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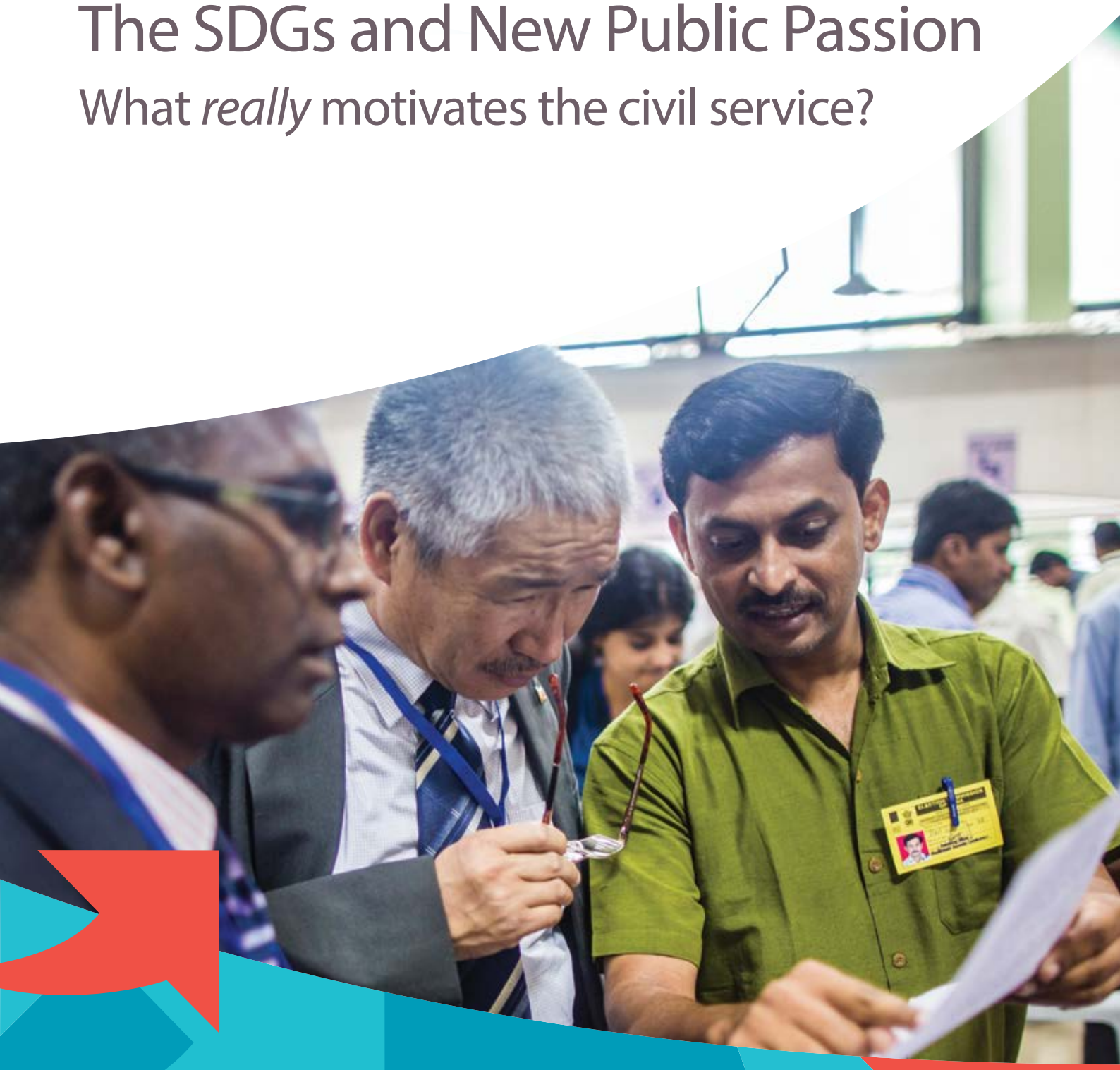
The SDGs and New Public Passion

What *really* motivates the civil service?



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Foreword

This paper is the ninth in our series of Discussion Papers, which put forward ideas for, and approaches to, improving public service in developing countries, especially with the aim of achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This discussion paper builds on three of our recent publications – two issues of our 'Notes on Public Service Excellence' - *From New Public Management to New Public Passion: Restoring the intrinsic motivation of public officials* and *Public Service Motivation and the SDGs – An unacknowledged crisis?* and our working paper on *Work in the Public Service of the Future.*

It looks at ways of reinvigorating a sense that public service matters, and leveraging the factors that engage public officials in their work. The public service is the backbone of development in any country. Yet in government agencies across the world, this backbone has become increasingly weakened by falling morale.

In addition to possessing the right skills required, employee motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and work stress are important factors that affect public service employee performance. These in turn play an important role in determining organisational performance.

Low pay and poor working conditions exacerbate declining motivation in the public sector of many developing countries. A 2014 study of public sector employees in Ghana confirms that dissatisfaction with pay (83%) and working conditions (64%) are amongst the leading factors for a demotivated and unproductive public workforce in Sub-Saharan Africa. A 2014 World Bank survey in the Philippines found that, with the exception of teachers, the main motivation for nearly 80% of workers in the public service was job security rather than the mission of the organisation – an attitude that is symptomatic of a generally low performance orientation amongst the 1.2 million Filipino public workers.

The worrying collapse of morale and the weakening of intrinsic motivation is thus a concern for the achievement of the SDGs in developing countries around the world.

Enabling and encouraging officials to fulfill their role as stewards of the public good can help to transform public services and give people the honest and responsive public institutions they deserve. Transformed public services run by motivated public servants would ensure that most countries meet the SDGs.

Max Everest-Phillips
Director, UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence

Introduction

Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) depends on civil servants in developing and transitioning countries; they are a crucial variable in the performance of governments and the outcomes they are able to deliver. This paper aims to examine the importance of New Public Passion and the intrinsic motivation of public officials in lifting morale and enhancing the performance of the public service. It emphasises that officials need to be empowered, and to feel empowered, to do what they joined the public service for in the first place, namely to serve citizens.[1] A focus on New Public Passion seeks to nurture high job satisfaction by ensuring that all civil servants feel directly engaged in improving the lives of their fellow citizens.

Civil servants working in the core, permanent administrative arm of government are the main subject of the paper. This includes officials working in government ministries, departments and agencies: personnel who advise on, develop, and implement government policies and programmes. More specifically, ways to motivate middle - ranking civil servants, or middle managers, will be considered. Members of the wider public service, such as the military, police, teachers, health workers and those working in public enterprises are not included in this discussion about the core civil service.[2]

These civil servants work under very different conditions to their frontline, service delivery colleagues, so their work motivation, and the types of incentives that can successfully increase their efforts, may differ. Civil servants are likely to be managers and deliverers of reform projects, and so are a critical part of wider reform efforts for the public sector. Getting the best out of this group of managerial, skilled and technical staff and retaining them are key challenges.

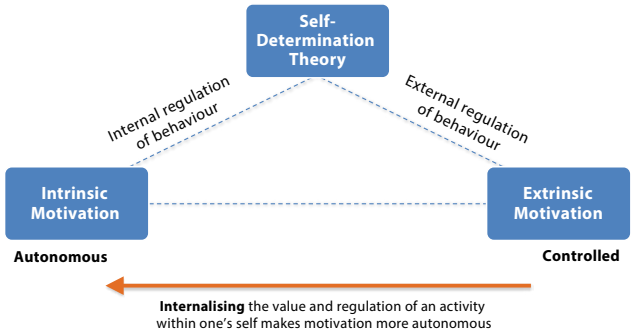
The civil service[3] in developing and transitioning countries may be struggling to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, while working under local hardships. It may be coping with economic globalisation, democratisation and its consolidation, conflict, a shifting balance between forces of the state, market and civil society and increasing demands made by better informed citizens. At the same time, many countries have large populations living in poverty, where basic needs go unmet and many people are unemployed or under-employed. Some countries cannot guarantee basic human rights or rule of law. Under these difficult local conditions, civil servants are asked to accomplish the impossible - undertake nation-building, set up infrastructure, and develop secure, healthy, educated and prosperous societies - under extreme resource constraints and negative perceptions about the civil service and civil servants themselves.[4]

This paper firstly provides a brief overview of theories about motivation for work, and expands on two beneficial aspects of having a motivated civil service that are often overlooked; namely in building trust in government and in combating corruption. Some of the historic, political, economic and systemic impediments to establishing a highly motivated group of civil servants are then explored. In the next section the paper looks at levers to foster motivation, which includes a discussion about the importance of pride and recognition and establishing a merit-based, professional public service. We argue that unjustified and cynical assumptions about the motivation of civil servants have contributed to low morale, and a cycle of underperformance. A more balanced approach is needed to recognise the efforts of the many who are motivated by a sense of purpose to serve the public interest, within very real constraints. Promoting a public service ethos, rather than undermining it, may better support reform efforts. To this end, the paper identifies ways to promote a values-based public service through human capital management, managerial and leadership practices. Finally, a research agenda is proposed so that understanding about motivation in public service in developing countries, and ways to improve it, can be furthered.

Theories about motivation for work

Theories about motivation for work refer to internal *(intrinsic)* and external *(extrinsic)* forces or motivators. Put simply, intrinsic motivation stems from doing something that one enjoys or finds interesting, whereas extrinsic motivation stems from doing something to receive a particular outcome. Structuring the work environment to maximise both forms of motivation, through enlarging jobs to make them more interesting (more intrinsically rewarding), and making extrinsic rewards such as

Figure 1: Self Determination Theory Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation



Source: GCPSE

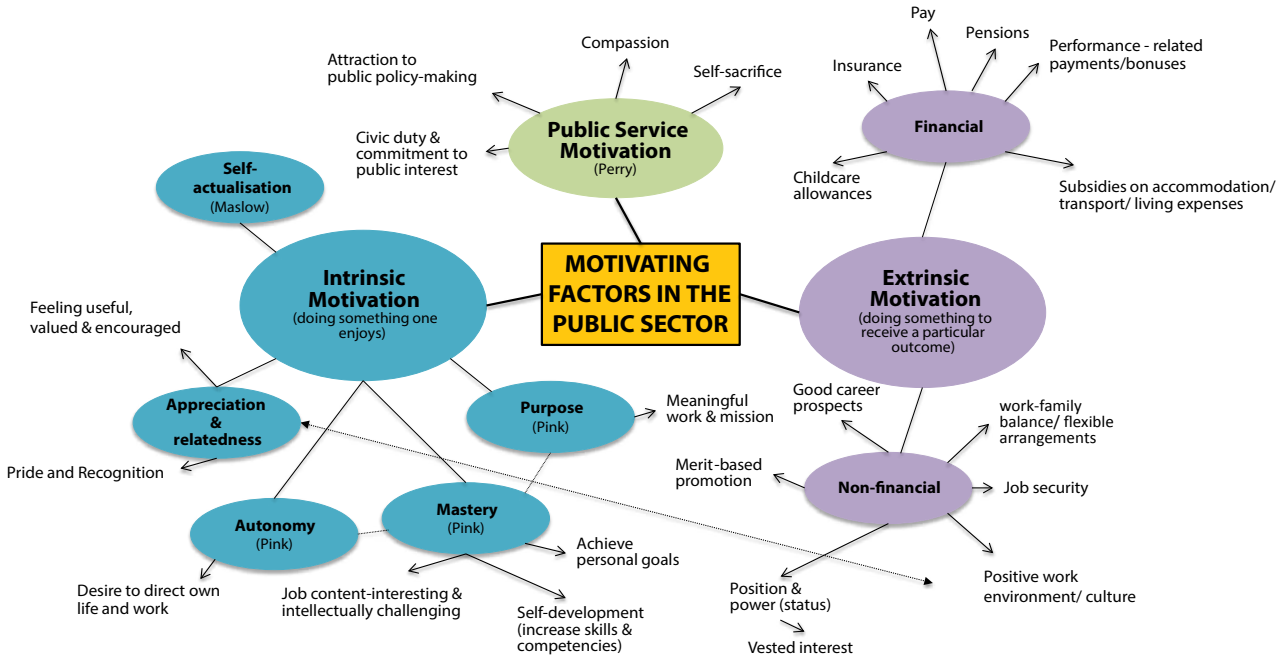
1 Clark, Helen. 2015. "Speech on Modernizing Civil Services for the New Sustainable Development Agenda at the Astana Economic Forum - Meritocracy and Professional Ethics as Key Factors of Civil Service Effectiveness", *United Nations Development Programme*.

2 Rao, Sumedh. 2013. *Civil service reform: Topic guide*. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

3 In this paper the terms 'civil servant', 'public official' and 'bureaucrat' have been used interchangeably in describing middle-ranking officials and managers. The scope of the paper is not intended to include senior or executive staff, although aspects of the discussion may also be relevant to this group.

4 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Professionalism and Ethics in the Public Service: Issues and Practices in Selected Regions.* 2000. New York: United Nations, p.4.

Figure 2: Motivating factors for work in the public sector



Source: GCPSE

higher pay and promotions clearly contingent on effective performance, it is argued, will lead to job satisfaction.[5]

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides another way of understanding motivation. SDT makes a distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomy involves acting with a sense of volition and having the experience of choice.[6] Through this lens, intrinsically motivated behavior is a classic example of autonomous behavior, since it is propelled by a person's interest in the activity itself. In contrast, being controlled involves acting with a sense of pressure, or a sense of being required to engage in the actions. The use of extrinsic motivators or rewards induces this controlled behaviour.

SDT goes one step further in the intrinsic/autonomous and extrinsic/controlled motivation dichotomy. It also proposes that the degree to which extrinsic motivation is either autonomous or controlled will depend on how far a person internalises, or 'takes on board' values, attitudes or regulatory structures. The external regulation of behaviour in this way can be transformed into internal regulation – so that the person will behave in that manner even if the external factor that was inducing it is taken away (e.g. I work even when not being monitored, or I behave ethically even when not required to under a code of conduct). The behavior can change from being controlled to being autonomous.[7]

Public Service Motivation (PSM) is a relatively new field of study that emerged in the 1990s. The concept of PSM assumes that public sector workers are guided by a selfless ethic in the pursuit of the public interest. It emphasises altruistic motives that go beyond self - interest to a greater good.[8] Public sector workers (and non-profit sector workers) generally have higher levels of PSM than private sector workers, and the presence of PSM tends to be associated positively with job satisfaction, individual and organisational performance, choosing or intending to choose a public sector job and organisational commitment.[9]

Figure 2 provides a 'map' of the theoretical concepts relating to motivation for work in the public sector.[10] As *Figure 1* shows, PSM may be conceived as a type of motivation in the public sector, but it does not cover all motives in the public sector. As will be discussed in this paper, the interplay between motivating factors varies across country contexts, and is affected by dynamics including history, culture, politics, public administration style and reform efforts and perceptions of the public service.

5 Banuri, Sheheryar and Philip Keefer. 2013. *Intrinsic motivation, effort and the call to public service.* World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6729.

6 Deci, Edward L., and Richard M. Ryan. 2012. "Self-determination theory." In *The Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology,* edited by Paul A M Van Lange, Arie W Kruglanski, E Tory Higgins, 416-433, London: SAGE Publications.

7 Gagné, Marylène, and Edward L. Deci. 2005. "Self-determination theory and work motivation." *Journal of Organisational Behaviour* 26 (4): 331-362.

8 Perry, James L. 1996. "Measuring public service motivation: An assessment of construct reliability and validity." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 6 (1): 5-22. The measurement instrument was first developed by Perry in 1996 and conceptualises PSM as consisting of four dimensions: compassion, self-sacrifice, commitment to the public interest and civic duty, and interest in public policy-making. Research in the PSM field has largely followed and used Perry's definition and measures for PSM.

9 Ritz, Adrian, Gene A. Brewer and Oliver Neumann. 2013. "Public service motivation: A systematic literature review and outlook." Conference Paper prepared for the *Public Management Research Association Conference, University of Madison-Wisconsin, 20-22 June 2013,* p.17.

10 Perry, James and Annie Hongedhem. 2008. "Editors' Introduction" In *Motivation in Public Management: The Call of Public Service,* edited by James L. Perry and Annie Hongedhem, 1-14. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3.

Motivation under different public administration models

Various models of public administration are based on different underlying beliefs about human nature and what motivates people, and this influences and shapes the incentive systems established for organisations operating under them.

Under the traditional or Weberian model of bureaucracy there is an assumption that public officials are motivated to work in the public interest. Bureaucratic organisations have highly formalised rules and interactions, and can tend towards extensive control and compliance systems, that "require officials to ask permission for everything and explain everything".[11]

New Public Management, with its roots in standard economic theory and public choice thinking, is based on the idea that public officials cannot be trusted; they are self-interest maximisers, using their administrative role to fulfil this self-interest. Today, in the wake of New Public Management, output-related performance measures linked to financial rewards are commonplace in public sector organisations in many countries.[12] Public choice theory comes with a sceptical or cynical view of motivation in the public service,[13] and it is in this context that attention to a public service ethos has been renewed and the concept of PSM has emerged.[14]

Contemporary approaches to public administration such as new public governance have an explicit focus on public officials working to achieve higher order public interests, in collaboration with citizens.[15] Proponents of these perspectives argue that it points to "a motivational force that does not rely on rules or incentives to drive public service reform. It rests on a fuller and rounder vision of humanity than does either traditional public administration or new public management".[16]

Motivating for better performance. . . and more

There are some important benefits that can accrue from highly motivated civil servants, in addition to better performance by individuals and ministries, and better quality services. Motivation can also help to achieve broader government objectives such as building trust in government and reducing corruption.

Building trust in Government

It is usually assumed that trust in government is primarily determined by government performance in results or outcomes; public trust can be restored or built by producing outcomes that matter to citizens. However, the assumption that measuring and reporting on outcomes alone will convince a sceptical public is short sighted. Process has a large effect on trust in civil servants, and it arguably matters as much to people as outcomes do.[17]

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Process as referred to here, is not defined in the narrow sense as onerous and unnecessary bureaucratic rules and red tape. Rather, it refers to the beneficial aspects of process, which include; Neutrality and Impartiality (including the lack of bias or favouritism)[18]; Equity (distributing public benefits evenly or according to need); Respect (courtesy and responsiveness to citizens) and Honesty (open, truthful process and a lack of corruption). Process, in this sense, can be described as highly motivated administrative behaviour, or the proper implementation of bureaucratic processes, and it has clear overlap with public service values.

Citizens care as much about aspects of process as they do about tangible outcomes in forming judgements about the legitimacy of authorities – even when the outcomes go against them (for example, when receiving a traffic ticket or losing a court case). Accumulated experiences with fair process at the hands of public authorities builds legitimacy and facilitates a government's job of maintaining order, enlisting cooperation, and requiring sacrifice, especially in

11 Van de Walle, Stephen. 2011. "New Public Management: Restoring the Public Trust Through Creating distrust?" In: *The Ashgate research companion to new public management.* Edited by Tom Christensen and Per Lægreid, 309-320. London: Ashgate Publishing, pp, 319-20.

12 Frey, Bruno S., Fabian Homberg and Margit Osterloh. 2013. "Organizational Control Systems and Pay-for-Performance in the Public Service." *Organisation Studies* 34 (7): 949–972, p. 950.

13 Van de Walle, "New Public Management: Restoring the Public Trust", p.14.

14 Van der Wal, Zeger. 2015. "All Quiet on the non-Western Front? A Systematic Literature Review of Public Service Motivation Scholarship in Non-Western Contexts." *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration* 37 (2): 69-86.

15 O'Flynn, Janine. 2007. "From new public management to public value: Paradigmatic change and managerial implications." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 66 (3): 353-366.

16 Stoker 2006, quoted in O'Flynn, "From new public management to public value," p. 360.

17 Van Ryzin, Gregg G. 2011."Outcomes, process, and trust of civil servants." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 21 (4): 745-760.

18 Rothstein, Bo. 2011. *The quality of government: Corruption, social trust, and inequality in international perspective.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

times of crisis.[19] Motivated civil servants can actively help to build public trust in government, by demonstrating through their actions that they prioritise and serve public interests. Civil servants with high PSM are more likely to attend to civic affairs, and to prefer participatory over authoritative policy making, which contribute to constructing social capital and trust.[20]

Minimising corruption

The motivation of bureaucrats has been linked to ethical behaviour.[21] In Korea it was found that bureaucrats with strong intrinsic motivation (measured by the extent to which they felt that their task was interesting or strong public service motivation), had stricter standards and lower tolerance for corruption. When bureaucrats were subject to merit-based promotion (i.e. they believed that their promotion was dependent on performance), they also had stricter standards against corruption. Thus, interesting work, strong PSM and merit-based promotion (a form of extrinsic motivation) may be important deterrents against corruption. PSM and other intrinsic motivators had a stronger deterrent effect than extrinsic motivators, underscoring their significance as anti-corruption devices.[22]

Giving bureaucrats more discretion can be a 'double-edged sword'; more discretion means that civil servants have increased scope to get the job done, but it also provides more opportunity for corruption. A common response to corruption is to penalise bureaucrats and increase monitoring, but this is likely to reduce their productivity overall, and increased monitoring has been linked to destroying the intrinsic motivation to be honest.[23] Contrary to the view that corrupt officials are immoral or incapable agents who need to be punished, monitored and curtailed, it may be possible to redirect their efforts towards public service instead of corruption. Assigning interesting work and using merit-based promotion are tangible tools to incentivise behavioural change.[24] In line with Self-Determination Theory, promoting a values-based public service can cultivate an organisational environment that encourages the internalisation of PSM, leading to autonomous behaviour towards public service rather than private interest.

19 Kim, Seok-Eun. 2005. "The Role of Trust in the Modern Administrative State An Integrative Model." *Administration & Society* 37 (5): 611-635.

20 Ko, Kilkon and Lulu Han. 2013. "An empirical study on public service motivation of the next generation civil servants in China." *Public Personnel Management* 42 (2): 191-222.

21 Cowley, Edd and Sarah Smith. 2014. "Motivation and mission in the public sector: evidence from the World Values Survey." *Theory and decision* 76 (2): 241-263.

22 Kwon, Illoong. 2014. "Motivation, discretion, and corruption." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 24 (3): 765-794. It should be noted however, that Korean central government officials are paid relatively less than comparable workers in the private sector, so it may be the case that they have generally higher levels of PSM or intrinsic motivation than counterparts in other countries.

23 Schulze, Günther G., and Björn Frank. 2003. "Deterrence versus intrinsic motivation: Experimental evidence on the determinants of corruptibility." *Economics of governance* 4 (2): 143-160.

24 Kwon, "Motivation, discretion, and corruption."

Country specific factors affecting motivation in the public service

Efforts to cultivate New Public Passion and develop a highly motivated and high performing public sector workforce are affected by wider country (and global) dynamics. Some of these are discussed below.

Broadening interpretations of PSM

While interest in PSM has gained momentum over the last decade, most of what is known and understood about PSM is from research undertaken in Western contexts. A review of academic literature by the Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (GCPSE) has found that 82.5 percent of PSM research between 1990-2014 was conducted using data from American or European settings. Research in non-Western settings has increased in recent years, albeit mostly in more developed parts of East Asia including Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan. Africa, Latin America and Central Asia are still very underrepresented in PSM research.[25]

PSM has tended to be characterised as purely altruistic, prosocial and 'other-oriented' in nature, and as a key motivating factor for work in the public sector.[26] However, this interpretation of PSM may not be applicable to every context, and emerging research in developing countries has begun to think about PSM in way that also incorporates self-serving motives, or which also include public sector motivation. 'Public sector motivation' refers to more extrinsic motives for working in the public sphere, and may include job security, work-life balance and pension systems,[27] as well as social status or an ability to earn a 'grey income' (the expectation of top-up benefits to compensate for low salaries).[28] An individual's range of motives for starting and maintaining a career in the public sector may also change over time and with seniority.[29] In *Figure 2*, broadening interpretations of PSM might be represented by a dotted line connecting the 'PSM' element to the 'Extrinsic Motivation' element of the map.

The political economy

Unlike their Western counterparts, many non - Western countries do not have well - developed public administrations characterised by professionalism. There may not be a separation between politics and administration, or a public service ethos to guide attitudes and behaviour. For example, bureaucracies in post-communist states transitioning to democracy and market based economies, have emerged from systems where state bureaucrats were responsive and responsible to the ruling party, rather than to citizens and the public interest.

25 UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence. 2014. *Internal Research Report*, unpublished.

26 Van der Wal, "All Quiet on the non-Western Front?"

27 Perry and Hongedhem, "Editors' Introduction", p.3.

28 Ko and Han, "An empirical study on public service motivation of the next generation civil servants in China."

29 Ritz et al, "Public service motivation: A systematic literature review and outlook".

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A public service ethos was not inherent in the old system.[30] Despite numerous attempts at public service reform; trademark characteristics of the previous bureaucratic mentality may still persist, namely in low levels of public service motivation, discrepancies between formal administrative rules and bureaucratic behaviour, and the continued politicisation of public administration.[31] African countries that emerged from colonial rule have also experienced a slow pace of reform, and many civil servants are having to respond to conflicting mandates as their states attempt to transition to the Weberian legal-rational bureaucracy that is the dominant model of state administration reform offered.[32]

Civil servants may be beneficiaries of patronage, which provides them with a job and a means of personal enrichment through corruption; a job in the public sector is exchanged for loyalty in some form. Politicisation of the bureaucracy, where politicians or incumbent political parties have amplified their role in the definition of public policies as opposed to civil servants, has been argued to deliver negative results in terms of efficiency of the civil service and in the quality of public policies.[33] But reform-oriented politicians, as has been the case in Latin America, have also been known to employ patronage as a tool to bring about significant policy reform and improved performance of government by bringing in "their people" to support change. These may be highly qualified technocrats and skilled professionals, or those that share commitment to new policy agendas.[34]

Patronage systems can be used by politicians for a variety of purposes, from vice to virtue, and commensurately civil servants' motivation for participating in such practices can vary widely. Loyalty is personal and can encompass mutual commitment to the long life and prosperity of the patron, to a family dynasty or party faction, to a vision of the future or a set of public policy goals, to the hegemony of a party machine, to an idea of nationhood, or class.[35] As will be discussed later, patronage and politicisation of the bureaucracy do not necessarily preclude un-corrupt competence in the civil service, despite this being the case in many countries.

Civil service reforms

In numerous developing countries the civil service has undergone extensive restructuring, both functionally and organisationally. These often occurred through Structural Adjustment Programmes inspired by New Public Management (NPM) doctrines, aiming to improve effectiveness and performance of the civil service and address the issue of "too much state". The size of public sector employment and the wage bill were considered too large, and the focus was on reducing public deficits through reducing the size of employment and the wage bill.[36] Pre-occupation with the technical implementation of NPM reforms without adequate consideration of administrative capacity, sustained time for reform, or adaptation to fit to local contexts, has meant that reforms have had limited impact.[37] Successive waves of civil service reforms in developing countries have also led to low morale and had very demotivating effects on workers.[38]

Low pay

In any balanced, coherent package of incentives, materialistic motivation is an important one, and adequate pay is critical for sustaining the motivation, performance and integrity of civil servants.[39] Unfortunately, the take home pay of the average civil servant in many places is insufficient to eke out a living, resulting in them being poorly financially motivated, and arguably more prone to absenteeism or using corrupt means to supplement their income.[40]

30 Houston, David J. 2014. "Pubic Service Motivation in the Post-Communist State." *Public Administration* 92 (4): 843-860.

31 Repucci, Sarah. 2012. *Civil service reform: A review.* Working Paper No. 2012/90. Helsinki: UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research.

32 Rao, Sumedh. 2013. *Civil service reform: Topic guide.* Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

33 Doli, Dren, Fisnik Korenica, and Artan Rogova. 2012. "The post-independence civil service in Kosovo: A message of politicization." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 78 (4): 665-691.

34 Grindle, Merilee Serrill. 2010. *Constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing career civil service systems in Latin America.* Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper Series. Boston: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, pp.1-2.

35 Grindle, *Constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing career civil service systems.*

36 Larbi, George. 1999. *The New Public Management Approach and Crisis States.* Discussion Paper No. 112. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, p. 8.

37 Dan, Sorin, and Christopher Pollitt. 2014. "NPM Can Work: An optimistic review of the impact of New Public Management reforms in central and eastern Europe." *Public Management Review* ahead-of-print 1 (28).

38 Ramsingh, Odette. 2014. "Invigorating the Professionalism and Morale of the Public Service". Paper presented to *the13th session of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration, United Nations, New York, 7-11 April 2014.*

39 Chen, Chung-An and Chih-Wei Hsieh. 2014. "Does Pursuing External Incentives Compromise Public Service Motivation? Comparing the effects of job security and high pay." *Public Management Review* 17 (8): 1190-1213.

40 Okafor, Lawrence Chima. 2014. "Motivation and Job Satisfaction in the Nigerian Public Service: Issues, Problems and Challenges." *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science* 2 (6), 207-214.

In Eritrea, civil service reforms have included reducing the size and growth of the civil service (such as through eliminating 'ghost' workers, retrenchment, voluntary departures, enforced retirements and hiring freezes), reviewing salary and compensation policies, re-classifying jobs, enhancing productivity, capacity building and training, and improving documentation and records management as well as personnel management. Still, despite efforts to improve these matters, wages remain low, and attracting and retaining professional, technical and managerial staff - combating 'brain drain' is an on-going challenge.[41]

The problem of inadequate levels of pay is not an easy one to solve; the size of the public sector wage bill has a major impact on the national budget. Nonetheless, a sense of fairness has been identified as a crucial element of motivation for civil servants, with those feeling unfairly treated being more likely to quit, reduce their level of effort, steal, or even sabotage output.[42] While a tailoring of base salaries to at least meet local labour market conditions may be necessary, this may still be insufficient to ensure good performance, since it may not restore the sense of purpose needed to make public services function.[43]

Levers for improving motivation

In acknowledging the range of demotivating factors that many countries face which affect morale in the public service, the need for strategies to strengthen the passion and sense of purpose of public officials becomes critical. The scarcity of financial resources in the public sector to support extrinsic rewards provides additional impetus for the adequate provision of less tangible rewards like appreciation and approval.

Developing pride and recognition in public service

Beyond the capacity of the public sector in terms of adequate financial, technological and human resources, its performance greatly depends on the motivation and commitment of its employees based on their sense of pride. Pride here refers to a proper sense of regard or respect – as a virtue, rather than inordinate feelings of self-esteem or conceit.[44] It stems from a sense of purpose; of public or moral duty, or nationalism. It is not just about seeking reward from financial gain or obvious power, but reward from stimulating intellectual application, involvement in matters of the state, a secure financial life and respected social standing.[45]

(cc) BY-NC Duncan Stephen / *Statue of an anonymous bureaucrat - Reykjavík, Iceland.*

From the perspective of a civil servant, to feel a sense of pride and purpose in what they do, they need to view working in the public service as something that confers a degree of public respect. Their sense of pride in what they do will also depend on their own perception of whether the public service serves a greater public good, or narrow business interests. To a large extent, the pride of public employees is shaped by the image and perception of public service held by the general public. This public perception is influenced by leading political figures and the media, and also by citizens' satisfaction with the delivery and quality of various services. Thus, in the public service, pride and performance are mutually interdependent. The sense of pride among civil servants and the public image of public institutions represent intrinsic sources of motivation or commitment that eventually affect civil servants' performance.[46]

This has also been described as a 'virtuous circle' of pride, performance and recognition. An increase in civil servants' pride will lead to improved performance, and improved performance will lead to greater public recognition of the public service. Following on from this, greater public

41 Habtom, Gebre Michael Kibreab. 2014. "Public administration reform in Eritrea: Past trends and emerging challenges." *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research* 6 (3), p. 48.

42 Paul, Elisabeth. 2010. *Motivating Civil Servants for Reform and Performance.* Global Event Working Paper. New York: United Nations Development Programme, p.10.

43 Rao, *Civil service reform: Topic guide,* pp.16-17.

44 Kernaghan, Kenneth. 2001. "An honour to be coveted: pride, recognition and public service." *Canadian Public Administration* 44 (1), p. 69.

45 Chapman, Richard A. 2013. *Leadership in the British Civil Service (Routledge Revivals): A study of Sir Percival Waterfield and the creation of the Civil Service Selection Board.* Oxon: Routledge, p.195.

46 Haque, M. Shamsul. 2001. "Pride and performance in the public service: three Asian cases." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 67 (1): 99-116.

recognition will increase civil servants' pride, and so on. In this virtuous circle, pride sets the level of quality for services and personal involvement. High performance is contingent on high levels of organisational commitment, job satisfaction and motivation. Organisational commitment can be described as the desire to work hard for, and remain in the organisation. Job satisfaction relates to the amount of job challenge; a sense of accomplishment, the possibility for independent thought and action and respect from superiors. Motivation follows when the first two elements are satisfied.[47]

Improved performance leads to increased public recognition, however this may be the most difficult part of the virtuous circle, as it has to involve creating a new, positive image for the public service to counter a negative one.[48] Negative stereotypes of the public service are certainly not new. As far back as 1798, a bureaucracy was being described as "a regime where bureaux multiply without need". In the 1960s and 70s, due in so small part to public choice theorists, the term 'bureaucrat' became synonymous with a cynical perception of civil servants. "Bureaucracy bashing" may also stem from negative perceptions of colonial legacies of public administration. In Bangladesh, people are sceptical about the bureaucracy, which is viewed as having been developed to serve the imperial interests of the empire and elites.[49] There is evidence to suggest that negative biases or perceptions of the public sector held by citizens are hard to shift, even if public sector organisations are performing at a high level.[50]

In the 1960s and 70s, … the term 'bureaucrat' became synonymous with a cynical perception of civil servants.

Public service reform provides an opportunity to improve performance and build a new reputation for the public service. However successful reform has proven elusive in most developing countries,[51] and so it has 'blocked' rather than facilitated the virtuous circle. Much reform has been predicated on the blanket rationale that public service is expansive and inefficient, and its performance disappointing. These assertions, backed by anti-public sector rhetoric on the part of political leaders and international agencies, have been used to push for market-driven reform.[52] In this way national and international actors have worsened the public image and perception of public service, which in turn, has created adverse impacts on the morale and commitment of public employees, and thus on their performance. The virtuous circle has turned into a 'reform conundrum'; successive waves of civil service reforms in developing countries have had a very demotivating effect on workers, yet change or reform is needed in order to lift morale. Clearly, more of the same will not solve the conundrum, or break the decidedly 'unvirtuous' cycle that has resulted.

Planning and implementation of reform should keep in mind what makes public service distinct from the private sector. As pointed out by the OECD, '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.[53] The unique public nature of the public service is a key source of public employees' intrinsic motivation. If the public service is viewed as just another business institution, then this pride, motivation and commitment may come under challenge.

Pride may also have negative connotations – for example, from a materialistic perspective, employment in the public service can come with high prestige or social status. While this motivation appears the polar opposite of PSM, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In China, graduating students intending to undertake the very competitive process of applying to join the public service know that the pay is low, but also that such employment comes with attractive perks or 'grey' income, job security and prestige. This makes it a sought after career (despite negative perceptions of the public service due to corruption and waste by officials). Yet applicants to the Chinese civil service are also highly motivated by the desire to serve the public good and benefit society, and this has been found to be a more important motivator to public sector job seekers than private sector ones.[54]

Change or reform that aims to promote rather than devalue a public service ethos may stand a better chance of 'sticking'. The advent of the SDGs should provide a turning point towards taking an asset-based perspective (rather than the usual focus on deficits) of civil servants. Attaining national and global development goals is better facilitated by the viewpoint that in the extremely heterogeneous institution of the public service, many or most civil servants are trying to do their best and are motivated to serve the public interest. Of course there will be substantial variation

47 Bourgault, Jacques and Esther Parent. 2008. "Inspiring Exemplary Practices in Canada: Ken Kernaghan's Contribution to Professionalism, Pride and Recognition" in *Professionalism and public service: essays in honour of Kenneth Kernaghan,* edited by David Siegel and Kenneth Rasmussen, Chapter 7. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

48 Van de Walle, Stephen, and Geert Bouckaert. 2003. "Public service performance and trust in government: the problem of causality." *International Journal of Public Administration* 26 (8 & 9): 891-913.

49 Jahan, Ferdous and Asif Mohammad Shahan. 2012. "Bureau Bashing and Public Service Motivation: A Case for the Civil Service of Bangladesh", *International Journal of Public Administration,* 35 (4), p. 277.

50 Marvel, John D. 2015. "Public Opinion and Public Sector Performance: Are Individuals' Beliefs About Performance Evidence-Based or the Product of Anti–Public Sector Bias?" *International Public Management Journal* 18 (2): 209-227.

51 Rao, *Civil service reform: Topic guide.*

52 Haque, "Pride and performance in the public service: three Asian cases." pp. 102, 107-8.

53 Quoted in O'Riordan, Joanna. 2013. *Public Service Motivation.* Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, p. 9.

54 Ko and Han, "An empirical study on public service motivation of the next generation civil servants in China."

among government employees regarding the extent of their commitment to the highest ideals of public service, but given the large number of government employees, and their central role in the political system, it is important that as many employees as possible are motivated to perform at a high level.[55] Appealing to the public service motivation of civil servants has been an underutilised means of achieving this.

Establishing a merit-based, professional civil service

Evidence suggests that building a merit-based civil service has been the most effective way of incentivising staff, while pay reform and performance monitoring have been less effective.[56] Career development based on the principle of rewarding merit constitutes the central element for professionalising the civil service and motivating its officials.[57] Even in an environment where the civil service is politicised it is possible for the merit principle to be implemented. Commentators point to China, where despite corruption, nepotism and cronyism, there exists a largely meritocratic and competent civil service, geared to advancing the common good, which has made the world's second largest economy what it is today.[58]

The Emperor receives a candidate for the 'Imperial' or 'Palace' examination (Song Dynasty, 960-1279 AD).

Performance-related pay: Use with care

Performance-related pay (PRP), or pay for performance schemes have been adopted in an increasing number of developing countries.[59] The issue of whether performance-related pay really improves efficiency and productivity is highly contested,[60] not only because it is very difficult to implement, but also due to problems of measurability. Developing appropriate measures for public services which deliver complex products and services (for example "good health" or "good education") is difficult and can become an intensely technical exercise, resulting in a tendency to quantify what is easy rather than what is important. Once developed, output performance measures may create perverse incentives and unintended consequences, such as civil servants fixating on meeting targets rather than on achieving outcomes that are being sought.[61] Some evidence has been found that explicit performance standards linked to paid bonuses can improve outcomes in jobs with readily observable outputs or outcomes such as health care, teaching and revenue collection. However, there is insufficient evidence of the positive effect or performance-related pay in organisational contexts similar that of the core civil service – where there are complex tasks and measuring outcomes is difficult.[62]

Extrinsic incentives may negatively affect individual performance *in the case of interesting tasks* (with 'interesting' being defined as those perceived to be challenging,[63] enjoyable and or purposeful). This is especially applicable to more senior civil servants and managers, who are most likely to have jobs with broader scope, more responsibility and challenges. Unfortunately, these are the employees who are most often targeted for performance-based pay schemes, and who ironically are also the ones who self-report as being highly motivated by interesting work, or in other words, are intrinsically motivated.[64] Pay for performance, in the case of interesting jobs, appears to cause a cognitive shift – it strengthens extrinsic motivation for behaviour, and at the same time weakens intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory helps to explain this phenomenon. According to this theory, individuals prefer to actively engage with their environment and wherever possible, self-initiate their activities; in other words, they want to be "master of their own destiny". Giving someone a performance-contingent financial incentive to do something they already enjoy can decrease their motivation to

55 Kernaghan,"An honour to be coveted: pride, recognition and public service." p. 68.

56 Rao, *Civil service reform: Topic guide, pp. 15-16.*

57 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 1997. *Promoting Performance and Professionalism in the Public Service,* SIGMA Papers, No. 21, OECD Publishing, p. 5.

58 Berggruen, Nicolas, and Nathan Gardels. 2013. "Re-Politicisation vs. De-Politicisation." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 30 (2): 45-50.

59 Koike, Osamu. 2013. "Institutionalising performance management in Asia: looking East or West?" *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 26 (5): 347-360.

60 Paul, *Motivating Civil Servants for Reform and Performance,* p.15.

61 Van Thiel, Sandra, and Frans L. Leeuw. 2002. "The performance paradox in the public sector." *Public Performance & Management Review* 25 (3): 267-281.

62 Langbein, Laura. 2010. "Economics, public service motivation, and pay for performance: complements or substitutes?" *International Public Management Journal* 13 (1): 9-23.

63 Weibel, Antoinette, Katja Rost, and Margit Osterloh. 2010. "Pay for performance in the public sector—Benefits and (hidden) costs." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 20 (2): 387-412.

64 Van der Wal, Zeger. 2013. "Mandarins versus Machiavellians? On Differences between Work Motivation of Administrative and Political Elites." *Public Administration Review* 73 (5): 749-759.

do it, since they are then likely to view their effort as externally driven or controlled, rather than as internally appealing. Their intrinsic motivation is undermined, or crowded out.[65]

The decision to use PRP should take into consideration the job or tasks to be undertaken. There is evidence to suggest that pay for performance has a strong, positive effect on the performance of non-interesting tasks, whereas in the case of interesting tasks, pay for performance has a negative effect and reduces performance.[66] Correspondingly, it may be more appropriate to use PRP with junior, or 'rank and file' civil servants, in jobs that require low investments in policy expertise, rather than senior civil servants. Caution should also be exercised in the implementation of PRP programmes in corrupt settings, because the absence of non-corrupt senior managers – and hence independent performance evaluations – may undermine such programmes, as was found to be the case within the civil service in South Africa.[67]

Promoting a values-based public service

Maximising the intrinsic motivation and PSM of civil servants may be underutilised keys to driving individual and organisational performance. This involves a move away from public management practices that are based on assumptions of self-interest (and therefore a pre-occupation with extrinsic incentives) or an excessive focus on rules, towards creating a values-based public service. Values such as transparency, responsibility, accountability and impartiality underpin public service and serving the public interest. To be credible, all human capital management practices need to be consistent with the message that 'public service matters', and these practices, from recruitment to performance management, should be reviewed to emphasise public service values in an integrated way.[68]

Hiring for mission, culture and values, or person-organisation fit, can include intensifying recruitment efforts in graduate programmes in public administration, to ensure that candidates have values that are consistent with or responsive to public service values, and incorporating measures of public service motivation into assessment tools for selection.[69] This may include the use of interviewing techniques such as structured face-to-face interviews, situational tests and realistic job previews. Using PSM in job marketing has also been suggested – through emphasising public service related messages and values in the recruitment process, creating a public service 'brand', and emphasising the availability of jobs suited to fulfil public service motives and needs.[70]

It is unrealistic to expect that all new employees will enter public service with strong public service motivation. 'Socialising' or 'onboarding' new employees in the first year of employment, though a comprehensive and strategic programme involving managers and supervisors, and focusing on culture and mission, can lead to increased commitment to the organisation and job satisfaction. In addition to formal learning and development programmes this could include orientations and social events.[71]

An organisational culture which instils and celebrates a public service spirit can be fostered by implementing learning and development programmes for teams and management in public service values, including courses that teach about the challenges, opportunities and expectations of public service,[72] and these can be linked to training on standards, ethics and codes of conduct. 'Soft' human capital management measures such as communication and maintaining learning and development initiatives have often been superseded and neglected while the focus is on reducing pay and headcount as part of civil service reform. This negatively impacts employee engagement and motivation.[73]

Pride and recognition programmes

Recognition programmes should be seen as an integral part of quality performance management, continued performance improvement and workplace validation. Numerous countries provide Awards for Public Service Excellence, and a Public Service Week/Month at the central, state and municipal levels. The United Nations runs an annual Public Service Awards, in conjunction with a Public Service Forum and Day. In Singapore, the Public Service Division (PSD), which is part of the Prime Minister's Office, champions change in the public service, and works closely with ministries and statutory boards to build a sense of pride among public officers.

65 Gagné, Marylène, and Edward L. Deci. 2005. "Self-determination theory and work motivation." *Journal of Organisational Behaviour* 26 (4): 331-362.

66 Weibel et al, "Pay for performance in the public sector—Benefits and (hidden) costs."

67 Sundström, Aksel. 2014. *Not to be used during fire: Performance-related pay for civil servants as an anticorruption tool,* The Quality of Government Institute Working Paper Series.

68 Paarlberg, Laurie E., and Bob Lavigna. 2010. "Transformational leadership and public service motivation: Driving individual and organisational performance." *Public Administration Review* 70 (5): 710-718.

69 Ritz et al, "Public service motivation: A systematic literature review and outlook".

70 Carpenter, Jacqueline, Dennis Doverspike, and Rosanna Miguel. 2012. "Public service motivation as a predictor of attraction to the public sector." *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 80 (2): 509-523.

71 Perry, James L. 2012. "Does Making a Difference Make a Difference? Answers from Research on Public Service Motivation." In *Reforming the Public Sector - How to Achieve Better Transparency, Service, and Leadership,* edited by Giovanni Tria and Giovanni Valotti, 51-67. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

72 Cun, Xiaogang. 2012. "Public service motivation and job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior An empirical study based on the sample of employees in Guangzhou public sectors." *Chinese Management Studies* 6(2): 330-341.

73 O'Riordan, *Public Service Motivation,* p. 29.

Positive managerial practices can foster and maximise the power of employee public service motivation. Civil servants often work in jobs with broad goals and long-term outcomes. Managers need to be able to translate and cascade ambiguous organisational goals into job specific goals, explaining not only what should be done and why, but also how an employee's actions contribute to the organisation's bigger picture.[74] 'Supportive supervision' rather than more punitive styles of management are more likely to be successful in motivating employees.[75] Performance appraisals need to reflect and promote public service values and associated behaviours (and not just job-related tasks); this might include behaviours like collaboration, citizen-orientation and continuous improvement.

Leaders play a vital role in encouraging public service motivation. They can communicate a compelling vision, and provide ethical and principled role modelling. Public service leaders who communicate a values-based organisational ideology – made real through mission, vision and strategy – positively influence employee behaviour. They can create alignment between an individual's prosocial values and the organisational values and mission. On an informal level, leaders also socially construct meaning within an organisation; they transmit values through telling positive stories and creating symbols of the achievements of the organisation, which integrate and motivate.[76]

Empowerment and autonomy

The way that public sector jobs and organisations are structured impacts the level of intrinsic motivation of their skilled and technical staff and managers. These employees need to feel that the organisation provides them with a degree of discretion and autonomy to undertake tasks they find meaningful. Contact with beneficiaries of work has also been found to motivating - in the case of civil servants, these beneficiaries may not be members of the public, but rather internal 'customers', such as co-workers and other agencies. Likewise, providing direct evidence of the 'line of sight' between policy work undertaken by a civil servant, and policy outcomes can drive their performance. [77] Explicitly linking the role of public officials to the SDGs acknowledges the pivotal role they play in achieving important national and global development outcomes.

Very bureaucratic organisations, with high levels of red tape, are de-motivating for public managers. However, active reform efforts to increase managerial authority and focus on results can reinvigorate PSM.[78] In Nigeria it was found that higher levels of autonomy corresponded to significantly better levels of motivation, evidenced by higher project completion rates. Higher levels of provision of performance incentives and monitoring corresponded to significantly *lower* project completion rates. Performance incentives and monitoring may create excessive regulatory burden or red tape on bureaucrats, leading them to misallocate effort towards these activities and non-productive tasks - to the detriment of project completion rates.[79]

(cc) BY-NC-ND Premier of Ontario Photography / *A clear 'line of sight' between policy work and outcomes can drive performance.*

(cc) BY-ND DCLG, Govt. of UK / *Sweeping away unnecessary red tape.*

74 Gould-Williams, Julian S., Ahmed Mohammed Sayed Mostafa, and Paul Bottomley. 2013. "Public service motivation and employee outcomes in the Egyptian public sector: Testing the mediating effect of person-organization fit." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25 (2): 597-622.

75 Paul, *Motivating Civil Servants for Reform and Performance,* p. 23.

76 Paarlberg and Lavigna, "Transformational leadership and public service motivation".

77 Moynihan, Donald P., and Sanjay K. Pandey. 2007. "The role of organisations in fostering public service motivation." *Public Administration Review* 67 (1): 40-53.

78 Yousaf, Momna, Shiza Zafar and Abida Abi Ellahi. 2014. "Do public service motivation, red tape and resigned work satisfaction triangulate together?" *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management* 63 (7): 923-945.

79 Rasul, Imran and Daniel Rogger. 2013. *Management of bureaucrats and public service delivery: evidence from the Nigerian civil service.* Public Economics Programme Papers, PEP 20. London: The London School of Economics and Political Science, Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines.

Employee engagement

There is a growing trend in public sector organisations to measure and track 'employee engagement' (also referred to as organisational commitment or organisational citizenship) on a regular basis, in order to take action on issues raised and enhance engagement.[80] Effective employee engagement is seen as a crucial component of improving performance, driving efficiency, reducing sickness absence and enriching employees' experiences of work.[81]

Singapore's Civil Service employees participate in an annual employee engagement survey, which is managed by the Civil Service College and has been running for 10 years. A key focus is on taking action to respond to any issues raised in the survey.[82] The United Kingdom has established an Employee Engagement Programme Team, which sits within the Government Innovation Group in the Cabinet Office, and is responsible for an annual *Civil Service People Survey* as well as a raft of other engagement initiatives. In 2015, the *Malaysian Civil Service - People Survey* will be fielded for the first time, to serve as feedback by government employees across the Malaysian Civil Service on dimensions related to perceptions of employee engagement levels within the organisation and its linkages to organisational performance, productivity and employee well-being.

Explicitly linking the role of public officials to the SDGs acknowledges the pivotal role they play in achieving national and global development outcomes.

Employee engagement currently encompasses intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, including employees' level of interest in their work, level involvement in decisions affecting their work, satisfaction with pay and benefits, and access to learning and development opportunities. However PSM tends to be overlooked. Given that high PSM has been positively correlated with job satisfaction and organisational commitment,[83] employee engagement surveys and initiatives should incorporate dimensions of PSM to ensure that civil servants feel that their jobs provide enough opportunity to contribute to the public interest or public policy.

The end of the annual employee engagement survey?

There have been calls for organisations to redefine their perspective on employees and "go beyond the annual engagement survey".[84] This means understanding that employee happiness is as important as customer satisfaction with services.

It is increasingly being recognised that an annual survey is not able to provide enough actionable information to enable employers to address problems and respond in a timely way. Rather, organisations need tools and methods that measure and capture employee feedback and sentiment on a frequent, real-time basis so they can continuously adjust management practices and the work environment at a local level. Real-time feedback tools for customers or citizens have already been applied in developing countries using low cost mobile phone technology.[85] Could the same kinds of systems be used for civil servants?

New tools and techniques have been developed to measure employee happiness, alignment and job satisfaction in real time. They include rapid pulse surveys, analytics applications that can correlate retention and performance to work factors, and day-to-day tools that let people openly express their feelings.[86] Such employee satisfaction "sensing" or feedback systems are currently being applied in private sector contexts. However, if no follow-up action is taken, these exercises can create more dissatisfaction than good. Questions have been raised as to whether employers using real-time feedback systems actually intend to, or have the capacity to respond to, employee concerns. The risk of these systems being cynically used for monitoring purposes has also been flagged.

Despite these concerns, the private sector trend towards focusing on employee engagement and feedback processes provides food for thought about its application to the public service. It serves as a reminder for government as an employer to consider the ways in which it understands and

80 Manning, Nick. 2012. "Improving the Contribution of Senior Staff to Program Performance," presentation delivered to *the Budget Community of Practice (BCOP) of the Public Expenditure Management Peer Assisted Learning (PEMPAL) network meeting March 2012.* Bohinj, Slovenia: PEMPAL.

81 See http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/improving/employee-engagement-in-the-civil-service

82 Tan, Amanda and Geraldine Ling. 2011. *What to do in the first 100 days after the release of engagement survey findings,* ODyssey Issue 15. Singapore: Centre for Organisation Development, Civil Service College.

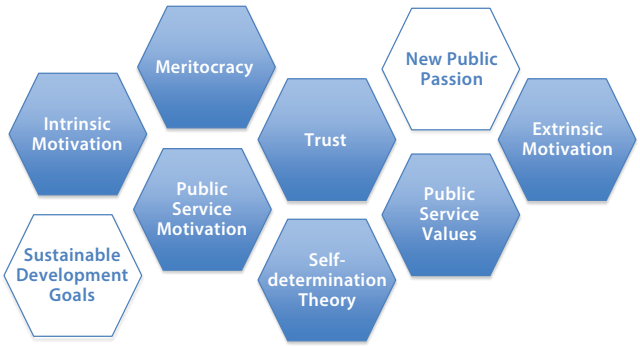
83 Crosby, Durand. 2014. "Improving Employee Retention in the Public Sector by Increasing Employee Engagement", in *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Engaged Management Scholarship, Tulsa, OK, September 10-14, 2014.*

84 Bersin, Josh. 2015. "Becoming irresistible: A new model for employee engagement", *Deloitte Review* Issue 16.

85 For example, the MajiVoice ("Water Voice") initiative in Kenya, which provides a platform for two-way communications between citizens and water providers enabling citizens to submit real-time feedback on water service delivery using their mobile.

86 Bersin, Josh. 2014. "It's Time to Rethink the 'Employee Engagement' Issue." *Forbes*, 10 April.

Figure 3: Sustainable Development Goals and New Public Passion



Source: GCPSE

responds to the needs of its human capital.

Conclusion and next steps

This paper has explored motivation for public officials at managerial levels, looking at the influence of different historical, cultural, governance and institutional contexts in developing countries and its impact on motivation. It has highlighted some of the ways in which motivation can be harnessed and developed through organisational processes, including human capital management and managerial practices. Assuming that civil servants are simply driven by self interest and extrinsic motivators has resulted in an over-reliance on rules and monetary incentives, and the blaming of officials for systemic problems with governance and administration. Instead, working towards motivating civil servants through creating a values-based public service provides an opportunity to lift morale and promote a New Public Passion for public service.

However, understanding of what drives civil servants to do their work well, particularly in developing countries, is still relatively nascent. The reality is that in many developing economies, with difficult governance settings, public sector employment may be as much about survival and income provision, or status and connections, as it is for self-development and civic duty.[87] More needs to be known about how PSM can be initiated, nurtured and sustained in such contexts. Can PSM compete with conflicting external drivers, or do they undermine it? A critical research agenda across a range of developing country contexts, which also explores mixed motives for working in public service, would be valuable for practitioners.

This research agenda might include:

- More research into the relevance of PSM for management and leadership practices, plus organisational support structures and Human Capital Management strategies that realise the potential of PSM,
- The experiences at the level of local government, and of the regions of Africa, Latin America and Central Asia, which are under-represented in PSM research,
- The motivation of politicians, who have received little attention in PSM literature, despite various authors suggesting that they may exhibit a form of PSM,
- The link between different types of motivators and propensity for unethical conduct, and willingness to change or report such conduct by colleagues and superiors.

Gaining insight into what motivates civil servants in a broader and more diverse range of country settings, and better knowledge about what organisational practices can successfully motivate these employees has the potential to improve government performance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Just as importantly, it has the potential to help explain the role that civil servants' motivation plays in the success or failure of public service reforms.

87 UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, *Internal Research Report.*

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About this paper:

This paper was prepared for the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence.

The Centre acknowledges the assistance of the following individuals for their inputs and suggestions: Zeger Van Der Wal, Chen Chung-An, Cheryl Tan and Yernar Zharkeshov.

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