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# **The Search for High Performance in Organizations**

**A study of the CHPS framework**

by

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## **Abstract**

In the last decades, scholars, managers and consultants have shown increased interest in identifying the characteristics of high-performance organizations. Searching for ways to improve organizational performance and respond to a growing demand for quality products and services in a rapidly changing environment, this subject is of special interest of managers in both public and private organizations.

Literature review of high-performance theory reveals that most theories and frameworks on high-performance organizations have been developed by researching private organizations, using financial yardsticks to define and measure high-performance. Less research has been done on high-performance in public organizations, where financial measurements are not necessarily the most relevant ones. However, some companies claim to have developed a framework that is equally applicable to all types of organizations, the Stockholm based company CHPS being one.

The aim of this research is to analyze the CHPS framework on high-performance organizations and explore whether it is a suitable tool for creating an environment of high-performance within different types of organizations. To do so, six organizations of different types, some of which have worked with the CHPS framework and some of which have not, were researched. Adapting a pragmatic, mixed-method approach, both a quantitative and a qualitative study was used.

The findings suggest that both public and private organizations can work systematically on improving the key factors of the CHPS framework and, by doing so, improve their organizational performance with regards to the goals of the organization. However, as the concept of high-performance in organizations is highly contextual and subject to different definitions, the findings cannot give concrete answers as to whether the framework can be used to create an organizational environment that fosters high-performance. Furthermore, the findings suggest that managers of different types of organizations consider the key factors of the CHPS framework highly relevant to improving organizational performance.

In conclusion, the findings hint at the validity of the CHPS framework as a suitable tool for both public and private organizations aiming to improve their organizational performance.

**KEYWORDS:** managers, CHPS, CHPS framework, the Plus, high-performance organization, HPO, organizational performance, public organization, private organization

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# Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>TABLE OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>V</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 BACKGROUND .....	2
1.2 PROBLEMATIZATION .....	4
1.3 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	5
1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER.....	5
<b>2. METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES.....	6
2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	7
2.2.1 Selection.....	7
2.2.2 Participants.....	8
2.2.3 Questionnaire .....	8
2.2.4 Interviews.....	9
2.2.5 Data Analysis.....	10
2.3 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS .....	11
<b>3. THEORETICAL REVIEW</b> .....	<b>13</b>
3.1 SEARCHING FOR EXCELLENCE: EARLY DAYS .....	13
3.2 SEARCHING FOR EXCELLENCE: 1945 – PRESENT DAY .....	15
3.3 CURRENT FRAMEWORKS .....	18
3.3.1 AMA Framework.....	19
3.3.2 HPO Center Framework .....	20
3.4 THE CHPS FRAMEWORK .....	22
3.4.1 The Beginning of CHPS.....	22
3.4.2 Defining HPOs .....	23
3.4.3 The Plus.....	24
3.5 COMPARISON OF THE CHPS FRAMEWORK AND OTHER THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS.....	29
<b>4. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>32</b>
4.1 CHPS ORGANIZATIONS .....	32
4.2 NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS .....	33
4.3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHPS ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS .....	34
4.4 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS.....	35
<b>5. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>37</b>
5.1 RESULTS BY ORGANIZATION .....	37
5.1.1 Motorcentralen.....	37
5.1.2 Olofsson Bil .....	38
5.1.3 Täby Kommun .....	38
5.1.4 Vodafone Iceland.....	39

5.1.5 Reykjavik University.....	40
5.1.6 Icelandic Football Association.....	41
5.2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHPS ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS .....	43
5.3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS.....	43
<b>6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>45</b>
6.1 DEFINING HPOS .....	45
6.2 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS VS. PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS.....	47
6.3 FURTHER THOUGHTS .....	48
<b>7. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>49</b>
7.1 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....	50
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>57</b>
APPENDIX A.....	57
APPENDIX B .....	58

## Table of Figures

FIGURE 1: THE CHPS PLUS .....	24
FIGURE 2: RESULTS OF CHPS ORGANIZATIONS .....	32
FIGURE 3: RESULTS OF NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS .....	33
FIGURE 4: COMPARISON BETWEEN CHPS AND NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS .....	34
FIGURE 5: COMPARISON BETWEEN CHPS AND NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS BY KEY ASPECTS OF THE PLUS .....	34
FIGURE 6: COMPARISON BETWEEN PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS .....	35
FIGURE 7: COMPARISON BETWEEN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS .....	36

# 1. Introduction

In the last three decades, there has been growing interest in identifying the main characteristics of high-performance organizations (HPOs) amongst scholars and managers alike. Since the pioneer work of Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, *In Search of Excellence* (1982), several others have attempted to find answers to what it is that separates high-performing organizations from the rest. This subject has been of special interest to managers in both the private and public sector, as they search for ways to improve organizational performance, adapt to a rapidly changing environment and respond to growing demand for quality products and services (Lear, 2012; Leggat, Bartram & Stanton, 2011).

Although the search for the characteristics of HPOs have only relatively recently taken on a structured form through concepts and measurements in the field of management theory, it has, however, been of relevance within organizations for a much longer time (American Management Association, 2007). Researchers tend to agree that identifying the characteristics of HPOs is a tough task, e.g. because of definition issues (Willcoxson, 2000), deciding upon what to measure (Kirby, 2005), and the difference between organizations and their goals, e.g. between public and private organizations\* (Nutt, 2000). Nevertheless, the ongoing search indicates that there is a belief that HPOs share some fundamental characteristics (Bhalla, Caye, Dyer, Dymond, Morieux & Orlander, 2011), and identifying these characteristics would be highly valuable to managers aiming to improve their organizations' performance (Waal, n.d.).

How organizations can achieve desired performance, however, is hard to determine and potentially varies depending on the goal of the organization. Various theories and frameworks on HPOs exist, most of which have been developed by analyzing private organizations, with financial measurements used to identify high-performance (e.g. Peters & Water, 1982; Collins & Porras, 1994; Nohria, Joyce & Roberson, 2003). However, previous attempts to transfer private sector business practices into the public sector have not always proven to be an easy

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\* The *third sector*, covering all types of non-profit organizations and associations that are neither affiliated with the government nor owned by shareholders or entrepreneurs (Nutt & Backoff, 1994), is in this research considered to fall under the public organizations definition due to the similarity in goals and intentions (Nutt, 2000).

task (Walker, Brewer, Boyne & Avellaneda, 2011; Mongkol 2011; Boyne, 2002), which begs the question whether HPO approaches, that trace their origin to research on private organizations, can be applied to other types of organizations aiming for different goals.

This study will research a current framework on high-performance organizations to explore if its key characteristics can be systematically improved and whether it is applicable to public and private organizations. Furthermore, the development of high-performance theory throughout history will be examined to see if the key characteristics of said framework can be identified in older theories.

In this opening chapter, the background and relevance of the topic is discussed, as well as the purpose of this research.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND**

Literature review of the search for the characteristics of high-performing organizations reveals that at least since the industrial revolution, businessmen and researchers have been searching for ways to improve organizational performance. Early approaches focused on improving productivity, with little emphasis placed on working conditions and the human aspect. However, as industries and organizations have evolved, so have theories on what makes an organization high-performing. For a long time, these theories could be divided into two categories; those focusing on tasks and procedures versus those focusing on people (Kirby, 2005; American Management Association, 2007), but most recent theories take both factors into account, with expectations of worker treatment and conditions having risen drastically over the last decades (Kiechel, 2012).

Since around 1980, the search for organizational excellence has taken on a more structured form, with various research teams analyzing groups of organizations they describe as high-performing, based on different definitions. By measuring and comparing organizations to others, these research teams have tried to pinpoint the characteristics that enable organizations to foster an environment of high-performance (Kirby, 2005). Peters and Waterman (1982) were the first to use such an approach, analyzing 43 companies defined as

high-performing because they had managed to consistently outperform their competitors over a long period of time, according to six financial measurements, such as growth and return on equity. Peters and Waterman concluded that factors such as staying close to the customer and having a bias for action were among those that contributed to organizational excellence.

A decade later, John P. Kotter and James L. Heskett (1992) followed suit and examined top performing companies over a period of 11 years, as defined e.g. by annual growth in net income and appreciation in stock prices. Kotter and Heskett emphasized the importance of company culture and concluded that creating a company culture that pays attention to all stakeholders (employees, customers and stockholders) and demands managers of all levels to show leadership is essential when aspiring for outstanding financial performance (Kotter, 2011).

Collins and Porras (1994) took a step further in their book *Built to Last* and analyzed so-called "crown jewels"; companies that had gained an iconic status in their respective industries and maintained it for decades. They also compared their high-performers to companies that had once held a similar status in the same industry but whose paths had since diverged, in an effort to give an answer to the question "high-performing compared to what?" Furthermore, Collins and Porras took non-financial measures into account in their research, such as their history of significantly impacting the world around them with inventions, but nevertheless admitted that financial measures can never be ignored when analyzing profit seeking companies (Kirby, 2005). Collins and Porras' findings suggest e.g. that high-performing organizations are those that stick to their core ideologies, even when everything else changes and are also able to simultaneously reach multiple goals that might seem mutually exclusive, such as aligning short-term and long-term goals or achieving high quality and low cost (Collins and Porras, 1994).

Several other researchers have set out to find the holy grail of high-performance, using different approaches, methods and definitions, cumulating in various models and frameworks on HPOs, some of which will be further introduced later in this thesis. Each new effort builds on previous knowledge and adds valuable data to the field of organizational performance, however, questions about which measurements are most relevant and what defines high-performance organizations are still very much alive (Kirby, 2005).

## 1.2 PROBLEMATIZATION

As a literature review on high-performance theory shows, most previous theories and, in fact, current models and frameworks on HPOs, have been developed by studying private organizations. As a result, most emphasis has been placed on financial matters when defining and measuring high-performance, factors that are not necessarily the most relevant ones in other types of organizations, i.e. various types of public organizations (Mongkol 2011; Nutt 2000). Less research has been done on high-performance across all organizational sectors, i.e. different types of public organizations, leaving a scarcely explored field in high-performance theory.

It is evident that the goal of private organizations is to grow and make profits and thus it is highly rational that most research has been done on profit seeking businesses, using financial measurements as yardsticks for high-performance. History has nevertheless indicated that when financial yardsticks are used in public organizations, the quality of service and satisfaction with service provided goes down (Walker et al., 2011; McLaughlin, Osborne & Ferlie, 2002). Therefore, applying HPO frameworks that have been built according to financial measurements might not be suitable for public organizations, or it could at the very least, prove a problematic approach for them (Mongkol 2011; Nutt 2000).

The authors of this paper are neither suggesting that the characteristics that have been located in previous research should be ignored, nor that financial measurements are irrelevant. Instead it is proposed that there is a need to research high-performance from the viewpoint of public organizations and build an HPO framework that can be applied to all types of organizations, public and private.

Some companies concerned with HPOs claim to have developed such a framework, with Stockholm based company CHPS (Center för Högpresterande System), being one. The CHPS framework traces its foundations to research on high-performance sports teams and was consequently developed into a general framework on high-performance in organizations. The creators of the framework claim that it is applicable to any organizational type, public and private (Ström, 2016), but it is yet to be researched to any extent outside of CHPS itself.

After looking into the CHPS framework and seeing harmony with it and previous HPO theories, the authors of this paper considered it an intriguing subject to do further research on.

### **1.3 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the CHPS framework on high-performance organizations and explore if the framework is a suitable tool for creating an environment that fosters high-performance within organizations, irrespective of organizational type. Furthermore, the purpose is to research if organizations can systematically improve the main characteristics of HPOs, as introduced in the framework, and whether that leads to high-performance. Finally, the aim is to explore the relevance of these characteristics to managers of different types of organizations when aiming for improved organizational performance.

In line with the purpose of the research, the following research questions are introduced:

- What is the difference between organizations that have been working with CHPS and those who have not with regards to the key factors of the CHPS framework?
- What is the difference between public and private organizations with regards to the CHPS framework?

### **1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In the introductory chapter the background and importance of the topic has been introduced, as well as the purpose and research questions set forth. In chapter 2, *Methodology*, the methods used for research and analysis, as well as the reasons for those choices are discussed. The chapter also addresses the research and methodological limitations. Chapter 3, *Theoretical review*, introduces the reader to both previous and current theories and frameworks on high-performance in organizations through a historical overview, as well as thoroughly introducing and analyzing the main subject of this paper, the CHPS framework. Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to introducing the findings of the quantitative and qualitative researches conducted respectively. In chapter

6, *Analysis and Discussion*, the research findings are evaluated and discussed in relation to the theoretical review. Finally, in chapter 7, *Conclusion*, the main findings and practical implications are articulated, and recommendations for future research are introduced.

## **2. Methodology**

In this chapter, the methodological approach to the research is discussed. A plan is laid out to answer the research questions and methodological limitations are addressed.

### **2.1 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES**

This is a pragmatic case study, concerned with exploring the CHPS framework. Due to the need for both quantitative and qualitative research methods, a mixed method approach was deemed as the most appropriate way to find answers to the research questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Landrum & Garza, 2015). A pragmatic case study offers the opportunity of a comprehensive, holistic analysis of the CHPS framework within organizations. Doing a case study is particularly relevant when researching whether characteristics of a specific framework apply and/or can be found within a real-world setting and is especially useful when there is little prior knowledge of the subject at hand (Bell, 2010; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Which makes it relevant to this study as the CHPS framework has not been researched outside of CHPS before (Ström, interview, 21 March, 2017).

A mixed method approach refers to using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analysis procedures. For this research they were done sequentially, with the quantitative data analyzed quantitatively and the qualitative data analyzed qualitatively (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Landrum & Garza, 2015).

## **2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A quantitative data collection method in the form of a descriptive questionnaire was used to collect numerical data from selected organizations in context with the key factors of the CHPS framework. Questionnaires are usually either used for descriptive or explanatory research. The quantitative part of this research would qualify as descriptive, as it searches for the characteristics of the CHPS framework within organizations. Using a descriptive research questionnaire offers the possibility of identifying the attitudes and opinions of the participants as well as the organizational practices relevant to this research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

After analyzing the quantitative data, a qualitative data collection method in the form of interviews was used to get deeper insight into each aspect and to gather responses to the results from the managers of each organization. The intention was for the different data collection methods to triangulate and complement each other, thus providing more credible results (Bryman, 2006; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

### **2.2.1 SELECTION**

Bearing in mind the small scale of the study and the nature of the research questions, it was considered most suitable to make a selection using purposive sampling (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). In order to get information from various organizations, both private and public organizations were included in the study. Therefore, three different organizations that had worked, or are currently working with CHPS, were selected. For the sake of comparison, three additional organizations that had never heard of the CHPS framework, deemed relevant to this study, were selected to participate. To limit the connection to the CHPS framework, three organizations from Iceland were chosen that:

- Have achieved a significant goal sometime over the last five years.
- Have been working systematically on improving their performance.
- Have not worked with CHPS before and had no prior knowledge about the CHPS framework.

The three CHPS organizations were contacted, two businesses and one municipality, and the three non-CHPS organizations were also contacted, a company, a university and a football association. All the organizations selected were willing to participate in the study upon being contacted.

The variety of organizations chosen gave a broad sample group, despite its small scale, that by estimation would give a better chance of answering the research questions in a sound manner.

Information about the participating organizations can be found in the appendix.

### **2.2.2 PARTICIPANTS**

For the quantitative research, a group of managers from each organization was selected to answer the questionnaire. For the qualitative research, senior managers from each organization were interviewed using a semi-structured interview procedure.

### **2.2.3 QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire used in the research is made up of 64 statements, created to measure key aspects of the CHPS framework. Each aspect is divided into subgroups that provide the possibility of breaking the results further down. This questionnaire was developed by CHPS over the last 15 years and includes questions that measure both opinion variables and behavior variables (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). CHPS aims to use the questionnaire as a measurement tool, to see how the main aspects of the CHPS framework manifests in organizations before and after their framework has been applied.

For the purpose of this research the questionnaire was adjusted in order to make it measurable and comparable. The original questionnaire is written in Swedish so it had to be translated into English using a direct-translation method. After being accepted by the thesis supervisor, the questionnaire was subsequently written into Google Forms and sent out to participants in April, 2017, for them to answer within a two weeks period. To limit the risk of

social desirability bias, total anonymity was ensured. Thus, the questionnaire is categorized as a self-administered questionnaire (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Respondents answered the 64 statements in the questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale (Bell, 2010), chosen as it is easy to construct and understand, as well as being easily quantifiable (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). With possible answers of; *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *agree* and *strongly agree*, the scale was subsequently quantified, with answers given values from 1-5 (1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being *strongly agree*) for the purpose of facilitating statistical analysis of the questionnaire (Bell, 2010).

In order to refine the research tool and to ensure the quality of the data, a pilot study (Bell, 2010) was conducted before the questionnaire was distributed to participants. Ten respondents, who the researchers believed to be able to identify with the target group, filled in the questionnaire and were asked to give critical feedback on the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions. The feedback was then used to make minor adjustments to the questions to avoid misinterpretation.

Due to a confidentiality agreement with CHPS, the questionnaire will not be published with this thesis.

#### **2.2.4 INTERVIEWS**

After receiving the findings from the quantitative research, senior managers of the organizations participating in the research were interviewed to get a deeper understanding of their views on the subject, as well as to further analyze the findings of the quantitative research. The interviews were exploratory and semi-structured (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009), and partly based on the quantitative findings. Questions were open ended, with the intention of allowing the managers to freely express their views on the topics of discussion. Some interview questions were based on the results of the quantitative research in order to get the managers' feedback on their organizations' scores. Other questions addressed the issue of high-performance in a more general way, aiming to gain insight into the managers' views on high-performance within their respective organizations.

The interviews were conducted through phone, and lasted from 18 minutes up to just over an hour. The interviews with organizations in Iceland were conducted in Icelandic as that was both the interviewers' and respondents' mother language. The interviews with organizations in Sweden were conducted in English and Swedish, with interviewees encouraged to speak Swedish in case they had difficulties communicating their thoughts and ideas in English.

Furthermore, CHPS creator Per-Olov Ström and his co-worker Karin Nyberg were interviewed twice, once through Skype and once in a face-to-face interview.

All interviews were audio recorded. The list of interviews can be found in Appendix A.

### **2.2.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Although several approaches to analyzing quantitative data exist (Bryman & Bell, 2011), a simple, descriptive approach was chosen as the best way of presenting the current status of the key factors of the CHPS framework in the organizations being researched. After collecting results from the quantitative study from each organization, the data was consequently entered into an Excel spreadsheet. There, the average score for each question was calculated. By combining the results of related questions, the average score of each subgroup of the CHPS Plus was calculated, giving insight into the key aspects of the CHPS framework and how they appear in each organization. The quantitative data was then presented and visualized in a descriptive manner, using charts created in Excel.

Cocks (2012) explains that when high-performance is measured, the measurement should be defined before the research. To measure high-performance within participating organizations in this research, a benchmark of 4.0 was set. If the overall score from an organization were over 4.0 out of 5 for each aspect of the Plus, the organization would be considered as high-performing according to the CHPS framework.

The overall score, and the scores from each subcategory for each organization, were partly used as a basis for the interviews conducted with the senior managers of each organization. This was done to gain a deeper understanding of the quantitative results collected. During the interviews, the researchers relied on the subject being interviewed to give insights and knowledge on the findings, without being guided. The main focus of the researchers was

placed on extracting and summarizing key points of the interviews when analyzing the qualitative data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

## **2.3 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS**

The authors of this paper are aware that there are certain limitations and causes for criticism regarding the research

According to Bell (2010) one critique of case studies is that it is difficult for researchers to cross check gathered data. Since this case study itself is quite small, only taking a snapshot of the status within organizations to identify the phenomenon that is the key aspects of the CHPS framework, and this being the first time the CHPS questionnaire is used, there is no comparison study. Therefore, there is no way to cross check the data collected. Furthermore, due to time constraints it was not possible to apply the CHPS framework over time on an organization to look for validation for the improvement that may occur in organizations that use the CHPS framework. It would have been preferable to be able to research organizations before, during and after working with the CHPS framework to get more reliable data to work with.

Secondly, the reliability of the questionnaire is also questionable as it may be vulnerable towards external factors. For example, the temperament of the managers that participated might have affected their answers at the time of participation, rendering the questions unreliable (Bell, 2010). However, the managers that were questioned were given the opportunity to answer the questionnaire whenever they felt like answering it, reducing the risk of temperament bias (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Furthermore, in both the qualitative and quantitative study, managers are asked about how they experience certain things. The questions are not about hard facts but are instead of an interpretive nature, resulting in less generalizability, especially with such a small sample (Thomas, 2013).

Thirdly, in hindsight it would have been better to research sets of similar organizations, instead of mixing up organizational types as done in this study. Comparing e.g. three businesses that have worked with CHPS to three businesses that have not, or three public

organizations that have worked with CHPS to three public organizations that have not, would have made comparing results and generalizing findings easier.

Lastly, due to the CHPS framework being a relatively un-researched phenomenon on a highly contextual and elusive concept, that being high-performance in organization, a grounded theory approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009) might have been a more suitable way to conduct this research. To gather data and then inductively build a theory. However, due to time constraints the authors of this paper deemed that approach to be unrealistic.

Bearing these limitations in mind, the authors of this paper are aware that this research will not provide concrete answers to all questions raised regarding high-performance within organizations. Rather it is an attempt to provide clues as to whether organizations, public and private, can improve their performance by attending to the key factors of HPOs according to the CHPS framework, and how relevant these factors appear to managers.

### **3. Theoretical Review**

The aim of this chapter is to give the reader an overview of both previous and current literature, theories and frameworks on high-performance organizations. Firstly, the history of the theory of high-performance within organizations will be explored to see if the fundamental characteristics of HPOs have stayed the same throughout history, or if they have developed alongside societal changes. Secondly, selected current frameworks on HPOs will be analyzed in relation to the historical overview. Finally, the CHPS framework on HPOs will be thoroughly introduced and analyzed, as well as reviewed and compared with regards to other theories and frameworks introduced, in order to gain insight into the philosophy behind the framework.

#### **3.1 SEARCHING FOR EXCELLENCE: EARLY DAYS**

According to Kirby (2005), practically no attempts were made to find the common drivers of organizational success for the first millennia of business history. Despite the fact that management scholars have only relatively recently begun the formal search for the characteristics of HPOs, there have been much earlier attempts at achieving high-performance, through different methods. During the industrial revolution, employers had to put in a great effort to train their workers, who had previously worked as independent craftsmen or farmers, so they could adapt to factory work. Standardization of work, punctuality and regular attendance were but a few habits workers had to pick up to fit the new system (Modern World History, n.d.). With the focus primarily on increasing productivity, early approaches to achieving high-performance often neglected the human aspect of organizations. Poor working conditions, low wages and long working hours were seen as the cost of sacrifice that ensured the work discipline needed for increased productivity (Hopkins, 1982).

Not everyone failed to understand the importance of the human element, however, with one example being Robert Owen, an early 19th century businessman. Owen insisted that investing

in workers was guaranteed to pay off, and would often yield up to a 100% return on investment, thus being no less important than investing in machinery or cutting production costs (American Management Association, 2007). These different approaches, focusing on people versus focusing on tasks, have since been developing alongside the evolution of industries and organizations for the last 200 years. Although these early attempts at increasing productivity or worker satisfaction may not have much in common with contemporary theories on HPOs, they "provide the roots for thinking about how to develop a high-performance organization" (American Management Association, 2007, p. 2).

Around a century later, at the turn of the 20th century, the search for excellence is still largely focused on increasing productivity and improving efficiency. Regarded as the father of scientific management (Copley, 1923), Frederick Taylor (1911) argued that the maximum prosperity of employers and employees were intertwined, neither could exist without the other. Taylor's concept of "maximum prosperity" can be viewed as an early term for high-performance. In his works, he claims that the concept refers not only to e.g. high profits for companies, but rather "the development of every branch of the business to its highest state of excellence, so that the prosperity may be permanent". This view is echoed in many modern HPO theories that emphasize that HPOs must perform well over an extended period of time (e.g. HPO Center, 2017a; Keller & Price, 2011). Although originally intended for engineers and managers of manufacturing companies and similar industries, Taylor hoped his principles of management could be applied to all types of organizations (Taylor, 1911).

Criticized for e.g. exploiting workers, creating monotonous jobs and increasing unemployment (Management Study Guide, n.d.), Taylor's scientific management started a century-long quest to find balance between "the things of production" and "the humanity of production" (Kiechel, 2012) with the contribution of Lillian Gilbreth continuing the trend of people versus task focus when searching for high-performance (American Management Association, 2007).

The search for high-performance was also ongoing in Europe at the start of the 20th century, with German Max Weber introducing bureaucracy as a way for large organizations to function more systematically by adapting authoritative hierarchical structures (McNamara, n.d.), and Frenchman Henry Fayol emphasizing the importance of managerial ability as a way to improve organizational performance. Fayol's *14 principles of management* introduce some

concepts that still today are considered important factors in creating and sustaining high-performance organizations, e.g. unity of direction, employee initiatives and the importance of company culture (*esprit de corps*) (Vliet, 2014).

Although originally intended to improve productivity in factories, these theories became more general as management theories evolved. They were also pivotal for the founding of specialized business schools around the world, which focused on training managers in running organizations in the best way possible. Still, focus was on productivity, but with the works of e.g. Elton Mayo, the social needs of the workers were also put in the spotlight and the social and human challenges of improving productivity were addressed (Mayo, 1933). Mayo is considered the founder of the Human Relations Movement in management, which emphasized the importance of e.g. job satisfaction, good interpersonal relationships and communication in organizations (Lawler III & Porter, 1967). Many of the fundamentals of the Human Relations Movement are still relevant today, with Mayo also stressing the importance of balancing the workers' needs and the organizations' needs.

An overview of the earliest attempts to define and identify ways to achieve high-performance within organizations shows that at first the main focus was on increasing productivity and efficiency in factories. However, some researchers immediately recognized the need to consider the well-being of workers while efforts were being made to improve performance, even stating that the workers' well-being was paramount to organizational improvement. The importance of the quality of management was also recognized quite early, leading to the foundation of business schools, whose aim was to improve organizational performance through excellent management. This overview also shows that it is hard to separate the early search for organizational excellence from the development of general management theory.

### **3.2 SEARCHING FOR EXCELLENCE: 1945 – PRESENT DAY**

The search for high-performance continued to develop alongside the development of management theory, and attitudes towards employees' welfare continued to improve. Furthermore, in the post-war period even more emphasis was put on how managers could influence the performance of organizations. One of the most influential figures of

management theory, Peter Drucker (Kiechel, 2012) led these ideas. Arguing that earlier generations of managers had been passive and without direction, Drucker claimed that managers had to manage, set a direction and attempt to change the economic environment in which they acted, adding that "businesses exist to produce results". Although Drucker did not use the word *strategy* for his ideas, his books are generally considered to be the pioneer works on business strategy (Kiechel, 2012), with strategic capabilities a common element of modern theories on HPOs (e.g. HPO Center, 2017a; Keller & Price, 2011). Drucker was also a forerunner in measuring organizational success against market potential, a trend taken up and developed by many future scholars attempting to identify the characteristics of HPOs (American Management Association, 2007).

George Terry (1960) agreed with Drucker as to how managers must shape organizations by directing and coordinating, adding that managers must lead people so organizations can achieve their goals. An additional viewpoint came from Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch (1967) who identified organizational structure as a critical element of high-performance as well as stating that organizations that were able to quickly adjust to their environment managed to outperform their peers.

The 1970's saw numerous organization and management theories arise and develop, so many that managers became confused as to where to find answers about how to improve organizational performance. However, these theories still generally fell into the two categories previously mentioned, organizational behavior focusing on motivation and leadership (or the people focus), and strategy and business policy focusing on processes and measurements (or task focus). Both sides saw advancements in the following decades with researchers confirming e.g. the effect of management and leadership on performance as well as identifying various structural and systematic improvements that could be made to improve organizations (American Management Association, 2007).

Around 1980, it can be argued that the *formal* search for organizational excellence really took off, with researchers starting to focus more on measuring, analyzing and comparing organizations in an attempt to identify which factors enabled some organizations to be high-performing and others not (Kirby, 2005). In a sense, this is where HPO theories and general management theories drift somewhat apart, although still developing in parallel with each other.

The comparison approach started with Tom Peters' and Bob Waterman's work *In Search of Excellence* (1982). Building on the key factors of McKinsey's 7-S framework (shared values, strategy, structure, systems, skills, style and staff) (Mindtools, n.d.), Peters and Waterman (1982) examined top performing companies around the globe and concluded that factors previously considered as "soft" such as people and customers were in fact what drove performance within organizations. Peters and Waterman identified eight attributes they argued HPOs had in common, e.g. having a bias for action, fostering innovation, staying close to the customer, gaining productivity through people and staying with the business you know (Chapman, 2014).

*In Search of Excellence* became an instant best-seller, perhaps for being the first work to challenge both managers and researchers alike, echoing Fayol's and Drucker's sentiments by claiming openly that managerial abilities can play a key role in organizational success, and insisting that isolating the key factors of high-performance was indeed a doable task (Kirby, 2005).

Whether Peters and Waterman were right in stating so remains open for discussion, but since their attempt others have certainly followed suit in trying to pinpoint the essential characteristics of high-performing organizations by analyzing and comparing companies. *In Search of Excellence* was not free from criticism, with doubts e.g. emerging over the methodology used to pick high-performers (Kirby, 2005) and Peters even confessing years later to faking some of the research data (Peters, 2001). Those who followed tried to make amends for that, with Collins and Porras (1994) matching their *iconic performers* (companies that had achieved and maintained high-performance for decades) to other companies in the same industries, that were once performing similarly but had later diverged. Collins and Porras identified several characteristics they believed to foster high-performance, e.g. having core values and a clear purpose, being flexible and adaptable, and "building clocks" instead of "telling time", i.e. creating a company capable of prospering in the long run instead of relying on a single great idea or a visionary leader (Kirby, 2005; Collins & Porras, 1994).

A couple of years earlier, Kotter and Heskett (1992) identified company culture as the driving force of performance, stating that a strong company culture that facilitated adaptation to the rapid changes in the world, and where managers showed excellent leadership skills were strongly associated to outstanding financial results (Kotter, 2011). They are certainly not the

only ones valuing the importance of company culture when it comes to performance, with 84% of a 2,200 participant survey claiming it to be extremely important for businesses to succeed. Some even going as far as saying that the only really important thing for leaders to do, is to create and manage company culture (Sayle, 2015).

Several other approaches to achieving high-performance have been suggested, too many to thoroughly introduce in this thesis. As this historical overview shows, the fundamentals of HPOs have developed rather than transformed throughout history, with core elements of recent theories bearing resemblance to some of the earliest work in the field. Characteristics like having a clear strategy, quality management, employee well-being and basing your work on core values with a clear intention of what you want to achieve are examples of common factors within different theories and frameworks that use different approaches. One could argue that the importance of these factors should not come as a surprise, that they should even be considered common sense. However, being the result of multiple studies perhaps validates and underlines just how immensely important they are for organizations wanting to achieve high-performance.

Finally, achieving high-performance status is not sufficient, as maintaining the status of HPO is an even tougher task, highlighted by the fact that many organizations, considered high-performing at a certain time according to some of the theories mentioned above, have since struggled to maintain their position or even gone bankrupt (Chapman, 2014; Willcoxson, 2000). This has led to speculation regarding the legitimacy of HPO theories and frameworks, and whether they can only be used to explain current status of organizations without having the power to predict what will make future organizations great (Hirst, 2010). Others have questioned the tendency of HPO theorists to generalize their findings without taking technical and societal changes into the equation, arguing that different times may call for different things with regards to achieving high-performance (Kirby, 2005).

### **3.3 CURRENT FRAMEWORKS**

For the purpose of comparing and contrasting the main subject of this paper, the CHPS framework, two other selected current frameworks on HPOs have been selected. These

frameworks trace their origins to previous theories that have already been discussed, however, as with previous theories, the definitions and methodological approaches of these frameworks differ.

### **3.3.1 AMA FRAMEWORK**

A decade ago, the American Management Association (2007) developed a framework that was based on previous literature and theories on high-performance organizations. The framework was then tested using a survey of 1,369 respondents to identify what factors contributed the most to high-performers outstripping low-performers. The AMA framework has five central characteristics, summarized below.

1. **Strategic Approach.** The strategic approach has to do with how well organizations "walk the talk", how consistent they are in following their strategy. HPOs have a clear vision, supported by a strategic plan that is both flexible and achievable, and they have employees and leaders who act according to their organizations' philosophy.
2. **Customer Approach.** In line with having a clear strategy, HPOs also have a clear approach to treating their customers as well as finding new customers and retaining them. HPOs think about customers' long-term needs and they value customer information as of great importance when developing new products and services.
3. **Leadership Approach.** At HPOs, employees know what is expected of them as managers and leaders set explicit, clear cut goals. The leaders also guide and coach employees towards the goals, making sure employees understand how their performance affects the success of the organizations. Promotions are based on talent, making sure the best people are chosen for each job.
4. **Processes and Structure.** HPOs make sure their processes and policies align with their organizational strategy. Tasks and workflows are set up so employees can meet the needs of both the organization and its customers in an effective way. Employees receive necessary training and performance measures are clearly defined.
5. **Values and Beliefs.** HPOs have a set of values and beliefs that guide employee behavior and are in line with the organizations' strategic approach and leadership.

HPOs emphasize high ethical standards, loyalty and readiness to change and they treat their employees well, reflecting in most employees enjoying working for the organization (American Management Association, 2007)

According to the authors, organizations that adapt these five characteristics are much more likely to be high-performing than those who don't. However, the authors also mention that organizations are indeed different and argue that there will likely never be a single approach to high-performance that suits every organization (American Management Association, 2007).

The AMA framework can be clearly related to previous theories on high-performance, with e.g. strategy, leadership, efficient processes and core values all elements that have repeatedly been related to high-performance. The framework is very business oriented as the research was only carried out with for-profit organizations, therefore making it hard to generalize its findings, with e.g. the customer approach an example of a factor that might be hard to translate into an essential element of some other types of organizations.

### 3.3.2 HPO CENTER FRAMEWORK

Dr. André A. de Waal, front man of the HPO Center, developed one of the most comprehensive modern HPO framework. Searching for the characteristics of high-performing organizations, Waal (2008) did a meta-analysis of 290 academic and management papers about HPOs from the last four decades, identifying 35 characteristics that were positively correlated with high-performance. Waal groups these 35 characteristics into five groups which he calls the HPO factors, summarized below:

1. **Management Quality.** The first, and most important HPO factor, according to Waal, is the quality of management. This factor has 12 characteristics that highlight e.g. the importance of trust, respect and integrity of management. Furthermore, managers coach and support employees, are action-oriented and able to make tough decisions, always focusing on achieving better results.
2. **Openness and Action Orientation.** In HPOs, much time is spent learning, exchanging knowledge and communicating. Management frequently reaches out to employees

and gets people involved in important processes. Mistakes are allowed and change is encouraged.

3. **Long Term Orientation.** HPOs put long-term gain ahead of short-term profit. They value good, long-term relationships with different stakeholders and always aim for outstanding customer service. Employees are encouraged to take on leadership roles meaning that managers are usually promoted from within the organization, which helps to nurture organizational culture.
4. **Continuous Improvement and Renewal.** HPOs adopt a unique strategy that sets them apart from their competitors. To fulfil this unique strategy, organizational processes are constantly being improved, aligned and simplified. Innovation with regards to products and services is important and the organization reports everything that matters to its performance, both financially and non-financially, not only to management, but to everyone at the organization.
5. **Quality of Employees.** HPOs put together a diverse and complementary workforce that is challenged to accomplishing extraordinary results by showing resilience and flexibility, and being creative in looking for new ways of achieving high-performance. (HPO Center, 2017a).

According to the HPO Center (2017a), organizations that get higher scores on these five factors than peer groups, outperform their peer groups, both financially (e.g with regards to profitability, growth and shareholder return) and non-financially (e.g. with regards to customer satisfaction, employee loyalty and quality of products and services). Although the five factors of the framework are interconnected, Waal (2008) stresses that the importance of each factor differs from industry to industry and organization to organization. The creators of the HPO Center framework argue that it is perhaps the only scientifically valid framework available, as other approaches have methodological flaws and have not been validated by other researchers. Furthermore, most previous research concentrate only on the western for-profit market, making it hard to generalize from its findings (HPO Center, 2017b).

As the framework is based on a collection of previous researches, similarities with earlier theories can naturally be identified. The framework places emphasis on the importance of the quality of management, a factor that has been in the spotlight at least since Peter Drucker (Kiechel, 2012) gave attention to it. The "battle" between focusing on people versus focusing

on processes that was ongoing throughout the history of HPO theories, has been settled, with the importance of both factors acknowledged in the framework. Furthermore, focusing on creating and maintaining a good organizational culture is something that has been gaining weight in HPO theory ever since being part of Henry Fayol's principles of management (Vliet, 2014).

Waal's (2008) research also mentions factors that, according to his research, do not play a role in creating HPOs, some of which are surprising. According to his findings, factors that have previously been considered important by many researchers, like improved employee autonomy and even organizational strategy, are relatively insignificant for organizations when becoming a HPO. Not dismissing the importance of strategy, Waal argues that it does not seem to matter *what kind* of a strategy companies adapt, but rather *how unique* they can be in following the chosen strategy. Furthermore, Waal (2008) insists that e.g. management quality is of far more importance than strategy, stating that "a team of good people can achieve anything it wants, while an organization with a clear and well-defined strategy but without the right people to execute it is bound to go nowhere (Waal, 2008, p. 6)."

### **3.4 THE CHPS FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter, the CHPS framework on high-performance organizations will be introduced and thoroughly analyzed. First, a summary of the history behind the creation of the framework will be discussed followed by an overview of said framework. Next, the concept behind each aspect of the framework will be introduced and finally the framework will be compared to previous theories and other frameworks in the field of high-performance.

#### **3.4.1 THE BEGINNING OF CHPS**

In the year 1995, a handball coach named Per-Olov Ström had unsuccessfully managed to lead a merger of two handball teams to greatness in its first year. This resulted in him resigning after a miserable year, filled with frustration and bad results. Feeling like a failure,

Ström started reflecting upon his time as a coach. Looking into other clubs that maintained their streak of being a top club for a period of years, decades even, he started researching the factors that made some clubs successful. After finding some correlation in the way the high-performance clubs were managed and structured he moved over to the business world, looking for the same key factors in high-performance organizations (Ström, 2016).

In 2000 he founded CHPS, Center for High-Performance Systems (*Centrum för Högpresterande System*), using his research as a foundation for further exploration into the theory of HPOs. Now, in 2017, CHPS claims to have created a framework that is applicable to all kinds of organizations. The CHPS framework, also known as the Plus, has been developed through trial and error over the years by the firm (Ström, interview 21 March, 2017).

### **3.4.2 DEFINING HPOs**

When measuring and defining high-performance organizations, the researcher has to define what it is to be high-performing and measure organizations from that angle to determine if said organization is high-performing according to the chosen definition, the end product (Cocks, 2012). With the CHPS framework, it starts from the other end. According to the framework, HPOs are organizations, or even individuals, that "live the way they want to, live their dreams". It is about having things the way they want them to be, setting goals, being clear with their intentions and having the ability to reach them (Nyberg, interview, 21 March, 2017).

According to CHPS, when their framework has been applied and everyone is on board helping the organization, it has the potential of becoming high-performing. It is imperative to state that this is not something that organization can do in one meeting with consultants, this must become a permanent change on how to do things. It has to transform every aspect of the process within the organization. A professional athlete cannot start practicing three weeks before the competition and break all the records. Professional athletes must live and breathe as a high-performing athlete. The same goes for organizations that want to implement the CHPS framework. It is a long-term project and the organization has to live and breathe as a high-performance organization to reach its goal and have that goal or achievement as a stable

condition within the organization. Only then can the organization be considered high-performing, according to the CHPS definition (Ström, 2016).

The CHPS framework gives every day action a sense of purpose. By using the CHPS framework, each member is aware on why actions are taken. They know what core value is driving the decision and understand what the end result is supposed to be. Therefore, they should be more inclined to accept it beforehand (Ström, interview, 21 March, 2017).

Although the CHPS framework is at first glance a Plus with five words that seem simple enough, there is no way to summarize their definition into one sentence. The Plus, in its simplicity, is quite complex. The CHPS framework is designed to create a system within the organization where all members row in the same direction with the big picture in mind, like a well-oiled machine. The Plus defines the five key characteristics that organizations can work on and measure to see what they should change or maintain on their road to high-performance. By not focusing on financial measurements as a necessary end goal, but rather encouraging organizations to set their own goals and intentions based on their own core values, the CHPS framework is more easily applicable to different kinds of organizations than "traditional" HPO frameworks.

### 3.4.3 THE PLUS

The Plus consists of five key aspects. Each aspect has a buzz word in it that represents various sub categories, adapted below from Ström (2016).

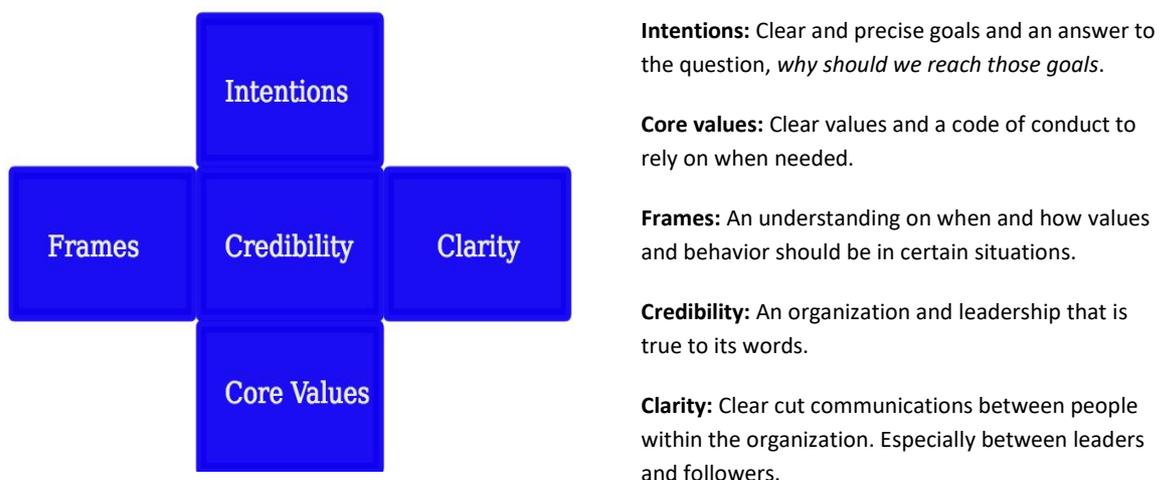


FIGURE 1: THE CHPS PLUS

### 3.4.3.1 INTENTIONS

According to Per-Olov Ström (2016) the organization should know what it wants to achieve. If an organization wants to be the best within a certain sector and knows what it needs to do to get there, it has intentions, but Ström (interview, 21 March, 2017) argues that for that organization to be high-performing it has to know where it wants to go, how to get there, and, most importantly, know why it wants to reach that particular goal and not some other. Intentions have to do with the *goals* of organizations and also the *drive* behind those goals.

Intentions should not be a short-term strategy. It is a long-term commitment to a certain way of doing things. Everything the high-performance organization does and takes on must correlate to what they are trying to achieve and bring the organization closer to its intentions (Ström, 2016).

### 3.4.3.2 CORE VALUES

Within a high-performance organization, there should be strong core values, guiding towards the intentions of the organization. Intentions are about what the organization wants and why it wants it. Core values are the source of strength, the code of conduct for the organization to reach the intentions. Somewhat of a manual on conduct towards the intentions (Ström, 2016). Organizations cannot go against their core values to reach their intentions and be high-performing according to the CHPS framework. A company that has the core value of being environmental is not high-performing if it uses a method that damages the environment to reach its intentions. The everyday action of the organization has to be measured to its core values (Nyberg, interview 21 March, 2017).

Core values can be different between two people, and even though the core values are completely different they can lead to the same goal. On a personal level, it is important to acknowledge that others have different core values and a way to do things. However, when organizations have core values it is important for the employees to adapt to those core values and make them their own in the workplace (Straz, 2015).

### 3.4.3.3 FRAMES

Frames are in many ways the most complex aspect of The Plus. In short, frames represent the situational culture that individuals are in at any given moment (Ström, 2016).

Frames are made from the intentions of the organization and its core values. When an organization has a deep understanding of how it wants to conduct the way of work and has unspoken rules on how to dress, act and behave for example, a frame is in place. Per-Olov Ström (interview, 21 March, 2017) explained that high-performance organizations have clear cut frames in place so no member of the organization is in doubt on how to conduct his or her day at the office. If someone goes out of the frame, that person is quickly dragged back in by the culture in place, or, worst case scenario, the manager.

The frames in place are contextual. In an organization, many frames can be in play, surrounded by one big organizational frame. Individuals enter a certain frame whenever they are in a different situation or work group. When at home, there is the *home frame*, and when at work, there is the *work frame*. High-performing individuals know not to mix these two together. When you are not at work, you are in a different frame and should not waste energy on the work frame, because if you do you will lose focus and risk burning out (Nyberg, interview, 21 March, 2017).

Frames are, however, not formal rules, even though there is a lot of similarity. They are more like the unspoken rules of the workplace. Unspoken rules that everyone agrees upon and everyone knows are there for a reason, the reason being to achieve what they set out to achieve (Ström, 2016). However, having these unspoken rules does not mean that everyone must do things in the same way. It is important that the frame is not too tight, and that creativity and innovation is encouraged within the frame. For example, when working on a new defense system with a sports team, the frame does not allow one player to run up the field and score, but it does allow that same player to be creative in offense to test the new defense system. That the player is being creative in offense is to test the new defense system, not to show how fantastic that particular player is in offence (Nyberg, interview, 21 March, 2017).

Having frames in place is therefore not restricting for the people within the organization. Quite the contrary, having valid good frames in place allows them to move more freely than if without. To explain the concept better, Ström (interview, 21 March, 2017) uses two metaphors. The first one is about people playing football on the roof of a skyscraper. If there are no fences around the edges, the people will most likely stay in the middle, not daring to go near the ledge. However, if there are fences and safety nets around the ledges, people will move more freely on the roof, knowing they will not fall down; the frame thus allowing people more freedom. The other one concerns the road system. In Sweden, everybody is expected to drive on the right side and within a certain speed limit. Other than that, individuals are free to choose the road they want and where they want to go; the frame thus keeping people safer, while not restricting their freedom (Ström, interview, 21 March, 2017).

#### **3.4.3.4 CLARITY**

In the CHPS framework clarity is somewhat of an umbrella term for many things connected to clear communications, feedback and role within the workgroup.

It is important to have the line of communication of a message as clear as possible, to make sure that none of the receivers of the message wonders on what it means. For example, that the message is so clear that it leaves no questions on what is supposed to be done, who is responsible for it to happen and so forth. Connected to that is clarity on what you should spend your time on. If the message is clear beyond doubt, employees know what the task at hand is and do not spend time on things that are not relevant (Nyberg, interview, 21 March, 2017).

The employees should know what can be affected and what cannot be affected. Too often, time and energy is wasted within the organization on matters none of them have any control over. Ström (2016) tells a story about a company that was moving its offices after being in the same location for 40 years. Many of the older employees were very unhappy with this move and spent time and energy of both the administration and themselves on discussing this move and trying to affect it. After an advice from Ström, the manager went with a clear message to the staff and told them that this move was happening and that would not be changed.

However, the staff could affect how the end results would be, how the new offices would be set up and so forth. Then the staff moved away from wasting time and energy on things they could not affect and moved into discussions about things they could affect, a much more constructive conversation than before, and less frustrating (Nyberg, interview, 21 March, 2017).

There has to be clarity in information. If a task is successfully handled or not. Sugar coating a bad task will only damage the organization. There has to be trust between people within the organization to give honest feedback, both if the task is well handled and if it is handled badly (Ström, 2016).

It is vital that if in doubt, no one is too shy to ask for help or information. If it is clear what an employee is supposed to develop and how he is supposed to do that, no excess energy will go into uncertainty and doubt. If there is a culture within the organization that encourages employees to seek assistance when needed, nobody will feel ashamed or lessened for doing so. That will lead to a healthier information exchange within the organization (Ström, interview, 21 March, 2017).

By keeping all communications clear and on point, employees do not fall into uncertainty and annoyance over not fully understanding the situation or the task at hand. With clarity in an organization, employees can focus their energy on things that they can affect and not waste energy on things they have no control over. Employees and managers must have all the information needed by them in order for them to perform tasks successfully. Therefore, it is vital that employees know where to access the information they need and for managers to be willing and able to inform them when needed (Ström, 2016).

#### **3.4.3.5 CREDIBILITY**

Final aspect of the Plus is credibility. Credibility serves as a red thread throughout the Plus. Without credibility, an organization can never be high-performing according to the CHPS framework. Organizations must create credibility in all their actions. They should have credibility towards their core values, frames, clarity and intentions (Ström, 2016). They also must have credibility towards themselves and their employees. For example, a company that

promotes healthy living and serves unhealthy food in the cafeteria is going against its own core value and therefore forgoes its credibility. To maintain credibility, there cannot be too big of a gap between what the organization claims it does and what it actually does (Nyberg, interview, 21 March, 2017).

### **3.5 COMPARISON OF THE CHPS FRAMEWORK AND OTHER THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS**

Although the CHPS framework offers a fresh approach to high-performance theory, with its roots lying in research on organizations whose main goals are not related to financial performance, it also shares characteristics with both previous HPO theories and other current frameworks on high-performance. Indeed, Per-Olov Ström (interview, 21 March, 2017), creator of the CHPS framework, does not claim that the CHPS framework introduces radical new truths about HPOs, but rather that it looks at things from a wider, more value based, point of view, therefore making it applicable to all types of organizations and even to sub-units within organizations. How the framework is applied can then vary greatly between organizations, based on e.g. the type, size, and the needs of the organization.

The *intentions* aspect, which focuses on what organizations want to achieve, can be compared to strategy and other similar terms widely used in HPO theory throughout history. Early scholars like Drucker (Kiechel, 2012) and Fayol (Vliet, 2014) wrote about the need for a common direction in organizations. Kotter (1996) claimed strategic vision and direction to be one of the key elements of successful change within organizations, and other recent HPO frameworks also highlight the importance of having a clear vision and a long-term orientation (see e.g. American Management Association, 2007; HPO Center, 2017a; Keller & Price, 2011). Ström (2016) adds that it is important not only to decide on *what* organizations want to achieve but also *why* they want to achieve it. Without knowing the purpose of pursuing a certain goal, organizations will struggle to attain a common drive towards that goal.

*Core values* are the foundation on which organizations build their work according to the CHPS framework. The importance of clearly defining core values is very present in HPO theory and other HPO frameworks (see e.g. Coleman, 2013; Collins & Porras, 1994). For an organization to succeed, just defining core values is insufficient, they must be deeply ingrained and guide

all of the organization's actions, never to be compromised for any reason (Ström, interview, 27 January, 2017).

In the CHPS framework, the concept of *frames* is made up of several sub-categories, and is perhaps the only aspect that is not at first easily recognizable from previous theories and other frameworks on HPOs. On further thought, and given the extensiveness of the concept, it can, however, be connected to various features from previous works. It is e.g. related to the concept of organizational culture, as it has to do with defining the cultural norms and values that guide employee behavior. The importance of organizational culture is a common theme throughout the history of high-performance theory, its importance stressed by e.g. Fayol (Vliet, 2014), Kotter and Heskett (1992) and several recent studies (see e.g. Coleman, 2013; Tsai, 2011). Peters and Watermans' (1982) key attribute of *staying with the business you know* can easily be defined as a frame in which organizations operate. How well an organization's structure, policies and processes align with its overall strategy is a matter of how competent the organization is in handling its own frames. Furthermore, the relevance of key components of the frames aspect is backed up by other studies. One component is the need for a balance between work and leisure (Ström, 2016). Research has shown that managers find that balance difficult to manage and work life is increasingly merging with family life (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). Separating these two aspects of employees' lives increases productivity and work satisfaction and speeds up recovery time for workers, resulting in less employee burnout (Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) that should help organizations achieve better performance.

*Clarity* has everything to do with the importance of clear cut communication and feedback within organizations. Focusing on these aspects can be traced all the way back to Elton Mayo's human relation movement (Lawler & Porter, 1967), with the importance of open and honest communication within, and between, all levels of organizations also evident in other HPO frameworks (see e.g. Keller & Price, 2011; HPO Center, 2017a).

Finally, *credibility* is essential for organizations aiming for high-performance according to the CHPS framework, as without credibility, e.g. toward the organization's goals and core values, they count for nothing. Despite the apparent novelty of using the term credibility, this aspect of the framework can be related to concepts like honesty and integrity (Waal, 2007; Waal

2008), consistency, and "walking the talk" (American Management Association, 2007), all considered important in HPOs, especially with regards to managers and leaders.

As this comparison shows, the key factors of the CHPS framework are not only based on the company's own research, but also deeply rooted in previous theoretical approaches to HPOs, as well as harmonizing with several other HPO frameworks. Together, the factors form a comprehensive whole, which, if carefully attended to, aid in creating an organizational culture that fosters high-performance (Ström, interview, 27 January, 2017).

Although the frameworks explored and analyzed in this study vary in many ways and to a different degree, they all agree on at least two things. Firstly, that no single factor can guarantee organizational success, but rather that high-performance is a result of an interplay between various components. Secondly, that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to achieving high-performance within organizations. HPO frameworks can help organizations to identify *what* they need to improve but they do not provide blueprints or specific instructions as to *how* to make those improvements. Finding that out is the job of managers, with or without the help of consultants, and how organizations approach such efforts needs to be adapted to different organizations based on e.g. size, type, structure, culture and goals of the organization.

## 4. Quantitative Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the quantitative research are introduced in a descriptive manner. The aim is to find out how the key elements of the CHPS framework appear in different types of organizations. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, management teams in the organizations answered multiple questions regarding each component of the framework, scoring from 1-5, with the average results shown in the charts below. In this chapter, comparisons are also made between companies that have worked with the CHPS framework and those that have not as well as between public and private organizations.

### 4.1 CHPS ORGANIZATIONS

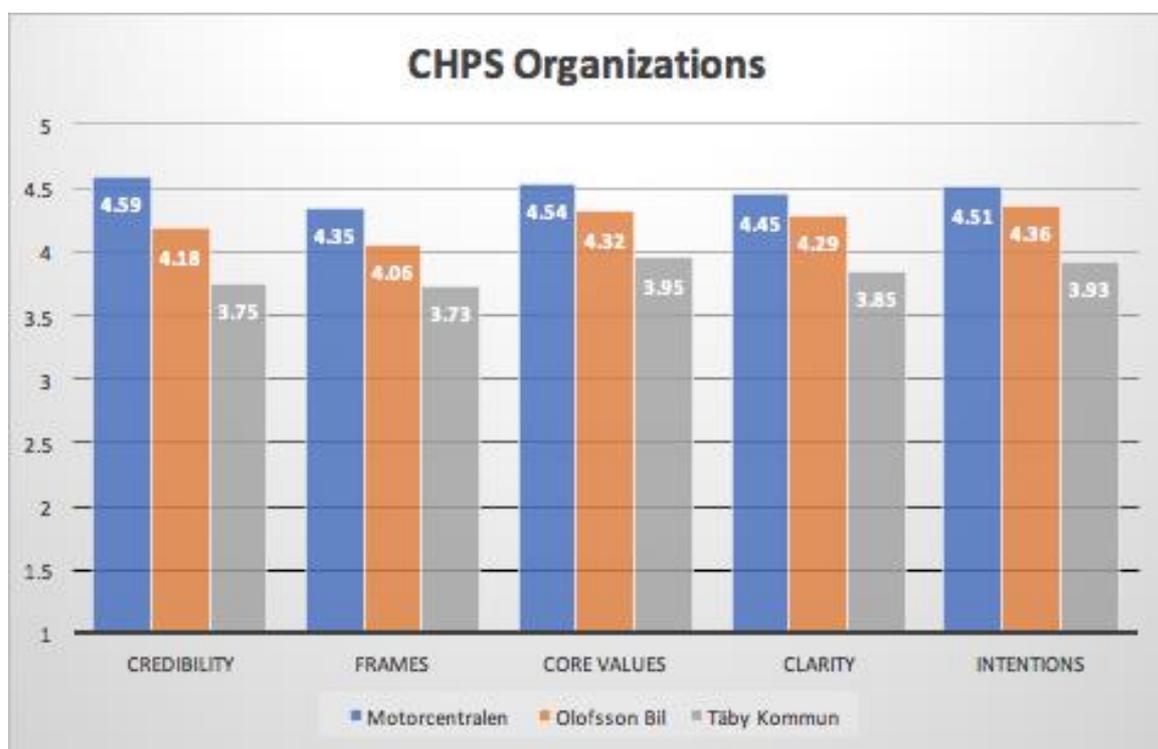


FIGURE 2: RESULTS OF CHPS ORGANIZATIONS

The findings of the quantitative research show, that two out of the three organizations that have worked with the CHPS framework, Motorcentralen and Olofsson Bil, score above the HPO benchmark of 4.0 on every aspect of the Plus, thus qualifying as high-performance organizations according to the framework. However, Täby kommun does not reach the benchmark of 4.0 on any aspect of the Plus.

## 4.2 NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS

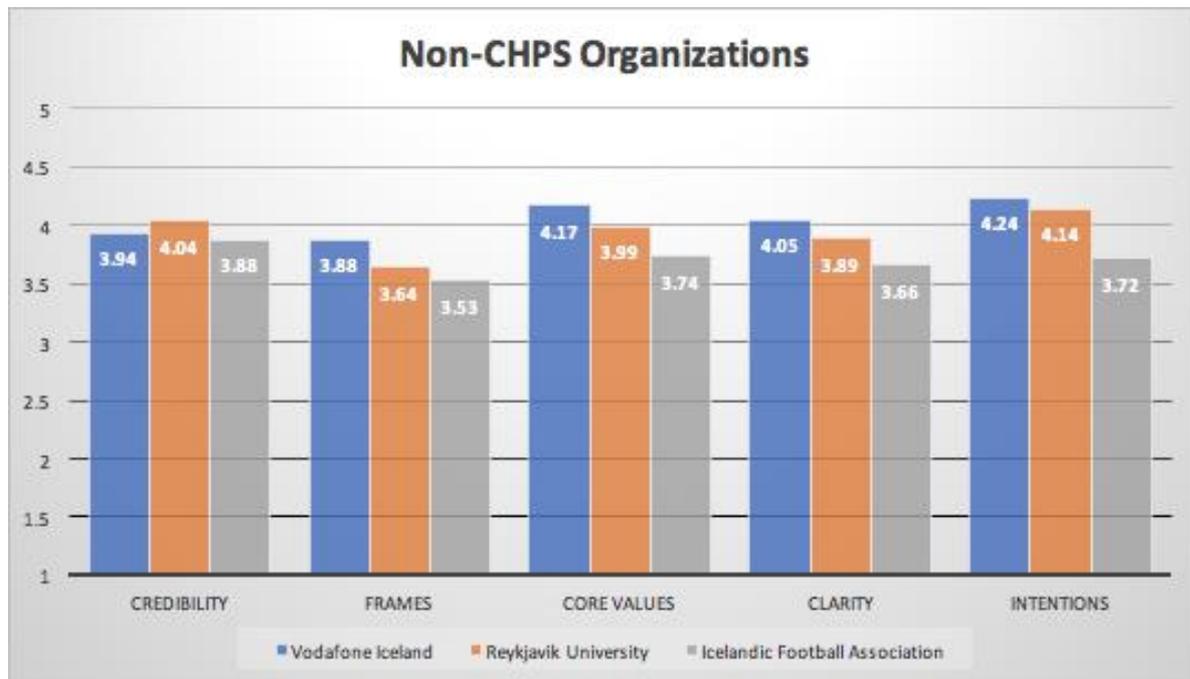


FIGURE 3: RESULTS OF NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS

The findings of the quantitative research show, that none of the organizations that have not worked with the CHPS framework reach the HPO benchmark of 4.0 on every aspect of the Plus. Vodafone Iceland and Reykjavik University reach the benchmark on three and two aspects respectively, while the Icelandic Football Association does not reach the benchmark on any aspect of the Plus.

### 4.3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHPS ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS

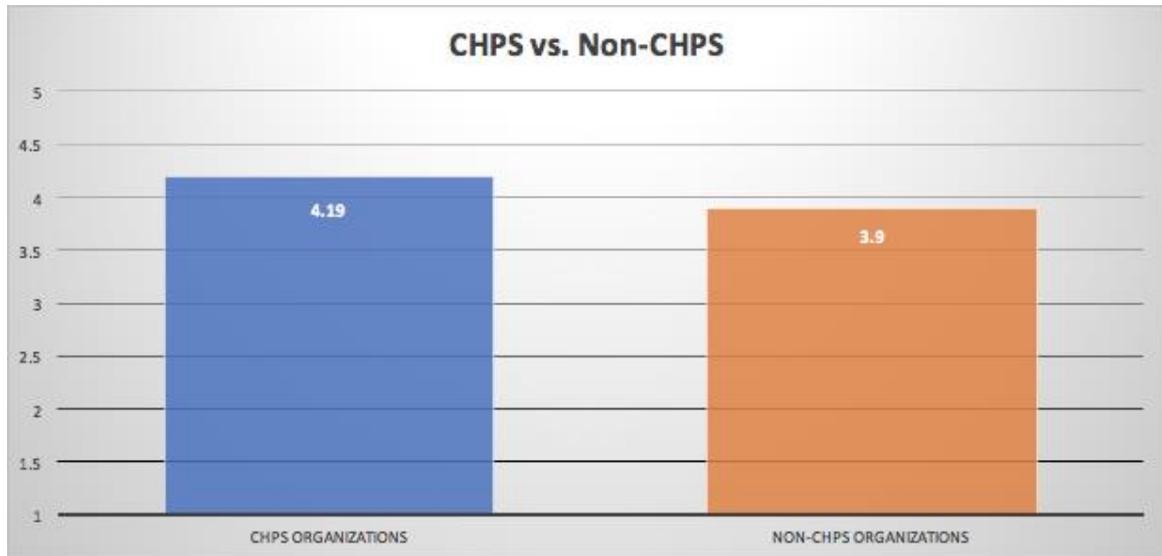


FIGURE 4: COMPARISON BETWEEN CHPS AND NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS

The compiled results of the study reveal that the difference between CHPS organizations and non-CHPS organizations is not significant, however the CHPS organizations score somewhat higher than their non-CHPS counterparts. On average, the CHPS organizations score above the HPO benchmark of 4.0 while the non-CHPS organizations fail to reach that benchmark.

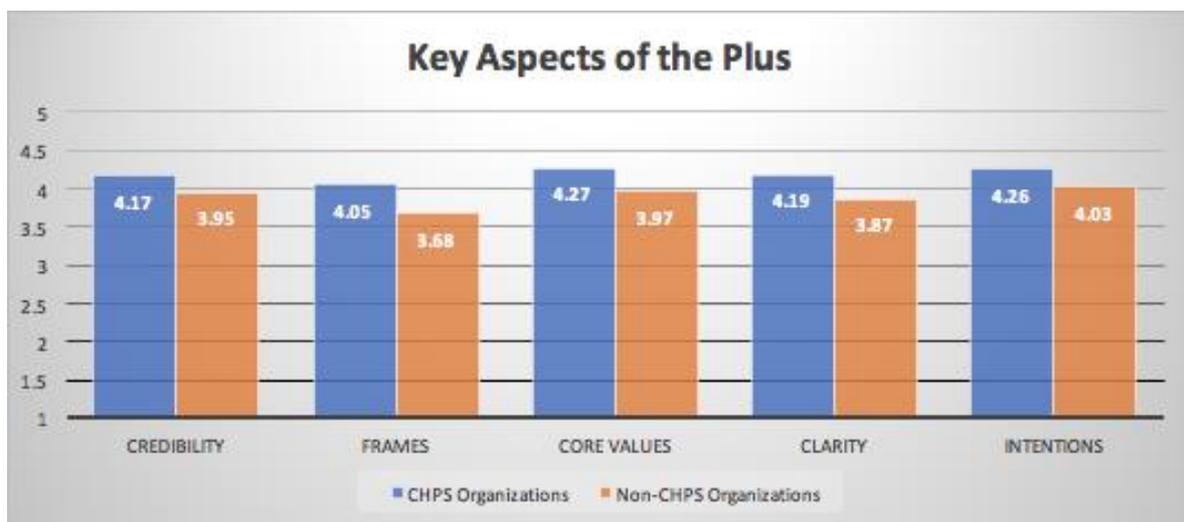


FIGURE 5: COMPARISON BETWEEN CHPS AND NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS BY KEY ASPECTS OF THE PLUS

Breaking the overall scores down into the five key aspects of the framework shows that only in the *intentions* aspect do the non-CHPS organizations score above the HPO benchmark of

4.0 on average. Meanwhile, the CHPS organizations score above 4.0 on average in all five factors.

#### 4.4 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

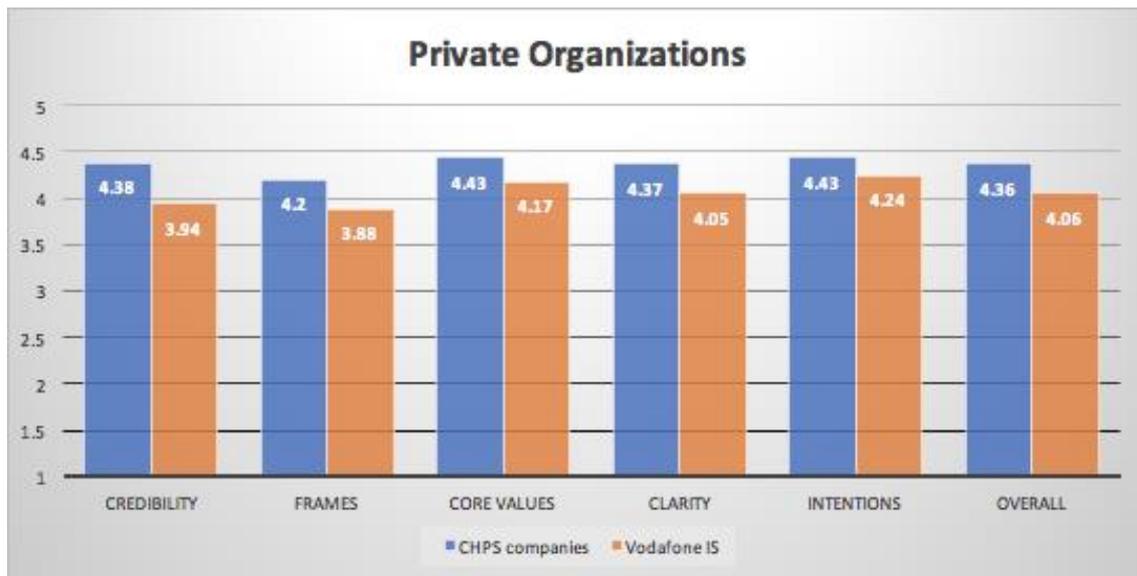
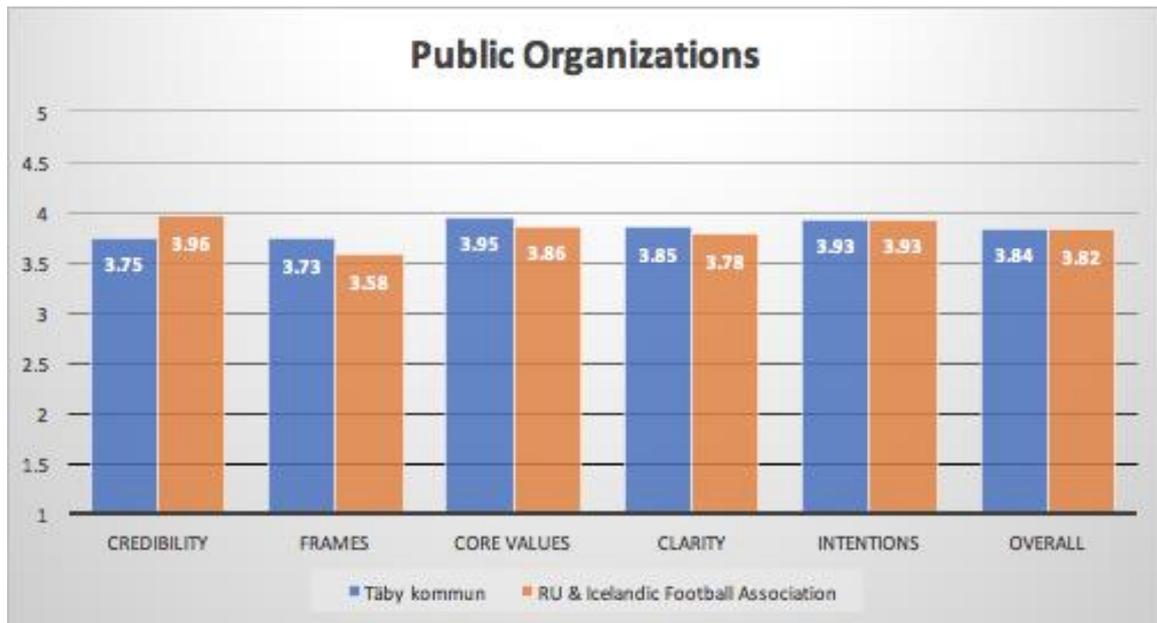


FIGURE 6: COMPARISON BETWEEN PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

When the public organizations (Täby, KSI and RU) are taken out of the equation and comparison is made between the private organizations, a slightly larger difference can be noticed between companies that have worked with CHPS and companies that have not worked with CHPS.



**FIGURE 7: COMPARISON BETWEEN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS**

When comparison is made between the public organization that has worked with CHPS and those that have not, hardly any difference is present. However, it should be noted that Täby kommun has only been working with the CHPS framework for a short period of time and is still implementing the framework into the organization. It would be interesting to repeat the study on the organization e.g. after one year, to see if improvements are made.

## **5. Qualitative Findings**

In this chapter, the findings of the qualitative research, i.e. the interviews with senior managers of the organizations in this research, are introduced. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the interviews were partly based on the results of the quantitative research, and thus references to those results are also made in this chapter.

### **5.1 RESULTS BY ORGANIZATION**

#### **5.1.1 MOTORCENTRALEN**

Motorcentralen scored well above the HPO benchmark of 4.0 on every factor of the CHPS framework. Having worked with CHPS for the last five years, Anna Ericsson, owner of Motorcentralen, was pleased to see such positive results. Ericsson says that working with the CHPS framework has helped the company a lot, e.g. in making communication clearer and more focused as well as defining and implementing the core values of the company. Employees are aware of the company's values during day-to-day work, and remind each other of the "correct" way of doing things when someone acts in a way that does not align with the values, resulting in a positive, constructive company culture. Furthermore, the management team has regular discussion on what being an HPO means to the company and how the company can purposely chase that goal (Ericsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

Working with CHPS, the company laid down three main goals it wanted to aim for; increased employee satisfaction, increased customer satisfaction and increased profitability. After working with CHPS, Ericsson says that notable improvements have been made with all of the company's main goals. Ericsson is certain that working on improving the five key aspects of the CHPS framework can positively influence the organization's performance and help them reach their goals (Ericsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

### **5.1.2 OLOFSSON BIL**

Olofsson Bil is the only other organization in this research to score above 4.0 on every factor of the CHPS framework, thus having HPO status according to the framework. The company has been working with the CHPS company on a regular basis for approximately the last decade, with a couple of years having passed since their last cooperation.

Maria Olofsson, CEO of the company, says that they originally started working with the CHPS framework as they wanted to focus more on implementing the core values of the company into everyday work, hoping it would lead to improved performance. Performance has indeed improved according to Olofsson, who says that working with the CHPS framework helped the company sharpen their core values and also aided in getting every employee on board, rowing in the same direction. The goal of the company is to be number one in its industry, and Maria is sure that working purposefully with the five factors of the CHPS framework can assist the company reaching their goal (Olofsson, interview, 12 May, 2017).

### **5.1.3 TÄBY KOMMUN**

Täby kommun does not reach the HPO benchmark of 4.0 on any factor of the framework, however, it falls relatively short of it on every aspect. The organization has worked with the CHPS framework for approximately one year, and according to district supervisor Johnnie Gedda, they have already noticed some positive changes. After having regular discussion as to how to improve its performance, the municipality decided to start working with CHPS in its efforts to improve communication between departments and aligning employees towards a common goal, a task easier said than done in a complicated organization like a municipality. After working with the framework, Gedda states that employees know their roles better, communication has improved and core values guide everyday work in a positive way. With the overall goal of improving job satisfaction, Gedda was pleased to see employee sick leave percentage rate drop from 8% down to 5,5% in the first eight months of working with CHPS (Gedda, interview, 12 May, 2017).

Gedda has previously used the CHPS framework at two other organizations and claims that the framework is an effective tool to use when organizations want to improve their performance. However, he stresses that simply hiring a consultancy firm and expecting things to change automatically, is doomed to fail. Employees must actively participate in the process and the managers' job is to make sure that everyone is on board. Changes take time, Gedda adds, and to maintain high-performance, organizations must regularly revisit topics such as the organization's core values, their goals and frames (Gedda, interview, 12 May, 2017).

#### **5.1.4 VODAFONE ICELAND**

Vodafone Iceland was the highest scoring of the three Icelandic organizations partaking in the research. The company scored above the benchmark of 4.0 on three key factors of the framework, with the *credibility* and *frames* factors scoring just below that mark. According to the CEO of Vodafone Iceland, Stefan Sigurdsson, the company has been going through a transition phase in the last couple of years with a clear goal of improving organizational performance through various measures, such as streamlining processes, having clearer communication channels, working with core values and improving flexibility for employees (Sigurdsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

Sigurdsson stated that a company offering a wide range of products and services, that is also operating in a highly competitive industry like Vodafone is, sometimes has problems prioritizing resources when multiple projects are being followed through simultaneously. To avoid such complications, and with the intention of aligning people, clear and open communication and a common understanding of the company's core values and goals are key, according to Sigurdsson, hence the reason for the company's interest in addressing these issues (Sigurdsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

When going through the company's questionnaire results, Sigurdsson was relatively pleased and rarely surprised. However, having recently worked extensively with the company's core values, the CEO would have liked to have seen even better results in that aspect. As the questionnaire was only answered by the company's management team, Sigurdsson concluded that there was need to work further with the core values on the management level

within the company. The high score on the intentions frame was pleasing to Sigurdsson, as the company has also been working a lot with clarifying the strategy and goals of the company and how to work effectively towards those goals (Sigurdsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

According to Sigurdsson, the management team regularly addresses the issue of what being an HPO means for the company and how the company can achieve that status. It is clear that despite not working with the CHPS framework, the primary features of the framework can be identified when Sigurdsson explains what the company believes to be important for improving the performance of the company. Indeed, when introduced to the key elements of the CHPS framework, Sigurdsson states that he believes that they do portray a picture of essential elements in achieving organizational excellence, adding a compliment regarding the questionnaire, which he thinks goes to the core of measuring these important factors (Sigurdsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

#### **5.1.5 REYKJAVIK UNIVERSITY**

Reykjavik University scored above the HPO benchmark of 4.0 on two out of the five main factors of the CHPS framework, *credibility* and *intentions*, with two additional factors, *core values* and *clarity* scoring close to 4.0 but with *frames* scoring lowest at 3.64. Ari Kristinn Jonsson, president of the University, said the results did not come as a surprise. Even though the organization scored highest on the *intentions* aspect, Jonsson would have liked to see that score even higher, as the organization has been working intensively on defining and aligning the goals of the University. However, Jonsson stated that aligning goals can be a tough task in a complex organization such as a University. The management team is somewhat divided, with academic management on one side and the management of various support divisions, such as the departments of operations and quality assurance, on the other. Although both sides can agree on the main goals of the organization, views on how to achieve those goals sometimes differ, possibly causing conflict and making alignment a challenge (Jonsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

Further discussing the complexity of an academic organization such as the Reykjavik University, Jonsson mentioned that defining what makes universities high-performing is far from simple. Should it be measured by the output of peer-reviewed articles and number of Nobel laureates or by graduating qualified individuals, capable of solving problems for organizations and creating value for society? According to Jonsson, both factors are highly important for universities being high-performing and fulfilling their goals of improving society through education and research (Jonsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

Responding to low scores on particular questions, e.g. regarding efficiency of meetings and balance between work and leisure, Jonsson stated that too much energy was often spent on both internal issues, far out of context to its effect on the overall goal of the organization, as well as external issues to which people have no control over. Here, Jonsson claimed that many organizations had opportunities to improve by focusing more on issues that really matter to their overall goals and cutting time and energy spent on irrelevant issues (Jonsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

Jonsson sees obvious positives about the CHPS framework, and he believes it can certainly help organizations improve their performance. He believes it goes to the core of what is important when it comes to setting a direction for organizations and aligning people behind the goals and values of an organization so that it is reflected in the daily work of employees (Jonsson, interview, 11 May, 2017).

#### **5.1.6 ICELANDIC FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

Of the organizations participating in the research, the Icelandic Football Association (KSI) had the lowest overall score, falling short of the HPO benchmark of 4.0 on every aspect of the framework. This could perhaps at least partly be explained by a methodological flaw, as a mistake by the researchers led to the questionnaire being presented to the board of the organization as well as managers, and not only to managers as was the case in other organizations. As the board does not operate within the organization on a day-to-day basis, this potentially distorted the findings.

The CEO of the association, Klara Bjartmarz, also contributed their low score to some extent to the big changes that have been ongoing in the organization over the last few months. KSI has been in a transitional phase, with a recent change in leadership occurring when Gudni Bergsson replaced long time chairman Geir Thorsteinsson earlier this year. As a result, many things have been changing, including the retirement of one of the most experienced employee at KSI headquarters, and according to Bjartmarz, more changes could be on their way. Further responding to the relatively low scores of the organization, Bjartmarz noted that the organization is under a gigantic workload and rather short on staff. This has led to "firefighting", where employees are constantly reacting to unforeseen scenarios, instead of being able to structurally organize daily tasks. Furthermore, Bjartmarz states that the nature of the work makes it hard for employees to disconnect and enjoy their leisure time. Their work mode is always on and the risk of a burnout is extremely high, especially in recent months (Bjartmarz, interview, 12 May, 2017).

The organization has made attempts to improve tasks and processes in the past, by consciously setting goals and developing a strategy, however, due to time constraints such efforts have so far been in vain. Bjartmarz said this was something they would like to attend to in the future, however adding that agreeing on core values and main goals might prove difficult in an organization like KSI, where a lot of conflicting interests are present (Bjartmarz, interview, 12 May, 2017).

Asked about the core elements of the CHPS framework, Bjartmarz was sure that if those factors were in place and maintained, the Icelandic Football Association would have fewer problems at its hand and it was something she wanted to work on in the near future. When asked if there had been any discussion as to how KSI would define high-performance for an organization like theirs, Bjartmarz explained that they simply did not have the time to have that discussion in any purposeful way. However, she did note that the Icelandic national soccer teams were working according to a high-performance agenda, with clearly defined goals, but at the office of KSI, such an agenda was not in place (Bjartmarz, interview, 12 May, 2017).

## **5.2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHPS ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-CHPS ORGANIZATIONS**

Although the numerical difference between organizations that have worked with CHPS and those that have not is not decisive according to the quantitative findings, there were some aspects of the qualitative answers that hinted that the CHPS framework does improve organizational processes. Of the non-CHPS organizations, the manager of Vodafone Iceland was the only one who did not talk about the problem of clashing interests between departments and the conflicts related to people wanting to go different ways to reach the same goal. Sigurdsson (interview, 11 May, 2017) noted that Vodafone had been working systematically on breaking down walls between departments and getting everyone to row in the same direction with the same means. In the CHPS organizations, however, all three managers noted that working with CHPS has led to increased cohesion within the organizations where everybody aim for the same long term goal.

## **5.3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS**

The difference between public and private organizations, their goals and responsibilities, frequently became the topic of discussion with managers of public organizations in the study, who agreed that clearly identifying high-performance in public organizations can be difficult. Jonsson (interview, 11 May, 2017), president of RU, mentioned that there can sometime be a gap between academic management and operational management within the University as to what goals to pursue and how to work towards them. Indeed, the main goals of the University, such as providing quality education and positively affecting the society, are very hard to measure, understandably making it challenging to come to a common understanding of how to reach them.

Johnnie Gedda, district supervisor of Täby kommun, stated that as municipalities have a quite complicated and divisionalized structure, compared to a regular company, aligning goals and core values can be a tough task. Klara Bjartmarz, CEO of the Icelandic Football Association told a similar story. Their organization is constantly trying to achieve multiple goals at the same time, some of which are seemingly mutually exclusive, yet equally important. The

managers of the private organizations did, however, not mention these "problems" when talking about aligning employees towards the goals of the organization.

Despite the apparent differences between different types of organizations, all managers of this study stated that paying attention to the five key factors of the CHPS framework was important for improving performance, irrespective of organizational type. This strengthens the argument that having a wider, value based, approach to an HPO framework, such as the CHPS framework, makes it more easily applicable to all types of organizations.

## **6. Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter is dedicated to analyzing and discussing the findings of this research, using both the theoretical overview as well as the findings from the quantitative and qualitative research as a basis for the discussion.

### **6.1 DEFINING HPOS**

During this research, the authors realized that defining high-performance within organizations was going to be difficult. Although countless definitions do exist, each being an effort to support a framework, or a benchmark set to distinguish between high-performers and others in studies, no general, scientifically proven definition, that everyone can agree on, exists, nor is one likely to emerge (e.g. Kirby, 2005; Cocks, 2012). Furthermore, the organizations that partook in this research all had different answers as to what constituted as high-performance to them, underlining the difference of goals between types of organizations and perhaps the need to think of high-performance from a new perspective.

Further validating this idea of a new perspective by going through the history of HPO theory and analyzing several high-performance models and frameworks, we conclude that the fundamental characteristics of HPOs have developed rather than transformed throughout history, with even the key factors of the most modern frameworks tracing their origin to some of the earliest work in the field. Researchers tend to agree that achieving high-performance is only possible by having a composite of a variety of characteristics, and that they might evolve over time along with technological and societal changes. Examples of these characteristics are having a clear vision for the future, ensuring quality management and establishing a strong company culture through core values. These characteristics, along with many others of historical significance in HPOs, are clearly present in the CHPS framework, leading us to argue that, despite its different approach to high-performance, the framework gains validity in context to other theories through being so deeply rooted in previous approaches to achieving high-performance.

The CHPS framework offers a non-traditional approach to the definition of high-performance. According to Ström (2016) the concept of high-performance should be focused more on the processes within organizations, rather than any tangible outcome that can be measured and compared. It might seem hard to argue that a "regular" company, that does not really excel at any level based on traditional measurements of high-performance, should be considered high-performing, just because it scores high on each of the five factors of the CHPS framework. Yet, according to the framework, this can be the case, as organizations that focus on these key aspects should have the capacity to reach their goals, and should thus be considered high-performing. Furthermore, one does not have to look far back in time to see that even though organizations are excelling and staying on top for an extended time according to traditional measurements of high-performance, few would, in hindsight, consider them high-performance organization, with Enron and the Icelandic bank system in 2008 being notable examples of "exemplary" organizations that went horribly wrong.

Having said that, the authors of this paper are certainly not implying that identifying key factors that lead to high-performance in organizations is a worthless cause. Indeed, countless researchers have claimed to have done so, some of which who back up their arguments with strong data. We argue that high-performance is a highly contextual concept, dependent on e.g. the goals and ambitions of organizations. We further argue, that the results of our study provide clues that the CHPS framework is a usable tool for organizations that want to improve their performance and that it can help them reach their goals through attending to the key concepts of the framework. Interviews with the managers of the Icelandic organizations further validate these arguments, as every one of them stated that the CHPS framework does offer solutions as to how organizations can improve their performance. We do, however, not present the framework as a "quick fix" for organizations, but rather as a clear, comprehensive, value based framework that is applicable to all kinds of organizations wanting to improve their performance.

## 6.2 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS VS. PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

The difference between public and private organizations is at the core, the ownership. Private organizations are owned by shareholders or entrepreneurs while the public sector is owned collectively by members of political communities (Boyne, 2002). Therefore, the whole operation of organizations varies between the private and public sector, leading to the concept of high-performance not necessarily meaning the same thing between different organizations. The assumption is that private organizations have to make more profit and continue to grow to be considered high-performing. In "regular" businesses, making a profit is always the final goal. Of course, companies can pursue other goals along the way, be that to promote CSR, improve employee satisfaction or foster innovation, however, these goals usually serve as a means to an end, which is to make a profit and keep the company running. Meanwhile, public organizations usually have to take a wider variety of end goals into the account. Pursuing multiple end goals is often the reality, thus making it harder to align people as they might have different views of what goals to aim for and how to reach them (Nutt, 2000).

As mentioned before, this was frequently the topic of discussion for managers of the public organizations of this research, emphasizing the challenges such organizations face when trying to align their goals. Likewise mentioned before in this thesis, the benchmark for high-performance has to be set before measuring if an organization is high-performing or not. The benchmark usually being related to financial measurements. Trying to create a measurable unit with the service that public organizations have to offer has not gone smoothly in the past and has in fact resulted in declining services and trust of the public organization, leaving a gap between the usual benchmarks and those that are feasible for public organizations. The CHPS framework, however, leaves it up to each organization to set the benchmark. The organizational change that has to be done to reach that benchmark is claimed to lead to, at the very least, better performance within organizations. Therefore, we argue that managers in both public and private organizations have equal opportunity of benefiting from using the CHPS framework, making it suitable for both private and public organizations.

### 6.3 FURTHER THOUGHTS

Our study only provides a "snapshot" of the current status of the organizations researched and cannot portray any potential improvement or decline that might occur over a certain period of time. To further validate our findings, a larger study, where several companies are researched over an extended period of time, both before and after working with the CHPS framework, and where improvements, not only on the CHPS key factors but also regarding the organizations' main goals are measured, would be ideal. However, the findings of the quantitative study gives clues about the effectiveness of applying the CHPS framework to organizations, as the organizations that have worked with the CHPS framework scored higher on all aspects of the Plus. When the findings were referred to the managers of CHPS organizations, they all agreed that they in fact did see a lot of difference in the overall process within the organizations. This is e.g. the third time that Johnnie Gedda (interview, 11 May, 2017) works with CHPS in an organization and he has, on every occasion, noticed a big shift towards better performance through different measures.

It can be argued that the findings of the research hint at the validity of the CHPS framework on big organizations as well as small businesses or even sub-units within organizations. We further argue, that the results of our study provide clues that the CHPS framework is a usable tool for organizations that want to improve their performance and that it can help them reach their goals through attending to the key concepts of the framework. Interviews with the managers of the Icelandic organizations further validate these arguments, as every one of them stated that the CHPS framework offers potential solutions as to how organizations can improve their performance.

## 7. Conclusion

In the last few decades, scholars, managers, and consultants alike have shown increased interest in identifying the characteristics of high-performance organizations. While searching for ways to improve organizational performance it is easy to lose track going through the vast amount of theories and frameworks available. Our study aimed at researching an HPO framework, developed by the Stockholm based company CHPS, to find out if the framework can be applied to organizations in order to facilitate an environment of high-performance. Furthermore, if it was possible to systematically improve the key characteristics of the framework and if that leads to improved organizational performance. Finally, the aim of the research was to explore the relevance of these characteristics to managers of different types of organizations when aiming for improved organizational performance. To live up to the purpose of the research, a historical overview of HPO theory was conducted as well as a qualitative and a quantitative research on six organizations, both public and private, three of which had worked with CHPS and three of which had not.

The findings from the research suggest that an organization can work systematically on improving the key factors that make up the CHPS framework, meaning that applying the framework to organizations is indeed possible. There are also clues that by doing so, an environment of high-performance can be created, at least with regards to how that concept is defined according to the CHPS framework, where organizations set their own benchmark of high-performance. We can, however, not state that attending to those factors will lead to high-performance as defined by "traditional" approaches to HPOs, as we lack measurements and the ability to compare based on our research.

To summarize, our research gives clues that the CHPS framework can lead to better performance in both private and public organizations, as measured by the participating organizations and the goals they have set out to reach. Examples being increased employee satisfaction in Motorcentralen and a lower percentage of sick leave in Täby kommun. Other factors that were mentioned by managers included better overall communication, alignment, and harmony within the organizations that have worked with the CHPS framework.

Our findings furthermore suggest that the key aspects of the CHPS framework are of high relevance to managers of different types of organizations and that managers identify the factors as connected to improving organizational performance. All managers that were interviewed, both those that had worked with CHPS and those that had not, asserted that the factors in the CHPS framework were highly relevant, and working systematically on improving them could lead to improved performance within organizations. As an example, although not working according to the CHPS framework, both Vodafone Iceland and Reykjavik University have been trying to improve their performance by working on some of the key factors of the CHPS framework, underlining the relevance of its key factors.

Finally, our research of high-performance organizations has shed light on just how contextual and elusive that concept is, and that coming to a conclusion as to what constitutes as a high-performance organization is always dependent on the definition and measurements for that particular observation. However, it has also shown us that, despite the different approaches to HPOs, some characteristics seem to be close to ever-present in organizations considered high-performing, such as having core values, clear goals and a strong organizational culture. Making it ever so clear that managers should dedicate time, effort and resources within the organization to attend to these essential elements when aiming for improved organizational performance.

## **7.1 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Based on this research, we cannot claim for certain that the CHPS framework leads organizations on a path to high-performance, e.g. because of how contextual and dependent on definitions that concept is. Our findings do suggest that the key aspects of the framework can be improved within organizations by working systematically towards that, and that by doing so, organizations can improve their performance in certain areas, dependent on the goals set forth by the organization. After thorough analysis of the CHPS framework, its foundations and philosophy, we argue that it is equally applicable for a CEO of an international corporation as it is for a teacher in a classroom. Each aspect of the framework is something that every manager can make good use of, making us certain that managers at

different levels of different types of organizations could do worse than turn to the CHPS framework as they look for ways to improve organizational performance.

As mentioned before, this study has certain limitations. It would be highly interesting to do a follow-up longitudinal research with a bigger sample of organizations, measuring the change and development within organizations that apply the CHPS framework, making comparisons and generalizations easier. Observing participating organizations over a certain period of time, instead of relying solely on a questionnaire and interviews at a single point in time, could prove valuable to the validity of such a research.

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## Appendices

### APPENDIX A

Organization	Position	Name	Country	Date and time	Length	Language
Reykjavik University	President	Ari Kristinn Jonsson	Iceland	11.05.2017 – 11:00 CET	62 minutes	Icelandic
Motorcentralen	Owner	Anna Ericsson	Sweden	11.05.2017 – 13:30 CET	23 minutes	English / Swedish
Vodafone Iceland	CEO	Stefan Sigurdsson	Iceland	11.05.2017 – 15:30 CET	52 minutes	Icelandic
Olofsson Bil	CEO	Maria Olofsson	Sweden	12.05.2017 – 11:00 CET	18 minutes	English / Swedish
Icelandic Football Association	CEO	Klara Bjartmarz	Iceland	12.05.2017 – 13:00 CET	43 minutes	Icelandic
Täby kommun	District supervisor	Johnnie Gedda	Sweden	12.05.2017 – 15:00 CET	32 minutes	English / Swedish
CHPS – Center för Högresterande System	CHPS creators	Per-Olov Ström and Karin Nyberg	Sweden	27.01.2017 – 10:00 CET	73 minutes	English / Swedish
CHPS – Center för Högresterande System	CHPS creators	Per-Olov Ström and Karin Nyberg	Sweden	21.03.2017 – 10:30 CET	Ca. 240 minutes	English / Swedish

## APPENDIX B

Three organizations that currently work with CHPS were selected to participate in the study. The companies contacted were:

- **Motorcentralen, Sweden**

Motorcentralen is a large car dealership in Umeå that has been operational since 1944. They have been working with CHPS for the last five years.

- **Olofsson Bil, Sweden**

A car dealership, located in Stockholm. They have been working with CHPS for a decade now.

- **Täby kommun**

The newest member on the CHPS roster. Have been working with CHPS for almost a year now.

For the sake of comparisons, three organizations that had never heard of the CHPS framework, but were relevant to this study based on our assessment, were selected to participate. The companies contacted were:

- **Vodafone, Iceland**

Since 2013 Vodafone Iceland has been growing steadily in customers, service and profit. They recently acquired the biggest media empire in Iceland securing their place as one of the biggest communication company in Iceland (Vodafone, 2016).

- **Reykjavik University**

Today Reykjavik University plays an incremental role in providing quality education aimed for the business and tech sector in Iceland (Reykjavik University, 2016).

- **The Icelandic football association (KSI)**

With success coming for both the men's and woman's national team over the last decade and number of members in KSI growing rapidly, KSI has shown record profit and growth for the last couple of years. Making them an interesting participant in this research (KSI, 2016).