High Performance Work Systems and Careers: Inseparable or Incompatible?

The idea behind High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) is that we employ state-of-the-art techniques in the management of the workforce. HPWS revolve around three pillars: the flow of people into, through and out of the organisation, the management of their performance and rewards, and the way we deal with the workforce (for example, opportunities for participation). If these three pillars are taken care in concert then we will see performance gains at every level; the individual worker, the work unit, and the organisation. However, which techniques exactly fall into HPWS and how HPWS operate (the so called “black box”) are less clear. A dominant view is that HPWS “work” because they increase the commitment of the workforce via providing a career. Most people aspire to have careers, and we know that people regardless of the generation they belong to view attractive careers in terms of three key elements: employment security, opportunities for advancement, and rewards, and the way we deal with the workforce (for example, opportunities for participation). If these three pillars are taken care in concert then we will see performance gains at every level; the individual worker, the work unit, and the organisation. However, which techniques exactly fall into HPWS and how HPWS operate (the so called “black box”) are less clear. A dominant view is that HPWS “work” because they increase the commitment of the workforce via providing a career. Most people aspire to have careers, and we know that people regardless of the generation they belong to view attractive careers in terms of three key elements: employment security, opportunities for advancement, and rewards, and the way we deal with the workforce (for example, opportunities for participation). If these three pillars are taken care in concert then we will see performance gains at every level; the individual worker, the work unit, and the organisation.