State of origin: research in global performance management, a proposed research domain and emerging implications

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to delineate a broad domain in the area of global performance management, so that ongoing research does not become so particularised and detailed that major activities of performance management – as globally practised across firms, industries and cultures – are ignored in the pursuit of increasingly constricted conceptualisations of 'performance'. The authors, therefore, propose a research domain that further differentiates performance management systems by considering the complexity in performance criteria with special emphasis on inputs, processes and outputs, by looking at explicit and implicit performance approaches and by investigating the extent of global standardisation and local customisation in global performance management.

Keywords: comparative performance metrics; cross-cultural performance appraisal; European performance research domain; global performance management theory.

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1   Introduction

Interest in global performance management (GPM) issues, academic and applied, continues to build (Caligiuri, 2006; Cascio, 2006). Advances in understanding the vertical links between global strategies and the form and content of performance management (Caligiuri, 2006; Caligiuri and Stroh, 1995); conceptualising the unique, horizontal, cross-cultural aspects of performance management (Brewster et al., 2004; Cascio and Bailey, 1995; Jackson, 2002); and using research designs tying these macro-level strategic issues to person level investigations (Caligiuri and Day, 2000; Wright and Nishii, 2004) have been ongoing and determined. These advances are not yet complete. According to Cascio (2006):

> "understanding those local customs, and mapping them across countries is a continuing challenge … The terrain of global performance management systems is largely uncharted." (pp.188 and 193)

At the same time, practitioner-based Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) and systems of increasingly capable, web facilitated, database enabled performance metrics create the promise of

> "sophisticated but easy to use analytical tools for Human Resource (HR) leaders to unlock the power of the data in their systems for analytical and business metric reporting." (Ryder, 2005, p.68)

This quote reflects the increased interest in more complex, timely, accurate and complete performance metrics (Kochanski and Sorensen, 2005). It is the promise of higher and higher magnifications – more resolution in the detail of those 'pixels of performance', if you will – that appears to be driving many of these recent developments. Efforts at increased control via these increasingly powerful lenses may be a reaction to three trends. The reaction may be due to the sheer complexity and inherent uncertainty of global performance and the bottom-line orientation increasingly required by a more competitive global environment. It may be related to the simple idea that tool capabilities (in this case sophisticated data analysis systems) create an increased interest in applying the tool to define and solve problems.

A central point of this paper is to present a potential irony. The empirical, conceptual and technical advances of the last 20 years in the domain of GPM may have combined to create an unforeseen danger. We see a danger in the use of increasingly sophisticated systems and techniques that lack a sufficiently broad conceptual base. This paper delineates a broad domain in the area of global performance management. Understanding this domain will ensure that ongoing research does not become so particularised and detailed that major activities of global performance management are ignored in the pursuit of increasingly constricted conceptualisations of performance. By presenting a more widely defined model of GPM, we hope to ensure that increased magnification and detail in performance metrics do not occur at the expense of a shared, globally encompassing and relevant definition of performance. Not taking this wider view provides more detail, but at the cost of the entire horizon of global performance management (Hilton, 1933).

Throughout this paper we use the term performance management in the micro sense – what some UK based researchers describe as 'performance appraisal'. Our efforts at understanding the performance domain is comprised of three sections. Firstly, we review research on the varied purposes and contexts of GPM. Moving beyond the traditional dualities of *developmental vs reward* purposes of performance management, we focus on research related to the development of global managers, as well as the use of performance management systems to build and reinforce a global corporate culture. Secondly, in the main section of the paper, we outline a systematic domain for GPM, an 'organisational geography' comprised of three elements: firstly, a horizontal dimension operationalising performance as person-based input, job-based process, and/or performance as outcome; secondly, a vertical dimension, distinguishing explicit vs implicit definitions of performance; and a third, 'depth' dimension, capturing the degree to which performance is conceptualised as a globally standardised or locally customised construct. These three dimensions: *performance as input/process/output*, *explicit vs implicit performance* and *standardisation/customisation* comprise a proposed 'terrain' (to use Cascio's term).

This terrain is parsimonious, and yet sufficient to provide adequate space for the development of GPM beyond the parochial origins of global executives and researchers alike. In the third section, we propose a series of potential 'rules of engagement' as actors (assessed and assessors) interact across the proposed domain of global performance management. The paper concludes with a series of observations on as yet unresolved issues and promising areas of further research.

2   Particular purposes: the complex content of global performance management

There is a long-standing body of research and theorising within US-based research outlining two purposes for performance management: *feedback* for developmental purposes, and the rationale for decisions with *consequences* for employees, such as pay, promotion, assignment or termination (Bernardin and Beatty, 1984; Cascio, 2006, pp.178–179; Evans et al., 2002, p.129). Furthermore, these two purposes are 'on the surface' said to be 'quite similar for domestic and international operations' and yet the 'major difference is that *implementation*' of these purposes is far more complex and problematic in international firms (Cascio, 2006, p.178). Briscoe and Schuler discuss these two purposes in terms of 'developmental goals' and 'evaluation goals' (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, p.355). These authors argue that complexities in transferring performance criteria, determining qualified evaluators, and developing appropriate form, frequency and feedback techniques create problems in the process, if not purposes, of GPM.

Evans et al. (2002, p.129) echo potential difficulties in implementing these two purposes. Differing communication styles and contexts may foil successful development efforts. Traditional risk-minimising pay practices, local legislation outlawing terminations, or the problems global firms share articulating global career options can thwart efforts to link evaluation results to personal consequences. Other authors have assessed the unique nature of global assignments in an effort to focus attention on the unique or particular context for GPM. In other words, what makes international work different in kind than domestic assignments, and how do these differences impact the purpose or context of GPM? Caligiuri distinguishes between 'technical performance', 'contextual performance', 'intercultural performance' and 'developmental performance' (Caligiuri, 2006, p.235). *Technical* performance work dimensions are the traditional 'aspect of work in job analytical terms and are represented by the task or duties (Borman and Motowidlio, 1993; Campbell, et al., 1993)' (Caligiuri, 2006, p.237). *Contextual* performance dimensions

> "may include such things as maintaining integrity, organisational commitment, promoting a positive image of the organisation, motivation and having a customer focus." (Caligiuri, 2006, p.237)

Intercultural performance dimensions relate to

> "an extensive need for communication with host nationals … and may include … negotiating … conducting training seminars … (in the host language) … working on a multicultural R&D team … presenting to … clients in the host language … adapting a marketing plan to a local culture … [or] … replacement planning." (Caligiuri, 2006, p.236)

Finally, some firms envision *developmental* performance dimensions; expecting 'global competence' or a global 'mindset' to result from rotational assignments (Caligiuri, 2006, p.238). This dimension may be associated with leadership development efforts. Sub-dimensions here may include:

> "learning how to conduct business in a country … building a network of professional relationships … learning the host country language … [or] … increasing one's understanding of the company's world-wide structure and operations." (Caligiuri, 2006, p.238)

Combining these four performance definitions across two dimensions – 'the significance of intercultural effectiveness' and an 'intended developmental component' – Caligiuri distinguishes between four forms of international assignments. 'Technical assignments' are described as low on the importance of intercultural effectiveness and low on development and estimated to be 5–10% of the total expatriate population. 'Developing high potentials' are described as indeterminate on intercultural effectiveness and high on development, and estimated to be 5–10% of the total expatriate population. 'Strategic or executive assignments' are seen as high on significance of intercultural effectiveness and high on an intended development component, and estimated to be 10–15% of the total expatriate population). Finally, 'functional' assignments are described as high on the significance of intercultural effectiveness and yet low on intended development component, and estimated to be 55–80% of the total expatriate population (for all four forms see Caligiuri (2006) pp.239–240).

Caligiuri's empirically based analysis provides two points of interest. Firstly, intended personal development may comprise no more than 25–35% of all expatriate assignments. The vast majority of assignments in her sample focus on understanding the local context and getting the immediate task accomplished. These intended developmental purposes may comprise a minority of assignments. Yet these developmental (or leadership) activities may be critical to implementing sophisticated global strategies (Caligiuri, 2006; Evans et al., 2002; Javidan et al., 2004).

Stroh et al. (2005, pp.4–11) present the developmental advantages of enhanced strategic capacity and enhanced coordination and control, as well as the more effective dissemination of information and innovation for more sophisticated global firms. Ghoshal and Bartlett (1997) also emphasise the critical developmental aspect of international human resource management (IHRM). These authors found empirical evidence to support their contention that careful attention to career management is essential, to ensure a proper competency mix of attitudes/traits, knowledge/experience and skills, if the transnational strategy is to be implemented (Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1997, pp.226–241).

A final purpose of context for GPM may be seen as an extension of the above stated purpose of 'strategic leadership'. One of the central problems facing diverse international firms – diverse as to products, geographic activities and markets, as well as management functional activities and employees – is the danger that all these sources of diversity centrifugally act to pull the firm apart – structurally, socially and politically (Bartlett et al., 2005; Evans et al., 2002; Galbraith, 2000; Nohria and Ghoshal, 1997). A strongly shared, deeply held corporate culture, what Bartlett and Ghoshal call the 'mind matrix', can be designed to overcome those internal and contextual forces of diversity (Bartlett et al., 2005; Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1997). Cultural integration, via a strong, shared firm culture, can create the 'discipline' to meet global challenges (Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1997, pp.160–166). This discipline may consist of a network of information flows, an 'organisational physiology', as well as those explicit, shared cultural values – an 'organisational psychology' – that combine to provide the transnational firm with balanced capabilities for global standardisation, local customisation and the diffusion of innovation (Bartlett et al., 2005, pp.349–351; Dowling et al., 2008).

Global performance management has the potential to be used to develop and reinforce these networks and systematically acknowledge, facilitate and reward

individuals who share, coordinate and act out the values of the transnational firms (Evans et al., 2002; Galbraith, 2000, pp.218–220; Nohria and Ghoshal, 1997, Chapter 10). Granted, a limited number of firms may now articulate or emphasise integrative culture building as a primary purpose for GPM. Yet there are aspects of this more sophisticated purpose or context to be found in the previous discussions of 'strategic executive assignments' (Caligiuri, 2006, p.240), the 'organisational glue' of GPM (Evans et al., 2002, pp.306–308) and the 'strategic purposes' of 'leadership development, 'coordination and control' and the dissemination of 'technology, innovation' and 'information' (Stroh et al., 2005, pp.4–12).

3 Mapping terrain: the organisational geography of global performance management

Given the three purposes of GPM outlined above – namely:

- providing general developmental feedback and decision consequences

- facilitating the development of contextual performance

- building and maintaining a strong, overarching integrative corporate culture

we must also look at global performance management as a process. Cascio delineates three elements to the process: defining performance, facilitating performance and encouraging performance (Cascio, 2006, pp.179–182). Dowling et al. (2008) discuss defining performance 'criteria', ensuring that multiple raters or assessors with useful perspectives are part of the process, and process issues – such as the format, frequency and feedback methodology. Caligiuri presents a five step process:

- determine 'the broad content domain' of performance – across countries for the same position

- determine if these jobs are comparable

- if so, create 'conceptual equivalence' that can be applied across cultures and countries

- determine 'how' the evaluations will be organised

- 'who' will conduct the appraisal(s) (Caligiuri, 2006, pp.232–236).

She cites research to support the contention that 'objective task-based performance dimensions' were less influenced by differences in rater-ratee (what we call actor) nationality than 'subjective contextual performance dimensions' (Caligiuri, 2006, p.234).

As stated earlier, any research domain we envision must be wide enough to capture these types of processes and yet presents a framework parsimonious enough to facilitate future research. We suggest three dimensions:

- complex performance criteria

- explicit vs implicit GPM process

- globally standardised vs locally customised GPM.

Each dimension will be presented and then combined to create a proposed domain for GPM research.

3.1 Complexity in performance criteria

An oft-cited reason for the difficulty of GPM is the acknowledgement that performance management measures and criteria are complex (Evans et al., 2002, pp.110–111). All the actors in the GPM process seldom share a common 'theory of performance' (Cascio, 2006, p.184). Some time ago, Phatak warned against relying solely on financial outcomes; recommending that consideration should also be given to non-financial measures

> "such as market share, productivity, relations with the host-country government, public image, employee morale, union relations, community involvement, and so on … it might be advisable to formalise the process, with scorecard ratings for all subsidiaries based on the same broad range of variables." (Phatak, 1995, p.236)

A range of process and outcome criteria provide a more accurate sense of individual performance over time, as uncertain and unpredictable local contexts will inevitably change (Phatak, 1995, pp.236–237).

Dowling et al. (2008) warn against standardising performance criteria. This is in line with Cascio, who hypothesises that more 'well established' global firms will assess 'factors in addition to technical proficiency and productivity indicators' and incorporate 'the behaviours used to generate results' (Cascio, 2006, p.192). Subjective criteria are critical for GPM systems. These criteria include 'leadership style and interpersonal skills' and 'contextual criteria' such as 'organisational citizenship behaviours' (helping and cooperating with others, working with enthusiasm, volunteering for activities, being flexible and open to change) (Cascio, 2006, p.193). Contextual criteria also include indicators of cross-cultural skill development (for example language, host culture, communication, networking) (Davis, 1998). Note that these criteria include elements related to the person, the process or context of the tasks and the output of tasks (Perlman, 1980). Also note that the criteria must be diverse and 'dense' enough to facilitate the three varied purposes of GPM outlined in Section 2 above. Some performance criteria are more tactical, while others are more strategic.

We suggest a three-element model of performance criteria, consisting of person, activities and results (Engle and Mendenhall, 2004; McAdams, 1996). This three-part categorical scheme for performance will focus on performance as personal input, job process and result outcome. Traditional systematic performance management systems in the US started out as production output schemes – readily observable piece-rate or productivity systems (Lytle, 1946; Mahoney, 1979; Milkovich and Newman, 2005). As performance became more complex and interdependent, and the costs and accuracy of measuring output became more problematic, job processes and personal skills or certifications became accepted as more readily accessible proxies for performance outcomes (Engle and Mendenhall, 2004; Mahoney, 1989). Personal qualities – the acquisition and application of skills, experience, certifications, or involvement in successful projects or assignments – may be seen as indicators of past

performance as well as the promise for ongoing performance (Engle and Mendenhall, 2004). A typical example for an input factor would include a degree from a prestigious French Grande Ecole, which is an important predictor for successful career development. In contrast, in other European countries, such as Germany, the institution granting the degree may not be of such a long-term importance for a person's career (Alexandre-Bailly et al., 2007). The acquisition of Cascio's 'cross-cultural skill development' is another example for such a person-based performance indicator. Sinangil and Ones (2001) present independent dimensions of expatriate performance that focus on the person – 'communication and persuasion' and 'effort and initiative' and 'personal discipline'.

Job-based processes – the context of performance – may be seen as performance as a work-in-process (Engle and Mendenhall, 2004). Cascio's 'contextual criteria' that focus on 'helping and cooperating, volunteering for *activities* (our emphasis)' and the 'subjective' criteria of 'leadership skills' and 'interpersonal skills' appear to emphasise the process aspects of performance (Cascio, 2006, pp.192–193). Sinangil and Ones (2001) present independent dimensions that appear to focus on process. The 'ability to work with others', 'task performance', 'interpersonal relations' and 'management and supervision' attend to the contextual process of work. These authors also speak to performance as output in the dimension of 'productivity'. Figure 1 presents these three aspects of performance. This factor makes up the horizontal dimension of the proposed GPM domain construct. This more complex view of performance – presented here on the micro (individual employee) level – is paralleled with observations on the complexity of 'organisational performance' on the macro level, and a need for a strategic 'combination of financial [output] and non-financial measures' of organisational performance (Stavrou et al., 2005).

Figure 1   Complexity in performance criteria
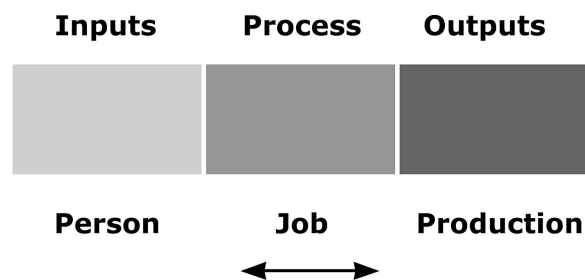
## 3.2   *Explicit and implicit approaches to performance*

Cultures may differ systematically in terms of openness in communication, and willingness to share one's thoughts without self-censoring. Hall and Hall (1990) refer to 'low context' cultures – more explicit and overt in their interactions and communications and 'high context cultures' – more covert and implicit in communicating deeply shared values. Low context cultures and firms value transparency and 'standardisation' via formalised, documented processes of management activities – particularly processes as central to organisational control

as GPM (Jones, 2004, p.112; Triandis, 2002). High context cultures and firms value the flexibility, social harmony and cooperative emphasis inherent in 'mutual adjustment' – the use of implicit, unspoken social judgement to ensure effective control (Jones, 2004, pp.111–112). Both forms provide conformity and control (Dowling et al., 2008; Ouchi, 1981). A typical European example of a high-context culture is France, while Germany represents a rather low-context country. These differences indicate already that the complexity that is inherent in developing implications for a European perspective on performance management.

At this point it might be useful to distinguish between explicit and implicit forms of GPM and the important terms 'objective' and 'subjective' performance (as used by Caligiuri (2006), p.233). Explicit performance is, by definition, recorded and formalised and the subject of shared externalised communications. Some explicit performance may be objective – that is the degree and precision of shared meaning is high. Industrial or professional principles and processes (e.g. generally accepted accounting principles, US Securities and Exchange Commission regulations, the laws of mathematics), may be so widely shared that precise agreement as to categorisation and assessment may be realised. According to Hegewisch and Larsen (1996), compensation is often linked to these objective criteria. For example, educational background or seniority may play a role here. Other explicit dimensions of performance may be more subjective – that is, there are fuzzy or incomplete agreements across parties in assessing and evaluating these performance criteria (Bernardin and Beatty, 1984, Chapter 6).

Interestingly, some researchers in the area of IHRM have noted that the lack of a common, shared 'decision science for talent' in HRM may be responsible for a lack of sustained theoretical development and the diminished impact of HRM in executive corporate circles. This lack of impact is particularly noticeable in comparison to business fields such as finance and accounting (Boudreau et al., 2003). Leadership is a common explicit, yet subjective, performance dimension that is vague enough to be framed as specific to a person (as in the US) or as a generalised social process (as in Japan and much of the Asian Pacific region) (Zinzius, 2004). Recent calls for increased 'frame of reference' training to 'provide trainees with a 'theory of performance' (Cascio, 2006, pp.184–185) and developing measures with 'conceptual equivalence' (Caligiuri, 2006, pp.232–233), may be seen as efforts to decrease subjectivity in explicit performance criteria.

It may be more difficult to speak the unspeakable, and create GPM processes and systems to make explicit the implicit. This is a particular problem when doing business in cultures that have long-held traditions of familial control, recognise the importance of 'face', and practice passive, diffuse values (Jackson, 2002, p.122; Triandis, 2001, 2002; Zinzius, 2004, pp.138–140). These understudied processes may relate to Caligiuri's first and second steps of developing performance criteria: namely determining a shared 'broad content domain'. Figure 2 represents these proposed relationships and the explicit/implicit dimension makes up the vertical dimension of our proposed GPM domain construct.

Figure 2   Explicit-implicit performance approaches
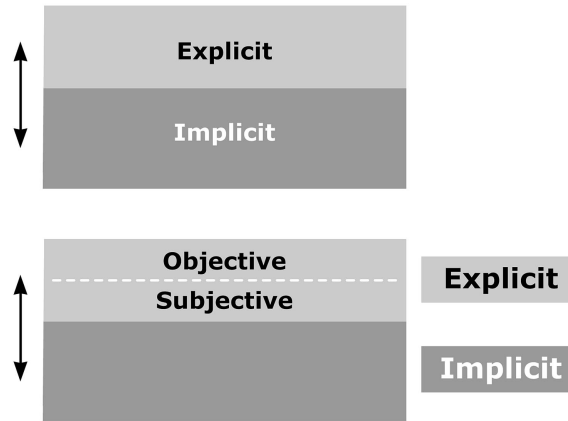
This explicit-implicit dimension is not new. US-based research and positivist statements by practitioners and academics have – for over 50 years – asserted the superiority of 'cultivated' ratings (Lytle, 1946, p.232). More explicit methods (namely behaviourally anchored ratings scales, mixed standard scales, graphic ratings scales and critical incident checklists), have legal and practical advantages over more implicit methods (such as paired comparisons, rank ordering, trait ratings and weighted checklists) (Bernardin and Beatty, 1984, Chapter 4; Latham and Wexley, 1981). Within this tradition, implicit assessment is presumed to be biased assessment. Global performance management practices may be more or less explicit in terms of five areas. These areas are: the criteria of performance, the frequency and timing of assessment, the legitimacy of actors in the process, the nature of feedback and institutionalised form for appeal or reconsideration of assessment decisions (Cascio and Bailey, 1995). Cross-cultural research on these issues is largely absent (Lindholm, 2000).

### 3.3   Global standardisation and local customisation in global performance management

The third and final dimension of performance is common to much research on multinational firms in general, strategies of globalisation and, more recently, issues of IHRM. This is the issue of dealing with the inherent tensions between the efficiencies of globally standardised organisational activities (in this case GPM) and the effectiveness of locally customised activities (Bartlett et al., 2005; Brewster et al., 2004; Evans et al., 2002; Festing et al., 2007).

Caligiuri deals with this issue by contrasting the strategic purposes of multidomestic firms (emphasising local customisation) with the strategic purposes of global firms (emphasising worldwide integration and standardisation) (Caligiuri, 2006, pp.229–230). As strategic purpose drives GPM decision-making in criteria selection, determining relevant actors and setting up methods and processes, these decision streams should tilt toward standardisation or customisation as a matter of strategic implementation. Stavrou et al. (2005) provide empirical evidence on three sub-regions within the European Union (pre-May 2004 expansion) that suggests that

'bundles' of HR practices (such as merit pay and group bonuses) may be common across these three regions. They go on to state that 'the HRM-performance link is moderated by geography' (Stravou et al., 2005, p.25). More empirical research along these lines is called for.

Cascio reiterates the need to be 'sensitive to local conditions' yet presents process models that emphasise universals. 'Formal systems should be implemented' (Cascio, 2006, p.187) and a 'common set' of 'three features' – defining performance, facilitating performance, and encouraging performance, are called for (Cascio, 2006, pp.179–182). The notion of training employees in a shared theory of performance also intimates an ultimate reliance on some level of standardisation. Caligiuri presents this issue in terms of standardising 'comparable dimensions' of performance and then possibly providing customisation via 'conceptual equivalence'. Real customisation may only occur through the local perspective of 'who' is assessing, and the 'how' performance is assessed in the local context (Caligiuri, 2006, pp.232–233). Figure 3 presents this standardised-customised dimension that makes up the third, 'depth' dimension in our proposed GPM domain.

Figure 3 Global standardisation and local customisation in global performance management

Globally Standardised

Locally Customised
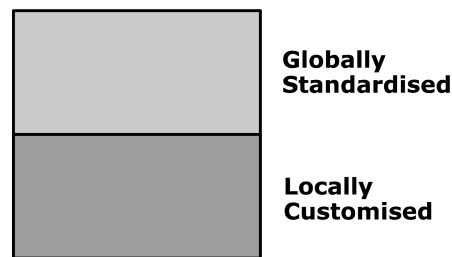
These three dimensions, the horizontal dimension of performance criteria, the vertical dimension of explicit vs implicit performance, and the third 'breadth' dimension of standardisation and customisation, are combined in Figure 4 to create a research domain, an organisational geography, for GPM.

Figure 4 A proposed research domain for global performance management
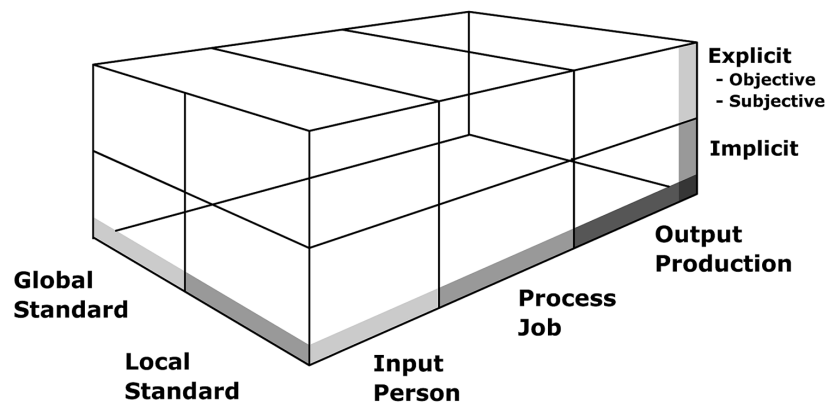
Taken literally, this domain comprises a 'lost horizon' critical to progress in GPM. Imagery and metaphor are long-standing devices for sharing and exploring personal and social perspectives. Research in IHRM has much to gain from presenting and exploring these metaphors as a primary step in understanding cross-cultural issues (Engle and Mendenhall, 2003; Gelfand and McCusker, 2002; Lawler, 1985; Mitroff, 1985). The imagery presented here is the vast panorama of an uncharted mountain range, with areas of lowlands blanketed in the mist of low-lying clouds.

How researchers and practitioners focus their attentions on the domain of GPM is important. It is equally important to consider the probability that individuals coming from different cultural, industrial and institutional backgrounds will be prone to focus on divergent regions of this vast and complex domain. A conceptually limited, overly focused perspective on the topic of GPM, coupled with increasingly sophisticated HRIS capabilities operating at high levels of 'magnification', may provide a false sense of precision in capturing performance, at the expense of a more complete understanding of the critical topic of GPM.

4   Actors and rules of engagement for global performance management

In this final section, we investigate different actors (the assessors and the assessed) and the processes (i.e. Cascio's stages of defining performance, facilitating performance and encouraging performance), as these actors and processes operate across the panoramic terrain presented in the previous section. We will discuss those actions and issues in GPM that make *implementation* 'much more difficult in the international arena' as these actions and issues relate to our mapped terrain (Cascio, 2006, p.178). These widely noted actions and issues may comprise the 'rules of engagement' commonly operating in GPM.

Parent country nationals (PCNs) may create a GPM system (that is select criteria, operationalise criteria, determine the method and timing of the evaluation) and operate that system via long distance remote control, systematically assessing host country nationals (HCNs), or third country nationals (TCNs). What if the PCNs have created and incompletely applied a standardised, explicit, outcome based construction of GPM while HCNs and TCNs are operating from a customised, implicit, input or person perspective? Potential differences in perspective could be insurmountable (Dowling et al., 2008). In an investigation of 78 expatriate managers, Caligiuri and Day (2000) found that national differences in GPM assessment dyads had a greater effect – that is a greater cultural distance between assessed and assessor was associated with lower performance outcomes – for the contextual, as opposed to technical dimensions of performance. Is the performance actually lower, or are these two culturally diverse actors simply looking for evidence of performance in very different locations in the wide-ranging terrain of GPM? We describe this issue as 'divergence in foci'.

According to Cascio,

> "while local management tends to appraise the expatriate's performance from its own cultural frame of reference, such an evaluation is usually perceived (by executives at corporate headquarters) as more accurate than that from the home office." (Cascio, 2006, pp.192–193)

In this engagement situation, local assessor perspectives may dominate the focus of attention and the mental models of the expatriate's home culture and the corporate headquarters' frame of reference are secondary. We describe this difficulty as 'proximity focus'.

As discussed earlier in the paper on performance as person, process and output, performance metrics for global situations can be complex. Some performance criteria may be 'hard', some 'soft' and some 'contextual' (Dowling et al., 2008). Caligiuri's research suggests that differences in cultural perspective on the part of GPM actors (the assessed and the potentially multiple assessors) may impact decisions differently for hard, as opposed to soft or contextual performance criteria (Caligiuri, 2006, p.235). The 'psychological distance' of cultural differences between assessor and assessed can vary tremendously. It varies again by the nature of the performance criteria (hard, soft or contextual). Given these two sources of complex variances, actors may more or less implicitly weigh different categories of criteria idiosyncratically. Mapping and predicting overall patterns of performance assessment becomes difficult. We describe this issue as 'interactive segmentation'.

We would predict that firms pursuing globalisation strategies would shift their emphasis from a reliance on local HRM processes and systems – including local performance management processes and systems – to more standardised processes and systems with increased experience and sophistication in HR activities and systems (Caligiuri, 2006; Dowling et al., 2008; Evans et al., 2002). The failure to successfully implement this shift from locally customised to globally standardised GPM may lead to miscommunication and disagreements as to the legitimacy of explicit vs implicit definitions of performance. There may also be serious disagreements as to what are acceptable performance criteria and the legitimacy of personal inputs vs job process vs task outcomes. We describe this issue as 'depth of field'. In a narrow depth of field GPM actors either focus solely on foreground (local customisation) or on background (global standardisation). In a wider depth of field actors involved in GPM can conceptually incorporate and balance – in terms of relevant concepts, models and processes – *both* global standardisation *and* local customisation. This 'depth of field' issue relates to Caligiuri's presentation on 'conceptual equivalence' in designing GPM processes (Caligiuri, 2006, p.232).

Finally, the purpose or context of GPM may create unique cognitive patterns or differing 'panoramas' for actors operating in global firms. Consequence-based GPM activities may emphasise the criteria of task outputs, relying on explicit models in a globally standardised manner. For the purposes of developmental assessment, these same actors may shift their emphasis (for the same individual being assessed) and widen their selection of performance criteria to include personal (input) and process (context) criteria. They may also expand their analysis to include – consciously or unconsciously – more implicit dimensions of performance, as well as take local models of assessment into consideration. We describe this potential issue as 'form follows function'.

5   Conclusion: a formidable research agenda

Within this paper we have proposed a research domain for global performance management. Our model reflects a state of origin in three senses of the phrase.

Firstly, for researchers, this presentation is intended to be a first step in mapping uncharted 'terrain' (Cascio, 2006, p.193) and, as such, our efforts are incomplete at best. Factoring this terrain into grids, applying robust metaphors to systematically assess the elements of the proposed domain, and empirically investigating – surveying in the engineering sense of the term – this terrain, are logical additional steps.

Secondly, all interested parties (researcher and practitioners alike), have their own personal states of origin, those disciplinary and cultural perspectives that by necessity create focus, foreground and background. US-based researchers tend to have an output-explicit-global standardisation perspective (bias?) that may have become more and more contracted in focus over time. The awareness of a broader domain for GPM, and a willingness to systematically evaluate these differing perspectives, may be beneficial at this time in order to facilitate efficient theoretical development. One individual's 'uncultivated variety of employee ratings' may be another's essential system in practice (Lytle, 1946, p.232).

For example, as Zinzius (2004, p.183) notes, is 'quanxi' – literally 'relations' – those 'connections defined by reciprocity and mutual obligations … [that] … network of family, friends and acquaintances … built up, who can provide material or immaterial support of any means, based on personal favours' a personal, implicit, locally customised form of performance management that has worked for hundreds of millions of people for centuries? As we investigate business practices in Asia, Africa and South America are we to ignore or dismiss out of hand long-standing business practices as 'uncultivated', or should we try to understand them and assess their usefulness?

Put another way, do US models and perspectives have a 'bias for summits'? What is the impact of a delimited and parochial focus on explicit, standardised, output criteria models for the investigation of GPM?

Thirdly, is this limited focus being facilitated by the technological advances of increasingly complex, global decision support systems (GDSSs)? Is the focal field increasingly microscopic – filled with details and yet without a complete context? If our state of origin is characterised by more depth of information and finer and finer detail, how can we alter the design of these systems to take a more encompassing, panoramic view of GPM? This new technological capability will be critical for global firms that have those advanced developmental purposes outlined in the second section of this paper. Building a coordinated, integrated transnational capability will require GDSSs that scan and encompass cultures, functions and processes (Engle et al., 2003).

We conclude with a series of observations. There is much more to the difficult complexity of GPM than metrics (Bates, 2003; Becker and Huselid, 2003). Performance metrics stand at the pinnacle of processes, systems, purposes, strategies, values and assumptions. Unless we can encompass this complexity we will never meet the practical requirements of global firms. Simply training employees to apply one shared frame of reference is problematic. By standardising process do we lose the reality of performance as understood in context? Should we rather train employees in the complexity of the issues outlined above and undertake unique, culturally relevant, interactive two-way conversations on these issues? Our collective ability to encompass and appreciate the panorama of GPM is a critical first step in building a 'theory of performance' that is truly shared (Cascio, 2006, p.184; Sulsky and Day, 1992).

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