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THURSFIELD, Denise and GRAYLEY, Katy

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Denise Thursfield and Katy Graley

Purpose

This article explores performance management in four UK trade unions. Specifically, the extent to which managers in the four unions accept or dismiss the unitarist, disciplinary and performative values that arguably characterise performance management practices.

Design/methodology/approach

A qualitative research design was adopted to investigate trade union managers' interpretations of performance management. Managers were targeted because they hold the power to shape performance management practices in their specific areas. The research employed qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Findings

Performance management in trade unions is linked to the structure, purpose and orientation of different types of trade union. It is also linked to the wider environmental context. The trade union managers' interpretations of performance management are linked to disciplinary and performative values. As such they are comparable to the unitarist forms of performance management described in the literature. There are moreover, similarities and differences between the approaches to performance management between trade unions and for profit or public sector organisations.

Originality/Value

The article adds to the emerging literature on internal trade union management by highlighting a particular aspect of human resource management.

Key Words: Democracy, Performance Management, Pluralism, Trade Unions, Unitarism.

Introduction

Studies of the employment relationship within trade unions are scarce, although recent research begins to address this gap. Margolies (2011) suggests that performance management is rarely practiced in US trade unions. Where it does exist it is inconsistent, ineffective and unions are tolerant of mediocre staff performance. Dempsey and Brewster (2009) argue that

the notion of management is largely absent from UK trade union discourse and that trade union managers are hesitant about managing the conduct and performance of their staff, although some managers would like to see the introduction of formal performance management systems. This article adds to the emerging literature on trade union management by exploring performance management in four UK unions.

Performance management is assumed to improve organisational and individual performance through the measurement of employees' achievements and through the development of appropriate management systems (Decramer et al., 2012). It is argued to take place within a unitarist framework (Mather and Seifert, 2011) whereby the primary concern is with organisational needs and where organisational and employee interests are viewed as synonymous (Harley and Hardy, 2004). Performance management is sometimes described as a disciplinary practice because it incorporates notions of individual accountability and self-regulation (Harper and Vilkinas, 2005).

Trade unions, in contrast, embrace the values of pluralism, collective organisation and democracy (Boniface and Rashmi, 2013; Hyman, 2001). From this perspective the employment relationship is characterised by unequal power relations and competing class interests (Kelly, 1996), which are best dealt with through collective bargaining and collective solutions to individual problems (Bacon and Storey, 1996; Storey, 1992).

This article argues however, that to distinguish between unitarist performance management and democratic pluralist trade union ideologies is overly simplistic because trade unions' purpose and values are variable. Moreover, trade unions are employers and as such must manage the performance of individual employees. The trade union employer-employee relationship is thus characterised by two possible contradictions: between the trade union values of democracy, pluralism and collectivism and managerialist notions of individual performance and in terms of inconsistent trade union values. A further dissimilarity between different trade unions relates to organisational structures: between larger 'organising' unions which employ full-time paid officials and smaller unions in which the officials are elected lay-

activists who are given secondment by the employer. This research involved managers from both types of union.

In the context of these contradictions the aims of the article are as follows: (1) to explore performance management in four UK trade unions. In particular, the extent to which senior managers in the four unions accept or dismiss the unitarist, disciplinary and performative values that are argued to characterise performance management practices; (2) to explore whether trade union values of pluralism and democracy influence performance management; (3) to develop an understanding of if and how performance management is linked to different types of trade union organisational structure and purpose.

The article's contribution is to add to the emerging literature on trade union management by exploring a particular aspect of human resource management in unions. It also explores how values and organisational structures interact to shape the managers' conceptualisations of performance management. The article begins with a review of the performance management and trade union literature followed by a discussion of the methodology. Next is a presentation and discussion of the interview data followed by an analysis of the implications in relation to trade union structures and orientations and the values of democracy, pluralism and collectivism.

Literature Review

Performance Management

Performance management theory assumes a relationship between performance management systems and practices and better individual and organisational performance (Decramer et al., 2012; Mather and Seifert, 2011; Nankervis and Compton, 2006; Risov and Croucher, 2009; Soltani et al., 2005). It is argued to encourage better job performance through its positive influence on employees' attitudes, intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and commitment (Becker and Huselid, 2006; White and Bryson, 2013); through performance management practices which assess and develop employees' competencies and through the adoption of performance management systems such as performance related pay to distribute rewards (Decramer et al., 2012).

Risov and Croucher (2009) suggest that performance management can be collaborative or calculative. Collaboration involves a mutually trusting relationship between managers and employees, consultation and collective forms of remuneration. According to Risov and Croucher (2009), collaborative performance management is more likely to enhance labour extraction because productivity depends on interaction between employees rather than individual effort.

Performance management ideology is criticised for its underlying unitarist assumptions, in particular its tendency to privilege organisational concerns over those of employees. Unitarist ideology is also argued to confer legitimacy on, and perpetuate managerial control (Horwitz, 1990). Even where performance management is collaborative, the ultimate aim is to extract the greatest possible amount of labour from employees (Storey and Sisson, 1993).

A further criticism concerns performance-related assessment and distributive practices which incorporate a disciplinary agenda by giving managers the power to define appropriate employee performance (Decramer et al., 2012). Distributive practices associated with performance management are linked to conformity and control because they reward desired behaviour and discourage undesired behaviour (Harper and Vilkinas, 2005). Performance management does this by measuring, evaluating and categorising employees to label them as stars, solid citizens, marginal performers and chronic under-achievers (Boxall and Purcell, 2008).

The Trade Union Context

Trade unions differ from profit-making organisations in that they are primarily concerned with the employment conditions of members rather than with economic benefit and are accountable to members rather than shareholders. They developed historically as 'a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment' (Webb and Webb, 1894:1). Yet, despite its disciplinary and individualistic concerns and its implicit aim of intensifying labour extraction, this article argues that performance management is entering into the internal management practices of trade unions. The nature of this infiltration is explored in relation to the distinction that is

argued to exist between narrow economism in which the material well-being of members is paramount and a wider political agenda aimed at redrawing power relations in society (Kelly, 1996). Hyman (2001) suggests that competing union ideologies are located within the triangle of three ideal trade union types that emerged over a century ago, those of anti-capitalism, social integrationism and business unionism. Anti-capitalist unionism was underpinned by the values of radical social democracy and communism. Priority was given to militancy, syndicalism, socio-political mobilization and the advancement of class interests.

Social integrationist unionism views unions as a vehicle for raising workers' status in society and advancing social justice. It 'counter posed a functionalist organicist view of society with the socialist conception of class antagonism' (Hyman, 2001:2). However, this form of unionism shifted from a revolutionary to reformist orientation and unions become agents for the democratization of industry.

 Business unionism, which is most commonly associated with the USA, is concerned with economic betterment through collective bargaining and improvement of the material welfare of the collective. Unions become interest organisations which are primarily concerned with labour markets. Representation of occupational interests is more important than socio-political projects. Indeed, the pursuit of economism and occupational interests may be undermined through socio-political entanglements (Hyman, 2001).

In a similar vein, Bednarek et al. (2012) distinguish between industrial unionism and trade consciousness. Industrial unionism aims to unite all workers in a particular industry regardless of their skill, occupation or status. Commitment is based on solidarity rather than exclusivity in that loyalty is to the wider working-class struggle rather than narrow craft interests. Trade consciousness is based on status division, exclusivity and narrow occupational identity. Trade consciousness is argued to be a feature of some modern professional UK unions (Bednarek et al., 2012) and can be traced back to the craft guilds of early British trade unionism. Professional trade unions are also comparable to the craft unions described by Hoxie in 1923 (Hoxie, 1923 quoted in Hyman 2001). Hoxie described such unions as being trade rather than class conscious, concerned with wages and conditions, regardless of workers

outside the group and regardless of political and social considerations that do not bear on their own economic ends (Hoxie, 1923). In contrast to the industrial focus of industrial unions and trade focus of craft unions, general unions have members across a range of industrial, public and private sectors and companies. Like industrial unions, loyalty and commitment in general unions extends beyond narrow occupational boundaries.

A further distinction is drawn between servicing and organising unions. In servicing unions members' needs are met by full-time union officers. Officers are responsible for representing members and negotiating with employers on issues such as pay and conditions (Allen 2009). In an effort to increase trade union membership and revitalise workplace organisation there has, since the 1990s, been a move away from a servicing towards an organising model (Gall, 2009a, 2009b; Heery, 2002). Under the organising model officers no longer represent and service a passive membership. Rather, their role is to encourage and strengthen workplace organisation through recruitment and the development of appropriate systems (Heery et al., 2000). The model is however, assumed to be bureaucratic, technocratic and centralised (Gall, 2009b).

A distinction can also be drawn between member or activist-led unions and officer-led unions (Undy, 2008). Activist-led unions are controlled by lay-members who are elected into office by the membership and who, in some instances, are given secondment to the union by the employer. Lay-activists are supported by a small number of full-time national officials. This contrasts with officer-led unions in which officers are full-time salaried appointments (although general secretaries are elected).

A particular problem relating to variations in ideological orientation and purpose, structure and governance is that of mergers. Mergers have been a feature of the union landscape for many years and putative mergers are often beset by contradiction and conflict (Undy, 2008). According to Bednarek et al. (2012), mergers raise fundamental questions about a union's purpose and who it represents. Undy (2008), for example, describes a divergence of opinions around the effectiveness of a merger that brought together a politically neutral, activist-led,

professional association representing bosses and a left-leaning, officer-led union politically affiliated to the UK Labour Party.

These tensions between wider political and narrow economic concerns and differences in structure and governance can be argued to characterise the key trade union value of democracy. On one hand democracy and purpose in trade unions is conceptualised in relation to tensions and ambivalence in wider institutional employment relations and to the way in which the achievements and progress of unions are understood (Martinez Lucio (2011). On the other hand, debates around democracy are also concerned with micro-level labour processes and the results of management practices (Martinez Lucio, 2011). In the 1960s and 1970s there was a concern with worker control and worker-led organisations, although in the past ten to twenty years this has become a forgotten chapter (Martinez Lucio, 2011). Moreover, worker-led organisations are of a qualitatively different order to the weak collaboration described by Risou and Croucher (2009). Without genuine worker control in the form of self-management committees, strategic worker ownership and more say in issues of conception rather than execution, participation is illusory (Martinez Lucio, 2011).

Martinez Lucio (2011) identifies a further possible conflict within trade unions: between democracy in terms of interests and the institutional framework and trade unions' need to deliver in the short-term through, for example, the shift to the organising model. He points to worries about the 'corrosive role of union bureaucrats on the imagination and potential of union and worker action' (Martinez Lucio, 2011:42). Martinez Lucio argues that the emergence of bureaucracy in trade unions can limit internal debate and is linked to the way in which agendas, objectives and notions of success are formed. This suggests a tension between democracy in trade unions and bureaucracy which is linked to the question of whether trade union managers articulate a bureaucratic and corrosive discourse.

Indeed, the very notion of a democratic distribution of power is itself open to interpretation. The term democracy refers to both direct popular participation and representative forms of democratic rule (Kokkinidis, 2012). Trade unions correspond most closely to the representative democracy model because union members vote their representatives in and out

of office. Two of the four trade unions involved in this research are structured around and governed by elected lay-activists. They are arguably examples of representative democracies. The second pair of unions are, in contrast, large organising unions. Organising unions are sometimes argued to support an activist-led form of democracy in which members engage in workplace representation (Jerrard et al., 2009). This view is criticised on the grounds that organising unions are 'top-down' and undemocratic because senior union leaders are responsible for setting the agenda (Allen, 2009).

The internal management practices of trade unions occur within the context of these variations in union orientation and purpose, union structures and governance and arguments around the notion of democracy. As Hyman (2001) argues, the wage-labour relationship is the product of social and political as well as economic forces and is grounded in social norms and obligations. The above discussion outlines however, the contested and differentiated nature of trade union norms and obligations. On one hand it can be assumed that the core trade union commitment to collective bargaining is incompatible with disciplinary forms of performance management because collective bargaining rejects individualism and the managerial power to define satisfactory performance (Storey, 1992). Moreover, Bacon and Storey (1996) argue that unions remain cynical about HRM and its ability to provide security and consultation. A strategy for dealing with HRM is to maintain that collective solutions are available for most individual problems.

On the other hand, Bacon and Storey (1996) also suggest that the mid-1990s saw a shift away from collective bargaining and a fracturing of collectivism through individualist management strategies. The focus by managers on individual employees makes it difficult to sustain the notion of a standardised group of workers with similar interests. Unions have also been accommodating however, in that they accept that some 'soft' aspects of HRM are not necessarily perceived as anti-union. They have, for example, accommodated HRM by participating in programmes designed to improve productivity such as employee involvement and TQM (Bacon and Storey, 1996).

In addition to these possibly shifting norms and obligations, the internal management practices of trade unions are inextricably related to their employees' motivation to work for a union. It is argued that commitment to a union is about ideological belief and acceptance of union goals rather than instrumental incentives (Kirton and Healy, 2013). Union officials are generally conscientious, committed and hard-working (Darlington and Upchurch, 2011). There are however, differences between union officials and members in that union officials do not sell their labour power to a capitalist employer. Although they are dependent on a salary, this comes from the union rather than a capitalist organisation. Their relative job security and often higher salaries further differentiate them from many union members. As a result, union officials have an interest in the continuation of the capitalist wage-labour system that furnishes them with an income and status. This differentiation, along with some degree of pressure to understand their opponents' outlook, suggests some contradiction between officials and union members and a possible tendency towards accommodation with employers' concerns (Darlington and Upchurch, 2011).

It will be demonstrated later in this article that motivation and commitment are key concepts in trade union managers' approaches to performance management. Before the empirical evidence to support this claim is presented and discussed however, the article turns to a discussion of the methodology through which the evidence was collected and analysed.

Methodology

Conceptualisations of performance management are explored through qualitative semi-structured interviews with thirteen managers from four trade unions. The decision to focus on these thirteen managers draws on the work of Mouzelis (1993) who suggests that micro-level encounters between a small number of powerful individuals can have macro-level consequences. In this instance, we argue that the micro-level conceptualisations and subsequent actions of senior trade union managers have organisational level consequences. The managers' views are relevant because they occupy relatively powerful positions in their organisations and have influence over organisational practices. It will be demonstrated, in the forthcoming descriptions of each union and each interviewee, that the relative powers of

participants in two of the unions, A and B, relate to their formal authority as regional or area managers. In the third and fourth unions, C and D, the relative powers of the participants relates to their status as elected lay-officers. Through their positions the interviewees are instrumental in shaping the employer-employee relationship within their trade union.

Regarding the use of qualitative interviews, Roberts (2014) suggests qualitative interviews give interviewees the opportunity to talk freely about emotionally challenging topics. This allows the researcher to probe deeply into everyday issues thus enabling a more in-depth examination of the processes at work in the situation under investigation (Roberts, 2014: 6).

The interviews took place in the managers' offices, were taped and were of one – two hours duration. The discussions focused on definitions and experiences of performance management and the problems associated with its implementation in trade unions. Analysis of the data was designed to identify the factors that shape performance management. It followed the tactics outlined by Edwards et al. (2014). They describe four analytical tactics: configurational analysis involves exploring how actors are articulated and positioned; normative analysis explores how actors respond to situations and field analysis examines the role of contextual conditions. Finally institutional explanation is focused on how the above combine to explain the phenomena under investigation.

In this research configurational analysis involved description of how the participants were positioned in relation to their union. Normative and field analysis explored how the managers' responded to the external and organisational environment. That is their experiences of performance management and the problems they faced in implementing modern performance management practices. Institutional analysis was used to explore how environmental and organisational phenomena interacted to engender the managers' beliefs and practices around performance management.

The Unions

The specific unions were selected to introduce a degree of similarity and difference in relation to structure, purpose and strategy. Specifically, to achieve comparison between large organising and small lay-activist unions and general, industrial and professional unions.

Unions A and B can, moreover, be described as social integrationist in that they conduct wider political campaigns and are affiliated to the UK Labour Party. In contrast, unions C and D are more economic in orientation and share characteristics with the old trade forms of union described by Hoxie (1923). Although they conduct political campaigns, these campaigns are linked to the specific profession and neither union is affiliated to the UK Labour Party.

Access was negotiated directly with participants who were identified through trade union contacts. One individual contact from Union A provided contacts in Unions A, B and C. A second individual from Union D was instrumental in gaining access to participants D12 and D13. The following description of each union and each participant outlines the relevant configurational positioning.

Union A

Union A is a large general organising union which employs full-time officers and administrative staff. It represents diverse members in manual and clerical occupations across a wide range of public and private sector employers. It also conducts a variety of socio-political campaigns around diverse national and international issues and is affiliated to the UK Labour Party.

Union A is divided into regions and areas. Each region is headed by a regional secretary and each area is managed by a senior officer who is responsible for managing a group of junior full-time paid officers and associated administrative staff. Senior officers wield a substantial degree of autonomy over managing the performance of their subordinates. Employees of Union A are recruited through a formal recruitment process. The Union A participants were based in three areas of one region. Participant one (A1) was the Regional Secretary and was ultimately responsible for human resource management issues across the region. Participant two (A2) was a senior officer also based at the regional headquarters and participants three (A3) and four (A4) were senior officers based in separate area offices. Governance of the union is provided by an elected national executive.

Union B

Union B is a large industrial union which was formed following the merger of two industrial unions and one professional craft union. Following the merger this union adopted the democratic ideals of the craft union, but took the form of an industrial organising union. It conducts socio-political campaigns in the industrial areas represented and is affiliated to the UK Labour Party. Membership is diverse in terms of the mix of manual, clerical and professional occupations. Union B employs full-time paid officers who are recruited through a formal process. It is organised into regions and areas and the role of a senior officer is identical to Union A in that they have line management responsibility for a team of officers and administrative staff. The participants from Union B were located in two different regions. Participant five (B5) was the Regional Secretary of one of these regions. He was responsible for setting the HRM policies for his region. Participant six (B6) was a senior officer in B5's region. Participants seven and eight (B7 and B8) were senior officers in a different region of Union B. As with their counterparts in Union A, they had a substantial degree of autonomy over their management practices. Also like Union A, Union B's governance is provided by an elected national executive.

Unions C and D

Unions C and D differ from Unions A and B in terms of structure and organisation. Both are lay-activist-led unions which employ just a small number of paid administrators and officers. Officers are elected to their post by union members. The lay-activist representatives are also elected to their post by members and given secondment by their employer to carry out their union activities. Both are organised around branches and elected regional committees and both are steered by an elected national executive. Neither union is politically affiliated, but both are affiliated to the Trade Union Congress. Both unions conduct campaigns related to their trade.

Union C is a semi-professional servicing craft union which represents members in one occupation. It is predominantly a public sector union although the opening up of the sector to private providers over recent years has meant that some members are now employed by private companies. Interviews in Union C were conducted with the national General Secretary

(C9) and his deputy (C10). C9 and C10 are, along with an administrator, the only full-time paid employees of the union. A third official to be interviewed (C11) is an elected representative who is a member of the union's national executive. C11 has no formal management responsibilities but is responsible for coordinating other elected representatives. Although C9, C10 and C11 have no formal line management authority over elected representatives, they are responsible for the performance of the union. Their people management role is one of motivation rather than traditional line management control.

Union D is a professional servicing craft trade union with members spread across numerous organisations. Interviews were conducted with an elected senior branch officer (D12) who was elected to his post and a branch officer located in a different organisation, (D13), who was an unopposed volunteer to her post. Neither had formal management responsibilities but D12 is a member of the regional committee and responsible for the coordination of elected branch officers across the organisation in which he is employed. Like the Union C interviewees, D12 has no formal line management powers and his management role is more one of motivation than control.

The Findings

The participants were unanimous in the view that the performance of trade union employees and elected lay-activists was crucial to the achievement of short-term targets associated with recruiting and retaining members. The interviews began with participants' descriptions of the challenges facing unions. They then went on to discuss their experience of performance management in practice and the difficulties they faced in implementing modern forms of performance management.

The Challenges

The challenges identified by participants focused on public sector privatisations and curbs on trade union influence. For example:

Attacks on trade unions over recent decades have been relentless. Privatisation of public services, curbs on trade union power and influence mean that we have to work really hard to attract, keep and protect our members (A1).

Some of our services are now given over to the private sector and 20% of our membership is employed by these companies. Their terms and conditions, salaries and pensions are less favourable than those in the public sector and private sector employees are less likely to join the union. This causes problems for us in terms of recruiting, retaining and protecting members interests because different groups of staff want different things – and we have to manage this (C9).

It can be seen from these quotes that the recruitment, retention and protection of members are major concerns for unions. Even where privatisation has not occurred, public sector unions face challenges that are rooted in the political climate. Thus:

This profession is under attack by this government. We have seen salaries fall and pensions are under threat. The performance of the union depends on persuading our members to stand firm (D12).

These quotes suggest that there are no differences between the general union and the craft unions in terms of the challenges they face. There are however, similarities and variations in how unions respond to these challenges through performance management.

Trade Union Managers' Experiences of Performance Management

Trade union managers' experiences of performance management were linked to their definitions of what performance management is. For A2 it was about targets and measurement. He argued that:

We have to set people targets and measure whether they have been met. How else would we know how people are performing (A2).

A slightly different interpretation was given by B6. He also understood performance management as the setting and measurement of objectives, but related them to teams rather than individuals. Teams were moreover, responsible for setting their own objectives. Thus:

Each team is responsible for setting their own objectives and performance is evaluated in relation to those objectives (B6).

A similar description of performance management was given by C9 who states that:

As a group of lay-activists we need to set ourselves some sort of aims and align them to the needs of the members. We are responsible for making sure they are carried through (C9).

It can be seen from these quotes that targets and measurement were seen as core elements of performance management by participants from large organising and smaller craft, lay-activist led unions. The key difference however, was between Union A and Unions B and C. In Union A, targets were set and measured by managers and focused on individuals. In Unions B and C, targets were set by the team and the focus of performance management was on the group. These differences are also apparent in the managers' experiences of implementing new forms of performance management. In the following quote A3 described her experience with one individual:

I have organisers who will always go that extra mile for members. They are totally committed to the union and don't need performance management. Others are more concerned for their own career and conditions. This is a good, well paid job and there

are opportunities for promotion, but some still complain. They are the ones who need performance management. There are also some who put their own beliefs before the union. We had an issue with one officer who refused to do something on the grounds that it clashed with his political beliefs. But, he was good at his job and so it was a question of whether to take disciplinary action or have a conversation about the responsibilities that go with the job. In the end I told him that there would be consequences if he didn't cooperate (A3).

Three issues were, it can be argued, discernible from this quote. First, performance management was linked to individuals. Second, performance was as much about attitudes and commitment as technical ability. Third, despite trade union ideals of democracy and pluralism, A3 was willing to take disciplinary action for breaches of commitment and compliance. This differs from Union B where there appeared to be a tension between a more collectivist, non-disciplinary approach and an individualist and more disciplinary ideal. In advocating the former approach B5 described his experience of implementing performance management in his region:

Performance management is focused on the organisation as a whole and not the individual. What we say to staff is that you as individuals will not be assessed in performance terms in any kind of disciplinary context. We measure our performance at the regional organisational level (B5).

In addition to this more collective approach to performance management, Union B has adopted, according to B8, a democratic approach to target setting. This democratic orientation was argued to be linked to the merger that created union B. Thus:

When the merger was going through it was decided that everyone in the existing organisations should have a say in what the issues and priorities should be and we still

do this every year. Everyone has a say in what we should be doing and how we should measure what we are doing. We have adopted performance management to measure how well we are collectively achieving our priorities (B8).

The extent to which 'everyone having a say' denotes the direct popular participation as described by Kokkinidis (2012) or even the weak consultation described by Risov and Croucher (2009) is questionable. This is because despite the claims to collectivism and democracy, the emergence, from the merger, of Union B created a degree of individual performance evaluation by managers. This is described by B5:

When the two unions merged we had to cut duplicated functions. It was tricky because we had to decide whose roles remained in particular and obviously we wanted the best performers. We tried to do it fairly and no one was made redundant. Some staff moved on but all were offered alternatives in the union (B5).

Although B5 suggested that the evaluation was done fairly and that alternative employment was offered there were inevitably winners and losers. Moreover, the limitations of collectivism and democracy were described by B7:

In my experience performance management is about getting people to remember what they came into union work for and to make sure they achieve what they came in for. As unions we want to treat people fairly and compassionately, but at the end of the day it's about members and how we best use our resources. Resources are limited and union staff must take responsibility for their performance. If they do not do that we will need to formalise the process (B7).

B7 was suggesting that self-responsibility and self-discipline are the most effective ways of managing individual performance, but that if this is ineffective, a more formal performance management process should be established.

Notions of commitment and self-discipline were also a feature of the experiences of performance management of participants from union D. For example:

> I am a volunteer. I suspect my involvement with the union will not advance my career prospects but I do it because I am a strong believer in trade unionism. If you are going to do this you have to take responsibility for doing it to the best of your ability and you have to commit yourself to it (D13).

D12 expressed the same view as D13 and it can be argued that the absence of management structures and the lay-activist nature of Union D support the notion of personal responsibility for performance. It can also be suggested however, that this form of personal responsibility differs from the conceptualisation described by B7. This is because the self-responsibility described by D13 emerges from personal motivation whist the self-responsibility alluded to by B7 is arguably imposed from above.

The difficulties of Implementation

The difficulties of implementing a modern performance management system were described by the managers. These difficulties related to structural factors and the characteristics of union employees or lay-activists. A4, for example, alluded to the work intensification that emerged from the union's response to the environmental conditions outlined earlier:

> It's not a good time to be an organiser because their workloads are enormous. They are under increasing pressure and their performance can suffer as a result. So we as a union must manage that because we (the organisation) have to respond to the attacks on members (A4).

For A1 from the same union, on the other hand, it is about the attitude, motivation and commitment of employees. He drew a distinction between different types of employee:

> We organisers eat, drink and breathe this job. Organisers come in through trade union activism and it's a fire that burns in their blood. Administrators are different. Some are totally committed to the union and to union values but equally we have some who do not share our trade union ideology. They see it as just a job. Because we operate good terms and conditions, good pension and sick pay etc., they take the piss. We have to manage their performance and it's not always easy because I'm a trade unionist and I don't want to see anyone in the position of going through a disciplinary (A1).

This quote suggests that A1 has a preference for personal responsibility, but is willing to take action if personal responsibility is absent and if its absence leads to poor performance. In Unions C and D, the difficulties of implementing any form of performance management were linked to the voluntary nature of the representatives' role. Both unions relied on the personal motivation and commitment of elected lay-activists. In Union C the issue of motivation and commitment was linked to the professional craft nature of the union. The aims of the union were largely limited to the economic and professional interests of the members and there was no attachment to a wider political ideology. According to C9:

> Our membership, including lay-activists, is not politicised. If it was it would be politically to the right. There is little trade union consciousness and people join for protection not ideology. People will put themselves up for election to the union to avoid the day job for a few years. It's not easy to manage their performance because there is no real commitment. They are ultimately accountable to members but poor performance can only be dealt with through elections. I have no control over their

performance – I cannot set targets like a line manager. All I can do is rely on them to take their role seriously (C9).

This quote sums up the difficulties associated with managing the performance of lay-activists and it illustrates the difference between larger officer-led unions and smaller lay-activist unions. Specifically, why, in the absence of line management enforcement and between election periods, personal responsibility becomes paramount.

In summary, it can be argued that the UK political climate has led to challenging times for trade unions and that this has, in turn, created the need to improve the performance of organisations and individuals, hence the adoption of performance management. There are however, some differences between the unions in relation to performance management practices and also differences in emphasis between individuals, even in some instances, between individuals within the same union. In the next section of this article these differences are explored along with a consideration of the implications of the interview data for trade union values and the unitarist principles that are argued to underpin performance management (Horowitz, 1990).

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this article was to develop an understanding of performance management in trade unions. Specifically, the interpretations of performance management held by senior managers who hold the power to shape human resource management practices. The article has explored these issues in the context of the wider political environment in which trade unions operate and in relation to trade union structures and values. It has demonstrated that an assumption of a link between performance management and organisational success (see, for example, Decramer et al., 2012; Mather and Seifert, 2011) was held by all of the participants. The key difference between performance management in the four trade unions and the models found in the literature was the absence of an association between performance management and the distribution of rewards as described by Decramer et al. (2012).

It has been argued that the challenging environment in which UK trade unions operate has led to the emergence of the bureaucratic, top-down, organising form of union activity (Allen, 2009; Gall, 2009a) of which unions A and B are examples. In unions A and B this bureaucratic organising model has resulted in a disciplinary performance management approach that was linked to targets and measurement, for example as described in the literature by Boxall and Purcell (2008). In both unions the managers were responsible for defining and assessing appropriate performance (for example, Decramer et al., 2012) and the ultimate aim of performance management was to extract the optimum amount of labour through work intensification.

There are however, some slight differences in that in Union A the exclusive focus was on the individual employee whilst in Union B there is an element of collectivism in the form of a team approach to performance management. This collectivism could, on the other hand, be argued to have been compromised by the merger process that led to the creation of Union B. During the merger the evaluation of individuals' performance was used to inform decisions as to who remained in post.

It can be argued that by embracing individual forms of performance management the collectivist values of trade unions are being diluted and that individualism is seeping into unions' management practices. This finding supports Bacon and Storey's (1996) argument from the 1990's that collectivism is threatened by management strategies. In this instance it is the management strategies of unions themselves that are undermining collectivism. The findings can also be argued to challenge the notion that unions prefer collective solutions to individual problems.

In all four unions performance was further defined in relation to employees' or lay-activists' attitude and commitment (see, for example, White and Bryson, 2013) and there was a recognition that, in accordance with the arguments put forward by Darlington and Upchurch (2011), full-time union officials may have complex motivations that are linked to their particular circumstances. Specifically, full-time union officials may have a deep commitment to the union and to members, but might equally have career and work aspirations that are

more closely allied to self-interest. This complexity further extends to lay-activists in unions C and D where a tension between commitment to the union and a self-interested desire to escape the day job for a period of time was described.

The attitudes and commitment of trade union employees are linked to notions of personal responsibility and self-discipline. The notion of performance management as discipline was common to participants from all four unions. In unions A and B this encompassed both managerially imposed discipline and self-discipline. In Unions C and D, self-discipline and personal responsibility were viewed as the key to performance. An exclusive focus on personal responsibility and self-discipline could be argued to have emerged from the lay-activist structure and non-bureaucratic, professional craft nature of these unions. It could be further argued that the focus on discipline in each union, but with no link between performance and reward, contradicts Storey's (1992) view that a commitment to collective bargaining is incompatible with a disciplinary performance management agenda. In these four unions a commitment to collective forms of reward exists alongside the emergence of target related self-discipline.

With respect to notions of unitarism and pluralism and their relationship to performance management, it can be argued that all four unions contain elements of both. There was consensus amongst the thirteen participants that the needs of the unions and their members took precedence. This corresponds to the unitarism described by Horwitz (1990). There was also however, some recognition of different and sometimes incompatible, interests: between union employees coping in stressful situations and the needs of members, between elected representatives' interests and those of members and between the aims of the unions and employees' political beliefs. This recognition demonstrates a degree of commitment to the pluralism described by Hyman (2001). Ultimately however, a unitarist approach to performance prevailed across the four unions.

A further key aim of this article was to explore the extent to which democratic values influence performance management in trade unions. In Union A there was no evidence of organisational democracy in the sense of the worker-led organisations described by Martinez-Lucio (2011)

and little reference to the consultation and collaboration described by Risov and Croucher (2009). This supports Allen's (2009a) assertion that organising unions are undemocratic and 'top-down.' Union B however, employed a more consultative approach, although it was not the worker-led form of democracy described by Martinez Lucio (2011). It could be argued that the weak form of democracy found in Union B emerged from the merger that created the union. Specifically, the influence of the more democratic professional craft union involved in the merger. Of further influence was B5's early experience as an active member of the professional craft union and his commitment to the democratic ideals of that union.

The conclusion that Union B was characterised by a weak form of democracy and that this resulted in more collective forms of performance management should however, be treated with caution and considered alongside the shift towards individualism described earlier. It could be suggested that Union B aspired to a weak democracy and collectivism, but that individualism was the fallback position when organisational needs were threatened.

It can also be suggested that the democratic values of Unions A and B were externally focused and more associated with social democracy in wider society than with internal worker-led organisational democracy. This external focus could be argued to be linked to the social integrationist orientations of these unions and their commitment to left leaning political campaigns. It could also be suggested that internal democracy was a casualty of the short-term need to deliver as described by Martinez Lucio (2011). For example, the need to deliver on member recruitment and retention.

Internal democracy in unions C and D corresponds most closely with the notion of representative democracy in that lay-activists are elected by members. This has implications in terms of performance management because lay-activists are accountable to members rather than line managers. Performance can only be managed by members choosing not to elect individuals to particular roles. In these unions the representative democratic lay-activist structures interact with the craft, professional and trade orientations of the unions to shape an approach to performance management that focuses on the self-discipline and commitment of lay-representatives to serve the needs of members.

In conclusion, this article has demonstrated that performance management is an emerging process in UK unions. It also supports Dempsey and Brewster's (2009) findings that trade union managers accept the use of performance management in order to ensure the performance of the organisation. The article has argued that the trade union managers' conceptualisations of performance management are linked to disciplinary and performative values. As such, they are comparable to the unitarist forms of performance management described in the literature. Moreover, although there is recognition of pluralism and variable degrees of internal democracy, the primary focus is placed on organisational and union members' needs rather than those of the employees or lay-activists. This suggests both similarities and differences between trade unions and for profit or public sector organisations. Finally, the article has described different types of union and different union orientations, but demonstrated that although there are some differences in terms of performance management, these differences are subtle and that discipline and commitment are common features of performance management in the four trade unions.

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