PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION

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FOREWORD

In the *State of the Public Service* research series, we seek to provide evidence-informed research and commentary on key aspects of contemporary Irish public administration. Our aim is that these reports will not only inform, but also challenge thinking about how the Irish public service performs and operates. It is intended that these short research reports will be of relevance and use not only to public servants, but also to policy makers and the wider public.

The notion that people are motivated to work in the public service as a result of a desire to serve or to have a positive impact on society is a long-standing one. This report examines how the current public service reform process, and the wider context of reform, may be impacting on the motivation of public servants. It also identifies ways in which public service managers can maintain employee motivation in a difficult environment, with consequent benefits for morale and performance.

Maintaining a motivated workforce is critical to achieving the objectives of reform. The report concludes that in circumstances where extrinsic motivations, such as pay, are being reduced, it is critical that public service managers in Ireland are aware of the importance of fostering and supporting the intrinsic motivations of employees, and are skilled at doing so. This report presents four key approaches that help organisations develop a culture grounded in public service motivation.

Brian Cawley
Director General

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ireland is currently in the grip of the most serious economic recession in its modern history which is having profound effects on the economy and society. The public service is also being significantly impacted by the fiscal crisis. It is not the purpose of this report to debate the need for pay cuts and changes in terms and conditions in the public service. Rather it is to highlight the impact of contraction and reform on employee motivation and engagement, and to identify ways in which managers can reinforce public service motivation in these difficult times.

What motivates public servants?

The notion that people are motivated to work in the public service as a result of altruism, a desire to serve, or a wish to have an impact on society is a long-standing one. It is closely associated with the idea of public service ethos, which is rooted in an understanding that the public service is different from the private sector, both because of the tasks it performs and the behaviours it expects of its employees.

Public service motivation is not the only or even the most important criterion of individuals choosing to take up, or remain in, public service employment. Recent research cites the superseding importance of good, or at least market-rate, levels of pay and security of tenure. The prevailing economic situation in the country and long-standing cultural issues which impact on the prestige and social standing of public officials are likewise relevant. However, public service motivation does matter, and among the intrinsic reasons that come into play when individuals chose where to work it is highly significant.

Against a backdrop of global recession, many governments are increasingly seeking to reform their public service, reducing cost and increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. These changes are necessary. However, this report cautions against ignoring or minimising the negative impact on employee motivation and engagement of changes to terms and conditions and ways of working.

In circumstances where extrinsic motivations are significantly constrained or even reduced, as is the case currently in the Irish public service, it is critical that managers are very aware of the importance of fostering and supporting the intrinsic motivations of employees.

Relevance of public service motivation for Ireland

The Irish public service in 2013 is in its fifth year of declining numbers, recruitment and promotion embargoes, budget cuts and implementation of new work practices. These reforms are necessary in order to reduce government spending and achieve the budget deficit target determined by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund.

While there is no concrete evidence available, there is a strong and prevalent perception that the reform and contraction of the magnitude being experienced by the Irish public service, in conjunction with the perceived scapegoating of the public service, is taking its toll on employee morale and engagement.

Further developing research and evidence in respect of public service motivation is valuable in the current Irish situation for a number of reasons. The theory on public service motivation is grounded in an assumption that the public service is different and therefore cannot be reformed in a manner similar to a private sector business. As the OECD often emphasise, the fundamental purpose of the public service is government and not management, and this means having regard for multiple objectives beyond 'the bottom line'. Furthermore, the desire 'to serve others' has been shown to be an important factor in motivating talented, ambitious people to join and remain in

the public service and undoubtedly these are the type of employee the Irish public service desperately needs in order to confront multiple challenges

In practical terms, managers need to implement policies that are consistent with, and support, public service motivation. Yet available evidence suggests that against a background of recession, 'pay and numbers' currently dominates the human resource management agenda in Ireland. Furthermore, particular concerns arise with respect to the recruitment and promotion moratorium in place in the public service. New recruits contribute beyond their skills and qualifications - they inject 'new blood' into organisations and challenge the status quo. Promotion opportunities also matter, because notwithstanding the contribution of public service motivation, extrinsic motivation still matters greatly and employees who perform to a very high level have to see that advancement is a realistic expectation.

Practices for supporting public service motivation

This report presents four central themes which help organisations develop an organisation culture grounded in public service motivation.

Transformational or value-based leadership

Strong, effective leadership is consistently shown to be a major driver of employee satisfaction and commitment. However, transformational leadership goes further than effective change management, good communications and other characteristics of good leadership. Value-based leadership requires the articulation of public service values and the communication of goals and objectives consistent with those values. It is also necessary that the leader themselves model these behaviours, leading by example in exhibiting values that transcend self-interest, and proving themselves to be trustworthy.

Person-organisation fit

Person-organisation fit theory suggests that performance is enhanced when an employee's values match organisational goals, values and culture. Similarly, in situations where they do not, turnover rates will be high. To be credible, all HR practices need to be consistent with the message that 'public service matters'. Thus, recruiting individuals who are not only task qualified but who hold values consistent with the organisation's mission is important. Similarly, induction programmes, training, development and performance management all need to reflect and promote public service values. In particular, performance appraisals need to be based not just around the specific role of an employee, but should also review performance in terms of a demonstration of behaviours critical to the effective operation of the public service, such as customer awareness, collaboration and accountability.

Effective goal setting and job design

Given that many people are attracted to public service work by their motivation to serve and make a positive difference in others' lives, it is essential that what is referred to as 'the line of sight' between their values and the task they are required to fulfil in the organisation is not lost. While clearly this is more feasible in service delivery work, showing all employees how their contribution matters to the overall objectives of the organisation is critical to maintaining their sense of motivation.

Creating a supportive work environment

This is a particularly wide-ranging concept, with factors including the nature of informal relationships, the quality of communication, the way conflict is managed, the collegiality of the organisation and, not least, the incentive systems, which together shape the relationship between an employee's public service motivation and their performance at work. At a basic level, aligning incentives with intrinsic motivations is an important element in managing the public service work environment.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The purpose of this report is to explore the concept of public service motivation (PSM), why it matters and what relevance it has for managers trying to deliver reforms against a background of recession, the consequences of which have been strongly felt in the Irish public service.

The notion that people are motivated to work in the public service as a result of altruism, a desire to serve, or a wish to have an impact on society is a long-standing one. It is closely associated with the idea of public service ethos, which is rooted in an understanding that the public service is different from the private sector, both because of the tasks it performs and the behaviours it expects of its employees.

Public service motivation is an important topic of study because it matters that the public service can attract, retain and motivate employees who are capable of delivering on the complex objectives of the public service.

1.2 Context – a changing public management environment

Recent developments have given the motivation of public servants new prominence. Since the 1980s to varying degrees across developed economies, there have been initiatives to reform the public service, with the objective of ensuring a well-managed workforce that delivers public services efficiently and effectively. These initiatives and programmes have been given new urgency by the current global economic recession and the need for governments to ensure fiscal restraint.

The drive to ensure cost savings within public services has resulted in the introduction of what are often referred to as 'private sector practices'. It is claimed that due to the imperative of the profit motive within the private sector that management practices are more rigorous. Consequently if these approaches, for example in respect of people management or financial management, are replicated in the public service, it will be possible to deliver better services while also reducing costs.

Another development, and related to the financial and economic crisis, is public loss of trust in both politics and in public administrations. Twice a year the Eurobarometer measures the level of public confidence in national government (Boyle, 2012). For both the EU-15 and EU-27 there has been a decline in levels of trust in government since 2008, to levels of 37 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. While the extent to which the Eurobarometer survey data includes both political and administrative elements of government is unclear, it has been suggested (Christensen and Laegreid, 2005) that there is a strong correlation between trust by citizens in different institutions of government, ranging from parliament to the civil service.

In parallel with these trends, debate is ongoing in respect of the distinctiveness or otherwise of the public service and the relevance of a public service ethos. Can we treat the public service like any other business or is the public service different? Is it important to retain a public service ethos founded on core characteristics including partisan neutrality, anonymity, and accountability to and through ministers, or do such features impinge on good management? Should terms and conditions of employment for public servants be distinct from those of private sector workers? Are there important benefits for example of guaranteed tenure that override the business case for treating public servants in a manner similar to all other employees? And what are the consequences of changing the long-standing image, identity and psychological contract of public servants?

While not definitively answering these questions the OECD (2004:2) points to one important consideration in the debate: that 'we must not forget that the fundamental purpose of the public service is government, not management. This means paying attention to fundamental values like fairness, equity, justice and social cohesion to maintain confidence in the governmental and political system as a whole. Managerial aspects, while important, must be considered secondary.'

According to Perry and Hondeghem (2008), the intersection of these developments - economic collapse and drives to reform public management; the relevance of trust in government and public administration; and whether there are fundamental values embedded in a national public service that are important to society and need to be safeguarded in any reform process – has given ideas and debate around the motivation of public servants new salience and prominence.

The importance of feeling valued

Conventional wisdom says it's on the retreat and may even be dead. A feature of a collectivist age now gone, markets and contracts were always going to do for it. But no, the public sector ethos is alive and well. Blossoming even. Working for government does have a special quality, for those in it. And, even more remarkably, the strength of the public service ethos has been growing during the twenty-first century, despite contracting and competition. That, broadly, is the conclusion reached by a report of the UK National Centre for Social Research titled 'Is There Still a Public Service Ethos?'

We're talking dispositions here, of course, not passion. And we are talking proportions. Many public sector workers aren't especially committed or motivated. Nothing here contradicts the findings that teachers and nurses regularly go home and slag off schools and the NHS to their friends and families. Yet people in the public sector are different in that they are more likely to value their job because it is socially useful and brings intrinsic rewards.

The survey on which the report is based found that 45 per cent of public service staff judged their work useful to society, compared to only 14 per cent of private sector employees.

Adapted from Guardian newspaper report in respect of a chapter: Is there still a public service ethos by Peter John and Mark Johnson in British Social Attitudes, the Twenty-fourth Report, the UK National Centre for Social Research, 2007-08. http://www.guardian.co.uk/public/features/story/0,,2252260,00.html
https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/api/datastream?publicationPid=uk-ac-man-scw:46693&datastreamId=FULL-TEXT.PDF

1.3 The Irish context

The Irish economy collapsed in 2007/08 when the international financial crisis and the resulting restriction of credit exposed the insolvency of Irish banks, the property bubble and unsustainable levels of public spending. In November 2010 with collapsed revenues and unable to finance bank recapitalisation and day to day spending, the Irish government negotiated an €85 billion loan from the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (the troika). This resulted in a loss of economic sovereignty and greatly accelerated the programme of austerity measures that had commenced in 2008, in order to ensure that the targets set by the troika in respect of the government deficit would be achieved.

The troika particularly identified the public service as having considerable potential to achieve savings for the government and advised extensions of initiatives already in place. A process of reductions in numbers had been instigated in 2008 with a target of a 12 per cent reduction by the end of 2014. A moratorium on recruitment has

also been in place and public service salaries have been cut, both directly and through the introduction of the pension levy.

In addition to the reductions in numbers, an extensive public service reform programme has been in place since 2011 under the auspices of the newly established Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Public Service Reform plan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2011) sets out a range of commitments including initiatives aimed at improving customer service, reducing costs through the introduction of shared services for HR, payroll and pensions, reform of procurement processes, reform of organisation structures, and new ways of working. For example, the performance management and assessment aspect of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) has been strengthened, initiatives such as workforce planning have been introduced and commitments remain in place around grading reform.

Reform in the public service was originally underpinned by the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement, negotiated in 2010 by the then government and the public service trade unions. Contingent on delivery of the savings and compliance with the Agreement, the Government gave certain commitments to serving public servants, in particular that there would be no further reductions in their pay and no compulsory redundancies as long as public servants remained flexible about redeployment.

Throughout 2012 the government emphasised that the scale of consolidation required could only be achieved through further contributions from all the major components of expenditure (Department of Finance, 2012). Thus a figure of an additional one billion euro emerged as the proportionate contribution in savings to be made from the pay and pensions bill over the three-year period 2013 to 2016. In order to deliver on this objective, the government commenced negotiations with the unions on a successor to the Public Service Agreement towards the end of 2012.

The Haddington Road Agreement (Labour Relations Commission, 2013), finalised in May 2013, represents the final outcome of these negotiations. A longer working week for all public servants, further pay freezes and a direct cut in pay for those earning more than Ð65,000 a year are the principal elements of the deal. Against this background, managers will be faced with an exceptional challenge around motivating their staff. Furthermore, the possibility of rewarding high performance through promotion is generally precluded. An appreciation of the intrinsic motivations that, among other reasons, prompted many employees to join the public service can provide managers with alternative ways of motivating staff in circumstances where extrinsic motivations have been eroded.

1.4 Report structure

Chapter two of this report examines the growing body of theory in respect of public service motivation, looking in particular at the definition and measurement of public service motivation and challenges in respect of the theory. It also addresses the question of why public service motivation matters.

Chapter three explores what impact the theory around public service motivation can have, in practice, on the administration of public services. In particular it is proposed that human resource models in the public service that are based upon assumptions of self-interest have unintended negative consequences while management practices that recognise and reflect the distinct motivations of many public servants may be related to a variety of positive outcomes.

The concluding chapter makes recommendations specific to Ireland and how an appreciation of public service motivation could assist managers in engaging staff against a background of economic recession, public service reform and pay cuts.

2 OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION

2.1 What is understood by public service motivation

Motivation describes a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way. Typically a desire and willingness or enthusiasm is implied. It is these positive attributes that energise, direct and sustain the relevant behaviour.

People are motivated by many different considerations to work for and in government. As noted by Perry and Hondeghem (2008), the public sector has traditionally offered some strong extrinsic motivators that might attract people, such as security of tenure, career and development opportunities and the pension system. Vandenabeele (2008) has also identified 'quality of life' as an attraction of public sector work, with people having the impression that the public sector affords better flexibilities for those combining work with family or other commitments.

However, these extrinsic or rational considerations, which might lead a person to seek public sector employment lie outside what is widely understood by the terms 'public service motivation' (PSM). Rather PSM relates only to the notion that 'individuals are oriented to act in the public domain for the purpose of doing good for others and society' (Perry, Hondeghem and Wise, 2010).

A further important distinction in the literature is between public service motivation as compared to public *sector* motivation. Koumenta (2009:2) suggests that in part this reflects governments seeking to 'break with the tradition of bureaucracy towards one of *customer oriented service*'. Secondly, the substitution of service for sector is in recognition that values traditionally upheld by those in public sector employment can also be found among those delivering a public service but employed by private organisations.

Thus, in summary, Perry and Hondeghem (2008:3) comment that public service motivation may be conceived 'as a type of motivation in the public sector, but it does not cover all motives in the public sector...[and it] may also transcend the public sector, that is, characterise motivations in other arenas of society that involve pursuit of public good'.

Does ownership matter? Public service motivation in the private and public sectors

At the core of PSM theory is the belief that public service motivation is higher among those employed in the public sector compared to the private sector. However, researchers have also queried whether PSM depends on the task or function being carried out rather than the sector of employment. It is difficult to investigate if this is the case because employees in the private and public sector perform different tasks and functions.

A group of Danish researchers (Andersen et al, 2011) explored the differences in the PSM levels for a single occupational group, physiotherapists, performing the same tasks in the Danish private and public sectors. The most important findings in the study are that there is no difference in the general level of PSM between employees performing the same tasks in public and private organisations. However, different types of PSM are expressed. While private sector physiotherapists seem to be more narrowly oriented towards the user, physiotherapists in the public sector have a broader orientation towards the public interest.

Source: Andersen et al (2011)

2.2 Defining public service motivation

The term public service motivation first emerged in the 1980s as a way of explaining differing reward preferences among public and private sector managers (Rainey, 1982). However, Perry and Wise (1990:368) were the first to explicitly define the concept. In an article examining motivational alternatives to merit pay in the US federal government, and reflecting the considerations noted in 2.1, they defined public service motivation as 'an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organisations'.

The focus in the Perry and Wise definition on motives and actions in the public domain that are intended to do good for others, encompasses thinking around a number of related concepts, especially altruism and pro-social behaviour. The former refers to an act that is or appears to be motivated mainly out of a consideration for another's needs rather than one's own, while pro-social behaviour has been described as 'a broad category of other regarding behaviour' or 'the desire to expend effort to benefit other people' (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008).

While Perry and Wise's definition of public service motivation is widely accepted, recent research has contributed to our understanding of how PSM is operationalised. In particular, it is now accepted that public service motivation may transcend the public sector and be experienced by those in both the voluntary and private sectors. Most recently, Vandenabeele (2008:145) has suggested that PSM can be influenced by the environment and context the individual finds themselves in. Consequently he suggests, motivation, rather than only a predisposition depends on the interaction between values inherent to an individual and an opportunity for behaviour consistent with these values.

Public service motivation versus public service ethos

Some writers use the terms public service ethos and public service motivation more or less interchangeably. According to Koumenta (2009:1) preference for either term depends on the discipline the researcher is coming from, with public service ethos more common in the field of public administration, whereas psychologists and organisation theory researchers have favoured the term public service motivation.

The country of origin of researchers is also a factor. The term public service motivation originated in the US and is used extensively there. Lawton and Rayner (2009) suggest that generally non-American authors do not use the term PSM when discussing the phenomenon that some individuals are highly attracted and motivated by public service work, rather they refer to a 'public service ethos'. In French speaking countries the commonly used expression is *'l'éthique du bien commun'* (the ethic of common interest) (Vandenabeele, 2008:144).

Country of origin also influences what is understood by the respective terms and their 'ingredients'. However, as Koumenta (2009) concludes, 'while cross-cultural, institutional and administrative variations naturally produce different lists of values, they also confirm the universality of the construct'.

Public service ethos is certainly the much older term. Its modern roots can be traced back to the Northcote and Trevelyan (1854) report on the Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service which set out the principles that came to shape the public service in the UK and other countries including Ireland that followed the so-called Westminister model. In contrast, public service motivation is a much newer concept emerging in a defined manner only in the 1990s.

According to Horton (2008:18) traditionally the focus among researchers was 'on public service as an ideal...and a prescription of behaviour expected of 'public servants'. However, she continues 'today we are more interested in using empirical research to discover why people remain in the public service'. It is with this shift in mind that Perry and Hondeghem (2008:9) refer to public service motivation as 'a direct descendant of what philosophers and others have called the public service ethos.'

The two terms can perhaps be best understood as representing different sides of the one coin, one describing the 'system', and the other the disposition of those choosing the system.

2.3 Measuring public service motivation

Much of the early research on public service motivation focused on establishing the existence of public service motivation by showing that public sector employees value intrinsic rewards more, and extrinsic rewards less, than their private sector counterparts (Wright, 2008). Public service motivation was seen to be only connected to altruistic motives. Consequently the level and type of an individual's public service motivation, and other research propositions such as the prevalence of public service motivation and its impact on performance remained unanswered.

Initial steps to develop a public service motivation scale that could be used for research were made by Perry (1996). The twenty-four item scale is divided across a range of distinct dimensions or reasons why people are attracted to public service work (Perry, 1996; Wright, 1998):

- *Attraction to public policy making:* From a rational or individual utility maximisation perspective, it is suggested that people are attracted to public policy making as a way of maximising their own need for power, sense of importance or as a way of advocating a special interest that would provide personal benefits.
- *A desire to serve the public interest:* In other words, having a sense of obligation to society
- *Compassion and self-sacrifice:* Dimensions that represent service as an emotional response to humankind.

According to Wright (2008:81) Perry's contribution was significant as it provided 'a more comprehensive and theory-based conceptualisation of public service motivation than previous approaches which only recognised altruistic motives for public service while ignoring the possibility that self-interested or rational motives might also exist.'

While many research studies have relied on the Perry scale, controversy still exists around the measurement of PSM (Vandenabeele and Van de Walle, 2008, Wright, 2008 and Wright and Grant, 2010). A first disadvantage cited is the length of the Perry scale, which is not easily integrated into large employee surveys. In addition, European researchers have identified difficulties in achieving a shared understanding of language when using the Perry scale outside of the United States, with, for example, terms like 'community' (statements 4 and 8 in the Perry scale) or 'self-sacrifice' (statement 22) implying something different to American and European respondents.

However, perhaps more significantly, it has been suggested that the public service values which inform the measurement scale may differ depending on geographic, historic, political and institutional context. This has led to further variations in Perry's scale. For example, Vandenabeele (2008:155) found that it was appropriate to add a further dimension – democratic governance – when measuring PSM. This was to capture public values or principles of public service considered appropriate in a European context, such as 'equality', 'permanence' and 'accountability'. Subsequently other scholars have added other dimensions to reflect the specific values guiding the administrative work in their country of research (Giague et al, 2012).

Perry's Public Service Motivation Scale

Attraction to policy making:

PSM1: Politics is a dirty word
PSM2: The give and take of public policy making doesn't appeal to me
PSM3: I don't care much for politicians

Commitment to the public interest:

PSM4: It is hard for me to get intensely interested in what is going on in my community
PSM5: I unselfishly contribute to my community
PSM6: I consider public service my civic duty
PSM7: Meaningful public service is very important to me
PSM8: I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the whole community even if it harmed my interests

Compassion

PSM9: It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress
PSM10: Most social programmes are too vital to do without.
PSM11: I am often reminded by daily events how dependent we are on one another
PSM12: I am rarely moved by the plight of the underprivileged
PSM13: To me, patriotism includes seeing to the welfare of others
PSM14: I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step to help themselves
PSM15: There are few public programs that I wholeheartedly support
PSM16: I seldom think about the welfare of people I don't know personally

Self-sacrifice

PSM17: Doing well financially is definitely more important to me than doing good deeds
PSM18: Much of what I do is for a cause bigger than myself
PSM19: Serving other citizens would give me a good feeling even if no one paid me for it
PSM20: Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements
PSM21: I think people should give back to society more than they get from it
PSM22: I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society
PSM23: I am one of those rare people who would risk personal loss to help someone else
PSM24: I believe in putting duty before self

Source: Perry (1996)

2.4 Criticism of Public Service Motivation

One of the central tenets of PSM research is that individuals with greater PSM are more likely to be found working for a government organisation because of the opportunities it affords to provide meaningful public service. In respect of the first part of this proposition, research to date has provided considerable evidence that public employees have higher PSM than private sector employees. As noted by Wright and Grant (2010:692), notwithstanding the measurement difficulties detailed above, 'our confidence in this relationship has been strengthened by the numerous studies that have replicated these findings in samples that vary by occupation, organisation, jurisdiction and nationality'.

However, we cannot be certain that PSM actually influences job decisions or performance. In this regard, Wright and Grant (2010) note that it remains unclear to what degree public sector jobs either attract, select and retain employees who already possess high levels of PSM and/or cultivate, increase and encourage the expression of PSM among employees. In other words, there is a lack of clarity around whether PSM is an antecedent or a consequence of employee job decisions.

A further aspect of this question is whether PSM is a static or dynamic trait. The former implies that PSM is a stable characteristic or disposition that is difficult or slow to change. In contrast if this doesn't hold it leaves open the possibility that PSM can be influenced in organisational settings.

Exploring these propositions involves testing individual's levels of public service motivation before they choose their job or career and then subsequently. However, longitudinal studies of this nature are not easy to design or construct, and so evidence remains tentative with research findings in favour of both the 'attraction-selection' and 'adaptation-socialisation' effects (Wright and Grant, 2010). Ultimately Wright and Grant (2010:693) conclude that 'it may be likely that both mechanisms play some role' and that PSM may be a relatively stable disposition but one that still can be changed over time and influenced by the organisation.

A further central principle of public service motivation research is that employees with greater PSM are likely to perform better in public sector jobs. It is thought that employees with high PSM are motivated to perform more effectively because their jobs provide opportunities to express and fulfil their values. Although there is some evidence linking PSM to higher levels of performance, as emphasised by Wright and Grant (2010:694), 'causality is unclear and much more research is needed'. Two particular difficulties arise in respect of research studies to date: the possibility of reverse causality and/or that some other factor is at play that is causing both PSM and performance to increase and creating a spurious connection between them.

Reverse causality implies the possibility that PSM may be a consequence, not a cause of improved performance. According to Wright and Grant (2010), this is grounded in extensive research that shows high performance builds self-efficacy – belief in one's capability, confidence and capacity to succeed. It is suggested that these traits may lead to higher PSM. For example, when a government official performs a task effectively, she may feel more convinced in her capabilities to develop policy or carry out other civic duties, grounded in a desire to serve the public (Wright and Grant, 2010).

As emphasised by Wright (2008), it is also possible that the consequences of public service motivation may be moderated or mediated by other factors. For example, he cites research that suggests that education moderates the relationship with PSM and only predicts public sector employment for college graduates.

A further concern in identifying a positive relationship between PSM and performance noted by Wright and Grant (2010) is the need for research studies to control for conscientiousness, which refers to the extent to which individuals tend to be industrious, disciplined, goal oriented and organised. They note that there is considerable evidence that of all personality traits, conscientiousness is the most robust and reliable predictor of job performance across a wide range of occupations.

However, conscientiousness is just one of a range of potential common causes of a spurious relationship between PSM and performance being identified. In order to demonstrate that PSM motivates higher levels of job performance, and rule out rival explanations, Wright and Grant (2010) recommend field experiments whereby interventions (e.g. to increase PSM) are examined and assessed in 'the real world'. However, to date, research of this nature has not been carried out in respect of PSM.

Evidence of the PSM-performance relationship

Vandenabeele conducted a survey among Flemish state civil servants of most of the central ministries and some associated agencies. The survey was an internet-based e-mail questionnaire. Given the potentially low response rate to on-line surveys, the entire population was sampled. A total of 3,506 useable responses were obtained, with the response rate across organisations ranging from 21 per cent to 90 per cent.

The survey measured PSM using the five-dimensional instrument developed by Vandenabeele (2008) and adapted from the original Perry (1996) measurement scale in order to better suit a European context. The research also explored the potential mediating effect of job satisfaction and organisational commitment on the PSM-performance relationship. In PSM research, positive feelings towards a work situation or an organisational setting are regarded as consequences of PSM.

Vandenabeele's paper concludes that based on the data and arguments presented, the study 'provides further evidence for a robust link between individual PSM and individual performance in public sector organisations'(2009:27). Furthermore, job satisfaction and organisation commitment are found to have a 'significant effect on the PSM-performance relationship' (2009:26).

This latter finding is particularly useful for public sector managers as it enables public managers to 'find more openings to harness PSM effectively' (2008:27). Job satisfaction and organisational commitment are easier to measure than PSM, tests for them being found in most employee attitude surveys, it is therefore useful to know that low scores for them, could indicate, based upon the results of this analysis, lower than expected performance' (2008:27).

Source: Vandenabeele (2009)

Reasons for choosing public sector jobs – 'Good pay, a secure job and a tad of PSM'[1]

People choose public sector jobs for a variety of reasons and although the importance of PSM for public career choice cannot be disputed, research findings are inconclusive about how important it is.

According to Van de Walle and Steijn (2012) research findings have been contradictory in respect of the determinants of this choice. In other words, the relative importance of extrinsic factors (such as pay, security, pension arrangements and work-life balance opportunities) as compared to intrinsic, value-based reasons, that include the concept public service motivation.

Furthermore, it would seem that there are large differences between countries with regard to public sector preference. Van de Walle and Steijn cite research by Norris who found preference ratings that varied from around 20 per cent in New Zealand to over 80 per cent in Bangladesh. These variations reflect both the economic situation in a country and also long-standing cultural differences, with government employment regarded as more prestigious and remunerated in some countries than in others –'compare for instance the social standing of public officials in Korea or Singapore, or the prestige of top officials in France, to the general condescending attitude towards government and its employees in, for example, Eastern Europe' (Van de Walle and Steijn, 2012:11).

In order to explore these issues in greater detail Van de Walle and Steijn used data for twenty-three countries drawn from a work orientations survey that formed part of the International Social Survey programme.

With regard to work values, they find (2012:25) that 'respondents who chose public employment highly value [extrinsic] job characteristics such as job security, a high income, and opportunities for advancement'. However, 'public service motivation is also associated with choosing public sector employment: respondents who choose public employment think it is important to have a job that is useful to society'.

[1]The title of Van de Walle and Steijn's article is 'Good pay, a secure job and a tad of PSM; A Multivariate model of public sector employment preference in 23 countries'

2.5 Does Public Service Motivation Matter?

Over the past two decades the body of academic research in respect of public service motivation has been steadily growing. Consequently, Perry and Hondeghem (2008:6) pose the important and pragmatic question: 'Why should we care about public service motivation?' The answer as they note is of course different depending on whether you are a scholar, public service manager, citizen or politician.

For public managers research on public service motivation would appear to have two main benefits. In shedding light on the background characteristics, work values and human motivations of those who join and remain in the public service, it can help managers develop appropriate systems to attract and retain able employees. This research is examined in chapter three. However, a further area where the concept of public service motivation has value is in offering 'an alternative perspective for public management research and practice' (Perry, Hondeghem and Wise, 2010:687).

For a number of decades public management research and practice has been heavily influenced by theories often referred to under the umbrella term *New Public Management*. This has involved the introduction of private sector or market oriented practices such as performance related pay, targets and performance indicators, into

the public sector. However, because the public sector has different objectives to the private sector there are risks in giving primacy to extrinsic motivations at the expense of intrinsic motivations. Horton (2008:29) expands on this point when she notes that 'good governance is not simply about delivering services but about maintaining stability and order; integrating and facilitating the welfare of society; and, at the top level, advising and warning politicians'. The implication is clear: if the context is different then, at the very least, a high degree of caution should be exerted in transposing private sector management practices into the public sector.

Public service ethos in the UK 'under threat'

The traditional principles of public service such as impartiality, accountability, probity and trust, are in danger of being eroded by crude adoption of 'profit motive' private sector business methods, says a UK MP's report.

The Commons Select Committee on Public Administration warns that the increasing prevalence of public-private partnerships could undermine the delivery of health, local government and other local services unless the government take action to protect long established public service values.

Although it accepts that there is no reason why the public service ethos cannot be upheld by private and voluntary service providers, it suggests that it needs to be reinforced by building it into contracts of service and employment to prevent it being 'put under strain by the profit motive'.

The report 'The Public Service Ethos', states: 'The ethos needs protecting and, where necessary reinforcing in these circumstances. The private sector can be a useful servant for public services, if properly supervised; what it can never be is their master'.

The report concludes that 'the public service ethos should not be seen as an echo from the past but as an indispensable ingredient of any public service deserving of the name'.

Source: House of Commons Select Committee on Public Administration (2002), *The Public Service Ethos*, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmpubadm/263/263.pdf

Moynihan (2010) identifies some further dangers in allowing the market model to become the dominant organisational culture in public organisations. He suggests that if all its associated practices, for example performance-related pay, are adopted that individuals may be induced to alter their behaviour to meet the incentives they face, thereby ensuring that public service motivation is 'crowded-out'. In addition, there is strong evidence from the person-organisation fit literature that employees who do not share the values of their organisation have higher turnover rates. Thus potential and current employees who value a notion of public service and public good may look elsewhere for work.

It is important to emphasise, as both Horton and Moynihan do, that 'criticisms of the market model should not romanticise the capacity of traditional bureaucracies' (Moynihan, 2010:31), the shortcomings of which could equally impact negatively on public service motivation. However, given the very widespread drive to rationalise government structures, it is vital to reflect on the impact this will have on the image and identity of public servants and whether that image will motivate people to enter the public service in the future (Horton, 2008:30).

A further dimension to the question of why we should care about public service motivation is provided by Le Grand (2003 and 2010). He argues that various models of delivering public services contain assumptions concerning the

motivation of the professionals and others who provide the service. At one extreme the motivational assumption is that public servants are completely self-interested – 'knaves'; while at the other end of the spectrum it is assumed that they are driven by a spirit of altruism and a desire to perform a public service – 'knights'. However, within various service delivery models, there are hidden incentives that impact on the motivations of those delivering the service. How the interaction between underlying motivations and the incentives imbedded in policy decision plays out, impacts on the effectiveness or otherwise of policy and practice.

Knights and Knaves

Julian Le Grand is Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics. Between 2003 and 2005 he worked as a senior policy adviser for Prime Minister Tony Blair. He illustrates his comments around the impact the incentives faced by public servants have on service delivery by referencing policy initiatives from Blair's decade as Prime Minister of Britain.

One striking example relates to the introduction of performance measurement by target by the British Labour Party government from 2000 onwards (Le Grand, 2010:60). Within the National Health Service, numerical targets were set for the activities of hospitals and those of other institutions. For instance, 98 per cent of those attending a hospital accident and emergency department had to be seen, treated or discharged within four hours. 75 per cent of ambulances called out to life threatening emergencies had to reach the required location within eight minutes; No patient for elective surgery should have to wait longer than a given period from the date of referral by a general practitioner.

As several independent studies have shown, this model, which Le Grand terms the 'mistrust model' worked. In particular waiting times fell dramatically across the service, and did so within the time frames specified by the performance management regimes.

Under the mistrust model staff cannot be trusted to do their jobs properly without outside intervention; they have to be provided with external incentives to do it. The reward and penalties included direct appeals to knavish self-interest for staff, such as financial gain and promotion if successful or alternatively, demotion and perhaps job loss if unsuccessful. The model also contained other more subtle forms of incentive such as 'naming and shaming' of perceived poor performers, with the intention of humiliating those concerned and thereby encouraging them, in their own self-interest, to perform better.

However, as slowly came to light in the UK, 'while there was movement in the right direction –'right' that is, as interpreted by those in charge', as predictable within public service motivation theory, the particular incentives driving the mistrust model also led to gaming and moral hazard. Examples included the unnecessary admittance of patients into a general hospital ward from accident and emergency in order to count them as 'seen'; ambulances that concentrated on dealing with emergencies a short distance away in order to meet the requirement of a response within eight minutes and an ophthalmology service that met a target for new outpatient appointments by cancelling and delaying follow-up appointments, which were not targeted, and which resulted in a number of patients losing their sight.

In reviewing how the incentives at work in the mistrust model interacted with the underlying motivations of those working in the relevant public services, Le Grand suggests a range of interpretations. Was it because the mistrust school were correct and everyone working in the public service was a knave, or did the strength of the

incentives turn knights into knaves by crowding out their intrinsic, more altruistic motivations, or did it simply add a measure of knavish incentives to supplement knightly ones, enhancing performance in a direction that the people concerned were keen to move in anyway?

Ultimately, Le Grand doesn't come to a definitive conclusion in relation to which motivations were involved and to what extent, stating that 'all this is impossible to deduce from the evidence of improved performance alone'. Furthermore, there was growing anxiety in the Blair government that top-down government direction, though apparently effective in obtaining short-terms results for simple targets, had too many problems associated with it to be an effective way of addressing longer-term and more complex goals in public service delivery. What was increasingly regarded as preferable was a system for service delivery that had incentives for improving performance embedded within it. Then providers would be motivated to provide a higher quality service without having been told to do so by the top.

Source: Le Grand (2010)

3 APPLYING PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION

3.1 Moving from theory to practice

In a review of twenty years of public service motivation research, Ritz and Neumann (2012) comment that 'only a small portion of current research provides action-based findings for public managers and human resource practitioners'. While there are some exceptions they suggest that more research is needed which identifies the practical use of PSM in organisations.

Global economic recession has put pressure on government finances since the late-2000s. In parallel, efforts to improve the performance of government employees have tended to focus on increased material incentives and bureaucratic, 'command and control' efforts to direct employee actions. However, as noted by Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010:710), 'such economic responses to managing employee behaviour in the public sector may actually have limited or even negative impacts on employee performance'.

3.2 Strategies and practices for applying PSM

Paarlberg, Perry and Hondeghem (2008) note that reviews of high performing workplaces suggest that practices that promote shared values not only entice individuals to join an organisation but also motivate people to act on their values once a part of the organisation. Building on this, they developed a framework of strategies and associated management practices (Table 3.1) that is designed to reinforce a value system grounded in public service motivation.

Table 3.1 Summary of strategies and tactics for applying public service motivation

Strategy	Tactics
Integrate public service motivation into HRM processes	• Use PSM as a selection criteria for entry into the public service • Provide opportunities for new recruits to learn about organisational values and expectations of employee behaviour that reflect public service values • Utilise performance appraisals that are not just task related but also reflect on competencies specifically relevant to public service work
Create and convey meaning and purpose in the jobs	• Convey social significance of job, if possible establish opportunities for direct contact between employees and beneficiaries of the service • Establish clear linkages between each employees' job and the overall mission of the organisation
Create a supportive work environment for public service motivation	• Create work structures that enhance self-regulation and empower employees • Commit to creating a supportive workplace environment and encourage cooperative workplace interactions • Align incentives with employees' PSM values • Design compensation systems that emphasise long-term attractiveness to employees and do not crowd out intrinsic motivations, for example pay increases on promotion
Integrate public service into organisation mission and strategy	• Articulate organisation vision and action that reflect commitment to public service motivation • Promote value-based leadership
Create societal legitimacy for public service	• Partner with educational and other institutions to incorporate public service values into curriculum • Advocate and provide opportunities for pre-employment public service experiences • Use media to bring public service to attention of society

Adapted from Paarlberg, Perry and Hondeghem (2008)

Each strategy is made up of a sub-set of management practices, with the authors noting that the model moves beyond traditional human resource management practices to look at how factors such as leadership, culture and inter-personal relationships can shape people's attitudes and behaviours

Building on this framework, but also incorporating evidence with respect to other motivation theories, in particular transformational or value-based leadership, Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010) also developed a framework of practices to support managers in harnessing PSM to bring about better performance. The central themes covered in their analysis are:

- Transformational leadership
- Person-organisation fit
- Effective goal setting and job design
- Creating a supportive work environment

Transformational leadership

Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010:711) note that in research conducted by the Partnership for Public Service (2009), leadership is consistently shown to be the most important driver of employee satisfaction in the US federal government. Transformational leadership is a process whereby employees are motivated by appealing to their higher ideals and moral values. In the public service, transformational leaders influence followers by elevating employees' motivations beyond their own self-interest and communicating goals and values that are consistent with public service values. Furthermore, to be convincing, it is also necessary that the leader themselves model these behaviours, in effect leading by example in exhibiting values that transcend individual self-interest, and proving themselves as trust-worthy. (Paarlberg et al, 2008; Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010)

The role of leaders

'We need strong and enlightened leaders who can inspire people working under them to do better, leaders who give people the space to experiment and explore, leaders who have the confidence and sound judgment to know when and how to take a chance with untested ideas', said Mr Peter Ho, Head of the Singapore Civil Service, in his 2007 speech, 'PS21 – Empowerment, Experimentation and Enlightened Leadership'

Mr Leo Yip, Chairman of the Economic Development Board, agrees that leaders have a crucial role in spurring passion and pride: 'In the public service we all serve a higher purpose, one that is above and beyond the individual and organisation', he tells Challenge. 'This is something leadership must communicate and emphasise regularly. I do this at town hall meetings and in regular communication with staff. It must also be something that leadership should live and exemplify'.

He adds; 'Celebrating successes, recognising organisational and individual accomplishments and their impact on Singaporeans are also important. Leadership must feel proud about what their staff are doing and convey this'.

Source: *Public Service – Are you Really Lovin' It*, PS21 Office, Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office, Government of Singapore, 2010
Http://www.challenge.gov.sg/2010/05/public-service-are-you-really-lovin-it/print

Person-organisation fit

Person-organisation fit theory suggests that performance is enhanced when an employee's values match organisational goals, values and culture. Such alignment is often identified through processes of selection and socialisation (Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010).

With regard to selection, recruiting individuals who are not only task qualified but also hold values consistent with the organisation's mission and vision has been linked to job satisfaction, organisational commitment and improved performance. Communicating public service values as part of an induction and on-going socialisation process also has merit, with employees introduced to the history, mission, goals and objectives of the organisation.

Reflecting the mission and values of the public service in general, and of the specific organisation, in appraisal systems is also desirable. Paarlberg et al (2008) note that often 'job-related appraisals ignore many of the non-task related behaviours that may be associated with public service'. They note that while assessment against organisation values is most common in military or defence settings, as public service organisations increasingly develop competency frameworks that include behaviours like collaboration, client orientation and continuous improvement, it naturally follows that these would be discussed in performance reviews.

Encouraging social workers 'to love their job again'

No one could disagree that employing qualified, committed and enthusiastic staff is a sound investment. So Central Bedfordshire Council in the UK, which had previously struggled in attracting experienced social workers developed a recruitment campaign to reach out to potential employees and the concept of 'love your job again' was born.

The campaign is primarily internet based and features unscripted videos with three of their staff and lots of supportive quotes from other employees about why they enjoy working in Central Bedfordshire. Advertisements were also placed in the trade press which reflect the look and the feel of the website.

According to a council spokesperson, 'we focused on those things which made our social workers choose the career in the first place: wanting to make a difference, helping children to stay safe and the chance to reach their professional potential. We use current staff to get the message across that our children's services teams are friendly and supportive and that there's always somebody around to talk things through with.'

'We also realised that in addition to an open, honest environment, it's essential to offer career progression and training. Our newly qualified staff tell us they are well supported with excellent training opportunities, delivered by nationally recognised trainers.'

'You rarely see a news story about good social work and we know we won't read about good decisions our social workers have made, or how they have gone above and beyond to make a difference. So we work hard to ensure that staff are recognised for their dedication in house'.

Source: Guardian Professional, 20 September 2012
http://www.guardian.co.uk/local-government-network/2012/sep/20/befordshire-social-workers-love-job-again

Effective goal setting and job design

Goal setting is about translating broad organisation missions into clear and meaningful work expectations. Goal setting, which is an important management responsibility, has consistently been shown to 'drive higher levels of performance by energising behaviour, encouraging persistence, and fostering problem solving' (Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010:713).

Job design theory focuses on jobs as a collection of relationships as well as a collection of tasks, recognising that employees are motivated to the extent to which they perceive that their jobs affect the well-being of others. Many people are attracted to public service work because of their desire to serve and make a positive difference in others' lives. However, once they become a public service employee 'line of sight' between task and values can be a critical motivational link. In other words, the extent to which employees perceive their job to be meaningful may depend on how well they can see the impact they have on the people they benefit.

Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010:714) cite a number of examples where initiatives in this area have been shown to increase motivation. In the US, when government employees such as police officers or social workers came into regular contact with service recipients, the service recipients actually have more influence on employee behaviour than supervisors. At the World Bank, as part of their induction programme, new recruits are given the opportunity to observe the everyday lives of the people the World Bank supports.

Thus, in principle, public service organisations should structure tasks in a way that allows employees to interact and communicate with service beneficiaries. While, this may not be possible in respect of all employees, for example where work is related to policy development rather than service delivery, in these cases concepts such as the 'internal customer' have been shown to add meaning to an individual's work. In addition, providing feedback or showing someone where their work has been used, for example their research included in a communication the minister sends to parliament, can help employees to perceive their role as meaningful (Paarlberg et al, 2008).

Job design and its influence on motivation among federal government employees in the US

According to the US Merit Systems Protection Board (www.mspb.gov) most federal employees view themselves as motivated, with 71 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, 'I feel motivated in my work'. However, agreement varied considerably across federal agencies, ranging from 62 per cent to 77 per cent. This range suggests that motivation can be shaped by features in the work environment. Further, it is clear that there is room to improve motivation. As a result a recent research report by the MSPB (2012) focuses on how job characteristics and rewards can present opportunities for improvements in employee motivation.

Job characteristics such as autonomy (the freedom to decide how to accomplish work assignments), skill variety, and feedback affect employee motivation and performance. For example, employees in jobs with high perceived levels of autonomy are more likely to be highly motivated – and perform at a higher level – than employees who believe they have little autontomy.

Federal agencies have considerable opportunity to design jobs or adjust working conditions to make them more motivating. In the course of their research, the MSPB computed a motivation potential level to gauge how a survey respondent viewed the characteristics of his or her job. Only 21 per cent of federal employees had a high motivation potential level. This finding suggests that although at a general level federal employees feel motivated in their work, job characteristics are an area where potential improvements in motivation can be made. In other words, agencies can take action to influence motivation through job characteristics.

The US Merit Systems Protection Board, 2012
http://www.mspb.gov/netsearch/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=780015&version=782964

Creating a supportive work environment

Workplace characteristics such as structure of the work environment, the nature of informal relationships, and incentive systems may also shape the relationship between employees' public service motivation and their performance.

In this regard the literature would suggest that there is lots of potential for government organisations to improve their practices. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) found that perceptions of bureaucracy and red tape may frustrate employees' public service motivation, while Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010) note that data from the Office of Personnel Management in the US shows that federal workers are less satisfied than their private sector colleagues about the information they receive from management and their involvement in decision making.

At a more everyday level, it is important that public service managers take steps to create a cooperative and supportive work environment. Performance management reviews can be used as an opportunity to discuss workplace experiences, especially those that may be stressful. In addition training can be provided to both employees and managers to develop and improve interpersonal, social and team building skills. However, ultimately senior management 'must be attuned to the workplace climate and able to proactively intervene when necessary' and 'be aware of how to address conflict with employees in ways that are respectful and supportive' (Paarlberg et al, 2008:277).

Finally, aligning incentives with intrinsic motivations is an important element in managing the public service work environment. Evidence from the literature (Paarlberg et al, 2008:278) suggests that as a bottom line, public service salaries much compete with those in the private sector. Beyond that, pay increases linked to promotions appear to sufficiently motivate ambitious, high performers, without the negative downside evident with performance related pay, whereby employees' public service values and intrinsic motivation are 'crowded out'. There is also some limited evidence to suggest that group based incentive schemes such as profit sharing can, through encouraging professional interaction, enhance performance among public servants (op. cit.).

Voice and Value

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development describe employee voice as where employees' views are sought out, they are listened to and they see that their opinions make a difference. Employees feel able to speak out and challenge when appropriate. A strong sense of listening and responsiveness permeates the organisation, enabled by effective communication.

In a report titled 'Leading Culture Change: Employee engagement and public service transformation' (2012) they describe the positive impact of listening and engaging with the workforce.

At the heart of Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service's approach to service transformation has been a huge emphasis by the strategic leadership team on effective communication, with an emphasis on 'telling it how it is' and listening.

This has been led by Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Sean Frayne and reflects his background as a fire fighter who has worked his way to the top of the organisation. He said: 'The culture historically in Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service was one where things were done to people, rather than with them, which is how I think you get the best out of people. My priority on becoming a principal officer was engagement and communication in order to make this shift'.

The management team at Derbyshire invest a significant amount of time visiting all of the service's 31 stations plus the support departments to ensure that messages are not lost in translation, to listen to employees' views and concerns and to build trust. 'I make it clear that I've been there and I understand what people are saying and will do whatever I can to help them to do their jobs – but if someone is wanting too much I will explain why they are wanting too much and I will lay it on the table', said Frayne.

He believes this approach is particularly important given the financial challenges facing the service and the scale of the changes being implemented while still delivering on its core vision of 'making Derbyshire safer'.

Source: CIPD (2012)
http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/6010%20Leading%20Culture%20Change%20(WEB).pdf

3.3 Managing public service values?

The emphasis within this chapter has been to highlight management practices, or tactics, that improve performance through promoting public service motivation. This concept of managing public service values is not new, with Paarlberg et al (2008:284) citing President John F Kennedy as a particularly strong exemplar of the tactic. However, despite growing evidence about the positive impact of value based leadership and management, often in organisations initiatives are introduced with the objective of improving performance which in practice may frustrate this goal because of their negative impact on public service motivation.

This is not to say, as emphasised by Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010:716), that 'linking value-based leadership and public service motivation to HR practices is without challenges'. Creating a workforce with shared public service values may limit the diversity of perspectives within an organisation and may create an environment in which individuals get lost in the collective. It is also possible that employees may feel that efforts to tap into their core values are manipulative or pressure to engage in pro-social behaviour may lead to over-load and job stress. Paarlberg et al (2008: 285) cite research conducted with Israeli teachers where three-quarters of them felt strong pressure to engage in what had once been considered 'extra' behaviours.

Awareness of these downsides can help ensure appropriate action is taken to pre-empt them becoming a problem. For instance, attention must be paid to ensuring that both applicants and recruits represent diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and integrity and acceptance must be reinforced as shared values (Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010).

Lastly, it is important to emphasise that no one tactic will improve individual or organisation performance – tactics have reinforcing and synergistic effects. Organisations need to attract people with strong public service values and those values need to be reinforced through the strategies, practices and behaviours of managers and leaders within the organisation.

3.4 Employee engagement

As noted in chapter one, the concept of public service motivation has almost uniquely been examined by academics with a public management background. In the HR literature, despite an on-going preoccupation with practices that elicit higher levels of performance in organisations, PSM has not to date been a focus of enquiry. Rather HR has typically referred to 'employee engagement' when looking to examine the factors that encourage employees 'to go the extra mile'.

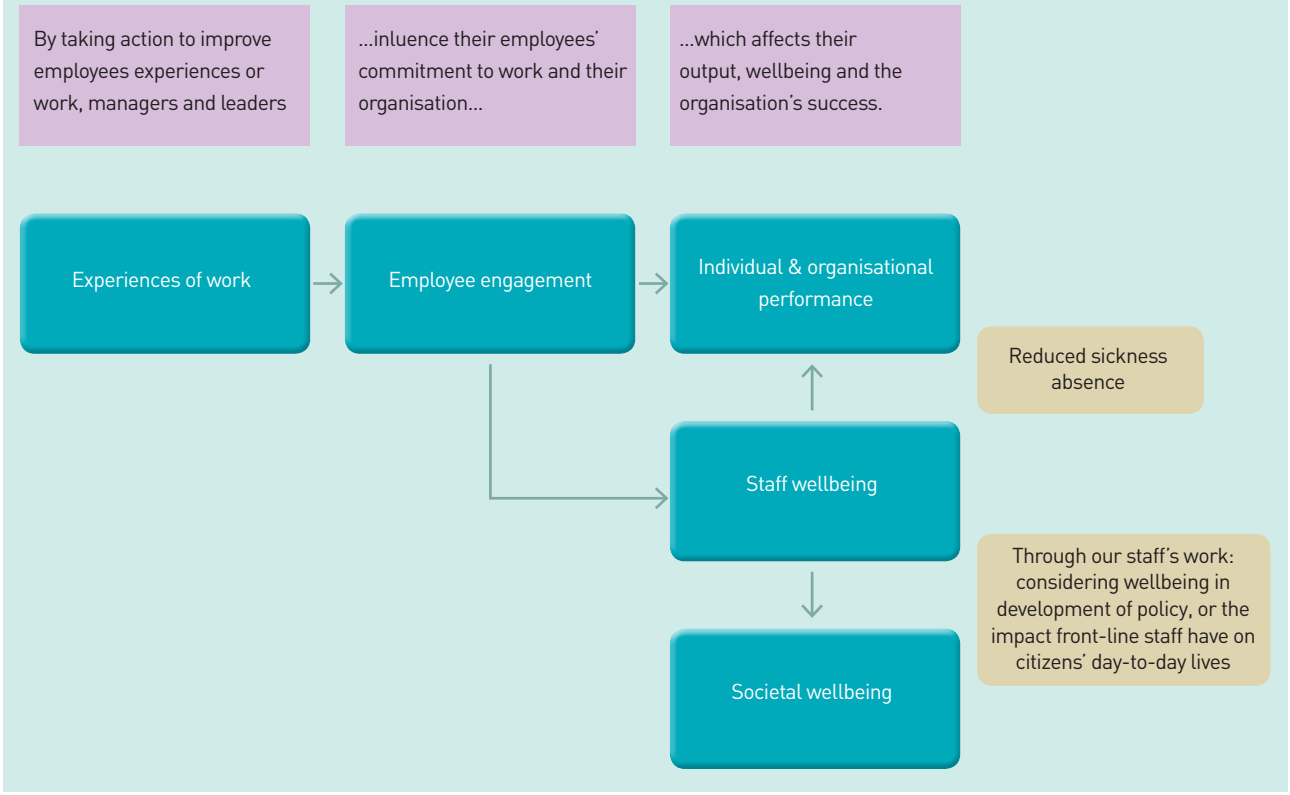
Employee engagement as a concept has of course universal applicability and is not only related to public service work, as PSM is. Furthermore, the motivation that underpins employee engagement can be as a result of a wide range of personal and organisational factors, while in the case of PSM the underpinning motivation is simply a desire 'of doing good for others and society' (Perry, Hondeghem and Wise, 2010). However, there are also parallels between the two concepts. The behaviours expressed by those with high levels of employee engagement and PSM are similar, as are many of the management practices that elicit employee engagement and PSM. Finally, both can have significant benefits for employees, since they are positively associated with job satisfaction and a good employment experience.

Purcell (2012:13) sums up employee engagement as 'employees' feelings, beliefs and attitudes concerning their job, their co-workers, the customers, their manager, and concerning the organisation as a whole and especially the senior management team'. Consistent with the importance of strong and value-based leadership critical to PSM, employee engagement is also firmly grounded in management behaviour and attitudes. Purcell (op. cit.) comments that 'employee engagement is best seen as an outcome of managerial activity to build perceptions of trust, fairness and organisational justice, especially procedural and interactional or interpersonal justice. These are the antecedents of engagement'.

The UK Institute for Employment Studies (2004) conclude that the main driver of employee engagement is a sense of feeling valued and involved. They describe the main components of this as: involvement in decision making; freedom to voice ideas, to which managers listen; feeling enabled to perform well; having opportunities to develop the job; and feeling the organisation is concerned for employees' health and well-being. These factors are very similar to those practices which in section 3.2 were shown to be important in harnessing PSM.

Through its *Civil Service People Survey (2012)*, the UK Cabinet Office has over a number of years sought to measure employee engagement across civil servants working in 97 organisations. The analytical framework of the survey is focused around measuring employee engagement and the experiences of work that affect employees' levels of engagement, so that through acting on these 'drivers of engagement' performance can be improved. Consistent with the theory, 'leadership and managing change' is the strongest driver of engagement.

The analytical framework of the UK civil service people survey



Source: Cabinet Office, 2012

The findings of the 2011 survey indicate that the overall civil servant engagement index (a composite of the responses to a number of engagement related questions across all organisations surveyed) is 56 per cent, the same as in 2010, and 2 per cent lower than in 2009. While this global figure masks considerable discrepancy within and between organisations (with smaller operational, regulatory and specialist organisations having staff with higher levels of engagement than large operational organisations) and grades (with senior staff indicating higher levels of engagement than their more junior counterparts), the results are relatively positive. While the UK has been less affected by economic recession than Ireland, their civil service has been significantly reformed, with changes in terms and conditions and compulsory redundancies. However, a majority of the workforce remain engaged resulting, the evidence suggests, in improved performance.

Similar surveys have not been carried out in recent years in the Irish civil or public service. However, in a study for the Labour Relations Commission, Roche et al (2011) examined the impact of the current recession on managing and representing people at work in Ireland, primarily in the private sector. Based on surveys and focus groups with HR managers they conclude that the most striking feature of the conduct of HR in the recession was the extent and degree to which the main focus was on controlling and often reducing pay and headcount in response to deep and acute commercial pressure. 'This hard-line or bottom-line agenda appeared to dwarf much else in its significance for HR managers and in the demands and burden it placed on them (Roche et al, 2011:122)'.

'Softer' or more developmental HR initiatives and measures, 'while not neglected...have seemed considerably more muted during the recession'. For example, HR managers are aware of the importance of communication and maintaining training and development initiatives. In addition, some organisations had 'undertaken specific initiatives or programmes to promote employee engagement or re-engagement' but, worryingly 'in other cases engagement programmes had been partially suspended or eclipsed while firms dealt with management of pay and headcount' (op. cit., 124).

Employee engagement in the Irish Department of Social Protection

One example, from the Irish public service of an initiative to improve engagement levels among staff is the Department of Social Protection. Starting in 2011, the department is undertaking a four year transformation programme. The context for the programme is the creation of Intreo, a new integrated service providing a single point of contact for all employment and income supports (www.intreo.ie). This has meant the development of a new, integrated and enlarged department of over 7,000 staff.

A staff survey carried out at the time Intreo was being introduced showed that work was needed to engage and involve staff if the new arrangements were to work effectively. Consequently an engagement and innovation programme was established. Underpinning the programme is a culture and values review which is intended to determine core values for the organisation and put these at the heart of what the department does.

The engagement and innovation programme is aimed at encouraging, enabling and empowering all staff to identify innovative practices and become more engaged in the working of the department. Projects are identified and run at divisional, sectoral and local level with management and staff working jointly. Above these are regional teams chaired by senior managers who have a role in coordinating projects and suggesting project topics. At the apex is a strategic leadership team chaired by the secretary general of the department, to ensure top-level drive and support for the programme.

Source: presentation by the Department of Social Protection, Dublin Castle, April 2013

In parallel to the possible negative effects of managing public service motivation, Purcell (2012:5) points similarly to the 'dark side' of engagement noting that where employees try to do everything they are at risk of burn-out, health problems, and consequent dis-engagement. According to Rees et al (quoted in Purcell et al, 2012:5, emphasis in the original) there are fears that engagement can drive work intensification with employers coming to expect employees to 'go the extra mile' as a matter of course with overtime being normalised (and probably unpaid).

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Why public service motivation matters

Public service motivation relates to the notion that individuals are attracted to work in the public service because it affords them the opportunity of doing good for others and for society. Over the past two decades interest in the concept has grown across academic disciplines with a growing body of research evidence pointing to its relevance in career choice and its impact on performance.

Public service motivation is not the only or even the most important criterion for individuals in choosing to take up or remain in public service employment. Recent research cites the superseding importance of good, or at least market-rate, levels of pay and security of tenure. The economic situation in the country and long-standing cultural issues which impact on the prestige and social standing of public officials are likewise relevant. However, public service motivation also matters, and among the intrinsic reasons that come into play when individuals choose where to work it is highly significant.

That public service motivation matters in choosing employment points to the fact that the public service is different. As the OECD often emphasise, the fundamental purpose of the public service is government, not management. Thus care needs to be taken in adopting private sector practices into the public service, particularly to the extent that reforms impact on the intrinsic motivation among public service employees to serve others.

Against a backdrop of global recession, governments in developed countries are increasingly seeking to reform the public service, reducing cost and increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. These changes are necessary. However, this report cautions against ignoring or minimising the impact on employee motivation and engagement of changes in terms and conditions.

In circumstances where extrinsic motivations are being significantly impinged on, as is the case currently in the Irish public service, it is critical that managers are very aware of the importance of fostering and supporting the intrinsic motivations of employees. This report presents four central themes which help organisations develop an organisation culture grounded in public service motivation.

4.2 Practices for supporting public service motivation

Transformational or value-based leadership

Strong, effective leadership is consistently shown to be a major driver of employee satisfaction and commitment. However, transformational leadership goes further than effective change management, good communications and other characteristics of good leadership. Value-based leadership requires the articulation of public service values and the communication of goals and objectives consistent with those values. It is also necessary that the leader themselves model these behaviours, leading by example in exhibiting values that transcend self-interest, and proving themselves to be trustworthy.

Person-organisation fit

Person-organisation fit theory suggests that performance is enhanced when an employee's values match organisational goals, values and culture. Similarly, in situations where they do not, turnover rates will be high. To be credible, all HR practices need to be consistent with the message that 'public service matters'. Thus, recruiting individuals who are not only task qualified but who hold values consistent with the organisation's mission matters

to both the individual's future job satisfaction and, most likely, their contribution to the organisation. Similarly, induction programmes, training and development and performance appraisal need to reflect and promote public service values. In particular, performance management systems need to be based not just around the specific role of an employee but should also review performance against behaviours critical to an effective public service such as customer awareness, collaboration and accountability.

Effective goal setting and job design

Given that many people are attracted to public service work by the general motivation to serve and make a positive difference in others' lives, it is essential that what is referred to as 'the line of sight' between their values and the task they are required to fulfil is not lost. While clearly this is more feasible in service delivery work, showing all employees how their contribution matters to the overall objectives of the organisation is critical to their sense of motivation.

Creating a supportive work environment

This is a particularly wide-ranging concept, with factors including the nature of informal relationships, the quality of communication, the way conflict is managed, the collegiality of the organisation and, not least, the incentive systems, all helping to shape the relationship between an employee's public service motivation and their performance. At a basic level, aligning incentives with intrinsic motivations is an important element in managing the public service work environment. As a bottom line, public service salaries must compete with those available in the private sector. Beyond that, pay increases linked to promotion appear to sufficiently motivate high performers without the negative down-side evident with performance related pay, whereby employees' sense of shared purpose and 'esprit de cops' are damaged.

4.3 Concluding comments

Ireland is currently in the grip of the most serious economic recession in its modern history which is having profound effects on the economy and society. The public service is being significantly affected by the actions taken in response to the fiscal crisis. Equally the public service has a major role to play in recovering from the crisis and ensuring that in the future the Irish public service is fit for purpose.

Debating the pay cuts and changes in terms and conditions and the extent to which they are necessary and/or fair is not the purpose of this report. Rather it is to highlight the importance of having regard for the impact of contraction and reform on employee motivation and engagement. In this respect evidence from Roche et al (2011) is a source of concern with 'pay and numbers' identified as the dominant concern of Irish HR managers.

In the short-term, both because it is consistent with good public service management but also because it may alleviate some of the negative impact on motivation and engagement of diminished terms and conditions, it is essential that public service managers develop and support practices appropriate to a public service context. Value-based leadership, a supportive work environment, and organisation goals and job characteristics that reflect employees' public service motivation have been shown to have a positive impact on morale and performance.

In the longer-term, public service managers also need to reflect on what is distinctive about public service work and the importance of a public service ethos that undoubtedly places obligations and responsibilities on state officials beyond those required of private sector employees. Furthermore, it is important to remember that any changes in the terms and conditions, in the very broadest sense, under which public servants work, impacts on the image and identity of public servants and raises the question of whether this new image will motivate people to enter public service.

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