Butler *et al* (2004) claims, it is a long-term strategy more likely to succeed than alternative approaches.

Traditional styles of management are seen as insufficient for contemporary turbulent and competitive business environments. Approaches that adopt autocratic and bureaucratic methods of management may not always be the right ways to manage the modern enterprise where creativity, flexible work patterns and empowerment are required more than ever. Therefore, if organisations continue to manage in a “machine like” culture (Morgan, 1997), then the consequence are the production of a workforce acting as automata as they disengage and become alienated from their organisational setting. This potentially leads to extrinsic expectations of reward by workers, who see the workplace as a mode of “domination”.

The 21st century represents a service sector environment, which is knowledge-based and advocates information sharing as an important resource for competitive success. The notion of resource acquisition and allocation, whilst having financial connotations within public service environments can be extended to the development of “people capabilities” through learning at all levels in the organization. However, within HPW, there remains an emphasis upon self-management, team capabilities, and project based activities to enable and support performance improvement (Ashton and Sung, 2003; 2004). The “hidden” and unseen “know how” of organisational life can often be overlooked by those operating in turbulent environments, yet the recognition of tacit knowledge remains of critical importance in attaining competitive advantage (Ashton and Sung, 2003 and 2004). Therefore, nurturing tacit knowledge within HPW environments is fundamental, yet often overlooked by those who attempt to apply performance measures and outcomes that are devoid of human meaning. Yet HPW should not be considered a short-term morale boosting and efficiency improvement programme; by contrast it acts to recognise the “bundles” of practices that might be adopted by organisations to suit particular contexts and competitive environments (Ashton and Sung, 2003 and 2004).

The following section presents the HPW Inventory. It is intended to assist public sector organisations in their quest to meet their performance management targets. The inventory has been developed from extant literature and empirical data collected from public service employees having its foundations within the Cultural Cognisance, Action Through People, and Performance Management model (C-A-P) of Armitage and Keeble-Allen (2007).

Design and methodological development of the HPW Inventory

Overview

HPW Inventory was developed by combining extant literature and empirical data within the model building methodologies of Kaplan (1964), Argyris and Schon (1974) and Tichy and Hornstein (1980). Nadler's (1980) six criteria evaluation framework (see Table 3) was used to ensure that evidence and data sources had sound theoretical and empirical foundations in the design and development of the HPW Inventory. The inventory emanates from the C-A-P model of Keeble-Allen and Armitage (2007) which has its foundations within the extant literature that was developed using the structured literature review methodology of Denyer, Tranfield and Smart (2005) and empirical data collected from 160 HRM professionals (Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2006 and 2007). What follows is a description of the two-stage process adopted in the development of the C-A-P model and the realization of the HPW Inventory.

Stage 1 Model Building

Criteria	Evidence
Explicitness	This is articulated within stated and described constructs, variables and relationships drawn from best practice sources and case examples (see Ashton and Sung, 2003).
Theory-Research driven	These are linked to the paradigms of High Performance Working and existing theory (Ashton and Sung, 2003; Butler <i>et al</i> , 2004).
Operationally defined	These are defined with respect to fully stated operational criteria, which are required to measure them in operation, and are a central feature to the establishment of face validity (see DTI/HM Treasury/ DfES/DWT, 2003).
Empirically validated	The inventory has been developed from primary data collection from HR professionals thus demonstrating that 'networked' relationships do indeed represent what is observed in actual settings and that this is 'how it is' in practice (see Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2006 and 2007).
Face validity	This was tested with 160 HRM and 120 public sector management professional in that it makes sense in the real world of organizational settings i.e. it 'tells it as it is' (Ashton and Sung J, 2003; Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2007).
Generalisability	The generalisability of the inventory has been developed from wide range organisational settings and has been tested with respondents from both public and private sector based SME's and large organisations (Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2005 and 2007). Thus whilst the external validity can never be certain across all possible settings, care has been taken to allow the inventory to be transferable from one organisational context to another.

Table 3 Development of the HPW Inventory (adapted from Nadler, 1980)

Explicitness and the theory based development of the C-A-P model was met by charting the evolution of the HPW landscape from the Tayloristic principles of work study and measurement, Total Quality Management and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) (Trofino, 2000; Teschler, 2006). At the turn of the millennium, management development had seen both lean management and six-sigma projects being adopted by organisations contributing to the growth of HPW principles and its associated literature (see Figure 1).

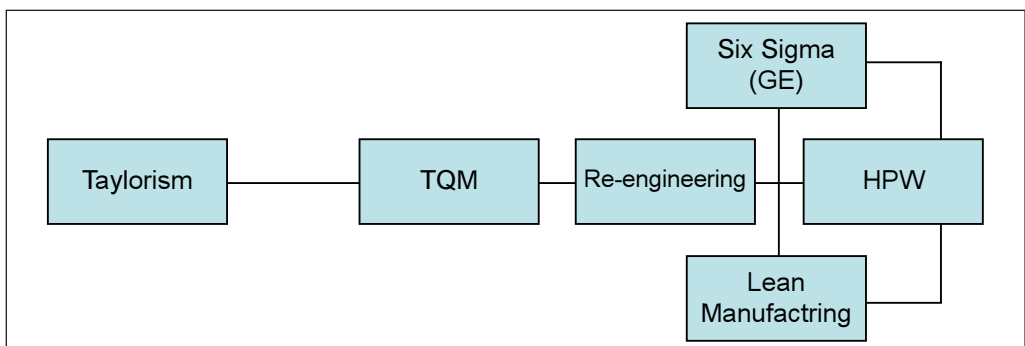


Figure 1 Evolution of HRM and People Development

A Structured Literature Review (SLR) methodology (see Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003) was consequently undertaken in order to interrogate the literature in more detail. This revealed a set of conceptual approaches emerging from the extant literature, stemming from strands of post-Fordist practices and TQM that underpin the conceptual foundation of HPW (Butler *et al*, 2004). Table 4 presents the outcomes of a structured literature review that was undertaken from the period 1999 - 2006 and shows the main contributors to the HPW debate (see also Butler *et al* (2004). Figure 2 shows the literature map of emergent themes that has developed and emerged over this period.

Year	Author	Main themes
1999	Ashton	Government Learning
1999	IPD	Learning Traditional thinking flexibility
2001	McNabb and Whitfield	Compatibility Commitment performance
2002	Rana	Change/Transformation Team-working Culture
2002	Powell	Individual Learning Government intervention
2002	Boyne	Employee development Performance Management
2003	Harding	Innovation Re-structuring Customisation
2002	Audit Commission	Performance Management
2003	Ashton and Sung	Productivity, Profitability and Best Practice
2003	Temple	Culture, Recruitment and Selection
2003	EEF	Management attitudes relating to employee performance
2004	Ashton and Sung	Leadership and Achieving management objectives
2004	CIPD&DTI	Softer HPWP's and Retention
2004	Seager	Investment and Modern Practice
2004	Miller and Skidmore	Change
2005	Harris	Targets for Learning and Culture Change
2005	Jorgensen	Integration and Collaborative networks
2006	Tuckwood	Adding Value Combination
2006	Moss	Leadership
2006	Jusko	Training and Performance

Table 4 Findings of HPW Literature

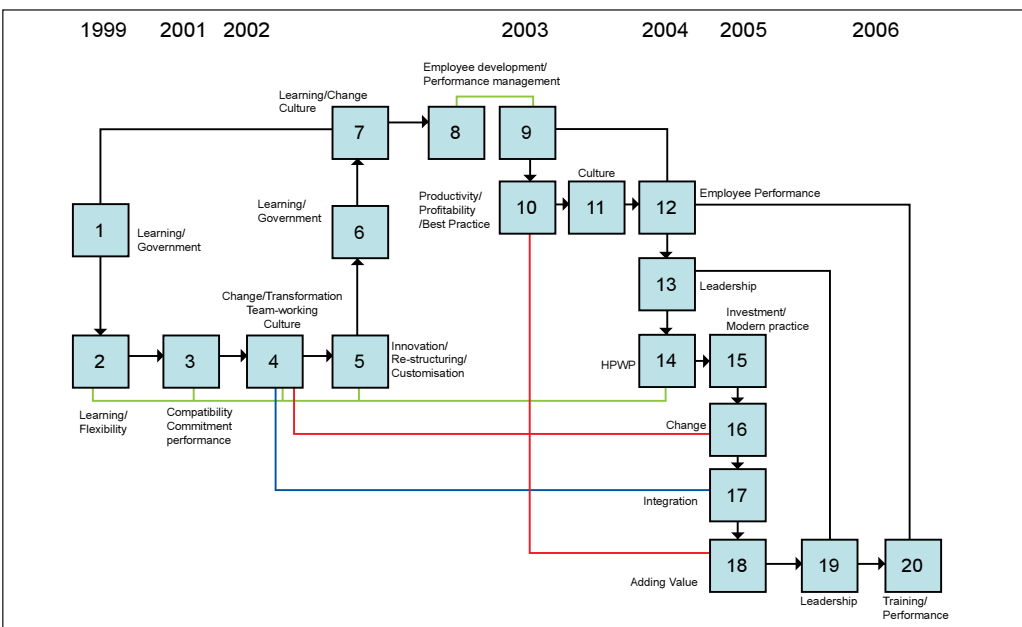


Figure 2 Evolution of HPW literature showing linkage of themes

The literature map illustrates that the issues of leadership, culture, employee performance, investment in people, employee development and training, feature prominently amongst the characteristics and attributes associated with HPW. The SLR also shows that HPW espouses an approach that focuses on increasing customer value by differentiating an organisation's services and moving towards customisation in order to meet their needs. As such, this might suggest that the path towards employee focused practices and the need to meet customer requirements more exactly, supports the ethos that underpins SDAs and embraces the need for performance management. The emergent themes that resulted from the structured literature review were used to inform the empirical data collection stage. The collaborative model building approach of Tichy and Hornstein (1980) was used to meet the requirements of the operational definition and empirical validity, and to develop the issues that respondents perceived as being central to HPW practices. Eight focus groups were used, comprising of 60 HRM professionals. Their perceptions of what HPW meant for them and their organizations were recorded. Whilst such data is not generalisable to a wider population, it is rich and provides insights into participant's meanings, which a more constrained research instrument may have limited. The eight focus groups were conducted over a four-week period, thus ensuring that we addressed the issue of construct validity (Rose, 1982). The participants were asked to respond to the following issues:

- 1 What was their perception (viewing) of HPW?
- 2 (in their opinion) How would they define HPW?
- 3 Having defined HPW, what were the five most important issues that underpin its philosophy?
- 4 Considering these issues in turn, how might these be implemented into contemporary organisations?

The focus groups contained respondents of varying background from both the private and public sectors. To ensure a more 'balanced' set of views, in terms of lengths of experience within the organization, they included those with limited HR careers as well as those with extensive experience. This facilitated a balance between those with deep experience of their organizations and those who could make surface observations of organizational attributes possibly missed by those closer to the organisation (Tichy and Hornstein, 1980; Anderson, 2004). The ages of the participants ranged from 23 to 60. Using the grounded data analysis approach of Easterby-Smith *et al* (2004), Keeble-Allen and Armitage (2007) identified three major clusters and fourteen criteria that emerge from the evidence. These were: Cultural Cognisance; Action Through People; and Performance Outcomes (see Table 5).

Cluster	Criteria
<p>Cultural Cognisance This cluster contains five criteria and examines top management's commitment and role in building and maintaining cultural cognisance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Strategic alignment to the external environment • Market positioning and customer orientation • People centred practice • People rewards
<p>Action Through People This cluster contains six criteria and examines top management's commitment and role in building and maintaining action through people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in people • Flexible working and diversity • Strategy and tasks • The thinking performer • Loyalty and inclusiveness • Self-motivation
<p>Performance Outcomes This cluster contains three criteria and examines top management's commitment and role in building and maintaining action through people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable outputs and target setting • Added value activities and innovation of processes • Quality assurance

Table 5 Criteria of the C-A-P Model

Stage 2 Validation

The C-A-P model was translated into the HPW Inventory so that the fourteen criteria could be validated as a means to evaluate the performance status of an organisation and was informed by the Regan's (1992) Total Quality Management Inventory. The validation of the HPW Inventory was in two phases in order to confirm the generalisability of the inventory. Respondents were asked to select a response to five constructs associated with each criteria (see Appendix 1 for an example) and enter them onto a scoring sheet in order to evaluate the HPW status of their organisation (see Appendices 2 and 3).

In the first phase the face and content validity (see Nadler, 1980:126; Lawler *et al*, 1980:323; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998:83) was confirmed by 120 management professionals from the public and private sector (Keeble-Allen and Armitage, 2007). It indicated that the three clusters and fourteen criteria meet the requirements of both face and content validity. A second phase of validation further tested its face and content validity. It was distributed to 100 HRM professionals. The findings from phase two of the validation process confirmed the inventories face and content validity.

Conclusions

This paper presents that High Performance Working (HPW) is not just a short-term morale boosting and efficiency improvement programme. HPW remains a means by which an organisation can adopt 'bundles' of practices that suits its particular context and competitive environment (Ashton and Sung, 2004). HPW, as a set of conceptual approaches, stems from strands of post-Fordist practices. These can be grouped into those referring to production management, those dealing with employee relations and those stemming from human resource management advocacy (Butler *et al*, 2004). They can be viewed as a means of retaining and developing organizational competencies and employee engagement (Swart and Kinnie, 2004). It further remains a theme that both the government (DTI, 2003) and professional bodies (e.g. CIPD, 2007) are investing time in promoting HPW as providing competitive advantage both for the nation and businesses within the UK.

The findings of our empirical study, regarding the perceptions of HPW practices, indicate similarities with the extant literature (see for example, Ashton and Greene, 1996; Ashton and Sung, 2003 and 2004; Huselid, 1996), which we have captured in our C-A-P Model. The design, development and administration of HPW Inventory indicate that it may be used with large and small public sector organisations. Therefore, based upon the evidence to date the inventory has accomplished the following five major objectives:

- 1 To offer the respondents the opportunity to identify and to define fourteen criteria of HPW
- 2 To differentiate the importance of each criteria in terms of organisational effectiveness
- 3 To provide a framework for management in the public sector to assess their organisation's current emphasis on each of the fourteen criteria
- 4 To initiate discussions about the adequacy of the organisation's level of activity for each of the fourteen criteria
- 5 To stimulate planning designed to increase the organisation's level of HPW involvement

Naturally, as for all models and inventories, we are fully aware that any empirical findings we present here can only be accepted as a temporary 'view of reality'. As more data accumulates, the inventory model is open to amendments and may need to be modified as organisational landscapes, perspectives and underlying theories, which reflect organisational life, change. However, we hope that we have presented a pragmatic and practical method for assessing HPW through the practices of organisations by way of our inventory setting down some basic tenets for others to build upon in their future research, consultancy and management practices.

References

- Argyris, C. and Schon, D.A. (1974) *Theory in practice*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.
- Ashton, D. and Green, F. (1996) *Education, Training and the Global Economy*, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Ashton, D. and Sung, J. (2003) 'Maximising employee potential and business Performance', Dec, CIPD/EEF.
- Ashton, D. and Sung, J. (2004) *High-Performance Work Practices: linking strategy and skills to Performance Outcomes*, DTI in association with CIPD.
- Bach, S. (2005) *Managing Human Resource*, Fourth Edition, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.
- Besterfield, D. (2003) *Total Quality Management*, Third Edition, New Jersey.
- Brignall, S and Modell, S. (2000) "An institutional perspective on performance measurement and management in the "new public sector." *Management Accounting Research*, Vol. 11, pp281-306
- Broadhead, R. and Rist, R. (1976) "Gatekeepers and the social control of social research" *Social Problems*, Vol. 23, pp325-326
- Butler, P., Felstead, A., Ashton, D., Fuller, A., Lee, T., Unwin, L. and Walters, S. (2004) *High Performance Management: A Literature Review, Learning as Work: Teaching and Learning Processes in the Contemporary Work Organisation*, Research Paper No 1, CLMS, University of Leicester
- Cobbold, I., Lawrie, G., and Issa, K. (2004) "Designing a strategic management system using the third generation balanced scorecard", *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, Vol. 53, No 7, pp624-633.
- Dowdy, J. (2007) *Targeting Improved Performance: Creating and effective management system in the Defence Logistics Organisation of the Ministry of Defence*. Public Services Productivity Panel
- DTI/HM Treasury/ DfES/DWT (2003) '21st century skills-realising our potential-individuals, employers, nations', The Stationery Office, London
- Fairhurst, E. (1983) "*Organizational Rules and the Accomplishment of Nursing Work on Geriatric Wards*", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 20, No 3, pp315-332.
- Feigenbaum, A.V. (1991) *Total Quality Management*, 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Franco-Santos M and Bourne M. (2005) "An examination of the literature relating to issues affecting how companies manage through measures", *Production Planning and Control*, Vol. 16, No 2, pp. 114-124.
- Gershon Report (2004) *Releasing resources to the front line: An independent review of public sector efficiency*, HMSO
- Greatbanks, R. and Tapp, D. (2007) "The impact of balanced scorecards in a public sector environment: Empirical evidence from Dunedin City Council, New Zealand" *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 27, No 8, pp 846-873.
- Harmon, J., Scotti, D. and Behson, S. (2005) *Effects of High-Involvement Work Systems on Employee Satisfaction and Service Costs in Veteran Healthcare*, *Journal of Health Management*, 48:16, pp.393-418.
- Harris, L (2006a) 'UK public sector reform and the 'performance agenda' in UK local government' *Personnel Review*, Vol.34, No.6, p.681-696.
- Harris, L, (2006b) *The changing nature of the HR function in UK local Government - new challenges and dilemmas*, CIPD Professional Standards Conference, University of Keele.
- HM Treasury, (2004), *Devolving decision making: Delivering better public services*", The Stationary Office London.
- Huselid, M.A. (1995) *The Impact of Human Resource Management Practices on Turnover, Productivity, and Corporate Financial Performance*. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.38, (2), pp.635-672.
- Johnston, R., Brignall, S. and Fitzgerald, L. 'Good enough' performance measurement: a trade-off between activity and action." *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, Vol. 53, pp. 256-262.

- Kaplan, A. (1964) *The conduct of inquiry: Methodology for behavioral science*. San Francisco: Chandler.
- Keeble-Allen D and Armitage A (2006) *Total Quality Management meets Human Resource Management: Perceptions of the shift towards High Performance Working*. CIPD Professional Standards Conference, Keele University.
- Keeble-Allen, D. and Armitage, A. (2007) *Using the Past to Improve our Future: Can High Performance Working learn from TQM?* CIPD Professional Standards Conference, Keele University.
- Kettley, P. (1995) 'Is Flatter Better? De-layering the Management Hierarchy', IES Report 290, 1995.
- Lawler, E.E., Nadler, D.A. and Cammann, C. (1980) *Organizational Assessment Methods*. In *Organisational assessment, perspectives on the measurement of organizational behaviour and the quality of life*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lawrie, G. and Cobbold, I. (2004) "Third generation balanced scorecard: evolution of an effective strategic control tool", *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, Vol. 53, No 7, pp611-623.
- Lawton, A., McKeivitt, D., Millar, M. (2000) "Coping with ambiguity: reconciling external legitimacy and organisational implementation in performance measurement", *Public Money and Management*, July-September, pp13-19.
- Lloyd, C. and Payne, J. (2004) *The Only Show in Town (if a pretty pathetic one at that)....Re Evaluating the High Performance Workplace as a vehicle for the UK*. High Skills Project. Paper presented at the International Labour Process Conference, Amsterdam.
- MacDuffie, J. (1995) *Human Resource Bundles and Manufacturing Performance*, *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, 48:2, pp.197-221.
- Martinez, V., Kennerley, M. and Neely, A. (2004) *Impact of performance measurement and management systems: a methodological approach*. British Academy of Management Conference, St Andrews, 30 Aug - 1 Sep 2004
- Morgan, G. (1997) *Images of Organisations*, California, Sage
- Nadler, D.A. (1980) *Role of models in organisational assessment*. In: Lawler. E.E., Nadler, D.A. and Canmann, C. (1980) *Organisational assessment, perspectives on the measurement of organizational behaviour and the quality of life*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Norman, R. (2002) "Managing through measurement or meaning? Lessons from experience with New Zealand's public sector performance management systems", *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 68, No 4, pp 619-628.
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) *Local e-Government Partnerships*, HMSO
- Powell, A. (2002) *Improving workforce development Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol.34, No.5 p176-181. Prentice Hall
- Rana, E. (2002) *Flying Information.*; *People Management* 11/7/2002, Vol.8 Issue 22, p30
- Reagan, G. (1992) *Total Quality Management (TQM) Inventory*. In: Pfeiffer, J.W. (1992) *The 1992 Annual: Developing Human Resources*. San Diego, California, Pfeiffer and Company.
- Rose, G. (1982) *Deciphering Social Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Scott, T., Mannion, R., Davies, H., and Marshall, M. (2002) *Healthcare Performance and Organisational Culture*, Radcliffe, Oxford.
- Simons, R. (1995) *Levers of Control: How Managers Use Innovative Control Systems to Drive Strategic Renewal*, Boston, Harvard Business School Press.
- Swart, J., & Kinnie, N. (2004) *Managing the Careers of Professional Knowledge Workers*. London: CIPD.
- Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (1998) *Mixed Methodology*. London: Sage.
- Teschler, L (2006) *TQM comes down to earth*, *Machine Design* 8 Sep 2006 Today 7/1/2003, p21.
- Tichy, N.M. and Hornstein, H.A. (1980) *Collaborative Model Building*. In: Lawler. E.E., Nadler, D.A. and Canmann, C. (1980) *Organisational assessment, perspectives on the measurement of organizational behaviour and the quality of life*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

- Tranfield, D., Denyer, D. and Smart, P. (2003) Towards a Methodology for Developing Evidence-Informed Management Knowledge by Means of Systematic Review. *British Journal of Management*, Vol.14, pp.207-222.
- Trofino, J.(2000)Transformational leadership: moving total quality management to world-class organisations, *International Nursing Review*, Dec1 Vol.47, Issue 4
- Wisniewski, M. and Olafsson, S. (2004) "Developing balanced scorecards in local authorities: a comparison of experience." *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, Vol. 53, No 7, pp 602-610.
- Wisniewski, M. and Stewart, D. (2004) "Performance measurement for stakeholders: the case of Scottish local authorities", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 17, No 3, pp 222-233.

Appendix 1

Example of response categories

- A. All top management are directly and actively involved in open leadership, teamwork and decision making that is shared and communicated through the organisation
- B. All top management participate in open leadership, team work and decision making that is shared and communicated through the organisation
- C. Some top management are directly and actively involved in open leadership, teamwork and decision making that is shared and communicated through the organization
- D. Some top management participate in open leadership, teamwork and decision- making that is shared and communicated through the organisation
- E. No top management are directly and actively involved in open leadership, teamwork and decision making that is shared and communicated through the organization
- F. No top management participate in open leadership, teamwork and decision making that is shared and communicated through the organisation

Appendix 2

High Performance Working Clusters and Response categories

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Criteria Cluster 1: Cultural Cognisance						
1 Leadership	20	16	12	8	4	0
2 Strategic alignment and the external environment	20	16	12	8	4	0
3 Market positioning and customer orientation	20	16	12	8	4	0
4 People Centred Practice and culture	20	16	12	8	4	0
5 People and rewards	20	16	12	8	4	0
Cluster 1: Response scores	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cluster 1: Total response score	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cluster 2: Action Through People						
6 Investment in people	20	16	12	8	4	0
7 Flexible working and diversity	20	16	12	8	4	0
8 Strategy and tasks	20	16	12	8	4	0
9 The thinking performer	20	16	12	8	4	0
10 Loyalty and inclusiveness	20	16	12	8	4	0
11 Self-motivation	20	16	12	8	4	0
Cluster 2: Response scores	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cluster 2: Total response score	—	—	—	—	—	—

Cluster 3: Performance Outcomes

12	Measurable Outputs and target setting	20	16	12	8	4	0
13	Added value activities and innovation of processes	20	16	12	8	4	0
14	Quality assurance and customer responsive and service	20	16	12	8	4	0

Cluster 3: Response scores**Cluster 3: Total response score**

___	___	___	___	___	___

Total response scores**Cluster 1** ___**Cluster 2** ___**Cluster 3** ___**Total overall response score** _____**Appendix 3****High Performance Working Inventory Interpretation Sheet***Total overall response score range 0-56*

A score in their range indicates that an organisation has no awareness of High Performance Working practices and has no involvement in the well being of its employees, its working practices, leadership style, quality assurance and innovation processes. An organisation of this type should focus initially on small project lead initiatives that can yield short term and visible results as a means to 'buy-in' the workforce and gain management support and confidence.

Total overall response score range 57-112

A score in this range indicates that an organisation needs to attain more awareness of what High Performance Working means and how it can be applied to their current practices. An organisation in this range needs to address urgently their focus on people issues, working practices and leadership approaches if it is to compete in the current competitive environment.

Total overall response score range 113-168

A score in this range indicates that an organisation has certain criteria in place and the foundations to become a High Performing organisation. It should focus its future attention on the weaker parts of its processes, working environment and leadership approaches to move to the next level of performance.

Total overall response score range 169-224

A score in this range indicates an organisation that has a sound and well-organised approach to the management of its people, processes, working environment and leadership style.

Total overall response score range 225-280

A score in this range indicates an organisation that has high commitment and long vision to its people, processes, working environment and leadership approach. An organisation in this category is best in class.