Managing performance and learning through reflective practices

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MANAGING PERFORMANCE AND LEARNING THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICES

Structured Abstract:

Purpose
The purpose of this paper is to study the role of performance management (PM) in the use of reflective work practices.

Design/methodology/approach
The empirical evidence was collected during a one-year, action-oriented research project.

Findings
According to the results, PM can support the use of reflective work practices by affecting and guiding the human behavior in an organization. In this study, five roles of PM are emphasized in order to support reflective practices at work: making reflective work practices visible, supporting reflective dialogue, creating a favorable measurement culture, clarifying the goals at all organizational levels, and motivating employees to use reflective work practices by means of compensation and rewards.

Practical implications
The results of the study can help professionals realize that reflective work practices may benefit organizational performance.

Originality/value
There is limited research and discussion on how a PM process through the use of reflective practices contributes to human resource management (HRM) and organizational effectiveness. In addition, PM literature has neglected the potential of reflective work practices in achieving performance at different levels (individual, group and organization). Reflective work practices, where individuals learn from their own and from each other's professional experiences, may be the most important source of professional development and improvement. This paper argues that PM can also support this type of learning, and thus guide and motivate people in attaining business goals.

Keywords: performance management, reflective practices, reflective work practices, human resource management, performance, performance measurement

1   Introduction

The roots of the research on performance measurement and management are in the evaluation of divisional and managerial performance and in the use of standard cost and variance analysis to control production activities (Chenhall & Langfield-Smith, 2007). Performance management (PM) includes activities that ensure that company performance is managed in accordance with its corporate and functional strategies and objectives. PM can focus, for example, on the performance of an organization, a department or an employee. Today, PM is considered a comprehensive process, where all aspects of an organization are seen to have an effect on performance. All in all, effective PM requires more than measuring and reporting in isolation (Brudan, 2010). For example, many of the current approaches to PM highlight the need for learning. This learning point of view is also emphasized by Otley (1999), who suggests that PM aims to focus employee attention and motivate behavior for the ultimate purpose of implementing the organization's strategy. According to the study of Waal and Kourtit (2013), there are two main reasons for the use of PM: a focus on strategy and a focus on control.

Earlier studies have shown that one of the issues that benefits organizational performance is investment in human capital (Hatch & Dyer, 2004; Sirmon et al., 2007). In order to achieve a competitive advantage through human resources, organizations must successfully utilize their human capital (Sirmon et al., 2007). Human resources literature has mostly concentrated on traditional practices of recruitment, training, development, communications and rewards. Its purpose is to employ these practices towards achieving desired strategic goals, and most importantly, to enhance an organization's financial performance. This means not only moving away from concentrating purely on employees, but also taking into consideration the organization's overall needs for human resources. It thus becomes relevant to connect human resources to other functions and to broader organizational goals (Chenhall & Langfield-Smith, 2007).

Contemporary management practice is no longer concerned simply with executing a standard set of policies and procedures. Rather, it requires questioning and understanding the relationships between choices in managing people, the strategies and goals of the organization and the possibilities presented by the external environment. Human resource management (HRM), which is primarily concerned with the management of people within organizations, should thus seek out sets of policies and practices that have a reasonable chance of producing capabilities that are valuable to the company (Roos et al., 2004). Formal classroom training and knowledge transfer may thus not be the best or only solution for this type of HRM. Instead, reflective work practices, where individuals learn from their own professional experiences, may be the most important source of professional development and improvement (Nakamura & Yorks, 2011). Reflective work practice refers to the actual ways in which reflection manifests through individual and collective actions within the organizational structure. There is limited research and discussion on how a PM process through the use of reflective practices

contributes to HRM and organizational effectiveness. In addition, PM literature has neglected the potential of reflective work practices in achieving performance at different levels (individual, group and organization).

This paper argues that PM should also support this type of reflective learning, and thus guide and motivate people in attaining business goals. The literature on the strategies to foster reflective practices is still early in development, and there is a lack of studies addressing the outcomes of reflective practices (Mann et al., 2009; Hilden et al., 2012; Saunila & Ukko, 2015). The present study aims to address this issue and build prerequisites for future research on PM facilitating reflective practices. The purpose of this paper is to study the interplay between reflective work practices and PM in achieving organizational effectiveness.

The empirical evidence was collected during a one-year, action-oriented research project. The organization that is the subject of this case study is located in southern Finland and operates in the fields of construction, decorating and gardening. Due to the high competition in its market, concentrating on developing HRM was viewed as crucial, and traditional ways to improve operational efficiency were not seen as sustainable solutions for improving competitiveness. Instead of traditional classroom training, reflective work practices were utilized to reach strategic goals.

The paper contains a description of the key issues that arise when managing organizational performance through reflective work practices. The research question of the study is as follows: What is the role of PM in the use of reflective work practices? According to the results, PM may support the use of reflective practices by affecting and guiding the human behavior in an organization. As a conclusion, the paper contains suggestions for managing organizational performance through developing reflective work practices. The paper aims to contribute to the current understanding of the interplay between reflective work practices and PM. As a practical implication, the results of the paper may help professionals begin to understand that leveraging reflective work practices may aid an organization in achieving its performance goals.

2   Review of prior literature

2.1   Performance management

PM is a multidisciplinary field. Management research in areas as diverse as HRM, manufacturing and operations management, business strategy, marketing, accounting, organizational behavior, industrial economics, psychology, political science and operational research all contribute to the field of PM (Neely, 1999; Franco-Santos et al., 2007; Richard et al., 2009; Franco-Santos et al., 2012). For example, research on human resources considers PM initially as a way of managing people, whereas operations management emphasizes the role of performance measurement in the process, stressing that all activities are important in

developing performance. In strategic management, the importance of PM lies in the formulation of firm objectives and translating them into action. Quality focused research highlights the improvements of processes and performance (Ates et al., 2013). Although the use of different perspectives, theories and paradigms has contributed to the development of the field, the lack of cross-disciplinary studies has also created fragmentation (Micheli & Manzoni, 2010).

2.1.1 Performance management and human resource management

In HRM literature, the goal of the PM process is performance improvement in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, initially at the level of the individual employee, and ultimately, at the level of the organization (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006; Biron et al., 2011). Thus, PM can link daily operations to the firm's overarching strategy or consider more tactical targets related to employee evaluation. Both are needed and are supported by each other, because while strategic goals signal how personal actions might be linked with, and thus contribute to, achieving the organization's strategy, tactical goals provide employees with signals regarding which performance related efforts are to be appreciated and rewarded (Biron et al., 2011). PM of employees is divided into two opposite approaches: one focusing on employee development and involvement and the other on monitoring and control (Stanton & Manning, 2013).

The first approach indicates that creating a set of practices that engender feelings of perceived justice among employees leads to increased levels of employee commitment (Farndale et al., 2011; Ukko & Saunila, 2013). Corporate culture needs to value employee engagement, because only then can the PM systems deliver their full potential. If this is not the case, then PM might be considered a bureaucratic requirement of little value in terms of employee development or performance improvement (Haines & St-Onge, 2012). Gruman and Saks (2011) have studied performance and engagement appraisal and found that it represents an opportunity, not only to assess employee performance, but also the degree to which employees exhibit engagement behavior in the performance of their work. Engagement facilitation recasts the role of supervisors as coaches, whose goal is to design tasks and provide support and resources that energize employees and absorb them into their jobs (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Managers in high-performance firms take an active role in the PM process, for example, by defining their objectives (Biron et al., 2011). More positive outcomes may be achieved when HRM is strategically integrated within the business plans of the organizations, which establish the relevance of the PM system with regard to important strategic goals (Haines & St-Onge, 2012).

In addition to a PM core practice, HRM research has studied related topics, such as high-performance work systems. Research on high-performance work systems studies a set of management policies and practices thought to endow employees with greater levels of skills, information, motivation and discretion (Guthrie et al., 2009), geared towards the strategic goals of the organization (Stanton & Manning, 2013). Recent research indicates that using high-

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performance work systems results in both human resource and organizational outcomes (Shih et al., 2006; Guthrie et al., 2009; Razouk, 2011). In terms of human resource outcomes, the use of high-performance work systems can positively affect attendance and retention (Guthrie et al., 2009). Wood and de Menezes (2011) found that not all the involvement elements of the high-performance work system have positive effects on the well-being of employees, but enriched jobs appear to be key to well-being. Similarly, Della Torre and Solari (2013) highlight that some bundles of practices are more effective and more satisfactory for different occupational groups. In terms of organizational outcomes, the use of high-performance work systems has positive associations, for example, to labor productivity, profitability, innovation and social climate (Guthrie et al., 2009; Razouk, 2011). The longitudinal analysis of Razouk (2011) shows that the companies that adopt high-performance work systems are not only able to obtain a good current performance, but are also able to keep up the same performance over the long-run.

Performance appraisal, which involves forming a link between employee behavior and an organization's strategy (Dusterhoff et al., 2014), has also been studied from a PM perspective. Performance appraisal literature has emphasized the role of employee participation in increasing trust and confidence in supervisors and, ultimately, the appraisal process as a whole (Chiang & Birtch, 2010; Pichler, 2012). That is, more frequent feedback (e.g., informal feedback) affords greater opportunity for supervisors and subordinates to interact, exchange ideas and discuss performance expectations, thereby increasing trust (Chiang & Birtch, 2010). Another stream of literature has investigated the role of learning in HRM. For example, Gómez et al. (2004) and Pérez López et al. (2006) have found that training influences organizational learning. Investments in training favor the acquisition and generation of new knowledge, knowledge transfer among employees and individuals' commitment to organizational learning (Gómez et al., 2004). The results of Kuo (2011) show that HRM has an indirect influence on organizational performance through organizational learning. According to López-Cabrales et al. (2011), the uniqueness of the employees' knowledge and skills are also positively related to organizational learning. The development of unique knowledge depends on the potential of the employees, but also on the employees' willingness to acquire new and specific knowledge. Appraisals and rewards play a large role in promoting such willingness (López-Cabrales et al., 2011).

Signaling theory is also used in HRM literature (Suazo et al., 2009) to examine the communication between individuals and units.

2.1.2 Performance management and organizational performance

In operations management and strategy literature, PM can be defined as organizational activities employed by managers to focus employee attention and motivate behavior for the purpose of implementing the organization's strategy (Otley, 1999). These activities aim to help

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organizations plan and coordinate what they should do, provide accurate and timely feed-forward and feedback on how they are doing and encourage corrective behavior when needed (Anthony & Govindarajan, 2007). PM is an essential management function to achieve competitive advantage through a process that leads to a number of outcomes (Adhikari, 2010). PM goals should thus be derived from an organization´s strategy. According to Ferreira and Otley (2009), PM should originate from purposes and objectives. PM includes, "evolving formal and informal mechanisms, processes, systems, and networks used by organizations for conveying the key objectives and goals, for assisting the strategic process and ongoing management, and for supporting and facilitating organizational learning and change" (Ferreira & Otley, 2009). PM includes various sub-processes: strategy definition (planning/goal setting), strategy execution, training, and performance measurement. Performance measurement focuses on the identification, tracking and communication of performance results through the use of performance indicators. Performance measurement concentrates on the evaluation of results, whereas PM is about taking action based on the results of the evaluation and ensuring the target results are achieved (Brudan, 2010).

Based on the fact that PM can be used for guiding and motivating people (e.g., Otley, 1999), HRM should be considered an integral part of PM. Previous literature has also found a link between HRM—such as skill development and training—and organizational performance (Khatri, 2000; Takeuchi et al., 2003; Hatch & Dyer, 2004; Skaggs & Youndt, 2004; Adhikari, 2010). According to Broadbent and Laughlin (2009), PM is often used in the context of human resources in relation to controlling employee behavior. The influencing role of PM is as much about behavioral approaches as it is about systems approaches. One of the important ways to influence behavior is through training and development. Training and development has at least two objectives: to standardize behavior by providing employees with missing skills and to "up-skill" employees. In this way, it is possible to facilitate opportunities for individual development and ultimately increase motivation (Noe, 2005, as cited in Adler, 2011). When it comes to measuring and managing human resources, the need for aligning human-resource based PM systems with organizational performance-measurement systems has been recognized, which has led to new perspectives on PM, including teaming measures and managerial measures (Bititci et al., 2012).

2.2   Reflective practices and performance management

HRM is considered a dynamic and evolving practice used to enhance organizational effectiveness. Organizations are aware that human resources have value, but many do not recognize the true importance of HRM practices. Improving knowledge, competencies, skills and attitudes is necessary to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organization (cf. Galley & Maycunich, 2000; Biron et al., 2011; Ulrich, 2013). Continuous professional development should not just include attending courses and gaining qualifications, but also the integration of learning and work as well as learning from wider experiences, both

on and off the job. For this reason, different forms of workplace learning (e.g., mentoring and peer-mentoring, communities of learning, job rotation and coaching) have been seen as a "medicine" for continuous and rapidly changing learning and development challenges (Tikkamäki, 2006). Today, HRM should be seen as a combination of structured and unstructured learning and performance-based activities that develop individual and organizational capacity to cope with and successfully manage change (cf. Simmonds & Pedersen, 2006; Hildén et al., 2012).

In this paper, HRM is understood as the development of the meta-skills that can be learned only through experience. Modern work calls for informal and self-directed learning— individual responsibility, ability and willingness to share expertise as well as continuous development. Enabling participation and a commitment to participate, constructing and sharing knowledge, socially supporting and taking care of workers' well-being, as well as reflecting experiences, practices and processes, are seen as relevant tools for promoting organizational learning (Tikkamäki, 2006, 2013). The challenge is knowledge transfer and making tacit knowledge explicit. Formal learning and training are not answers to this problem, and the emphasis on organizational learning and development of employees has transferred from training to reflection in work (Cressey et al., 2006). The results of the annual report of the Confederation of Finnish Industries support this observation. Based on the report, the most often used forms of personnel development in companies were informal learning, on-the-job training and taking part in various events. In general, companies called for agile and tailored forms of developing personnel's "know-how" (Confederation of Finnish Industries, 2013).

The concept of reflection, as developed within adult learning theory, contributes to HRM by showing the significance of both problem solving and problem posing for individual and organizational performance (Woerkom, 2004), as well as by assessing progress towards goals, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and devising approaches to overcome perceived obstacles (Bednall et al., 2014). While reflection is something that individuals have at their disposal, its mere existence does not necessarily determine organizational influence. It is rather how reflection is used, that is, how an organization draws on and mobilizes such competence in order to get things done. Reflection in a workplace context is called reflective work practice. When we place reflection into the workplace context (Schön, 1983; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Marsick, 1998; Watkins & Marsick, 1990), it is seen as a powerful tool for making sense of events and experiences (Weick et al., 2005) by recognizing, analyzing and making evaluative hypotheses, as well as planning developmental actions (Daudeling, 1996). Reflective work practices can sharpen professionals' perceptions of their methods and approaches to challenging situations, identify the gaps between theory and practice, help evaluators improve their professional practice through critical thinking and decision-making, and at their best, contribute positively to job satisfaction (Page & Meerabeau, 2000; Smith et al., 2015). Thus, to reiterate, in this paper, reflective work practice refers to the actual ways in which reflection manifests through individual and collective actions within the organizational

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structure. In practice, this means that members of the organization learn and are encouraged to pay attention, slow down in order to dialogue, and explore the connections between actions as well as their consequences.

Reflective work practice consists of: 1) an individual's reflective capacity, 2) reflective dialogue taking place in groups and teams, 3) reflective management control, and 4) reflective experiment (Hilden et al., 2012). Reflective capacity is based on meta-skills, like self-reflection, managing emotional reactions and self-regulatory behavior (Nesbit, 2012). These are the tools for becoming aware of and organizing and reconstructing experiences. Reflective dialogue aims to expose meaning constructions based on how another person thinks and acts, thus creating a shared understanding. Dialogue is a process of discovering and interrogating to achieve understanding or agreement (Isaacs, 1999). Through dialogue, individual and collective assumptions and knowledge are examined and further developed. Reflective management control refers to the implementation of an organization's strategy by using the potential of reflective practices. Management control and PM define the "infrastructure" for reflection to be implemented in everyday work. In practice, this means that an organization's work processes, values, measurements and rewards should encourage a reflective working style, planning and administrative solutions should build in time and space for reflection, and the organization should follow-up on the results of the reflective practices. Also, the findings of Matsuo (2012), indicating that reflective practice is facilitated by clarifying the mission of the unit, supports the importance of goals and strategies to attain the benefits of reflection. Reflective experiment, in turn, intertwines thinking and acting. Through reflective experimenting, ideas and principles are applied and explored in practice, and new experiences are acquired to be reflected (Hilden et al., 2012; Tikkamäki, 2013). Other factors that facilitate reflective work practices are supporting workplace culture (Griggs et al., 2015) and managers' involvement in reflection (Nansubuga et al., 2015).

Though reflection is discussed within various theoretical fields, what is still missing is a more holistic managerial perspective. Indeed, the interaction between reflective learning and managerial authority is potentially significant to both learning and management theory (Hildén et al., 2012). Although it now seems to be common knowledge that organizational learning includes both learning and performance, theories on work-related learning are still dominated by an output approach, and the processes and their contingencies within the organizational institutions remain fairly unexplored. We propose that PM offers an incisive and practical framework for understanding organizational learning possibilities in developing opportunities for organizing reflection. PM can play an important role in implementing and facilitating reflective practices. Meaningful and supportive infrastructure for reflective practices, aligned with strategy and development plans for employees and teams, enables development of key competencies, knowledge sharing and attainment of business goals. This type of reflective practice at work can be called a productive reflection (Boud et al., 2006). It is making the kinds of changes in work practices that enhance productivity, personal engagement and meaning in

work. It places learning and developing as central to work organizations and calls for redesigning daily work in a way that enables reflective practices.

3 Methods

3.1 Research setting

While the emphasis on reflective practices is somewhat well-established within the HRM literature, reflective work practices as a tool in PM has not received extensive attention. In-depth action research and case studies are needed for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and arrangements by which PM and reflective practices can be connected. It is essential to understand how firms can be organized to ensure that reflective work practices are not an isolated part of a management system. Management of human resources should be part of PM, and due to the changing environment, new ways of reflective practices in the workplace context should also be considered more extensively in PM literature. This study focuses on the interplay between reflective work practices and PM through an action-oriented case study. According to Yin (2003), one rationale for using a single case study is the researcher's access to a situation previously inaccessible, and therefore the descriptive information alone will be revealing. This approach has guided the research strategy of this study.

The case organization operates in the fields of construction, decorating and gardening, and employs approximately 50 workers. An action-oriented case study was conducted in the organization during the year 2012. The store was established in 2007, and it has therefore had the potential for the development of human resources. The store compares very favorably to its competitors in terms of financial measures. However, current PM has failed to scrutinize the potential benefits of using reflective work practices in order to gain a competitive advantage. The organization has previously utilized traditional classroom training, but due to highly competitive markets and an intensified financial situation, reflective practices, where individuals learn from their own and from each other's professional experiences, were seen as a potentially important source of professional development and improvement. Further, the case organization has had a variety of different development projects in the area of HRM. However, a large number of overlapping development projects were considered too stressful, and the desired results have not been achieved. Development that was too intensive has even disrupted the actual selling work. At the same time, the job descriptions of the sales people have changed through the automation of logistics. This means that the sales people can use all of their working hours for selling. This change has posed a new requirement for these jobs, which now involve, for example, multi-skills, an active sales approach, a willingness to serve and coaching skills. Although many of the participants in the study had a manager status, their main task was to sell. Based on this background, a limited number of reflective practices were launched. To examine how PM can support the exploitation of reflective practices, as well as monitor the

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impacts of these practices, certain goals and measures were implemented. From a broad viewpoint, the study focuses on the interplay between reflective work practices and PM.

3.2 Phases of the research

The research process is structured based on Ferreira and Otley (2009). They have presented a framework to be used as a research tool for describing the structure and operation of PM systems in a holistic manner. The framework, developed from the relevant literature and from observations and experience from practice, expands the five questions of Otley's PM framework into 12 questions and integrates aspects of Simons's levers of control framework. It has been suggested that the extended framework provides a useful research tool for those wishing to study the design and operation of PM systems by providing a template to help describe the key aspects of such systems. In this research process, the framework is utilized to evaluate the role of PM in the use of reflective work practices. The main phases of the research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Phases and goals of the research process

Phase	Goal	Main output
Researcher meeting	Planning the research process	
Group interview 3 researchers 1 manager	Clarifying the vision and mission Impulse and objectives for reflective work practices	Culture and contextual factors Vision and mission Key success factors
Researcher meeting	Checkpoint – Reflecting the research process	
Interview 1 1 manager 1 researcher	Defining the prerequisites of PM through reflective work practices	Culture and contextual factors Organization structure
Researcher meeting	Checkpoint – Reflecting the research process	
Focus group meeting 1 1 manager 2 middle managers 3 researchers	Defining plans to reach the objectives Clarifying the preliminary information for measurement	Strategies and plans
Researcher meeting	Checkpoint – Reflecting the research process	
Interview 2 1 manager 1 researcher	Evaluating the process and plans	
Researcher meeting	Checkpoint – Reflecting the research process	
Meeting 1 1 manager 2 researchers	Selecting the key performance measures	Key performance measures Target setting
Extended focus group meeting 1 2 managers 9 middle managers 2 researchers	Introduction of the process of PM through reflective practices and key performance measures to the employees	
Researcher meeting	Checkpoint – Reflecting the research process	
Focus group meeting 2 3 managers 1 researcher	Researcher coaching on how to enhance reflective work practices	
Focus group meeting 3 4 managers 2 researchers	Introduction of the first measurement results to the focus group	Performance evaluation
Researcher meeting	Checkpoint – Reflecting the research process	
Extended focus group meeting 2 2 managers	Introducing the first measurement results to the extended focus group	Performance evaluation Reward systems

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9 middle managers 1 researcher		
Researcher meeting	Checkpoint – Reflecting the research process	
Meeting 2 1 manager 2 researchers	Defining incentives to support PM through reflective work practices	Reward systems
Questions 9-12 clarified gradually during the research process		

The empirical evidence was collected during a one-year, action-oriented research project. The data was gathered via questionnaire, interviews and participant observations in meetings in which the representatives of the whole organization or a selected focus group were involved. A questionnaire was conducted before and after the action-oriented process. The survey included 15 items to measure reflective practice (adopted from Hildén et al., 2012) at the individual, group and organizational levels. An observational method was used to collect the data regarding the process of applying reflective practices in an organization. To avoid observer bias, face-to-face interviews and questionnaires were also utilized. A focus group was selected both to assist in taking the process forward and to communicate the process and work to the employees. According to Ferreira and Otley (2009), full use of the extended framework requires that the questions of the framework be asked at the various hierarchical levels down to the first level of management and that the evidence about patterns of usage and behavior be gathered at each level. In this way, the overall effects of PM can be understood (Ferreira & Otley, 2009). Therefore, members of the focus group were selected from different hierarchical levels. Focus group members included the manager of the organization, one manager responsible for developing human resources, one manager responsible for sales, one person responsible for the product group and a representative from the employees.

3.3   Summary of the results

A brief description of the results is presented in Table 2 in terms of how a PM process through the use of reflective practices contributes to HRM and organizational effectiveness.

Table 2. Summary of the results

Key findings		Main data sources	Data analysis
Making reflective work practices visible (reflective practices as a permissible way of HRM)	Challenges in developing the knowledge and skills of the employees in a way that enables a more visible relationship between their skills and performance.	Interview 1, Focus group meeting 1, Extended focus group meeting 2	Content analysis of the meeting reports, analysis of observational data
	Utilization of the understanding and skills that already existed in the organization; coaching the best professionals in a way that enabled the teaching of the other team members and reflecting collectively regarding both the products and their technical features. Includes the clarification of roles, responsibilities and work contents.		
	Showing how the best possible margin could be achieved with the sales; required defining a set of measures that primarily supported the achievement of "know-how" and sales targets.		
Supporting reflective dialogue	Management level: a director and managers regularly compare the results of the financial measures to the previous year, as well as to the shadow budget and the official budget.	Questionnaire, Group interview	Analysis of questionnaire answers, content

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(creating space for reflective dialogue)	Employee level: regular meetings where the sales managers and product group managers discuss the results of different measures in detail.		analysis of interview data
Creating a favorable measurement culture (how measurement results are handled and communicated)	Enabling the criticizing of prevailing working methods and rules without a demand for development proposals.	Focus group meetings 1-3	Content analysis of the focus group reports, analysis of observational data
	Allowing everyone to take care of the essential issues concerning the entire organization without fear that they may "step on anyone's toes." Allowing similar proactive behavior from colleagues.		
	Individuals willing to help and support the other members of the team and organization. Individuals also had to be willing to offer her/his own knowledge and skills as common property of the team.		
Clarifying the goals at all organizational levels (what is to be achieved with reflective practices)	Dissolution of the old organizational boundaries; creating the "infrastructure" for reflection to be implemented in everyday work.	Questionnaire, Meetings 1-2, Extended focus group meetings 1-2	Analysis of questionnaire answers, content analysis of the meeting reports, analysis of observational data
	Individual/group level: 1) multi-skills (technical & product), 2) active sales approach and willingness to serve, 3) coaching skills, and 4) system skills.		
	Organizational level: higher results in reflective practices and development of knowledge and skills should lead to higher customer satisfaction (a customer satisfaction survey, reclamations and sales activity (sale attempts/shift, sales/shift, tracking the big deals)) and financial results (operating profit, profit margin index for each product group, sales, sales index for each product group and loss).		
Motivating employees to use reflective work practices by means of compensation and rewards	Having a master (coach) status was perceived as a non-financial reward. Linking the measures of reflective practices and development of knowledge and skills to the customer satisfaction and financial measures. The positive impact of reflective practices on financial measures when comparing the results to the other competitors in the same field.	Questionnaire, Meeting 2	Analysis of questionnaire answers, content analysis of the meeting reports

4   Findings and discussion

Today, reflective work practices are an important means of developing the knowledge and skills of employees. Based on a recent statement, the most often used forms of personnel development in companies were informal learning, on-the-job training and taking part in various events. There is also an increasing need for new agile and tailored forms of HRM for developing personnel "know-how" (Confederation of Finnish Industries, 2013). This study supports this view by suggesting that agile and tailored forms of HRM are needed to get the valuable input necessary for developing personnel knowledge. Reflective work practices have the potential to answer this call. Based on the case study, the following five issues are seen as crucial when managing organizational performance through reflective work practices.

Making reflective work practices visible

First, PM plays an important role in *making reflective work practices visible.* In the case organization, the HRM challenge has been to develop the knowledge and skills of the employees in a way that enables a more visible relationship between their skills and

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performance. As a novel approach to HRM, the appropriate reflective work practices were launched to support and visualize the development of individual knowledge and skills, as well as to transfer these skills to other employees. Reflective practices also aimed to promote individual and collective sense-making. The case organization implemented two reflective practices, the master-apprentice approach and the shopkeeper approach, both of which have been considered appropriate means of developing the key success factors and furthering financial performance. In addition, the organization's HRM needed appropriate measures to evaluate the connection between skills and changes in financial measures. The managers used measurement information to increase the knowledge, understanding and transparency around the financial targets and their construction. The measurement and evaluation concerning the reflective practices and the development of knowledge and skills were used to explicitly present the results of the master-apprentice and shopkeeper approaches.

The utilization of both reflective practices was facilitated by connecting them to the measurement and targets. The measurement and targets stimulated the employees' interest regarding the launched practices by signaling how personal actions are linked with, and thus contribute to, achieving the organization's strategy, with signals regarding which performance related efforts were to be appreciated and rewarded. The results are thus in line with the results of Biron et al. (2011). Farndale et al. (2011) have shown that creating a set of practices that engender feelings of perceived justice among employees leads to increased levels of employee commitment. In the current study, the perceived feelings of justice and commitment around the reflective practices were reached by connecting them to the specific measurement and targets. In the study, the use of reflective practices was perceived to facilitate learning through experience (e.g., Tikkamäki, 2013). Instead of formal learning, the reflective practices emphasized the movement of organizational learning and development of employees from training to reflection in work. The study thus supports the findings of Cressey et al. (2006).

Further, defining and opening up the ground rules regarding reflective work practices at all organizational levels is an important prerequisite for putting these new forms of HRM into practice and committing the personnel to implement them. It is important to clarify to the employees what is meant by reflective practices and why is it important for the whole organization. Moreover, it is important that employees understand the benefits to the employees when they share knowledge and reflect their actions with others. Reflective work practices may be carried out in part unconsciously, but their effectiveness and benefits are increased when employees are aware of their potential. One of the roles of PM is to define the "infrastructure" for reflection to be implemented in everyday work. In practice, this means, for example, that organizational work processes and values should encourage a reflective working style (Tikkamäki, 2013). This may require a change in mindset to support the new business idea and the organization of the business.

Supporting reflective dialogue

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Second, the power of PM should concentrate on *supporting reflective dialogue*. In the case organization, sharing knowledge and experience, as well as sales results, with reflective dialogue between different organizational levels was crucial. Accordingly, a director and managers regularly compared the results of the financial measures to the previous year, as well as to the shadow budget and the official budget. Reflective practices also included regular meetings, where the sales managers and product group managers discussed the results of different measures in detail. These spaces for reflective dialogue promoted collective sense-making and transfer of knowledge. Both objective and subjective performance evaluations were utilized.

It has been shown that the performance measurement process forms a link between employee behavior and an organization's strategy (Dusterhoff et al., 2014). The role of employee participation in the performance appraisal process can be emphasized, especially in increasing trust and confidence in supervisors and, ultimately, the appraisal process as a whole (Chiang & Birtch, 2010; Pichler, 2012). In the case study, the employees participated in the utilization of reflective practices, as well as in meetings concerning the measurement results, which realized a more sophisticated dialogue and increased the trust and confidence between the different personnel groups. Also, the variety of channels for both formal and informal feedback and discussions enabled greater opportunities for supervisors and subordinates to interact, exchange ideas and discuss performance expectations, thereby increasing trust (cf. Chiang & Birtch, 2010).

Further, in the case organization, critical assessment and systematic development of one´s own work was viewed as important. There was a readiness for questioning current actions and opening new points of view on working style. This demonstrates the preparedness of the employees to exploit their reflective capacity. The tools of becoming aware of, organizing and reconstructing experiences (Nesbit, 2012) exist in organizations. The task for PM is to create forums for sharing knowledge and experience between people in different departments and hierarchical levels. It is also connected to the transparency of the applied reflective work practices, because when reflection at work is made visible, it is also easier to discuss and create a shared understanding on issues related to daily work. After all, the effectiveness of PM will depend on how it affects individuals' behavior (Chenhall & Langfield-Smith, 2007).

Create a favorable measurement culture

The third PM role is to *create a favorable measurement culture*. A supportive organizational culture is required for reflective work practices to succeed. As a starting point, the case organization defined guidelines for a new learning culture with the intention that PM could be utilized to support this new culture in the future. In the case organization, the new learning culture aimed to enable the criticizing of prevailing working methods and rules without a

demand for development proposals. The learning culture also allowed everyone to take care of the essential issues concerning the entire organization without fear that they may "step on anyone's toes." Also, presenting one's own opinions was explicitly allowed, even when they overstepped hierarchical and organizational boundaries. On the other hand, the new culture also required that an individual allow similar proactive behavior from colleagues. Individuals earned with their own actions the other team members' support and trust. The learning culture required that the individuals be willing to help and support the other members of the team and organization. Individuals also had to be willing to offer her/his own knowledge and skills as common property of the team.

Measurement should encourage applying reflective practices at work, not create a culture of control. The focus of PM should thus be in strategy, not in control. According to Waal and Kourtit (2013), when the focus of PM and measurement is on strategy, it includes creating a focus on formulating, deploying, communicating, implementing and understanding the strategy throughout the organization. This refers to the point of view presented by Anthony and Govindarajan (2007). They state that PM activities aim to help organizations plan and coordinate what they should do, provide accurate and timely feed-forward and feedback on how they are doing, and encourage corrective behavior when needed. Encouragement and support are amplified when it comes to PM through reflective practices. It is important to construct measures that support the achievement of knowledge and learning goals (including the measures of reflective practice, learning and finances). In this case, measurement culture refers to the ways in which the measurement results are handled and communicated. The employees and managers need to have factual and constructive discussions of the measurement results. In this way, understanding of the measurement results and their consequences are certain to increase. The handling and reflection of the measurement results is a way to acquire consciousness of the outcomes, and thus benefits the whole business. The results are in line with Haines and St-Onge (2012), who found that the new learning culture needs to value employee engagement, because only then can the PM systems deliver their full potential. The engagement of employees also recast the role of supervisors as coaches, whose goal was to design tasks and provide support and resources that energized employees and absorbed them into their jobs (cf. Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Clarifying the goals at all organizational levels

PM and measurement are based on the organization´s strategy from which the goals and objectives of reflective work practices are derived. Thus, the fourth key issue in PM is *clarifying the goals at all organizational levels*. The case organization was part of a store chain, and its overall targets were defined by the parent organization. However, the case organization had autonomy to decide how these targets would be achieved. Although clear responsibilities between managers remained in place, the new learning culture program resulted in a partial

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dissolution of the old organizational boundaries. Reflective management control would be needed in creating the "infrastructure" for reflection to be implemented in everyday work.

When reflective work practices are applied, it is a PM challenge to clarify strategic and operational goals related to reflective HRM at all hierarchical levels. PM's strategy focus should be used for translating the organization's strategy at the operational level, for organization-wide strategy alignment and to clarify the capacities of the people who have to execute the strategy (Waal & Kourtit, 2013). Clarifying the goals helps employees understand the importance of reflecting current work practices. This includes clarifying the linkage between employees' actions and the organization's strategic goals and objectives. Regarding the reflective work practices of the case organization, the future success factors were determined at different levels: individual/group and organization. At the individual/group level, the targets were as follows: 1) multi-skills (technical & product), 2) active sales approach and willingness to serve, 3) coaching skills, and 4) system skills. As the reflective work practices were expected to have an impact on a customer´s experience, customer satisfaction was also included as a crucial goal. Financial goals included traditional financial measures, such as profits and sales. This set of performance measures was launched with the notion that higher results in reflective practices and development of knowledge and skills should lead to higher customer satisfaction and financial results. The measurement results were to be compared to each other to determine whether changes in certain measures predicted changes in other measures and eventually led to increased financial performance. Measures and the measurement results principal target group were managers.

Based on the results, the goals should be made visible to the employees when the reflective work practices are realized. It is also a motivational factor when employees know why something is put into practice. This effect is supported by the fact that the reflective practices are sustained and are not one-time interventions. As a whole, the results support the findings of Saunila and Ukko (2015). They concluded that reflective practices foster better outcomes when they are more explicit and targeted through different organizational levels. They also found that the role of PM and measurement is important in connecting the reflective practices with performance. PM must therefore be considered as a communication and social system that allows the employees to discuss the learning and development process as a part of the results.

Motivate employees to use reflective work practices by means of compensation and rewards

Fifth, PM's future challenge is to *motivate employees to use reflective work practices by means of compensation and rewards*. In the case organization, the financial reward system required reorganization. Current compensation was not seen as a motivational factor. However, having a master (coach) status was perceived as a non-financial reward. This reorganization was enabled by developing the reflective management control. The performance measurement was changed by increasing the measures of reflective practices and development of knowledge and

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skills to complement the customer satisfaction and financial measures. The case organization linked the measures of reflective practices and development of knowledge and skills to the customer satisfaction and financial measures. The preliminary results indicate that reflective practices have a positive impact on financial measures, when comparing the results to the other competitors in the same field.

This study shows that compensation and rewards act as important motivators regarding why an employee should reflect at work. The development of unique knowledge depends on the potential and willingness of the employees to acquire new and specific knowledge. This study thus supports the statement that appraisals and rewards play a large role in promoting such willingness (López-Cabrales et al., 2011). On the basis of this study, non-financial rewards were considered more effective in supporting reflective practices than financial rewards (cf. Ukko & Saunila, 2013). Being able to help others on the basis of one´s own experience was seen as a motivational factor and comparable to rewards. Although financial rewards were also operative, they were not an important factor in fostering reflective practices at work.

5   Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to study the role of PM in the use of reflective work practices. This study supports the view that PM can act as an important tool to manage and develop reflective work practices in order to attain performance goals. This requires, however, that reflective practices are explicit and targeted on the basis of strategic goals. Five roles of PM are emphasized in order to support reflective practices at work: making reflective work practices visible, supporting reflective dialogue, creating a favorable measurement culture, clarifying the goals at all organizational levels, and motivating employees to use reflective work practices by means of compensation and rewards. The roles have been clarified and the mechanisms of action have been revealed by the results. On the basis of this study, PM and HRM should not be separated, but organized in such a way that they support each other. Especially with regard to reflective practices, PM has great potential to support this type of HRM in order to benefit an organization's business. As a practical implication, these findings may help professionals begin to understand that leveraging reflective HRM practices may aid an organization in achieving its strategic goals.

The results presented in this paper offer many opportunities for future research. The study has concentrated on issues that are crucial in managing performance when reflective work practices are main sources for the professional development of employees. These issues include, for example, the role of compensation and rewards in motivation, clarifying the strategic HRM goals at all organizational levels, and creating a culture that favors the measurement of the impacts of reflective practices. The present study does not, however, provide measures for developing reflective practices. Further research should concentrate on developing measures that assist in this task. Another subject for future research is an empirical examination of the

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relationships between reflective work practices and organizational performance. This work would also assist in the measurement of reflective practices.

As a limitation, the findings of this study are based on data from a single case organization, which limits the manner in which the results might be generalized. However, due to the nature of the research subject, an in-depth case study is a proper research strategy to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which PM can support reflective practices. This study argues that more in-depth action research and case studies are needed to validate the results in terms of suitability, usefulness and acceptability. There are other potential limitations concerning the methods of data collection as well as those usually associated with action research. In order to minimize these issues, the data was gathered and analyzed through the cooperation of five researchers with regard to content analysis, after which the common view was discussed. Theory triangulation was also adopted. By employing different theoretical frameworks, the goal was to produce new understandings.

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