Global Centre for Public Service Excellence

GCPSE

UNDP

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

The SDGs and New Public Passion
What *really* motivates the civil service?

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.

The civil service in developing and transitioning countries may be struggling to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, while working under local hardships. Under difficult local conditions, civil servants are asked to undertake nation-building, set up infrastructure, and develop secure, healthy, educated and prosperous societies - under extreme resource constraints and negative perceptions about the public service and civil servants themselves.[2] They 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 in the employment of the public service, are key challenges.

This paper argues that unjustified cynical assumptions about the motivation of civil servants has contributed to low morale and 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.

Theories about motivation for work

Key theories and ideas relating to motivation for work in the public sector include the concept of internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) forces or motivators, Self-Determination Theory, Public Service Motivation (PSM).

▶ 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 higher pay and promotions clearly contingent on effective performance, it is argued, will lead to job satisfaction.[3]

▶ Self-Determination Theory makes a distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomy involves acting with a sense of volition and having the experience of choice.[4] Through this lens, intrinsically motivated behavior is a classic example of autonomous behavior, since it is propelled by people's interest in the activity itself. In contrast, being controlled involves acting with a sense of being required to engage in the actions. The use of extrinsic rewards (e.g. financial) induces controlled behaviour.

▶ The concept of Public Service Motivation (PSM) assumes that public sector workers are guided by an ethic in the pursuit of the public interest. It emphasises altruistic motives that go beyond self-interest to a greater good.[5] 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.[6]

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.

---

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   United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2000, 4.

3   Banuri and Keefer 2013.

4   Deci and Ryan 2012.

5   Perry 1996. 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.

6   Ritz et al 2013, 17.

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".[7]

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.

Contemporary approaches to public administration, such new public governance have an explicit focus on public officials working to ac hieving higher order public interests, in collaboration with citizens.[8] 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".[9]

Motivating for better performance. . . and more

Motivation can also help to achieve broader government objectives, including building trust in government and reducing corruption.

▶ Building Trust in Government - Civil servants build trust in government through the proper implementation of bureaucratic process through neutrality and Impartiality, equity, respect and honesty.[10] 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 times of crisis.[11] 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.[12]

▶ Minimising Corruption - the motivation of bureaucrats has been linked to ethical behaviour.[13] Interesting work, high PSM and merit-based promotion (a form of extrinsic motivation) have been identified as deterring civil servants against corruption. PSM and intrinsic motivators appear to have a stronger effect than that of extrinsic motivation, pointing to the significance of them as anti-corruption devices.[14]

Country specific factors affecting motivation in the public service

There are historic, systemic, economic political and structural impediments to establishing a highly motivated group of civil servants. These include:

▶ The Political Economy - many non-Western countries do not have well-developed public administrations characterised by professionalism, a separation between politics and administration, and infused with a public service ethos.[15] Despite numerous attempts at reform; trademark characteristics of the previous bureaucratic mentality may still persist, namely in low levels of public service motivation, discrepancy between formal administrative rules and bureaucratic behaviour, and the continued politicisation of administration.[16]

▶ Civil Service Reforms - successive waves of civil service reforms in developing countries have led to low morale and had very demotivating effects on workers.[17]

▶ Low Pay - 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.[18] 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.[19]

Levers for improving motivation

Acknowledging that many developing countries face a range of demotivating factors affecting morale in the public service, strategies to strengthen a New Public Passion in public officials include:

▶ Developing Pride and Recognition in Public Service – which 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.[20] 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.[21]

▶ Planners and implementers of public service reform should bear in mind what makes public service distinct from the private sector. If the public service is viewed as just another business institution, then this pride, motivation and commitment may come under challenge.

▶ 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.[22] Even in an environment where the civil service is politicised it is possible for the merit principle to be implemented. In China, despite corruption, nepotism and cronyism, there exists a largely meritocratic and competent

7 Perry and Hongedhem 2008, 19-20.
8 O'Flynn 2007.
9 Stoker 2006, quoted in ibid., 360.
10 Rothstein 2011.
11 Kim 2005.
12 Ko and Han 2013.
13 Cowley and Smith 2014.
14 Kwon 2014. 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.

15 Van der Wal 2015.
16 Repucci 2012.
17 Ramsingh 2014.
18 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.
19 Rao 2013, 16-17.
20 Chapman 2013, 195.
21 Haque 2001.
22 Rao 2013, 15-16.

civil service, geared to advancing the common good, which has made the world's second largest economy what it is today.[23]

▶ Promoting a Values-based Public Service - values such as transparency, responsibility, accountability and impartiality underpin public service. To be credible, all human capital management practices need to be consistent with the message that 'public service matters',[24] and these practices, from recruitment to performance management, should be reviewed to emphasise public service values in an integrated way.[25]

▶ Empowerment and Autonomy – civil servants need to feel that the organisation provides them with a degree of discretion and autonomy to undertake tasks they find meaningful. 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.[26] Explicitly linking the role of public officials to the SDGs acknowledges the pivotal role they play in achieving important national and global outcomes.

▶ Employee Engagement - there is a growing trend in public sector organisations to track 'employee engagement', in order to take action on issues raised and enhance engagement.[27] Given that high PSM has been positively correlated with job satisfaction and organisational commitment, it should be incorporated into employee engagement practices.[28]

Conclusion and next steps

Different historical, cultural, governance and institutional contexts in developing countries impact upon motivation in the public service. 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

23 Berggruen and Gardels 2013.
24 O'Riordan 2013.
25 Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010.
26 Yousaf et al 2014.
27 Manning 2012.
28 Crosby 2014.

servants and 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 in relatively nascent. The reality is that in many developing political economies, with difficult governance settings, public sector employment may be as much about survival and income provision, or status and connections, as self-development and civic duty.[29] More could 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, exploring mixed motives for working in public service, would be valuable for practitioners.

Gaining insight into what motivates civil servants in a broader and more diverse range of country settings, and better knowledge about what practices can successfully motivate these employees has the potential to improve government performance to achieve the SDGs. 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.

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

For more detailed coverage of SDGs and New Public Passion, please refer to the full paper at: http://bit.ly/GCPSEevidence

References

Banuri, Sheheryar and Philip Keefer. 2013. *Intrinsic motivation, effort and the call to public service*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6729. http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/1813-9450-6729

Berggruen, Nicolas, and Nathan Gardels. 2013. "Re-Politicization vs. De-Politicization." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 30 (2): 45-50. DOI: 10.1111/npqu.11375.

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.

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*. http://bit.ly/1fFiYru.

29 UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence 2014.

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. DOI 10.1007/s11238-013-9371-6.

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.* http://ssrn.com/abstract=2555709.

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." P*ublic Management Review* 1(28). http://repub.eur.nl/pub/51367/NPM-can-work_preprint.pdf

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.

Haque, M. Shamsul. 2001. "Pride and performance in the public service: three Asian cases." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 67 (1): 99-116. http://profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/polhaque/iras-pride.pdf.

Kim, Seok-Eun. 2005. "The Role of Trust in the Modern Administrative State An Integrative Model." *Administration & Society* 37, (5): 611-635. DOI: 10.1177/0095399705278596.

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. DOI: 10.1117/0091026013487122.

Kwon, Illoong. 2014. "Motivation, discretion, and corruption." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 24 (3): 765-794. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/mus062.

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. http://www.pempal.org/data/upload/files/2012/04/presentation_nick-manning-wb_eng.pdf

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. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8500.2007.00545.x

O'Riordan, Joanna. 2013. *Public Service Motivation.* Dublin: Institute of Public Administration. http://www.ipa.ie/pdf/PublicServiceMotivation.pdf.

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.

Paarlberg, Laurie E., and Bob Lavigna. 2010. "Transformational leadership and public service motivation: Driving individual and organizational performance." *Public Administration Review* 70(5): 710-718. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02199.x.

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.

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.

Ramsingh, Odette. 2014. "Invigorating the Professionalism and Morale of the Public Service". Paper presented to the *13th session of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration, United Nations, New York, 7-11 April 2014.* http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN92632.pdf

Rao, Sumedh. 2013. *Civil service reform: Topic guide.* Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/CSR_TopicGuide_2013.pdf

Repucci, Sarah. 2012. *Civil service reform: A review.* Working Paper No. 2012/90. Helsinki: UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research. http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/working-papers/2012/en_GB/wp2012-090/_files/88543507008651313/default/wp2012-090.pdf

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

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

UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (GCPSE). 2014. *Internal Research Report,* unpublished.

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. http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan000112.pdf

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. DOI: 10.1080/23276665.2015.1041223.

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. DOI: 10.1108/IJPPM-06-2013-0123 DOI 10.1108/IJPPM-06-2013-0123.