Teamwork and its contribution to High Performance Workplace Organization: UK response

Q.0 Survey descriptions

National surveys constitute the main sources of evidence relied upon to answer this questionnaire. They are as follows:

National surveys

(i) Workplace Employee Relations Surveys (WERS) 1998 and 2004

WERS 1998 and 2004 are representative surveys of establishments in Great Britain. They cover most sectors, with the exception of agriculture, forestry and fishing: mining and quarrying and overseas organisations. The 2004 survey included all workplaces employing five or more persons (the 1998 survey covered establishments with 10 or more employees). A workplace is defined as comprising ‘the activities of a single employer at a single set of premises [i.e. location]’, full details of the survey are available at www.niesr.ac.uk/niesr/wers98. The sample is drawn, on a stratified random basis, from the official register of business and employing organisations. Fieldwork for the 2004 survey took place from February 2004 until April 2005, and resulted in the completion of 22,451 employee questionnaires (a 61% response rate) as well as interviews with managers and employee representatives. All findings were weighted to adjust for the effects of stratification of the sample and non-response bias (for further details please see www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/surveys/UK05011SR01).

The 1998 Cross-Section Survey contained the following three components:

- Face-to-face interview with a main management respondent;
- Face-to-face interview with a worker representative, where present;
- Self completion questionnaire distributed to a random selection of employees (new for WERS 1998).

The 1990-8 Panel Survey returned to a random selection of workplaces that had participated in the 1990 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey. A face-to-face interview was conducted with a main management respondent, with the specific intention of identifying change since 1990. Over 2,000 workplaces and nearly 30,000 employees took part in the 1998 Cross Section survey. Around 900 surviving workplaces participated in the 1990-98 Panel Survey. Response rates of 80 per cent for the Cross Section’s main management interviews and 83 per cent for the Panel Survey give a clear indication of the quality of the resultant data.

In keeping with its predecessors WERS 2004 contains both a cross section and a panel element. The Cross Section survey contains the following components:

- A face to face interview with the senior manager that has responsibility for employment relations or personnel issues (Average duration 110 minutes);
- A four page, self completion questionnaire on the financial performance of the establishment over the past 12 months (new to WERS 2004);
• A face to face interview with a trade union representative and a non-union employee representative, where present (average duration 45 minutes); and
• An eight page, self completion questionnaire distributed to a random selection of up to 25 employees at each workplace.

All workplaces in Britain with five or more employees, and whose activities are located within Sections D-0 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1992, are eligible for the Cross section survey. The Cross Section Survey data comprise responses from approximately 2,300 managers; 1,000 employee representatives and 22,000 employees. The 1998-2004 Panel Survey returns to a random selection of workplaces that participated in the 1998 Cross Section Survey. A face-to-face interview is conducted with a main management respondent, with the specific intention of identifying change since 1998. Around 1,000 establishments have taken part in the Panel survey. The remaining 1,200 establishments that took part in the 1998 Cross Section survey will be traced in order to establish whether they are still in existence or have closed down.

Full findings from the WERS 2004 will be published in a major source book in Spring 2006. The dataset will become publicly accessible in November 2005, but the publication of any findings from the analysis undertaken by the wider research community is embargoed until after the launch of the source book. Currently, only the first findings are available.

(ii) The Change in Employer Practices Survey (CEPS) 2002

The CEPS (2002) consisted of a total of 2,000 telephone interviews with employers in Great Britain. The survey was establishment based, that is, information was collected on an individual site basis irrespective of whether or not the site formed part of a larger organisation. Only those establishments employing five or more staff were included within the scope of the survey. The sample was drawn from British Telecommunications Business Database (known as Yell Data), a regularly up-dated comprehensive list of establishments in Britain with a business telephone line. The main stage of interviewing was carried out between 23 July and 2 September 2002. The principal respondent was the senior person responsible for human resource or personnel issues. Generally, in establishments with 100 employees or more, this was the human resource/personnel director or manager. In establishments with fewer than 100 employees it was typically the owner, proprietor or the site or office manager. The approximate average length of the interview was 30 minutes (White et al. 2004).

Q.1 Question wordings and figures which deal with the incidence of teamwork in the UK

Q.1a Incidence of team working

(i) WERS 1998 and 2004

The question asked was: What proportion, if any, of [the largest occupational group] at this workplace work in formally designated teams?

All
Almost all
Most
Around half
Some
In 2004, a further question was added: What proportion if any of [the largest occupational group] at this workplace work in problem solving groups involving non-managerial employees?

All
Almost all
Most
Some
Just a few
None

(ii) CEPS 2002
Questions asked were: (i) Over the past three years has the number of employees working in formally designated teams:
Increased
Stayed the Same
Decreased
(ii) Over the past three years has the variety of work that staff are expected to do:
Increased
Stayed the same
Decreased
and (iii) In your workplace are there teams that get together to generate ideas or suggestions for improving the way that work is done?

Q.1b Figures on the extent of team working
There are no figures available on gender or educational attainment and team working in the UK.

(i) WERS 1998 and 2004
In the WERS 1998, 83% of managers stated that at least some employees in the largest occupational group worked in formally designated teams (the figures were 85% and 72% respectively for the public sector and private sector. In addition, at 65% of workplaces, most employees in the largest occupational group worked in teams.

There was considerable variation in team working depending upon which occupation formed the core workforce. Team working was least common where craft & related workers and operative & assembly workers formed the core.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of team working in core workforce, by occupation</th>
<th>At least some team working</th>
<th>No team working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest occupational group</td>
<td>% of workplaces</td>
<td>% of workplaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate professional and technical</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and secretarial</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and related</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and protective services</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and machine operatives</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other occupations</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All workplaces</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cully et al. (1999:44).

Base: All workplaces with 25 or more employees.

 Seventy-two per cent of managers in small workplaces (between 10 and 99 employees) said that at least some of their employees in the largest occupational group worked in formally designated teams. This rate was higher for small multiples (where the workplaces are part of a wider organisation and where total employment in the organisation exceeds 100 employees) than for stand alone sites (79% and 65% respectively) and higher than where a full-time working owner was present (58%). Approximately one-third of all small workplaces (34%) said that all employees in the largest occupational group worked in teams. Having all or almost all employees in teams was no more likely in the very smallest of workplaces (those with 10 to 24 employees), which suggests that managers had been able to make a distinction between team working and more traditional notions of the workforce being ‘one big happy family’.

According to the WERS 2004, the incidence of team working had changed little since 1998. Almost three-quarters of workplaces had at least some core employees in formally designated teams (72%) although there had been a slight rise in the public sector (from 85% to 88%) and a slight decrease in the private sector (from 72% to 68%). Where team working was in place it was usually embedded among staff: 80% of workplaces with team working extended it to at least three-fifths of core employees.

Problem-solving groups were much less common than team working. Around one-fifth (21%) of workplaces had groups of non-managerial employees that met to solve specific problems or discuss aspects of performance or quality. In less than two-fifths (38%) of these workplaces (that is only 8% of all workplaces) these groups involved at least 60% of the non-managerial employees. Larger workplaces were less likely than smaller workplaces to involve most of their non-managerial employees in problem-solving groups.

(ii) CEPS 2002

Twenty-eight per cent of the managers surveyed reported an increase in the use of formally designated teams, while only two per cent of managers reported a decrease in their use.

Among organisations where the variety of tasks that employees perform was increasing, 40% were also increasing the amount of formal team working, whereas in organisations where the variety of tasks per employee was static, only 20% were increasing their team working. Fifty per cent of workplaces said that they made use of work improvement groups to some extent.
Q.2 Survey questions concerning team form and organisation

Q.2a Form and Organisation of Teams

(i) WERS 1998 and 2004

Questions asked were: (i) Which if any of the following statements apply to the way that team working operates among the largest occupational group at this workplace?
(ii) Team working depends upon team members working together
Yes
No
and (iii) Teams are given responsibility for specific products or services
Yes
No

Q.2b Main findings

(i) WERS 1998 and 2004

As mentioned above, in 65% of workplaces most employees in the core workforce worked in teams. However, in a small proportion of cases (three per cent) team members did not actually work with one another! In other words, whilst the employees were designated by their employers as members of the same team they did not actually work alongside one another. Furthermore, in a large number of cases the team did not have responsibility for a specific product or service (11%). In 2004 this figure had risen so that 17% of teams did not have responsibility for a specific product or service.

Q.3 Does teamwork increase autonomy of employees in decision making about their work? What degree of self-regulation can be distinguished?

Q.3a Autonomy of members in a team

(i) WERS 1998 and 2004

Questions asked were: (i) Which if any of the following statements apply to the way that team working operates among the largest occupational group at this workplace?
(ii) Team members jointly decide how the work is to be done
Yes
No
and (iii) Team members are able to appoint their own leaders
Yes
No

(ii) CEPS 2002
The questions asked was: In your workplace are there teams that organise their own work without a supervisor?

**Q.3b Content and main findings**

(i) **WERS 1998 and 2004**

The WERS 1998 revealed that just over half of teams were allowed to jointly decide how team work was to be done, but only five per cent of teams appointed their own team leader. According to the survey’s authors this meant that only three per cent of workplaces met the four criteria necessary to fit the model of fully autonomous team working (team members worked together; teams had responsibility for specific products or services; teams jointly decided how team work was to be done; and teams appointed their own leader) while 35% of workplaces operated teams that approximately corresponded to a model of semi-autonomous team working.

The incidence of (at least) semi-autonomous teams was lowest in manufacturing workplaces, hotels and restaurants and transport and communication. In these industries it amounted to no more than one-fifth of workplaces.

WERS 2004 showed that 61% of teams in the workplaces surveyed could jointly decide how work was done, which marks an increase from the 1998 survey. In just six per cent of workplaces teams were allowed to appoint their own team leader, this is only a very slight increase on the 1998 figure.

(ii) **CEPS 2002**

Nearly 40% of workplaces operated some teams that organised their own work without a supervisor (self-directed teams).

**Q.4 To what extent are workers satisfied with team based ways of working? Can you also report on an association between overall job satisfaction and teamwork presence? Does teamwork increase overall job satisfaction?**

**Q.4a Satisfaction with teamwork**

The evidence on the relationship between job satisfaction and team working is limited. The main survey evidence relating to job satisfaction does not look at team work as a specific issue. Most of the recent evidence relating to job satisfaction, including the 2001 Skills Survey (Felstead et al. 2002) shows that job satisfaction has declined in Britain in recent years, due at least in part to decreasing levels of task discretion. This suggests that team working in practice has not had a big impact on increasing levels of task discretion for employees (www.kent.ac.uk/economics/staff/gfg/WorkSkills1986-2001.doc)

**Q.4b Main Findings**

(i) **WERS 2004**

Findings from this survey show that those working in teams with greater autonomy were more satisfied with the amount of influence they had over their jobs than team-workers who were given limited freedom or responsibility. The full data on these findings are not yet available.
Q.5 Does any evidence exist in your country about connections between teamwork presence, higher work intensity and probable work overload?

Q.5a Interconnection between teamwork introduction and higher work intensity and higher stress exposure

The effects of selected high-performance practices have been analysed (White et al. 2003) with data from two national surveys of British employees the Employment in Britain Survey (EIBS) in 1992 and the Working in Britain Survey (WIBS) 2000 survey. These two surveys are representative surveys of the employed and self-employed in Great Britain, with samples restricted to those aged between 20 and 60 years inclusive. The EIBS generated a sample of 3,855 employed people with a response rate of 72%. The research was conducted in 1992. The WIBS produced a sample of 2,466 employed people with a response rate of 65%. The research was conducted between June 2000 and January 2001.

In the EIBS 1992, the question asked was: How often would you say the following statements are true of yourself?

1. After work I have too little time to carry out my family responsibilities as I would like.
2. My job prevents me from giving the time I would like to my partner/family.
3. My partner/family gets a bit fed up with the pressure of my job.

Almost always
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Never

Item 2 was reversed in the WIBS 2000 to read ‘My job allows me to give the time I would like to my partner/family’ but the authors of the study do not believe that this affected the meaning of the scale.

Group working practices were represented by four items:

1. whether or not the individual worked in a group
2. whether co-workers influenced how hard the individual worked
3. whether the individual took part in work improvement or quality circles
4. whether pay depends in part on the performance of the work group

Q.5b Main findings

The EIBS and WIBS results confirmed that Britain’s work-life balance was not simply a problem of long hours worked. High performance work practices (HPWPs), including group work, were a source of spill-over of work into home life, even after controlling for working hours. Overall, the results suggest a conflict between high-performance practices and work-life balance policies and in particular showed group working practices were playing a larger role in work demands.
Q.6 What is the impact of teamwork on learning environment in organization?

Q.6a National surveys

(i) WERS 1998 and 2004

The questions asked were: (i) What proportion of experienced [workers in the largest occupational group] have been given time off from their normal daily work duties to undertake training over the past 12 months?

- All (100%)
- Almost all (80-99%)
- Most (60-79%)
- Around half (40-59%)
- Some (20-39%)
- Just a few (1-19%)
- None (0%)

(ii) Did any experienced [workers in the largest occupational group] have time off from their normal daily work duties to undertake training over the past 12 months?

- Yes
- No

(iii) On average, how many days of training did experienced [workers in the largest occupational group] undertake over the past 12 months?

- No time
- Less than one day
- Less than 2 days
- Less than 5 days
- Less than 10 days
- 10 days or more

(iv) Did this training cover any of the matters listed on this card?

- Computing skills
- Teamworking
- Communication skills
- Leadership skills
- Operation of new equipment
- Customer service/liaison
- Health and safety
- Problem-solving methods
- Equal opportunities
- Reliability and working to deadlines
- Quality control procedures
- None of these

(v) Did the training have any of the objectives listed on this card?

- Improve the skills already used by employees in their current jobs
- Extend the range of skills used by employees in their current jobs
- Provide the skills needed for employees to move to different jobs
- Obtain Investors in People status* or other quality standard
- Increase employees’ understanding of, or commitment to, the organisation
- Some other objective(s)
None of these

*The Investors in People (IIP) Standard is a national quality standard designed to advance an organisation’s performance through its people. It was developed in 1990 by a partnership of leading businesses and national organisations to help organisations to improve performance and realise objectives through the management and development of their people. Currently there are over 37,000 IIP recognised organisations in the UK employing over 27% of the UK workforce.

Q.6b Main Findings

(i) WERS 1998 and 2004

The WERS 1998 found that some training took place for employees in four-fifths of workplaces. In these workplaces managers were asked about the type of training which was provided. Training was often provided in just one area: this was most likely to be health and safety (40%), the operation of new equipment (27%) or computing skills (14%) none of which are related to team working. Of more interest is the way in which some topics were combined. Combinations of training in team working, improved communications and problem-solving methods were apparent, with one-third (34%) of workplaces providing training in at least two of these areas.

Areas covered by training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of training</th>
<th>Per cent of workplaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation of new equipment</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing skills</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team working</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving communications</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service/liaison</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality control procedures</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving methods</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability and working to deadlines</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cully et al. (1999:64)*

*Base: All workplaces with 25 or more employees where off-the-job training has been provided in last 12 months. Figures are weighted and based on responses from 1,642 managers.*

Similarly, problem-solving, reliability and meeting deadlines and quality control clustered together with approximately one-fifth (21%) of workplaces covering at least two of these matters. A third group was training in communications and customer service which went together in 25% of workplaces. These groupings imply different management approaches to work organisation. The first is consistent with a participative approach to work organisation (and team working) whereas the second is more closely associated with a ‘hard’ quality management approach.

The WERS 2004 revealed that almost half of all workplaces had trained at least some core employees in team working, communication or problem-solving skills in the previous year. This figure rose to 54% among the two-thirds of workplaces that operated either team working or cross training for most core employees, or problem solving groups for most non-managerial employees.
The comparable figure was only 37% among the remaining one-third of workplaces. This suggests that, at least in relation to communication or problem-solving skills, training was more likely to be forthcoming where team working is in place. There is also a very important difference between the provision of training and the creation of a learning environment or so-called ‘learning organisation’ which is beyond the scope of the present questionnaire.

Q.6d It is assumed that team working contributes positively to Job Enlargement and Job Enrichment. Can you find any reported association between team work and job enrichment and job enlargement?

The use of the terms job enrichment and job enlargement have been superseded to a large extent in the UK by the use of terms such as task flexibility, multi-skilling and ‘intelligent’ flexibility.

Evidence from the CEPS 2002 suggests that about half of workplaces have asked their employees to carry out an increasing variety of tasks over the last three years which has gone hand-in-hand with an increased use in team working, increased training to cover other jobs and increasing working hours. In 30% workplaces there has also been an increase in the use of job rotation systems, whereby an employee takes on different jobs at different times. The authors of the CEPS 2002 comment that increased flexibility from individual employees and co-operative groups are complementary developments.

Q.7 Team effectiveness subjectively perceived

Q.7a National surveys

None.

Q.7b Main Findings

None

Q.7c Case findings

The majority of recent studies of team working have focused attention primarily on the implications for organizational performance and associated managerial issues, rather than its effects upon employees and the subsequent reception by the workforce. This is a position which contrasts with the 1960s and 1970s when aspects of workers’ orientations, job satisfaction and the quality of working life received much greater attention.

One recent example of case study research into employee perceptions of team working is ‘Worker responses to teamworking: exploring employee attributions of managerial motives’ by Bacon and Blyton (2005). This paper examines employee views of why and how managers introduced teamworking at several sites within a steel company. They found that the motives that employees attribute to management actions can moderate the subsequent effects of team working on employee attitudes. The two-year investigation involved workplace interviews and surveys of the effects of introducing team working and related changes across five sites of British Steel (now Corus plc). Workers suggested that managers sought to gain as a group by benefiting disproportionately from team working in comparison to other employees. In addition, employees believed that successfully implementing team working would enhance the promotion and career prospects of managers. As a result, a number of employees adopted an accusatory tone, detecting managers could ‘move on’ after the successful implementation of team working, were concentrating on impression management rather than effective man-management and were
preoccupied with seeking status and promotion. Employees also suggested that team working was introduced as a result of the company prioritizing the claims of shareholders over the interests of employees and, second (and relatedly), as a way of reducing the number of workers. The majority of employees across these plants supported team working and realized it may prolong the survival of their plant but they also resented the possibility that this extracted more effort from them and that plant closure may still not be avoided.

Q.8 Please reflect briefly on the existing governmental documents, policies, programs or social partners agreements discussing implementation of new work organization forms with emphasis on teamwork at national level.

Q.8a National surveys

Debates in the UK surrounding new forms of work organisation and flexibility mostly centre upon the issues of HPWPs, work-life balance and working time rather than team working per se. The recent government involvement in the joint Department of Trade and Industry and Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) research project ‘High Performance Work Practices: linking strategy and skills to performance outcomes’ (www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/corpstrgy/busiperfm/dtihpwprac.htm ) indicates an interest in promoting HPWPs as well as skills and learning. Interest has also been shown by employers in this topic (see for example a joint Engineering Employers’ Federation and CIPD publication on HPWPs (www.eef.org.uk/UK/preview/guidance/allmembers/CIPD031110.htm ). However, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) has been more focused on issues of working time (see for example www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/tuc-11171-f0.cfm).

References


Helen Newell and Jane Parker, University of Warwick