



Leadership Change: The Key to Better Performance?



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Background

It is often suggested that new leaders bring about positive change to a firm's, a sports team's, a council's or a country's performance. Much has been claimed about the importance of public leadership for performance, but evidence tends to be anecdotal rather than systematic.

To fill that gap, we explored the relationships between political and managerial leadership change and performance in all principal English local governments (London boroughs, metropolitan districts, shire counties and unitary authorities) from 2000 to 2005.

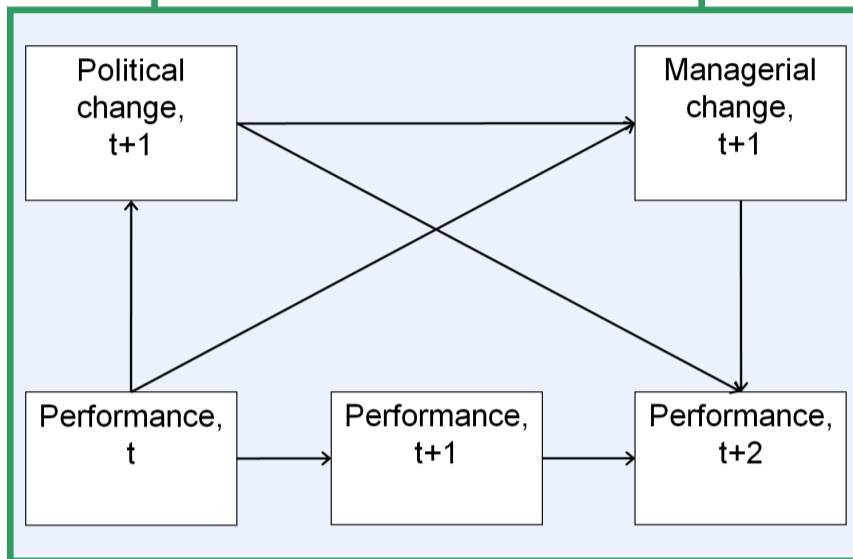


Figure 1: Interrelationships between performance, political change, and managerial change

What We Did

- ❖ We collected data on political and managerial leadership succession of all 148 principal English local authorities and linked that with data on performance and background factors. We used these data to test models explaining the vote share of the incumbent party, management turnover and chief executive succession and organisational performance.
- ❖ We conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 managerial and political leaders. These helped us to interpret our quantitative results.

Aims

We set out to examine whether:

- ❖ the electoral success of incumbent parties in local councils, chief executive successions, and changes in the team of service directors were influenced by public service performance;
- ❖ changes in the political party control of local councils tended to lead to chief executive successions and increased turnover in the team of service directors;
- ❖ turnover in the top management team was associated with better performance;
- ❖ new chief executives were linked with higher performance; and
- ❖ under what conditions new political and managerial leaders made a difference to public service performance.

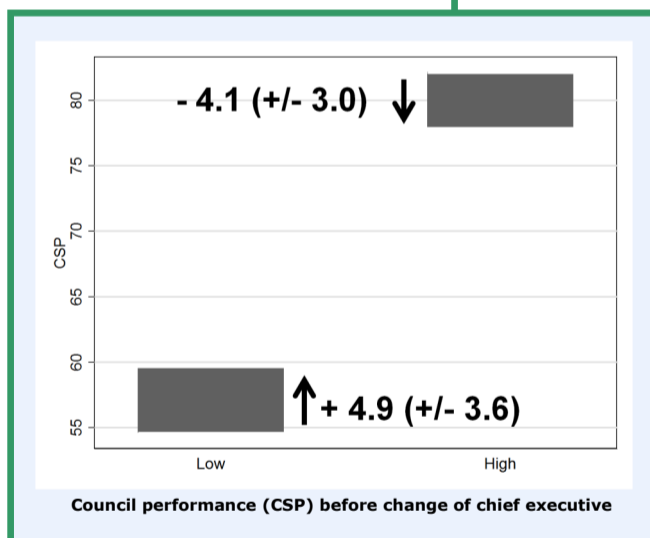


Figure 2: A change of chief executive was associated with a rise in CSP score in previously underperforming (low CSP) councils, but with a fall in CSP in highly performing councils

Findings

- ❖ Poor performance on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and reductions in CPA ratings were predictors of a reduced share of the incumbent party's vote at the next election, but there

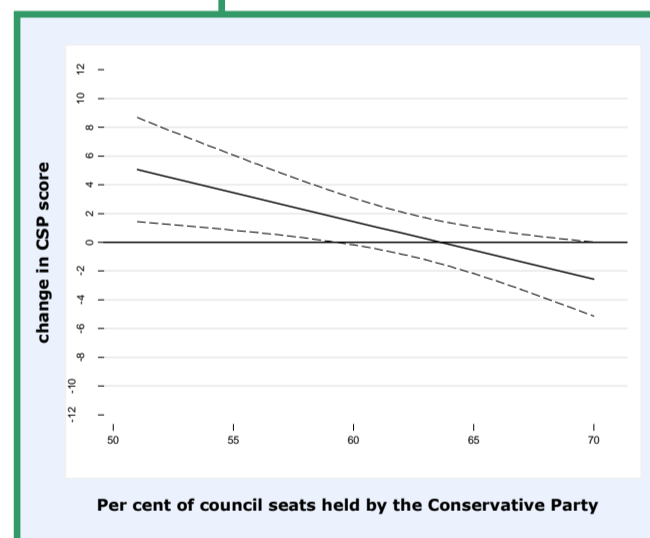


Figure 3: A change to Conservative Party control tended to be followed by an increase in the Core Service Performance score (CSP), but only if the new majority was relatively narrow, i.e. less than sixty per cent of council seats

- was no electoral advantage to be gained from an increased CPA.
- ❖ The measured performance component of the CPA (known as the CSP) of a local government was strongly linked to turnover of top managers, but to the chief executive only if there was also a change in political party control.
- ❖ Managerial leadership turnover led to better results when prior performance was weak, but worse results when prior performance was strong (Fig. 2).
- ❖ Majority control by either the Labour Party or the Conservatives was associated with slightly better performance, compared to all other types of political control (Fig. 3).

Find out more...



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