

Public Service Values

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39

Public Service Values

Muiris MacCarthaigh



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FOREWORD

This paper is the thirty-ninth in a series undertaken by the Committee for Public Management Research. The Committee has developed a comprehensive programme of research designed to serve the needs of the Irish public service. Committee members come from the following eight departments: Finance; Environment, Heritage and Local Government; Health and Children; Taoiseach; Transport; Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; Social and Family Affairs; Office of the Revenue Commissioners and also from Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and the Institute of Public Administration.

This series aims to prompt discussion and debate on topical issues of particular interest or concern. The papers may outline experience, both national and international, in dealing with a particular issue. Or they may be more conceptual in nature, prompting the development of new ideas on public management issues. They are not intended to set out any official position on the topic under scrutiny. Rather, the intention is to identify current thinking and best practice.

Jim Duffy, Chair
Committee for Public Management Research
Department of Finance

For further information or to pass on any comments please contact:

Pat Hickson
Secretary
Committee for Public Management Research
Department of Finance

Lansdowne House
Lansdowne Road
Dublin 4
Phone: (+353) 1 676 7571; Fax: (+353) 1 668 2182
E-mail: hicksonp@cmof.finance.irlgov.ie

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why are values important?

Values are essential components of organisational culture and instrumental in determining, guiding and informing behaviour. For bureaucracies, adherence to high-level public service values can generate substantial public trust and confidence. Conversely, weak application of values or promotion of inappropriate values can lead to reductions in these essential elements of democratic governance, as well as to ethical and decision-making dilemmas. While a core set of public service values is necessary, it is also true that different values apply to different parts of the public service. For example, a distinction may be made between technical, regulatory and administrative tasks, or between those parts of a bureaucracy in direct contact with the public and those which are not.

Given the increasing range of demands on the public service, as well as the frequent ambiguity in terms of goals, relationships and responsibilities, value conflicts are not unusual. As values can differ within different parts of the public service, one of the principal tasks of managers and leaders is to co-ordinate, reconcile or cope with differing values between individuals or even between parts of the organisation. Also, there are a number of dynamics challenging traditional values in the public service. These include new modes of governance and the fragmentation of authority, market-based reforms (such as New Public Management), politicisation and political expectations, the growth in the use of agencies, decentralisation or relocation, changes in human resource management and recruitment, and the advent of new technologies and methods of information sharing.

Values in the Irish public service

Official and secondary publications on Irish public administration document a range of values associated with the service, including efficiency, impartiality, honesty, loyalty, risk-aversion, equity, hierarchy, integrity, accountability and fairness. A series of workshops with public servants from the civil service and local government

sectors identified that there was greater emphasis on 'defensive' values in response to various pressures on the public service. New or non-traditional values occasionally identified included flexibility and 'value for money' or effectiveness. However, some values that may have been expected in the context of modernisation, such as innovation, did not emerge. The workshops agreed that values were developed and transmitted in the workplace, and daily formal and informal communication with colleagues were instrumental in developing value sets. They also agreed that values were learned through 'osmosis' rather than in a once-off manner. Strong emphasis was placed on the role of line managers in the transmission of values.

In terms of how values were changing, it was suggested that the 'pecking order' of values had altered in response to public service modernisation and related reforms, as well as wider social change. For example, many public servants reported that accountability was now the dominant value in the performance and execution of their work. Others noted that efficiency, in the sense of speedy service delivery, had emerged in importance. EU and domestic legislative requirements, as well as a greater emphasis on the role of the individual public servant, were also identified as drivers of change in respect of values. On the issue of what values were necessary for the future public service, views ranged from the belief that traditional values would become more important, to the opinion that values such as innovation, leadership and flexibility were increasingly desirable.

Whatever values are deemed to be appropriate for the public service, the evidence suggests that performance will be enhanced through their meaningful integration into all aspects of the work of the service.

Recommendations

Identification and expression of values

- The evidence from the workshops suggests that public servants are aware of the values associated with public service. It also suggests that public servants are aware of and receptive to the need for 'new' values to underpin the changing nature of their work. However, there is uncertainty as to how values such as innovation and

flexibility can sit alongside more traditional values. Therefore, in the context of a more systemic review of public service values, considerable emphasis must be given to the issue of what values are appropriate for the modern public service. In particular, consideration of what the appropriate balance is between traditional public service values and values necessary to underpin the changes of the last number of years is required.

- While the work of the public service is increasingly specialised, a public service-wide values statement should be considered in order to bond all elements of the service. As Codes of Conduct have emerged for different parts of the service, sector-specific value sets have also materialised. A service-wide value statement offers an overarching framework, which can be complemented as necessary by the sector-specific value statements. It might usefully draw on the experience of other developed bureaucracies, where categories or sets of values are used. Naturally, the first step in this process will be the identification of those values deemed appropriate for a modern public service. In response to feedback relating to the increasing influence of the political sphere on the public service, a (re)statement of values can help to reaffirm the role and limits of the public service in Ireland.
- Values that reinforce the mission of an organisation have a direct and positive effect on the performance of that organisation. Values and values statements should form a discrete part of any code of conduct, and not be blended or confused with ethical behaviour and descriptions of expected conduct. Values statements will normally be short and contain a limited number of values. Also, as values help to define the ‘personality’ of an organisation, they should appear in publications other than codes of conduct, such as in customer charters and annual reports.
- In the context of decentralisation and the enhanced use of statutory and non-statutory agencies by civil service departments, a reassertion of civil service values is warranted, either through future editions of codes of conduct or otherwise. The development of a civil service values statement should involve staff from decentralised

offices and agencies in order to ensure the alignment of values between central and regional offices and agencies. Annual reports and other corporate publications by agencies should reflect the values espoused by their parent department.

- Individual civil service departments, and particularly those which interact extensively with the public, should consider publicising a values statement unique to their work in their public offices and publications. Analysis and discussion of this statement should also form part of any induction training for new staff members.

Treatment of values

- While the identification and mode of expression of values is the first step for any value-driven organisation, acting on those values is essential to give them meaning. Having a list of values does not mean they exist in an organisation. Advocating value sets but not acting on them is even counter-productive.
- This study identifies that senior managers are a key cohort in the realisation of a value-based organisation, as their activities send out fundamental signals concerning the relevance of values within the organisation. Ideally, a new statement (or restatement) of values within an organisation should begin at the most senior level. It should be noted that some organisations have ethics or values sub-committees on their boards and have a senior member of staff report to them on the implementation of a values programme. Line managers must also be cognisant of their influence on the establishment of a workplace culture, and the maxim of 'do as I do, not as I say' is of relevance here.

Values training

- While this study finds that the informal communication of values is of equal importance, formal methods of developing values offer substantial benefits. The most well-known formal method is induction courses for new staff involving case-studies and role-play scenarios. The centrality of values to all aspects of public service work should be demonstrated and values statements analysed and expanded on.

- An often-overlooked element to values training is the need to demonstrate clear methods by which value conflicts can be managed or what avenues public servants should pursue in order to resolve ethical dilemmas without fear of negative personal consequences. Value conflicts should not be regarded as detrimental to an organisation and learning to cope with such conflicts is part of good public management.
- As open recruitment to more senior grades in the public service takes root, the importance of values training increases for new recruits. Senior managers face different types of value conflict to more junior grades and training should take cognisance of this.
- The task of ensuring values are put into action in the work of an organisation is a continuous one and periodic renewal and re-examination of values is a necessary part of organisational development. If espoused values do not feature as actual values in the work of an organisation, the 'fit' between the organisation and its values should be visited again.
- Values seminars and workshops offer employees the opportunity to explore the meaning and practical application of values to everyday workplace scenarios. They also help to develop employees' awareness of the organisation and how it can achieve its objectives within a value-bounded framework of activity. Indeed the process of defining and examining the values of an organisation provides an opportunity for staff engagement in the development of the future direction of the organisation. The role of values should also be integrated into existing management training and development courses.
- In order that values form a meaningful part of any induction or further training courses, a toolkit would provide a useful support. Examples from elsewhere of such toolkits suggest that contents should include aids for the identification and discussion of values, how values translate into decision making, case-study scenarios concerning value conflicts or ethical dilemmas, and key documents (including legislation) relating to public service values.

Introduction

It is not possible to understand the motivations and behaviour of organisations and those who work within them comprehensively without consideration of values. All decisions are value-based and identifying the values within an organisation provides the key to understanding why and how certain activities take place while others do not. Different types of organisation operate on the basis of different value sets, and the public service is no different in having its own unique combination of values. With the Irish public service having experienced the most significant period of reform in its history over the last decade, it is timely that the values underpinning it now be considered in order to assess whether they are appropriate to the needs of a modern public administration.

1.1 Focus of the study

This discussion paper explores public service values in an Irish context. While the findings are of general application to public organisations, the primary evidence used to substantiate the work emerges from two key elements of the Irish public service – the civil service and local government sectors. The research on these sectors presented here demonstrates the need for a reappraisal of public service values and the means of their expression, as the public service develops to meet new challenges. As well as identifying the nature of values currently in the Irish public service, therefore, the paper also focuses on how values can be influenced, developed and transmitted.

1.2 Methodology

In order to provide empirical depth to the research, both primary and secondary sources were used. As detailed in Chapter 6, a content analysis of official and secondary sources provided initial data on expected (and unexpected) values and their expression in the public service. In order to validate these findings, a number of workshops were conducted with public servants from the civil service and local government sectors. The first workshop was conducted in May 2007 and the questions put to participants were revised in light of the experience gained from this event. Two further workshops were held in September 2007. The feedback from the three workshops represent views from senior public servants, and it may be argued that the values of junior ranking civil servants may differ from these. However, subsequent to the workshops, three presentations and discussion sessions were held during October-December 2007 with groups of middle and junior-ranking civil servants to test and further validate the results. A paper was also presented in December at a conference on governance. The feedback from these fora suggests that the findings are shared by a wide spectrum of grades across the service.

In all workshops, participants were given a brief presentation on the study, before being asked to identify and give their views on the following four issues:

- the values that inform the work and activities of the civil service/local government
- how values are transmitted in the civil service/local government
- whether or not value sets were changing and, if so, what the drivers of change were
- the values necessary for the future work of the civil service/local government sectors.

Chapter 6 presents the findings from these workshops and categorises the different values and other responses according to each of these four issues. The recommendations presented here are based on the workshops as well as current trends and best practice identified from academic literature and publications from other national and international sources.

1.3 Structure of the paper

Chapter 2 discusses briefly why public service values have emerged as a topic of interest in bureaucracies internationally. Chapter 3 is concerned with definitional issues, and distinguishing values from other concepts, including ethics. Drawing on secondary sources, Chapter 4 looks in some detail at public service values internationally and their categorisation. Chapter 5 examines the issue of value conflicts and the sources of challenges to existing values systems. In Chapter 6, a content analysis of academic and official literature concerning Irish public service values is presented, and is followed by the feedback from three workshops with public servants. In chapter 7, methods for developing and encouraging values are presented based on official and other international secondary sources. Chapter 8 summarises the study and presents recommendations. Appendix A presents sample codes of conduct and values statements from New Zealand, Canada and Australia.

Why public service values?

2.1 Why public service values?

In organisational theory, values are normally conceptualised as essential components of organisational culture and as instrumental in determining, guiding and informing behaviour (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005; Schein 2004). While the practice, study and understanding of public administration has evolved considerably over recent decades, the concept of 'public service values' remains fundamental to all aspects of government and administration. Reflecting this, Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007: 355) argue that 'there is no more important topic in public administration and policy than public values'.

Given the nature of the public service, identifying what values or sets of values are appropriate for public organisations is problematic, and not helped by the lack of research into how values are successfully translated into action. Despite almost universal recognition of the importance of values in organisational development, the study of values is hampered by its abstract nature and the theoretical problems posed by its analysis. Similarly, the study of public service values is one characterised by ambiguity, measurement difficulties and with competing and conflicting definitions and interpretations. Nonetheless, as all public service activities are value-based, identifying the nature of those values is worthy of assessment and this paper presents an analysis of public service values in an Irish context.

Public service organisations operate in environments subject to regular change and replete with competing demands and obligations. Process is as important as

outcomes and public trust is predicated on democratic values being represented at all stages in the decision-making process. In an environment of uncertainties, and which is subject to frequent structural and functional change, values provide a compass for guiding activities. If the work of the public service is not based on or driven by an appropriate set of values, it may lose the trust and respect of those who rely on it – the public. Different emphases may be placed on different values according to the administrative and political priorities at a given time, but adherence to a set of broadly coherent and accepted values is essential for stability and coherence (Toonen 2003: 470). As public administrators' values are developed through an interaction of self, situation and society, it is important that values are therefore periodically re-examined and challenged.

2.2 The re-emergence of values

Concern with values, standards and ethics in public life is not new. An emphasis on public service ethics that took root in Western states during the 1960s has been supplemented by a more recent concern with public service values. As demonstrated below, values and ethics have a close but distinctive relationship in policy making. Of relevance to this study, it is significant that many Whitehall-styled bureaucracies such as those of Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Britain have recently sought to review and restate public service values in the context of administrative reform and modernisation. In several cases, the requirement for restating values has also come about as a consequence of revelations of political and administrative corruption (Sherman 1998, Korac-Kakabadse et al 2000). Declining public trust in institutions of government internationally has also acted as a catalyst for re-establishing the primacy of public service values and as part of a 'back-to-basics' approach to governing.

Kernaghan (2003: 712) argues that a renewed emphasis on values is also driven by the trend to develop 'corporate culture' and the requisite concomitant need to clarify corporate values as a means to achieving corporate success. In public organisations the New Public Management (NPM) movement, which seeks the application of economic rationalism to the public service in an attempt to overcome its traditionally perceived failings, has also encouraged and engendered new value sets. On this matter, Christensen et al argue that that as the first 'wave' of structural reforms induced by the NPM movement ends, a new wave of cultural reforms is beginning, which emphasises the centrality of shared values (2007: 35- 6). These values are necessary to underpin reforms based on improving responsiveness and efficiency and, as later chapters detail, the extent to which new values replace rather than support existing values raises important questions in relation to performance and management.

While private firms require varying degrees of public trust according to their direct involvement with consumers and the public, public trust and confidence are integral to public institutions such as the civil service or the courts. Adherence to high-level public service values can generate substantial public trust and confidence. Conversely, weak application of values or promotion of inappropriate values can lead to reductions in these essential elements of democratic governance. It follows that a clear definition and public statement of values is a requisite of all public organisations, and the task of management is to ensure that planning and actions are conducted in the framework established by these values.

Defining values

3.1 Defining values

Like many other concepts in public administration theory, there is no universally accepted definition of values (or for that matter what values are appropriate to the public service). While values are germane to all aspects of public sector work and provide a framework for activities and decisions, the breadth and complexity of the subject has determined that it is not one subject to much systematic study. What comparative work exists is principally concerned with the identification of those values stated in public documents such as codes of conduct or ethics legislation. In their review of public administration periodicals from the United States, United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries over the period 1990-2003, Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007: 357) identified 230 articles that deal with the issue of what they term 'public values', but they note only two books on the issue (Frederickson 1997 and Van Wart 1998). By way of contrast, and reflecting a global concern over corruption and 'good governance', Ghere notes that 'government ethics research' is flourishing (2005: 2).

Defining a concept is normally assisted by identifying its etymological source. However, the source of values is an issue of considerable ongoing debate in ethical philosophy and is similarly contested in organisational theory. One school of thought proposes that values emerge and evolve gradually through natural processes over time. An alternative view is that values can be shaped by institutional design and change, and that conflicts between actors can cause new values to emerge. Whatever their origin or field of application, however, it is agreed that

values mould and inform behaviour. Thus they provide a foundation for the achievement of organisational objectives that cannot be achieved by simply steering according to those objectives alone, and are worthy of further consideration in the context of public service development.

The many interpretations of the term determine that identifying a robust definition of what is meant by values is no easy task. The Oxford English Dictionary refers to the 'principles or moral standards of a person or social group'. Using a definition from Rokeach (1973: 5), Kernaghan (2003: 711) defines values as those 'enduring beliefs that influence the choices we make among available means or ends'. The New Zealand State Services Commission defines values as 'essentially the link between the daily work of public servants and the broad aims of democratic government in New Zealand' (2001, p.1). However, values are not only concerned with resource allocation and decisions on public policy as these definitions might imply, but can also inform other features of organisation life such as HR policy and interpersonal employee relations.

A broader definition is offered by an OECD study (1996: 12) commissioned during a period of particular concern over issues of corruption and ethics in public life. It defined values as 'the individual principles or standards that guide judgement about what is good or proper'. While this is a more useful interpretation, it is proposed in this study that values are neutral in respect of their application i.e. while an organisation may list the values which it believes should be central to its work, this alone will not determine that the values are expressed and realised in all its activities. For example, having transparency as a value does not mean an organisation will conduct all its activities in a transparent manner.

Also, values are not always the same as standards, nor do they solely determine 'proper' or 'good' activities (which are normally ethical issues – see below). Instead, each value has its own characteristics and may influence behaviour in

different ways. Many, but not all, principles are values, and similarly many values are in fact qualities which organisations and individuals use to express the attributes associated with their work. Therefore, the definition of values to be used in this study is:

‘the individual principles or qualities that guide judgement and behaviour’.

3.2 Values and ethics

As a concept, values are often interchanged with ethics (and not infrequently also with standards), particularly in relation to addressing corruption or maladministration. While there is a close and often interdependent relationship between both, such interchanging is problematic for the study of either concept, and it is notable that in Canada, a distinction was drawn between both in the establishment of an Office for Public Service Values and Ethics in 1999¹. A similar distinction is necessary here. As noted above, values in and of themselves do not have agency i.e. they do not actually do anything. Instead it is the application of ethical codes to values that will lead to particular behaviour. Ethics, therefore, are in effect the rules that translate values into everyday life (adapted from OECD 1996, p. 12).

At its most basic, ethics is about determining what is ‘wrong’, ‘good’, ‘bad’ or ‘right’, and ethical choices are informed by values which help actors decide on what option to take when faced with an ethical dilemma (Kakabadse et al 2003, p.478). While the values of different bureaucracies may vary between states, similar ethical challenges are routinely met, particularly in respect of issues of resource management. It is because of conflicts between ethical and unethical behaviour that Codes (or Standards) of Conduct and rules of procedure have emerged in importance. They provide an aide or benchmark against which decisions can be made and acted upon.

In his work on changing public sector values, Van Wart argues that ethics are a sub-set of values, and that values form our broad, socially derived ethical standards for how the world should operate (1998: 163). Ethics, he proposes, is doing the right thing, that is, acting on values. Values inform all aspects of ethical decision-making – ethical judgment, ethical choice and ethical behaviour – and are reinforced by them. Similarly, Gortner proposes that ‘an understanding of the role of values in choices clarifies many of the issues related to ethics in public administration’ (2001: 509).

In the context of malpractices being exposed in multinational corporations, a range of corporate governance and legal requirements are now in place for the oversight and audit of such organisations. Many of these requirements have also been applied to public organisations. As well as the development of extensive rules and regulations guiding the activities of public and private organisations, there is a focus on the adoption of ethical values and work practices which encourage adherence to the spirit as well as the letter of these requirements.

Distinctions between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ values are misplaced, as how values are interpreted is in and of itself a value-based act. Therefore, by definition, values cannot be negative or positive – rather, how they are used to inform decisions and performance can be viewed from negative or positive viewpoints. For example, confidentiality as a value may be interpreted in a positive manner (provides for trust between an organisation and its customers) or negatively (it inhibits transparency). In a similar vein, not all values are ethical values (i.e. concerned with right and wrong), and values may be unethical or non-ethical (Kernaghan: 2003, p.711) as Table 1 demonstrates. Also, some ethical values, including fairness and honesty, are more germane to the public service than others.

Table 1: Interpreting Values

Types of Values	Examples		
<i>Ethical</i>	Fairness	Honesty	Impartiality
<i>Unethical</i>	Greed	Dishonesty	Nepotism
<i>Non-ethical</i>	Personal freedom	Happiness	Health

3.3 Ethos, conduct and principles

Apart from ethics, some other concepts emerge in discussions of values; most commonly conduct, ethos and principles. A brief comment on each is necessary here.

If values and ethics guide action, then conduct is understood as performance of the actual activities themselves. Conduct is also about the behaviour of individuals in particular situations and the decisions they make and act upon. As will be detailed below, Codes of Conduct are increasingly common in the public services.

Ethos is a collective term and shares common origins with ethics. However, while ethics is concerned with guiding judgement, an organisation's ethos is understood by looking at its character and the manner in which it performs its tasks. Ethos therefore comprises ideals as well as disposition.

Finally, principles are frequently interchanged with values and our definition of values above includes the term. However, while principles can also be values, not all values are principles. Principles represent fundamental beliefs which should not be transgressed, and statements of principles may contain many values (see for example the New Zealand Public Service Code of Conduct at Appendix A). Cooper defines principles as 'general law[s] or rule[s] that provide a guide for action' (2006: 22). Examples of principles might include justice, liberty or equality.

What are public service values?

4.1 Identifying public service values

Public servants are servants of the public, of government, of their immediate organisations and of the law. Their role is traditionally conceptualised as part of an interconnected structure existing alongside but outside of the private sphere. In Western society, the dominance of democratic theory means that it is assumed public servants share the values of wider society, whilst also recognising the need for representative government (Gortner 2001: 517). Though public servants perform a myriad of tasks and undertake a multitude of responsibilities, there are common elements to their work. In 1996, the UN adopted an 'International Code of Conduct for Public Officials' which opened with the following general principles:

1. A public office, as defined by national law, is a position of trust, implying a duty to act in the public interest. Therefore, the ultimate loyalty of public officials shall be to the public interests of their country as expressed through the democratic institutions of government.
2. Public officials shall ensure that they perform their duties and functions efficiently, effectively and with integrity, in accordance with laws or administrative policies. They shall at all times seek to ensure that public resources for which they are responsible are administered in the most effective and efficient manner.
3. Public officials shall be attentive, fair and impartial in the performance of their functions and, in particular, in their relations with the public. They shall at no time afford any undue preferential treatment to any group or individual or improperly discriminate against any group

or individual, or otherwise abuse the power and authority vested in them.

(United Nations 1996)

As Yoder and Cooper (2005) identify, this Code was in response to growing concern with corruption in government internationally, and represents an attempt to identify those values which are shared by public administrations through the lens of ethical principles. There are obvious constraints to attempts to prescribe values which public services should adopt, given the variety of historical, social and cultural forces at play in different parts of the world. However, within the EU, there are many shared values between public services in both Rechtstaat and common law traditions.

In most European states, public administrations were established to provide politically neutral and loyal service to governments. For the purposes of ensuring neutrality and loyalty, rules were formalised concerning such issues as impartiality, incorruptability, allegiance to the constitution, and obedience to the law (Demmke 2000: 86). In order to provide an environment in which these rules could be adhered to, public servants were offered security of tenure, a meritocratic career path and post-service remuneration. This arrangement has characterised the nature of public service up to and into the twenty-first century.

In line with the classic organisational form, the image of the public servant has traditionally been that of a 'bureaucrat' – an image which tends to be associated with conservatism, an absence of radicalism or even hierarchical control. The public servant's duties today remain many, complex and often seemingly contradictory, but successful public servants recognise their multiple roles and prepare for them. These include maintaining confidentiality, acting in the public interest, regulating, providing quality advice, adjudicating, avoiding conflicts of interest, ensuring accountability to a range of actors and treating all

colleagues equitably. In performing each of these tasks, public servants employ a range of values as a means to guide their behaviour and to assist them in steering a course through multiple requirements. The complexity of public service ensures that its value system is unique and specific to its work. Invariably, given that there are so many elements to it, the components of a value system often compete with one another. Therefore clarity over an organisation's values is essential and the appropriateness of a particular value-system is worthy of regular consideration in the context of changing expectations and functions.

Public servants play a critical role in the implementation of public policy and should understand the importance of values to all aspects of their work. Poor clarity or uncertainty about values can not only lead to ethical and decision-making dilemmas, but also affects organisational coherence by diminishing team spirit, creating organisational confusion and weak external communication. Public administrators are responsible not only for understanding the values implicit in the decisions they take, but also for articulating those values clearly for others in the organisation and for external clients (Van Wart 1998: 4). Such external clients may include not only citizens, but politicians and other stakeholder representatives.

Competing interpretations over what values are in fact 'core' to the public service reflect an ongoing debate over the role of the public service in a democracy. A belief that the public service exists to serve the government places an emphasis on particular values such as (political) neutrality and loyalty, whereas viewing the service as holders of the 'public interest' implies greater emphasis on fairness, transparency and impartiality. Given the various tasks performed by bureaucracies, and the varying levels of direct contact with the public, different values will also apply to different parts of the public service (Sherman 1998: 15-6).

Also, the concept of the public service as a single employer is no longer valid as tailored performance management schemes are created for different elements of the public sector and HR responsibilities are decentralised².

While 'global' public service values exist, 'local' values may be adopted according to the type of function and environment in which public servants operate. For example, a distinction may be made between technical, regulatory and administrative tasks, or between those parts of bureaucracy in direct contact with the public and those which are not. Similarly, values that are 'local' to a particular part of the service may occasionally come into conflict with the more common service-wide values. This can also occur in the context of individual or functional parts of the service moving between departments or even between divisions within a department.

Identifying appropriate value sets and knowing when to promote or prioritise particular values over others is a challenge faced by managers in all organisations, as is understanding the multiple motivations of employees. In their study of 'corporate virtue', Osterloh and Frey (2004) make a distinction between the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of employees to perform their work. The principal extrinsic motivation is monetary compensation, which dominates economic theory and analysis and which involves adherence to a particular set of values. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is premised on a different range of values and is essential when extrinsic motivations cease to influence employee contribution to the objectives of the firm. Intrinsic motivation is arguably more powerful than its extrinsic counterpart, as norm-violators are more likely to be shamed for free-riding, than if their motivation was purely extrinsic. The relationship is dynamic, they argue, and it is possible for extrinsic motivations to undermine intrinsic ones. For example, an over-emphasis on financial compensation and performance-based rewards can reduce voluntary commitment to the organisation and

its work. Similarly, an overemphasis on control through such means as monitoring and sanctioning (as favoured by principal-agent theorists), pay-for-performance, and corporate control by takeovers can reduce motivation and induce the opposite effect to that desired.

When compared with their private sector counterparts, public service organisations are more remarkable for their shared values rather than the variety of value sets within them. Indeed, a defining value of public service in Anglo-American democracies has been the ability to promote a sense of equity and fairness (Savoie: 2003: 264). Nonetheless, variety does exist and different emphases may be placed on individual values according to necessity. For example, a Department dealing directly with the public might place particular emphasis on the values of equity and transparency. However, other Departments might prioritise efficiency and effectiveness as their core values. Similarly, different values may apply to different parts of the public service – for example between the civil service and local government systems³. This is reflected in the fact that different Codes of Conduct exist within the public service – albeit with many shared themes and values.

In the absence of any systemic surveys of data-gathering, literature reviews have been the best tool for identifying those values which are viewed as germane to the public service. For example, a review of public sector codes and guidelines by Sherman (1998: 15) revealed the following values to be the most common:

- honesty and integrity
- impartiality
- respect for the law
- respect for persons
- diligence
- economy and effectiveness
- responsiveness
- accountability.

Similarly, in a cross-national study of ethics measures, the OECD identified impartiality, legality and integrity as the most frequently stated core public service values (2000: 12). While some of the most commonly expressed public service values are also found in other non-public organisations, public service organisations normally employ a range of values that set them apart from profit-seeking businesses. For example, in an article on corporate values, Webley points to a 1991 survey that identified five 'top priority values' for corporate managers: people, competitiveness, customers, quality and productivity. The two lowest ranking were social responsibility and short-term profitability⁴ (1999: 176).

4.2 Categorising public service values

In order to better conceptualise and contrast values, they are frequently grouped rather than treated on an individual basis. Arguably, this 'grouping' of values reflects not only the growing expectations on public services, but also recognition of how different elements and tasks within the public service require value-sets that may not be suitable to others. For example, the American Society for Public Administration identifies five sources for public administrators' values: personal values, professional values, organisational values, legal values and public interest values (Van Wart: 1998, pp.8-25). In a similar vein, using work based on values in the Canadian public service⁵, Kernaghan (2003, p.712) identifies four categories of public service values (see also Appendix A), as Table 1 describes:

Table 1: Categories of Public Service Values

Ethical	Democratic	Professional	People
Integrity	Rule of law	Effectiveness	Caring
Fairness	Neutrality	Efficiency	Fairness
Accountability	Accountability	Service	Tolerance
Loyalty	Loyalty	Leadership	Decency
Excellence	Openness	Excellence	Compassion
Respect	Responsiveness	Innovation	Courage
Honesty	Representativeness	Quality	Benevolence
Probity	Legality	Creativity	Humanity

Many values are common to more than one category (such as fairness, accountability, loyalty and excellence), and value conflicts can occur when similar values are applied in different contexts. By categorising the values, public servants are provided with a framework that reflects their varied duties and responsibilities. In a similar exercise for academic research, and building on work by Hood (1991), Toonen (2003) identifies three 'families' around which core values in public administration are situated:

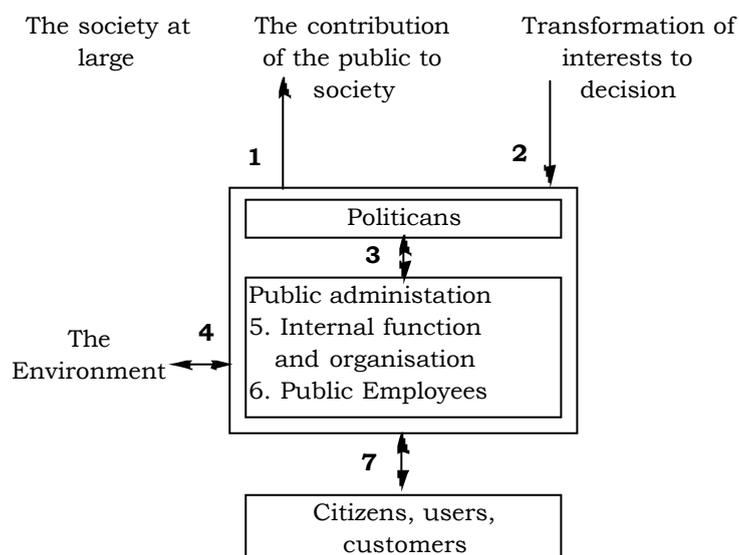
Parsimony and economy: Values in this family are concerned with ensuring optimal and efficient use of resources, and are at the core of public management as viewed from a financial perspective.

Fairness, equity and rectitude: These values are concerned with honesty and the development of public trust in government.

Robustness, resilience and sustainability: These values are concerned with ensuring that public administration and government are strong in the face of various pressures, but are flexible enough to learn and adapt to changing circumstances in order to maintain public confidence.

The most recent analysis of literature on ‘public values’ by Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) identified seventy-two such values informing the social and organisational environment of public servants. They clustered these values according to the relationships set out in Figure 1 below

Figure 1: Structure of the Public Values Universe (adapted from Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007: 359)



The categories and values required for each are as follows:

General social values

1. Public sector's contribution to society: common good, altruism, sustainability, regime dignity
2. Transformation of interests to decisions: majority rule, user democracy, protection of minorities

3. Relationship between public administrators and politicians: political loyalty
4. Relationship between public administrators and their environment: openness-secrecy, advocacy-neutrality, competitiveness-co-operativeness*

Organisational values

5. Intra-organisational aspects of public administration: robustness, innovation, productivity, self-development of employees
6. Behaviour of public sector employees: accountability
7. Relationship between public administration and the citizens: legality, equity, dialogue, user orientation

*These three represent value-scales rather than individual values

The categorisation of values serves to provide a more coherent and comprehensible basis for public servants to understand the context for their work and professional relationships in an ever-changing environment. The academic treatment of values by category also demonstrates the many interpretations and applications of values within public management, as well as the widening range of values evident in public administration. In this context, value conflicts and challenges to existing value sets are increasingly common, and are considered in the following chapter.

Value conflicts and challenges to values

5.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter demonstrated that categorising values provides for easier conceptualisation of their role and origins, the nature of public service and the multiple tasks of public servants will inevitably result in value conflicts. Also, in the context of greater fluidity between the public and non-public spheres, traditional values are challenged and/or complemented by other value sets. In this chapter, drawing on international evidence, value conflicts and challenges to public service values are considered.

5.2 Value conflicts

The environment in which the public service operates is a constantly changing one – current dynamics of change include new technologies, growing and changing public expectations, demographic changes and the effects of economic and social globalisation. As Demmke (2004: 1) identifies, public policy is delivered through a multitude of ‘complex networks, decentralised governance structures, public-private partnerships, and cooperative ventures between NGOs, consultants and Government’. In this environment economic, political and social values can come into conflict with the professional values of the public administrator. Values can also differ within public service organisations, and one of the principal tasks of managers is to co-ordinate or reconcile differing values between individuals or between parts of an organisation.

Kreitner and Kinicki (2005: 191-2) propose that there are three different types of value conflict. Intrapersonal value conflicts occur within the individual when he or she

is faced with competing personal values. Interpersonal value conflicts occur between individuals with different ambitions and goals. Finally, individual-organisational value conflicts occur when the values employed by an organisation are at variance with the personal values of an employee. They propose that while intrapersonal value conflicts require an almost exclusively personal self-assessment of work priorities, interpersonal and individual-organisational value conflicts can be resolved through the provision of clear value statements and the motivating capacity of 'value-centred leaders'. Considerable resources are often spent by organisations attempting to achieve harmony between the embedded personal values of staff and the values publicly professed by the organisation.

In his classic work on administrative ethics, Cooper argues that the role of the 'responsible administrator' is being accountable for conduct to relevant others whilst also acting in a manner that is consistent with the professional values that underpin the role of guardian of the public good. He also notes that the most common conflicts of responsibility faced by administrators are conflicts of authority, role conflicts and conflicts of interest (2006: 6). In this context, the requirement on public services to clearly articulate and uphold common core values becomes even more imperative, yet the drivers for change can make this even more difficult if not properly managed. For example, in a bureaucracy based on meritocracy, how can succession planning be developed? Similarly, is risk-taking possible in an environment where financial probity and effective use of resources is also expected? Do the professional loyalties of specialist grades in the public service conflict with the values demanded by the generic public service values?

Reflecting on the emergence of 'new' values in local government, Newman (1996: 153) argues that two of the most prominent value conflicts have been between efficiency and equity, and cooperation and competition. The former emerges in the context of demands for greater

cost-cutting while simultaneously being a good employer and providing quality services for all. The latter refers to the challenges faced by local authorities in an environment where they are expected to emulate the 'competitive edge' of private sector firms, yet co-operate and engage meaningfully with a wide variety of stakeholders across a range of service areas.

Dealing with any policy issue involves values and value judgements. Van Wart (1998: 163) argues that there is no such thing as a value-free decision and this makes it all the more important that public administrators fully understand the values they use when making decisions. Given the increasing range of demands on the public service, as well as the frequent ambiguity in terms of goals, relationships and responsibilities, value conflicts or 'clashes' are not therefore unusual. These clashes can occur in relation to issues such as:

- tensions between the need for control and the need for discretion
- tensions between the needs of different stakeholders
- the requirement to provide efficient and effective service within budget and to respond to growing public expectations
- the tension between adapting to changing circumstances and the need to maintain existing standards .

(adapted from Lawton 1998: 147)

Similarly, Korac-Kakabadse et al (2000) also identify some of the conflicting requirements faced by public servants which lead to value conflicts:

Free market economy	versus	Accountability
Freedom of information	versus	Privacy
Public sector codes	versus	Ministerial discretion
Public servan	versus	Political servant
Information sharing	versus	Confidentiality

For example, if a civil servant believes a policy to be misguided, he or she may have to reconcile their loyalty to their minister with their duty to serve the public interest, however defined. Similarly, while public servants are encouraged to treat all citizens impartially, fairly and equally, demands for effective use of resources and efficiency necessitates a prioritising of different value paradigms. Value dilemmas can only be resolved through the use of ethical standards or frameworks.

In a discussion paper by the Canadian Task Force on Values and Ethics in the Public Service (Privy Council Office of Canada, 1996), a distinction was made between public servants 'managing up' and 'managing down'. Managing up refers to the concerns of public servants in meeting the demands of their superiors, both political and administrative. While managing up ensures that the requirements of democratic government are met, it can often be at the expense of managing down, which is concerned with the implementation of programmes, customer satisfaction, internal management and financial resources. The Task Force found that middle and lower levels of the public service did not feel that they shared the values of the more senior levels. It was argued that those dealing with the public directly feel their primary accountability to citizens/customers while senior bureaucrats identified with accountability to the taxpayer via the political process (p.57).

Value conflicts are inevitable, particularly in organisations performing multiple tasks and with a range of stakeholders. Rather than an impediment to progress, however, conflict can enhance the quality of decision making through problem identification and deliberation. The challenge for public servants is to cope with and manage conflict and simultaneously make decisions based on the appropriate value-set. For many public servants, managing conflict is something learned 'on the job', but training can assist in the process of prioritising values in times of crises or difficulty.

5.3 Challenges to values

While value conflicts occur in all fields and at all levels of the public service, there are specific challenges to contemporary public service values which are considered here. They arise in the context of:

- new modes of governance
- market-based reforms
- politicisation
- agencification
- decentralisation/relocation
- changes in HRM and recruitment
- ICT.

New modes of governance

New methods of interaction between the state and those affected by public policy – often referred to as a shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance’ – present challenges for value systems. Traditional Weberian notions of government – hierarchy of authority, meritocracy, impersonality – have been swept aside by growing relationships between public, private, public-private and non-profit sector interactions (Demmke 2004: 51). Decision making and implementation is not the preserve of the public sphere and networks have emerged as means of ensuring control, accountability and regulation. It may be argued that this fragmentation of authority stretches the capacity or applicability of value-systems which were created in the context of a single-unified structure.

The expansion in public-private partnerships (PPPs) provides a useful example of such developments. While government contracting with the private sector is not new, the emergence of public-private partnerships as a form of policy implementation and service delivery is. PPPs present new challenges in terms of contract specification, accountability arrangements and governance mechanisms. They also raise questions concerning the compatibility of

values held by different actors in such arrangements. This development is an international one and Savoie argues that it is not clear how basic public service values fit in a new model of governance which sees greater involvement of non-government actors (such as consultants) in policy making (2003: 254). The management and use of information generated within the public service by non-public actors also emerges as a key issue in such arrangements.

Market-based reforms

As has been well documented, over the last number of decades public administrations in the developed world have been encouraged on the basis of economic rationalism to adopt more market-like practices. The ensuing reform programmes based on New Public Management (NPM) have encouraged a clear separation of policy from operation and the slimming down of the state in favour of greater private and third-sector involvement. As well as reforming institutions and processes, this transformation has involved rethinking values (and norms) and in many cases the adoption of new value systems (Bozeman 2007). In some cases, the transformation has been quite radical, involving value shifts that have been criticised for undermining public service loyalty and integrity (Kakabadse et al 2003: 477).

Given the unique nature of public service, there are clearly limits to how far public service managers can be expected to emulate their private sector counterparts. For example, certain practices common to the private sector (such as offering gifts or hospitality) would not be regarded as appropriate use of public funds were it to occur in the public service. When it comes to different value systems, many commercial state-owned enterprises routinely experience difficulties operating within a competitive market environment but with requirements to fulfil certain public duties.

If reform is a narrative interpreted through tradition, the values necessary to successfully implement public service reform must be cognisant of existing value sets. Systems of public administration tend to have deep historical roots and traditions and are slow to reform. On this matter, Christensen and Laegrid repeat the views of Brunnsen and Olsen when they propose that ‘the greater the consistency between the values underlying the reforms and the values on which the existing administrative system is based, the more likely the reforms are to be successful’ (2007: 5). Similarly, Boyle and Humphreys (2001: 55) draw attention to OECD analyses which indicate that public service reform programmes can contribute to ‘irregular behaviour’ by undermining but not replacing existing value systems.

Traditional public service values have been discussed above, but their position is now challenged by a desire for public servants to become public ‘managers’. The prominence of managerial concepts in reform of the public service has been possible through the championing of new sets of values. Commenting on this phenomenon, Horton notes the difficulties presented by NPM-styled reforms and their emphasis on values such as ‘productivity, efficiency, risk taking, independence and accountability’, which, she argues, can often be in conflict with ‘traditional Weberian values of procedural correctness, equality of treatment, risk avoidance and strict adherence to rules and regulations’ (2006: 538).

Also, reform programmes initiated for the purpose of improving the responsiveness and coherence of public services frequently call for greater levels of service ‘sharing’ between similar (e.g. local authorities) or different parts (e.g. state agencies and regional authorities) of the public service⁶. The extent to which different public organisations share common values is a central question in this context. If sufficient variation between the respective organisations’ value sets exists, achieving shared values becomes a prerequisite for attaining the objectives of shared services

or even a form of governance through which shared services are delivered.

Politicisation

As noted above, public servants are expected to be loyal to a variety of agents – politicians, colleagues and the public. However, these loyalties may on occasion conflict, and the politicisation of civil services internationally raises important questions concerning the application of values. This is borne out in the Australian context by evidence from focus-group research with public servants (Stewart: 2007). Commenting on the Canadian experience, Savoie also argues that in the midst of public sector reforms, efforts

...to make career officials more responsive to politicians and outside forces on policy have moved government operations away from delivering programs uniformly. Many observers have also in recent years confused responsiveness to clients or consumers with political accountability (2003: 264).

In other words, public servants may find themselves serving the purposes of political expediency rather than the public good.

Also, political demands for greater ethical standards in government and administration, combined with a greater focus on professional integrity within the public service, have also reasserted the issue of values. Political expectations of appropriate conduct among bureaucrats have also been a stimulus for the codification of standards of conduct and the development of values-based public management.

Agencification

The development of new public service bodies or ‘agencies’ presents challenges for the transfer of public service values.

While a Department may place particular emphasis on certain values, it is not axiomatic that bodies under its aegis will faithfully and similarly promote them. Addressing this issue in a speech to Chief Executives of State Agencies, the then Taoiseach, Bertie Aherne TD, noted that while the public service was undergoing significant changes

...we must hold on to something of the core values of public service, such as integrity, impartiality, diligence and commitment. If they are lost, it will be too late and too difficult to get them back. I believe that shared values are important as the 'glue' which helps to hold the system together – perhaps even more so in State Agencies which have widely different remits and structures. (Ahern 2005)

Many agencies have unique arrangements in terms of HR, policy and financial autonomy (Verhoest et al: 2004) and can develop their own sets of values in line with the tasks expected of them. Christensen et al (2007) suggest that values become contextualised as the public service fragments (principally through agencification), and note the complexity brought about by the co-existence of standard values alongside agency-specific values. Thus, ensuring value alignment between agencies and parent bodies has become a major preoccupation of governments. In addressing this issue in Australia, the 1999 Public Service Act codifies the values expected of the public services generally, and 'agency heads'⁷ are required to 'uphold and promote' those values.

Decentralisation/relocation

Issues similar to those raised in the context of agencification also occur in respect of decentralisation or the physical relocation of offices. An obvious concern would be that decentralised offices develop sub-cultures and

values that are in conflict with the Department's (or even public service) values. The fact that many key functions such as remuneration policy remain largely centralised provides an initial counterweight to potential value conflicts in this respect. Nonetheless, ensuring that the relationship between decentralised offices and their department is one based on shared and reinforced values requires particular attention.

As formal and informal communication with colleagues in a shared working environment is frequently identified as a key method for the transmission of values, decentralisation requires compensatory mechanisms to ensure a process of sharing and learning values. In their study of the governance challenge and opportunities presented by decentralisation, Humphreys and O'Donnell reflect this, arguing that a 'more geographically dispersed civil service needs to be balanced by sufficiently strong common values and culture to support effective system-wide co-operation and decision making' (2006, p. 23). They suggest that rather than undermining shared values, decentralisation offers an opportunity for reasserting and strengthening them across the public service, particularly in the context of a 'considerably more geographically complex and younger service of the future' (2006: 35). Methods of managing values within the context of decentralisation/relocation are considered below.

Changes in HRM and recruitment

With increased recruitment from the private sector, the inculcation of public service values normally provided through exposure over time to those values is challenged. The shift in public services internationally away from being systems-driven organisations towards people-based ones also has implications for organisational values. HRM activities such as promotion and the distribution of rewards play a particularly important role in inculcating values, as they are directly experienced by public servants and will

strongly influence their subsequent behaviour. For example, for the vast majority of public servants, their first experience of the public service was recruitment based on merit. If public servants believe that promotion for others is not based on merit but seniority, their adherence to merit as a value diminishes as a consequence. Also, processes of internal promotion and reward reflect the values in an organisation. Identifying who is suitable for promotion and selecting them sends out signals to other staff concerning what is valued by the organisation.

ICT

Finally, greater use of information and communications technology has allowed easier information sharing and the swift transfer of large volumes of information. This poses difficulties for the ability of the public service to maintain confidentiality, particularly in the context of an increased number of actors in the policy-making sphere, as discussed above.

The discussion above demonstrates the many ways in which public service values are challenged by contemporary reforms and modernisation initiatives. In order to ensure the maintenance of key shared value sets, methods for instilling values become increasingly important. Before considering this, the next chapter identifies those values of relevance to the Irish public service.

Values in the Irish public service

The values espoused by an organisation's leadership or its publications (including codes of conduct) do not necessarily reflect the actual values informing the everyday work of that organisation. If they did, many corporate failures and fiascos would not occur. In this section, the values of the Irish public service are examined using secondary and primary evidence. Drawing on feedback from workshops with senior public servants from the civil service and local government sectors, the issues of existing public service values, their development, changes in relation to values and the values necessary to underpin the future work of the public service are considered.

6.1 Values expressed in official and secondary publications

The formidable work undertaken by the Public Service Organisation Review Group during 1966-69 did not venture into the field of values, instead concerning itself with issues of management, control and co-ordination. However, a summary of the report did state that since its establishment, the civil service had worked with 'reasonable efficiency' and that it operates 'impartially'. It also noted that

...it has tried as best it could within the framework of its organisation and resources to promote the development of the nation; it has given its advice to Ministers fairly and honestly and, when given the final decisions of the Government, it has implemented them without reservation (1970: 72).

While the report did commend the 'honesty and loyalty' of civil servants (p.73), it also identified as a weakness

impediments caused by 'artificial barriers of class' and deference to seniority (p.75-6).

In his seminal work on the Irish administrative system, Barrington (1980: 98) lamented that

The neglect, over large areas of the public service, of the skills of management, and the existence of long hierarchies stretching into clouds of unknowing, accentuate the impersonality of the whole and make little or no provision for personal leadership and charisma.

He also argued that public servants should be 'strictly honest' and 'in their private and their official lives leave no reasonable ground for suspicion that they are motivated by anything other than the public interest'. They should also 'be careful to ensure that no question of a conflict of interest between their public duty and their private activities can arise' (pp.101-2). Noting earlier work by O'Doherty (1958), Barrington proposes that the 'special moral quality associated with the public service is that of justice' (p.102). He also notes political impartiality as part of public service in Ireland.

Writing on the establishment and early decades of the Irish civil service, Chubb (1990: 263) identified some 'basic characteristics' that were retained from the parent British civil service system. He argues that for various historical and cultural reasons, it was 'only natural that the civil service should remain an incorruptible, non-partisan, and usually anonymous corps'. He went on: 'it was also natural that they should tend to conservative austerity with regard to the functions of the state and to their role in public business'.

In setting out its objectives and strategy for modernisation of the civil service, the 1996 Delivering Better Government (Department of The Taoiseach, 1996) initiative makes passing comment on values. It refers to '...the core public service values of equity and integrity' and notes that the changes proposed in DBG

...will build on the existing values of the Civil Service while adding new characteristics of the kind being adopted by the most effective public service organisations in other countries. In order to deliver the greater professionalism, the openness and flexibility, the quality and 'customer' orientation and the results and outcomes focus required, significant change must take place (1996).

It also proposed that the programme of reform should have as its vision a civil service that is 'a high performance, open and flexible organisation operating to the highest standards of integrity, equity, impartiality and accountability'.

As noted above, values may also be construed negatively. Writing on his experiences in the civil service, Murray notes that the 'culture of clientelism', which he viewed as pervading the political sphere, inevitably permeated into the public service and presumably affected the fair distribution of resources (1990: 93). More recently, in their analysis of the Irish civil service, Dooney and O'Toole (1998: 138) identify the 'principle' of accountability (and in particular ministerial accountability to parliament) as a major determinant of the manner in which the service operates. The requirement of accountability, they propose, ensures an 'overriding emphasis on equity and impartiality' in the service. They also note that integrity, confidentiality and political neutrality are key features of the service (p.143-4). In commenting that much of the civil service's work is non-commercial, they also draw attention to the fact that, traditionally, efficiency and effectiveness had 'not been the dominant factor in determining the flow of funds', but also proposed that, at time of their writing, this situation was changing (p.139). In terms of promotion, meritocracy is identified as an 'accepted...principle' (p.147).

Whilst documenting many (mainly political) incidents of corruption and concluding that it is an institutional, as

opposed to systemic, phenomenon in Ireland, Collins and O'Shea note that the 'recruitment and promotion procedures of the Irish public service are formally and rigorously meritocratic' (2000: 69). They also identify that 'traditionally the civil service has stressed equity, impartiality and integrity as their key assets'.

Compared with many other European states, Ireland is unusual in that its public service values are not prescribed in either the Constitution or in law. Instead, circulars from the Minister for Finance (as provided for under the 1956 Civil Service Regulation Act) provide the legal framework for Irish public service values. Codes of conduct and behaviour now exist for many sectors of the public service, including the civil service and local government sectors. Drawing on these and other sources, an OECD cross-national study (2000: 186) identified the 'core values' of the Irish public service as:

- impartiality
- political neutrality
- recruitment and promotion based on merit
- proper disclosure of information
- sympathetic, efficient and courteous dealings with the public
- efficiency and diligence in work
- avoidance of the use of improper influence
- avoidance of conflict of interest.

In fact this list contains several statements of principles as well as values. As noted above, the blurring of lines between values and principles is common in codified statements on standards and conduct.

The launch of the public service modernisation agenda – the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) – saw many market-based ideas and related values emerge in the language and work practices of the public service. A review

of the SMI published in 2002 noted that the programme of reform for the civil service – Delivering Better Government – had

...envisaged a more performance and customer oriented culture taking hold within the civil service. These represented new values to be added to more traditional ones such as equality, consistency, fairness, transparency and propriety in dealings with staff and customers (PA Consulting 2002: 17-18).

As well as the outward focused values, the report also noted the value changes required to underpin new HR management practices, noting that legislative changes needed to be supplemented by local ‘people management’ skills.

This reflects the complexity of a devolution process that is aimed at fundamentally changing behaviour while retaining core values of consistency and fairness in managing the relationship with staff (PA Consulting 2002: 58).

While the report was not commissioned to explicitly consider values in the context of the reform programme, in its final chapter on ‘challenges, restraints and recommendations’, it considers the importance of values for the development of the programme. As discussed in Chapter 5 above, market-based reform programmes are normally based on values sets which challenge established and traditional public service ones. The relevant sections of the PA report are worth quoting at length in this context.

One factor which is implicit in the earlier chapters of this report, but which has not yet been directly addressed, is the extent to which the particular culture and values of the civil service itself can influence the capacity for organisational change. There is much that is good in this culture and in the values it reflects. It should be remembered that it was not the purpose of

SMI/DBG to change or to undermine these values in any way. This organisational culture is visible in features such as equality and consistency in the treatment of staff, a sense of propriety and due process in the treatment of staff and customers, stability and permanency of tenure in relation to employment, and a sense of fairness and transparency in the conduct of business. Within the context of a highly organised labour environment, these values also sustain a sense that the interest and well being of staff remain of central importance.

Many of these values are understood to inhere within the structures of the 'unified civil service'. It is frequently argued therefore that even if this unified structure can on occasion be unwieldy and cumbersome, attempts to modify the structure in any way must be able to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness benefits in excess of any values displaced. Equally however it may be observed that efforts to introduce a greater flexibility into civil service structures are not necessarily at odds with these values. Nevertheless, this is a challenge for the modernisation programme as it attempts to refine the shape and structure of a flexible and high-performance civil service in an increasingly complex external environment.

Other features of organisational culture relate to the extent to which traditional values such as order, stability, and consistency can limit a capacity for innovation. Risk-aversion is a frequently quoted attribute of all public service bureaucracies. Much of the time, this is an entirely reasonable feature of a system where customers are entitled to expect unfaltering horizontal equity in decision-making. The capacity – and even the necessity – for process innovation by individuals can be eliminated from any

system by years of compliance with prescribed operating procedures. In such circumstances, values such as caution, mistake avoidance, and an adherence to procedure can appear more important than individual success-seeking behaviours. Consequently, even in cases where individual innovators make it to the top of the organisation, they may find that their appetite for change is not always shared by their colleagues in middle and senior management.

The question arises however as to whether these values of caution, mistake avoidance, and an unfaltering adherence to procedure, are congruent in all respects with the more managerial tone of SMI/DBG. To comment on risk-aversion is not to suggest that the civil service should become risk-seeking. But it does open the question as to whether a dynamic and high-performance civil service can avoid risk to quite the same extent (PA Consulting 2002: 99-100).

Expanding on the values espoused in *Delivering Better Government*, the Irish Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour published in 2004 opens with a mission statement stating that the work of the civil service is based on 'principles of integrity, impartiality, effectiveness, equity and accountability' (p.2). It also identifies the 'traditional values of the public service [as] honesty, impartiality and integrity' (p.5). The code recognises the need to restate core public service values in order to 'marry the best of the old with the new' (p.5). It further details various 'standards' expected of civil servants in relation to service delivery, behaviour within the workplace, and in relation to matters of personal integrity such as conflicts of interest, receipt of gifts and outside employment.

Apart from the civil service, other parts of the public service have directly addressed the issue of values in the context of their ongoing development and reforms. For example, the Code of Conduct for Local Authority

Employees, also published in 2004, states that the traditional core values of local authorities are 'honesty, impartiality, integrity and serving the common good' (p.3). 'Performance' is also recognised as a value in subsequent pages (p.4). As per its civil service counter part, this code enters into considerable detail on conflicts of interest (particularly in relation to planning issues), receipt of gifts and hospitality, and outside employment.

The growing recognition of values as an integral element of a reform agenda in the public service is reflected in a recent report by the new Garda Inspectorate in 2007. It appeals for much greater emphasis on the role of values in day-to-day policing work:

...as part of the change process, more attention must be given to the values of the Garda Síochána so that all employees know them, embrace them and put them into effect in their daily work. While the values published in the Garda Corporate Strategy are certainly on target, simplifying the language will make them easier to communicate and understand. For instance, the simple words 'respect, courtesy, integrity and human rights' would sum up the most important organisational values. It may be a cliché but everybody in the Garda Síochána must 'walk the talk.' Every interaction with every member of the public and every Garda policy, practice and procedure should be informed by the values (Garda Inspectorate 2007: 6).

Finally, in its mission statement, the Commission for Public Service Appointments, (on which falls a particular responsibility for the upholding of public service values) identifies its role as being

...to support the provision of excellent public services by fostering a flexible public appointments process which upholds the principles of probity, merit, equity and fairness in recruitment and selection and related services.

The content analysis undertaken above demonstrates that there appears to be reasonable consistency between those values traditionally championed for the public service in official documents and those practised, according to informed commentators. However, it remains the case that values and their application has not been the subject of systematic study, either in the context of social and economic change or of recent public service reform initiatives based on market principles. For organisational reforms to be successful it is necessary that they are underpinned by appropriate values. Therefore a more detailed examination of what values now exist in the Irish civil service and local government sectors is necessary.

6.2 Contemporary values in the Irish civil service

The Irish civil service is one of the most trusted public institutions in the state. The Irish Social and Political Attitudes Survey (ISPAS) survey of 2002 noted that 50 per cent of survey respondents had 'high trust' and 39 per cent 'medium trust' in it, figures that were higher than those for the courts and government (Garry 2002: 65). High levels of trust can be maintained through adherence and communication of shared values. The question that arises is what are the values inherent to the Irish public service which distinguish it not only from the market or 'third'/NGO sector, but also from bureaucracies in other jurisdictions.

In order to probe further the issue of contemporary values in the public service, a series of workshops with senior personnel from the civil service and local government sectors respectively was convened to identify and analyse key issues, principally:

- the values that inform the work and activities of the civil service/local government
- how values are developed and transmitted in the civil service/local government

- whether or not value sets were changing and if so, what the drivers of change were
- the values necessary for the future work of the civil service/local government sectors⁸.

6.2.1 Current values

The feedback from the workshops covered a broad range of values, principles and ethics for each sector. In relation to the first issue, concerning the values which inform the work and activities of the civil service and local government, many different values were discussed. The most common responses from each workshop are reproduced in Table 6.1. below (in random order) and demonstrate both similarities and differences between sectors.

Table 6.1: Most commonly identified values

What values inform the work and activities...		
...of the civil service		...of local government
Workshop I	Workshop II	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty • Impartiality • Integrity • Fairness • Loyalty • Quality Service • Collegiality • Flexibility • Commitment to the citizen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty • Impartiality • Integrity • Fairness • Accountability • Legality • Neutrality • Speed (of service delivery) • Value for Money • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty • Impartiality • Integrity • Fairness • Accountability • Legality • Neutrality • Loyalty (to local area) • Equity • Public Value • Reputation

Unsurprisingly, all workshops identified and agreed that the 'traditional' public service values featured in their work and the work of their organisations. The civil service workshop II and the local government workshop both

placed particular emphasis on ‘accountability’ and how it was now the pre-eminent value of public service work. It was also suggested that there was greater emphasis on ‘defensive’ values in response to various external pressures on the public service.

In the civil service workshops, as well as the traditional value sets, other values emerged that resonate with public management reform programmes. These included flexibility, value for money (effectiveness) and speed of service delivery (efficiency). Civil service workshop I also discussed values in an international comparative context, and participants who had engaged with bureaucracies in other EU states presented their views on what they saw as defining values and characteristics of the Irish civil service. In response, it was noted that the generalist nature of the Irish civil service provided for greater collegiality and shared values, as well as flexibility in terms of moving between Departments and policy areas during a career. Also, the Irish civil service was viewed as being comparatively egalitarian with a ‘flatter’ structure than other bureaucracies. Finally, informality and an ability to network were also identified as defining features of the service.

The workshop for local authorities also identified values particular to local government. It was suggested that local authorities place particular emphasis on their jurisdiction or locality, and that the values of loyalty and reputation are construed in this context.

6.2.2 Developing values

Turning to the issue of how values are developed and transmitted in the public service, again some common themes emerge as Table 6.2 demonstrates.

In all workshops, it was agreed that values were developed and transmitted ‘on the job’, and that the cultural norms of the workplace and day-to-day contact and communication with colleagues were instrumental in developing value sets. Also, informal methods were

Table 6.2: Developing values

How are values developed and transmitted ...		
...in the civil service		...in local government
Workshop I*	Workshop II	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social/cultural norms • Personal values • Contact with colleagues • Corporate culture/ethos of organisation • Legislation and legislative changes • Politicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned through 'osmosis' • Codes of Conduct/Rules/Procedures • Line Managers • Legislation • External monitors/oversight bodies • Politicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Values • Work environment • Leaders/Managers • Line managers • Through 'osmosis' • Informal methods • Induction courses • Formal methods (e.g. corporate plan) • Internal communications

* In this workshop, participants were asked their views on the 'origins of values' and not their development and transmission per se. However, the discussion did consider the issues of values development and transmission.

considered to be as, if not more, important for the transmission of values within the public service. Values were not learned overnight but rather through a process of 'osmosis' as individual public servants develop their careers. While some public service organisations provided induction courses for new staff, the issue of values was not specifically dealt with. In two of the three workshops particularly strong emphasis was placed on the role of line managers (and not senior managers) in the transmission of values. The emergence of management teams in local authorities in recent years was recognised, and it was suggested that these teams played an important role in respect of values. It was also suggested that values could be learned in a 'negative' fashion, for example an employee being reprimanded for his or her actions.

In the workshop discussions it was noted that new recruits to the public service were more likely to question authority and existing values, and were also more receptive to change. Also, recruits to the more senior levels brought with them values learned in non-public service organisations. It was also suggested that variation in the type of work undertaken by different parts of the public service had a bearing on how values were learned. For example, many parts of the public service which had direct contact with the public had codified rules and procedures, and these shaped the values of staff working with them. Similarly, for senior public servants, contact with politicians (at local and national) level influenced their values. Precedent and tradition were also identified as informing the culture and values of an organisation.

6.2.3 Changing values

On the issue of changing values, workshop participants were asked to comment on whether or not values were changing in the public service, and if so, what the drivers for change were. Overall, while the workshops reflected a strong view that the public service retained a unique set of values that had traditionally characterised its work, there was also recognition that the 'pecking order' of values had changed due to a variety of factors. As noted above, participants identified a greater emphasis on those values associated with public sector reform, including efficiency, flexibility and particularly accountability. It was also suggested that the demand for ever-speedier responses to issues also placed pressure on the ability of the service to ensure the 'super-accuracy' with which it is traditionally associated.

When asked what the drivers for changes in values were, a wide variety of issues arose and again distinctions between the civil service and local government sectors can be identified. Changes in Irish society had resulted in greater demands and expectation on public services. This

had also been reinforced through a variety of EU and domestic legislative developments which required new approaches to such issues as equality, freedom of information and health and safety. Political expectations were also greater. Public sector reforms and a greater emphasis on the role of the individual public servants were also identified as a driver of value-change.

While there was much common ground with the civil service, some interesting drivers of change arose in the local authority context. These included the shift from traditional hierarchy towards flatter governance structures in which local authorities engage with a wide variety of stakeholders. Particular mention was given to the social inclusion agenda and also the demands on local authorities to ensure that risks and liabilities are mitigated.

Table 6.3: Changing values

Drivers for changes in values		
Civil Service		Local government
Workshop I	Workshop II	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public service reforms • Less emphasis on precedent • Greater political expectations • Legislative change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social change • Greater political expectations • EU (for some Departments) • Social Partnership • Expectations of new recruits • Focus on needs of individual public servants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift to 'governance' • Social inclusion agenda • Greater public expectations • Avoidance of risk culture • Focus on needs of individual public servants • Import of private sector management practices • EU and domestic legislative changes • Legal liability

6.2.4 Future values

Looking forward, workshop participants were asked to consider what values they believe would be necessary to

underpin their work in the future. While a number of these values were viewed as already existing within the service, others were not as prevalent. Beginning with local government, it was argued that traditional values would become of greater importance in the future, in spite of challenges to them as the nature of local government work changes. In the context of changing modes of governance and greater interaction between local authority personnel and a variety of stakeholders, particular mention was made of the importance of the integrity of local authorities. Also, the nature of the relationship between values and a focus on performance and outcomes rather than process was raised. It was suggested that values should support quality service delivery and not encourage an environment where 'what gets measured gets done'.

For the civil service, much of the discussions focused on values that would provide necessary aptitudes for working in a changing context. As well as some of the more 'traditional' values, innovation and flexibility were also frequently identified as desirable values. Other qualities raised (which may be contested as values according to the definition used here) included risk-taking and leadership; and ensuring the non-politicisation of the service was raised. Identifying a balance between the values necessary to underpin a successful public service and those necessary to support individual public servants was deemed to be important in both the civil service and local government workshops. It was suggested that greater emphasis on work-life balance would continue to have an impact on the public service and whether or not public servants had a job or a career.

In the context of decentralisation, questions were raised about the transmission of values through interpersonal contacts. It was argued that as a consequence of Departments being in multiple locations, there might be a need for more structured and formalised transmission of values. However, it was suggested that physical distance

Table 6.4: Future values

Future values for...		
...civil service		...local government
Workshop I	Workshop II	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • Innovation • Impartiality • Efficiency • Decisiveness • Specialisation • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • Innovation • Risk-taking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity • Impartiality • Fairness • Honesty • Accountability • Legality • Neutrality

has always featured between parts of the service and being in close proximity did not guarantee regular interchange of values. Nonetheless, having an ability to create and manage networks of actors in physically disparate locations was raised as a desirable quality within the future public service.

6.3 Commentary on key workshop findings

In the main, secondary accounts of Irish public service values reflect those espoused in official documents. In line with international counterparts, values such as honesty, impartiality, loyalty and integrity emerge as defining the Irish administration. However, closer examination of the matter with groups of public servants demonstrate that the relative weight given to 'traditional' values has altered in recent years and a number of new values have come to prominence.

While accountability is for many public servants now the primary value guiding the course of their work, others note the challenges faced by marrying 'new' values with more traditional ones, a matter raised by the independent review of the Strategic Management Initiative in 2002 (above). Also, the workshops reveal that while some values often referred to

in the context of modernisation – efficiency and flexibility – were occasionally identified, others – such as innovation and risk-taking – do not emerge as prominent values informing the work of public servants. This is not to say that such values are never acted on; they have simply not yet matched the emphasis placed on better-established values.

However, the workshops reveal that as their careers develop, public servants are aware of the need for a greater role for these non-traditional values, including innovation and flexibility. The feedback suggests that greater work is necessary to find a balance between these values and the traditional value sets. Many workshop participants expressed the view that the traditional values would become even more important as the public service seeks to retain its identity and role in the future.

In terms of developing values, many of the issues identified above (Table 5.2) mirror what the literature on values suggest are the modes by which values are communicated – workplace environment, communication with colleagues, codes of conduct or legislation. Nonetheless, workshop discussions reveal that the role of line managers at all levels in transmitting the values of an organisation is particularly noteworthy. How managers communicate and perform their work can occur both formally and informally. Also, the influence of politicians on public service values is of interest given the non-partisan stance of the Irish public service. This is also reflected in how public servants felt that they were now subject to enhanced political demands.

Instilling values⁹

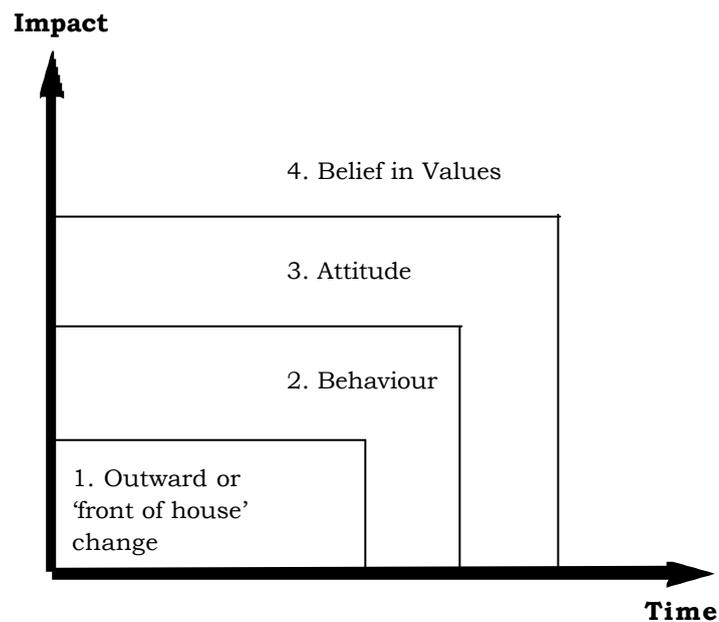
Organisational values emerge through tradition but can also emerge as a result of a radical change to an organisation brought about by an event such as a merger (or takeover) or a crisis. The key challenge for leaders in an organisation is therefore to articulate a coherent set of values that guide its work and the activities of its employees. When an organisation publicly espouses values that do not resonate with the experience of its employees, it can undermine morale and productivity and develop a breach in trust between senior management and staff. This is particularly true in the public sector where public service is the principal motivating factor of the majority of state employees. Ironically, organisations with embedded and deep-seated values are normally the most reluctant to change them, and initiating a process of change can be misconstrued as criticism of existing work practices. In this section, methods through which values are developed or instilled are considered, drawing on case studies and other literature.

7.1 Planning the development of values

As Gortner identifies, the examination of values goes hand in hand with growth and development (2001: 524). Challenging values can lead to positive change or the reinforcement of values, once it is based on sound reasoning and consideration. Meaningful development of values is difficult to achieve in the short term. As Figure 7.1 below details, developing or changing values requires considerable effort and consistency over time. Short-term outward facing measures, such as the development and publicising of values statements in offices are an important first step, but

are limited in terms of their impact. Moving beyond this level towards behavioural (or external) and eventually attitudinal (or internal) change amongst employees in an organisation requires training and the reinforcement of value sets through multiple interactions and activities. The ultimate goal is to achieve a situation whereby organisational values are instinctively understood and form the basis of action by all members of an organisation. This is a long-term goal and therefore requires that values are constantly addressed and reinforced.

Fig. 7.1: Scheme of values development¹⁰



While values are absorbed through a variety of informal means, formal methods are also important in shaping them and planning a programme for the formal development of values is a worthwhile exercise. Codes of practice and ethics legislation alone are not sufficient to ensure that public service work is performed in the context of a

particular set of values. It may be necessary to develop other measures, including whistleblower protection legislation, effective auditing and reporting regimes, freedom of information legislation and training in the application of ethical standards (Sherman: 1998, 16-7). However, as Boyle and Humphreys identify, it is not sufficient to simply act on individual breaches of ethics legislation or incidents of maladministration. They propose that 'it also follows that effective action to restore confidence at the corporate level in the quality of public administration requires a re-assertion of the core values of public service' (2001: 54).

In their study of how ethics can be integrated in an organisation, Hicks and Scanlan (1998: 113) agree that the reinforcement and transmission of common cultural values needs to be planned and systematic. They argue that without attention being given to inculcating core values and standards, other more localised values can come to the fore. They propose that the best way to promote and manage public ethics in a devolved public management system involves the following 'vital elements':

- recognise and assert the importance of ethics to good government
- integrate the management of ethics into the wider system
- exercise leadership from the centre and demand similar leadership in departments
- promote through a combination of standards, guidance, education and recognition of good practice
- allow information to flow to inform and guide devolved decision making
- continue to test theory and rules against experience and remain responsive to challenges in the political and policy environment.

However, they argue that behind this approach lie some critical assumptions. In the first instance, for ethics to be successfully developed enduring principles and values integral to public service are required. It is also assumed that those who enter the service do not necessarily come equipped with the desired value sets, and that therefore training is necessary in order to ensure that what they refer to as 'foundation values' are made known to public servants, and systematically reinforced.

Based on his experience in the Canadian Office for Public Service Values and Ethics, Heintzman (2005) argues that achieving high levels of positive values in an organisation is based on three pillars: leadership, organisational culture, and people management. He suggests that several key factors promote values (and ethics) in the public service:

- the effectiveness of the organisation's leaders in providing clear values leadership
- the existing strength of the values culture within the organisation
- the identification of high-risk 'zones' which require strong control and monitoring activity; such zones include areas of the public service where individual staff retain the power to confer or withhold a benefit
- the strength and efficacy of the control systems within the organisation.

Experience from the private sector is also instructive here. In their analysis of the emergence of the multinational healthcare company SmithKline Beecham, Jones and Pollitt identify five key lessons gleaned from the attempt to introduce a new set of values following the merger that led to the new organisation (1999: 196-7).

- 1) The initiative to develop particular values must come from the most senior level of the organisation.

- 2) The process of value development must be inclusive.
- 3) Values must be given a high priority within the organisation.
- 4) Training must supplement the vision of a value-driven company.
- 5) The legitimisation of the process of developing values will ultimately be through its effect on performance.

Encouraging values-based rather than rule-based management can also be statutorily provided for - the Australian Public Service Act 1999 (Appendix A) represented such a paradigm shift in a developed bureaucracy.

7.2 Key elements in values development

In summary, there are several avenues through which the values can be instilled in the public service. We consider here:

- leadership
- working environment
- workable codes of conduct and values statements
- professional socialisation mechanisms such as training
- risk review
- controls.

Leadership

As noted above, 'leadership' is frequently identified as a much sought-after value for managers in organisations - the explosion of interest in autobiographical works of leaders in organisations play a key role in the development of values, and changing values in an organisation often requires a change of leader. Leaders influence not through their advocacy of value statements but through their words

and actions. The values held and expressed by leaders may not always be desirable however, and even leaders need to reassess the values they bring to the workplace on a daily basis.

Kakabadse et al (2003) argue that effective leadership offers a means of guidance through ethical dilemmas faced by public servants. They identify that public sector leaders face unique challenges in being asked to break new ground and encourage a more open climate of governing. Also, the conduct of leaders in decision making and the extent to which decisions are value-led will have a pronounced effect on the behaviour of staff in an organisation¹¹.

Working environment

As well as codified value statements, as noted in Chapter 6, values are manifested informally in everyday work practices and transactions. Public servants absorb 'traditional' values through various means of socialisation, the most important of which is the 'local' organisational culture in which they work. Conforming to any workplace environment inevitably involves the acceptance of the primacy of certain values over others. This process can be enhanced by rewards and sanctions, although as noted earlier, there is an inherent danger that the intrinsic motivation for employee behaviour may be compromised by rewards or sanctions. The values promoted by an individual's peer group in a workplace environment also play a role in deterring inappropriate behaviour or activity.

Workable codes of conduct and values statements

As noted above, values are normally recognised formally in codes of conduct and legal frameworks as they provide a means for translating values into practice. However, as Kernaghan (2003: 712-4) identifies, codes of conduct (or ethics) often combine mention of values with guidelines, procedures, principles and detailed discussions on conflicts of interest and confidentiality. Values are also often

confused with criteria for good performance. To gain credibility, a code of conduct should contain a discrete statement of values, identify how these values contribute to the goals and principles of the organisation, and provide details on expected conduct of staff or members. In the absence of a set of values, such conduct is without context or meaning, and what is not prohibited by the code may be interpreted as permissible when this is not in fact the case.

A code of conduct should not be simply a list of unethical practices. It should be clear about its purpose and how it contributes to the mission of the organisation. Codes should also be easy to read and understand. Van Wart (1998: 8) argues that a code of ethics has little effect unless it is a) realistic and coherent, b) encouraged through training, education and organisational culture, and c) monitored and supported through sanctions and rewards. Acting on the values expressed is essential for their acceptance throughout the organisation. Too often, much time is spent on the development and creation of codes of conduct and ethics as opposed to integrating the values expressed within them into the various practices of the organisation to which they apply.

An accessible code of conduct should contain a statement of the core values of the organisation. It should also explain the meaning of those values in practice. Currently, many codes of conduct do not distinguish between values and expected behaviour, or expand on the meaning of the organisation's values. Examples from the public and private sectors of where values are distinguished from codes or statements of conduct, and their meaning expanded upon, are set out in Box 7.1

As noted above, in the public service there is an increasing trend towards identifying customised values sets depending on the nature of the work and the policy area in question. This is particularly the case where there is considerable discretion given to staff over resources allocation or collection e.g. tax collection, welfare

*Box 7.1: Identifying and expanding on core values***PricewaterhouseCoopers**

Our core values of **excellence**, **teamwork** and **leadership** help us to achieve...growth.
Putting our values in action:

Excellence

Delivering what we promise and adding value beyond what is expected. We achieve excellence through innovation, learning and agility.

Teamwork

The best solutions come from working together with colleagues and clients. Effective teamwork requires relationships, respect and sharing.

Leadership

Leading with clients, leading with people and thought leadership. Leadership demands courage, vision and integrity.

While we conduct our business within the framework of applicable professional standards, laws, regulations and internal policies, we also acknowledge that these standards, laws, regulations and policies do not govern all types of behaviour. As a result, we also have a Code of Conduct for all PwC people and firms. **This Code is based on our values and it takes them to the next level—demonstrating our values in action** [bold by author]. The Code also provides a frame of reference for PwC firms to establish more specific supplements to address territorial issues.

Science Foundation Ireland Core Values— EESIIF***Excellence***

We fund internationally recognised world class research.

Engaged

We are committed to the Foundation's role in Ireland's development and to the research community .

Strategic

We are visionary, plan for the long term and invest in research with consequences for the benefit of Ireland's economy and society.

Innovative

We are dynamic, collaborative, creative and responsive to the ever changing needs of our stakeholders.

Integrity

We inspire trust by acting fairly, objectively, honestly and transparently in the manner in which we operate and the research that we fund.

Frontiers

We work at the frontiers of research .We advance knowledge, stimulate interdisciplinarity and promote linkage with industry.

distribution or procurement. These statements of values should be discussed on a regular basis with staff and displayed in a prominent place within the organisation's premises.

Professional socialisation mechanisms such as training.

Induction and orientation programmes for new recruits to the public service provide an important opportunity for discussion on public service values and ethics and communicating to staff the required standards of behaviour expected of them. The Canadian 'Task force on public service values and ethics' recommended training for public servants (1996: 63) in order to,

Think about values and ethics, how to discern values and ethical issues in the public sector, and how to deal with moral dilemmas and conflicts. Such training should emphasize the specific governmental context of values, helping public servants to relate values and ethics to the higher purposes of the public service as a national institution with a solemn public trust. In an environment of employee takeovers, partnerships and new approaches to service delivery, the conflict of interest issues are subtle, complex and widespread. Public servants need a better understanding of them and of how the existing framework should be applied.

While such training is beneficial for all public servants, it is particularly pertinent for those recruited directly into middle management levels and above, who may not have the same level of exposure to public service values as those who have come 'through the ranks'.

Training in respect of values should not be a once-off event for new recruits however, and Heintzman (2005) suggests that routine staff assessment of the performance of an organisation in respect of its values statement is a worthwhile exercise. This also contributes to 'risk reviews' (below).

Risk review

Values can be enhanced by reviewing potential risk areas and developing a values and ethics risk management strategy. Certain elements of public service work are more sensitive to value conflicts than others, and the OECD identifies tax, customs and justice administration, as well as the political-administrative interface, as particularly relevant in this regard (2000: 9). As a consequence, it is not unusual for specialist codes of conduct (and process manuals) for staff in these areas to be developed.

Identifying the areas most at risk of value (or ethical) conflicts is necessary for the development of a value-based working environment. Along with providing mechanisms for recourse for staff who are aware of wrong-doing and the introduction of appropriate controls, risk reviews play a part in good corporate governance and play a major role in preventing ethical scandals. Long regarded as a core component of sound financial stewardship within an organisation, risk reviews are increasingly common for the non-financial aspects of an organisation's work.

Controls

Prevention is better than cure. Heintzman (2005) identifies that effective controls are arguably the dominant factor in ensuring high levels of values and ethics performance in public organisations. Such controls include:

- clear policies, procedures and controls
- separation of duties and oversight
- effective monitoring, audit and reporting
- clear mechanisms for reporting wrongdoing
- effective and transparent action when wrongdoing is discovered.

As noted above, providing recourse mechanisms for staff who are aware of wrongdoing or who find themselves experiencing a value conflict (or ethical dilemma) can also

assist in the process of developing a value-based working culture. Staff must be reassured that using a recourse mechanism will not see them incur a penalty or that their position will be undermined. This reflects the importance of a values-based culture in which staff are committed to the goals of the organisation.

In an era when, internationally, trust in public institutions has been undermined by scandals and incidents of malpractice, it is timely to consider the basic values on which public organisations are built. Public praise for the public service is not common. Rather, the absence of public dissatisfaction and continuing public confidence are the measures of good performance. Confidence in the public service requires the development of a value-based culture through training, leadership and codes of conduct and values statements, combined with preventative measures and recourse mechanisms. Whatever values are deemed to be appropriate for the public service, the evidence suggests that performance will be enhanced through their meaningful integration into all aspects of the work of the service.

Conclusions and recommendations

Values are essential to organisational performance but are inherently a difficult subject of analysis. This paper has considered the role of values in the public service, including how they emerge and conflict with each other, how they are challenged by various dynamics and, drawing on workshop output, the form they currently take in the Irish civil service and local government sectors. By using secondary sources, the paper presents what is considered to be best practice in the process of developing a value-based work culture. In this section, the principal findings of the study are summarised and recommendations for developing and further enhancing public service values are presented.

Why public service values?

Values are essential components of organisational culture and instrumental in determining, guiding and informing behaviour. While all public service activities are value-based, the study of public service values is one characterised by ambiguity, measurement difficulties and with competing and often conflicting definitions and interpretations. However, in an environment of uncertainties, and which is subject to structural and functional change, values provide a compass for activities. Different emphases may be placed on different values according to the administrative and political priorities at a given time, but adherence to a set of broadly coherent and accepted values is essential for stability and coherence.

A renewed concern internationally with public service values follows declining public trust in governing institutions, and revelations of administrative and political corruption. Values are also critical to the development of

'corporate culture'; corporate values, must be clarified as a means to achieving corporate success. For bureaucracies, adherence to high-level public service values can generate substantial public trust and confidence. Conversely, weak application of values or promotion of inappropriate values can lead to reductions in these essential elements of democratic governance. It follows that a clear definition and public statement of values is a requisite of all public organisations, and the task of management is to ensure that planning and actions are conducted in the framework established by these values

Defining values

Given its many interpretations and usages, there is no universally accepted definition of values. For the purposes of this study, the definition of values used is the individual principles or qualities that guide judgement and behaviour. While much of the relevant academic and official literature interchanges the two concepts, it is important that values be distinguished from ethics. While values in themselves are neutral, ethics are concerned with issues of good and bad, right and wrong. In other words, ethics are the rules that translate values into everyday action. Ethical decision making, therefore, is informed by values.

Similarly, values should also be distinguished from other terms with which it is frequently substituted, including ethos, conduct and principles. Ethos is a collective term relating to an organisation's character and the manner in which it performs its tasks. Conduct is the actual activities performed by individuals and is increasingly guided by Codes. Principles represent fundamental beliefs which should not be transgressed and are usually presented as statements which incorporate many values.

What are public service values?

There are obvious constraints to attempts to prescribe values which public services should adopt, given the variety

of historical, social and cultural forces at play in different parts of the world. The public servant's duties today remain many, complex and often seemingly contradictory. This is reflected in the values and principles underpinning those duties – including maintaining confidentiality, acting in the public interest, providing quality advice, avoiding conflicts of interest, ensuring accountability to a range of actors and treating all colleagues equitably.

In performing each of these tasks, public servants employ a range of values as a means to guide their behaviour and to assist them in steering a course through multiple requirements. Therefore clarity over an organisation's values is essential and the appropriateness of a particular value-system is worthy of regular consideration in the context of changing expectations and functions. Poor clarity or uncertainty about values can not only lead to ethical and decision-making dilemmas, but also affects organisational coherence by diminishing team spirit, creating organisational confusion and weak external communication.

While a core set of public service values is necessary, it is also true that different values will also apply to different parts of the public service. For example, a distinction may be made between technical, regulatory and administrative tasks, or between those parts of a bureaucracy in direct contact with the public and those which are not. The values most commonly associated with public service are:

- honesty and integrity
- impartiality
- respect for the law
- respect for persons
- diligence
- economy and effectiveness
- responsiveness
- accountability.

In order to better conceptualise and contrast values, there is an increasing trend towards 'grouping' them rather than treating them on an individual basis. For example, the American Society for Public Administration refers to personal, professional, organisational, legal and public interest value sets, while the Canadian public service distinguishes between ethical, democratic, professional and people values. The categorisation of values in this way serves to provide a more coherent and comprehensible basis for public servants to understand the context for their work and professional relationships in an ever-changing environment.

Value conflicts and challenges to values

Given the increasing range of demands on the public service, as well as the frequent ambiguity in terms of goals, relationships and responsibilities, value conflicts or 'clashes' are not unusual. They may occur in relation to such issues as information sharing and confidentiality, risk-taking and accountability or professional and organisational loyalties. As values can differ within different parts of the public service, one of the principal tasks of managers and leaders is to co-ordinate, reconcile or cope with differing values between individuals or even between parts of the organisation.

While interpersonal and individual-organisational value conflicts are common to all organisations, there are a number of dynamics challenging traditional values in the public service. These include new modes of governance and the fragmentation of authority, market-based reforms (such as New Public Management), politicisation and political expectations, the growth in the use of agencies, decentralisation or relocation, changes in human resource management and recruitment, and the advent of new technologies and methods of information sharing.

Values in the Irish public service

Official and secondary publications on Irish public

administration document a range of values associated with the service, including efficiency, impartiality, honesty, loyalty, risk-aversion, equity, hierarchy, integrity, accountability and fairness. In order to examine current value sets, a series of workshops with public servants from the civil service and local government sectors was held during 2007. These workshops identified that certain values, and in particular accountability, had increased in prominence and that there was greater emphasis on 'defensive' values in response to various pressures on the public service. New or non-traditional values occasionally identified included flexibility and 'value for money' or effectiveness. Reputation was also regarded as of increasing importance. However, some values that may have been expected in the context of modernisation, such as innovation, did not emerge.

All workshops agreed that values were developed and transmitted in the workplace, and daily formal and informal communication with colleagues were instrumental in developing value sets. They also agreed that values were learned through 'osmosis' rather than in a once-off manner. Strong emphasis was placed on the role of line managers in the transmission of values. Variation in the type of work undertaken by different parts of the public service had a bearing on how values were learned.

In terms of how values were changing, it was suggested that the 'pecking order' of values had altered in response to public service modernisation and related reforms, as well as wider social change. For example, many public servants reported that accountability was now the dominant value in the performance and execution of their work. Others noted that efficiency, in the sense of speedy service delivery, had emerged in importance. EU and domestic legislative requirements, as well as a greater emphasis on the role of the individual public servant were also identified as drivers of change in respect of values.

On the issue of what values were necessary for the future public service, views were very mixed. They ranged from the belief that that traditional values would become of greater importance, to the opinion that values such as innovation, leadership and flexibility were increasingly desirable.

Instilling values

The final section considered the methods through which values are developed or instilled in organisations. A key challenge for leaders is to articulate a coherent set of values that guide its work and the activities of its employees. This can be challenging in organisations with embedded or deep-seated values, and codes of practice and ethics legislation alone are not sufficient in the development of value sets. While it is recognised that values are absorbed through a variety of informal means, formal methods are also important in shaping them, and planning a programme for the formal development of values is a worthwhile exercise. Without attention being given to core values (and standards), other more localised and potentially undesirable values can emerge.

Some of the principal conduits and mechanisms advocated in literature for the successful transmission of values include effective leadership, the nature of the working environment, the use of workable and accessible codes of conduct and values statements, professional socialisation mechanisms such as training and induction courses, risk reviews and values risk management, and procedural controls and oversight. Also, providing recourse mechanisms for staff who are aware of wrongdoing or who find themselves experiencing a value conflict (or ethical dilemma) can also assist in the process of developing a value-based working culture. Staff must be reassured that using a recourse mechanism will not see them incur a penalty or that their position will be undermined.

In an era when, internationally, trust in public institutions has been undermined by scandals and incidents of malpractice, it is timely to consider the basic values on which public organisations are built. Confidence in the public service requires the development of a value-based culture through training, leadership and codes of conduct and values statements, combined with preventative measures and recourse mechanisms. Whatever values are deemed to be appropriate for the public service, the evidence suggests that performance will be enhanced through their meaningful integration into all aspects of the work of the service. As a result of the findings detailed above, some recommendations for the development of public service values are presented below.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will be treated under three categories:

- identification and expression of values
- treatment of values
- values training.

Identification and expression of values

- The evidence from the workshops suggests that public servants are aware of the values associated with public service. It also suggests that public servants are aware of and receptive to the need for 'new' values to underpin the changing nature of their work. However, there is uncertainty as to how values such as innovation and flexibility can sit alongside more traditional values. Therefore, in the context of a more systemic review of public service values, considerable emphasis must be given to the issue of what values are appropriate for the modern public service. In particular, consideration of what the appropriate balance is between traditional

public service values and values necessary to underpin the changes of the last number of years is required.

- While the work of the public service is increasingly specialised, a public service-wide values statement should be considered in order to bond all elements of the service. As codes of conduct have emerged for different part of the service, sector-specific value sets have also materialised. A service wide value statement offers an overarching framework, which can be complemented as necessary by the sector-specific value statements. It might usefully draw on the experience of other developed bureaucracies, where categories or sets of values are used. Naturally, the first step in this process will be the identification of those values deemed appropriate for a modern public service. In response to the feedback relating to the increasing influence of the political sphere on the public service, a (re)statement of values can help to reaffirm the role and limits of the public service in Ireland.
- Values that reinforce the mission of an organisation have a direct and positive effect on the performance of that organisation. Values and values statements should form a discrete part of any code of conduct, and not be blended or confused with ethical behaviour and descriptions of expected conduct. Values statements will normally be short and contain a limited number of values. Also, as values help to define the 'personality' of an organisation, they should appear in publications other than codes of conduct, such as in customer charters and annual reports.
- In the context of decentralisation and the enhanced use of statutory and non-statutory agencies by civil service departments, a reassertion of civil service values is warranted, either through future editions of codes of conduct or otherwise. The development of a civil service

values statement should involve staff from decentralised offices and agencies in order to ensure the alignment of values between central and regional offices and agencies. Annual reports and other corporate publications by agencies should reflect the values espoused by their parent department.

- Individual civil service departments, and particularly those which interact extensively with the public, should consider publicising a values statement unique to their work in their public offices and publications. Analysis and discussion of this statement should also form part of any induction training for new staff members.

Treatment of values

- While the identification and mode of expression of values is the first step for any value-driven organisation, acting on those values is essential to give them meaning. Having a list of values does not mean they exist in an organisation. Advocating value sets but not acting on them is even counter-productive.
- This study has shown that senior managers are a key cohort in the realisation of a value-based organisation, as their activities send out fundamental signals concerning the relevance of values within the organisation. Ideally, a new statement (or restatement) of values within an organisation should begin at the most senior level. It should be noted that some organisations have ethics or values sub-committees on their boards and have a senior member of staff report to them on the implementation of a values programme. Line managers must also be cognisant of their influence on the establishment of a workplace culture, and the maxim of 'do as I do, not as I say' is of relevance here.

Values training

- While this study has identified that the informal communication of values is of central importance, formal methods of developing values offer substantial benefits. The most well-known formal method is induction courses for new staff involving case-studies and role-play scenarios. The centrality of values to all aspects of public service work should be demonstrated and values statements analysed and expanded upon.
- An often-overlooked element to values training is the need to demonstrate clear methods by which value conflicts can be managed or what avenues public servants should pursue in order to resolve ethical dilemmas without fear of negative personal consequences. Value conflicts should not be regarded as detrimental to an organisation and leaning to cope with such conflicts is part of good public management.
- As open recruitment to more senior grades in the public service takes root, the importance of values training increases for new recruits. Senior managers face different types of value conflict to more junior grades and training should take cognisance of this.
- The task of ensuring values are put into action in the work of an organisation is a continuous one and periodic renewal and re-examination of values is a necessary part of organisational development. If espoused values do not feature as actual values in the work of an organisation, the 'fit' between the organisation and its values should be visited again.
- Values seminars and workshops offer employees the opportunity to explore the meaning and practical application of values to everyday workplace scenarios. They also help to develop employees' awareness of the organisation and how it can achieve its objectives within

a value-bounded framework of activity. Indeed the process of defining and examining the values of an organisation provides an opportunity for staff engagement in the development of the future direction of the organisation. The role of values should also be integrated into existing management training and development courses.

- In order that values form a meaningful part of any induction or further training courses, a toolkit would provide a useful support. Examples from elsewhere of such toolkits suggest that contents should include aids for the identification and discussion of values, guides showing how values translate into decision making, case-study scenarios concerning value conflicts or ethical dilemmas, and key documents (including legislation) relating to public service values.

Selected Codes of Conduct

New Zealand Public Service Code of Conduct¹².

The Three Principles:

First Principle: Public servants should fulfil their lawful obligations to the Government with professionalism and integrity

- Public servants are obliged to serve the aims and objectives of the Minister. Public servants should ensure that their personal interests or activities do not interfere with, or appear to interfere with, this obligation.

Second Principle: Public servants should perform their official duties honestly, faithfully, and efficiently, respecting the rights of the public and colleagues.

- Public servants should carry out their duties in an efficient and competent manner, and avoid behaviour which might impair their effectiveness.
- In performing their duties, public servants should respect the rights of their colleagues and the public.
- Public servants should perform their duties honestly and impartially, and avoid situations which might compromise their integrity or otherwise lead to conflicts of interest.

Third Principle: Public servants should not bring the public service into disrepute through their private activities.

- Public servants should avoid any activities, whether connected with their official duties or otherwise, which might bring their department and the public service into disrepute, or jeopardise relationships with Ministers, clients, or the general public.

Canadian Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service (abridged)

Statement of Public Service Values and Ethics: The four families of public service values:

Democratic Values: Helping Ministers, under law, to serve the public interest.

- honest and impartial advice to ministers, including all information relevant to decision making
- loyal implementation of ministerial decisions, lawfully taken
- support of individual and collective ministerial accountability
- information on results achieved by public servants provided regularly to parliament and Canadians

Professional Values: Serving with competence, excellence, efficiency, objectivity and impartiality.

- respect for the laws of Canada
- political neutrality
- proper, effective and efficient use of public money
- equal importance in the way ends are achieved and the achievements themselves
- continual improvement in quality of service to Canadians
- changing needs accommodated through innovation
- improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs and services in both official languages
- transparency
- respect for confidentiality under the law.

Ethical Values: Acting at all times in such a way as to uphold the public trust.

- performance of official duties and arrangement of private affairs in such a way as to conserve and enhance public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of government
- actions that will at all times bear the closest public scrutiny
- decisions made in the public interest
- resolution in favour of the public interest of any conflict between private interests and official duties.

People Values: Demonstrating respect, fairness and courtesy in their dealings with both citizens and fellow public servants.

People values reinforce the wider range of public service values. Those who are treated with fairness and civility will be motivated to display these values in their own conduct.

- respect for human dignity and the value of every person in the exercise of authority and responsibility
- participation, openness and communication in all public service organisations
- respect for diversity and for the official languages of Canada
- appointment decisions based on merit
- key role for public service values.

Values of the Australian Public Service¹³

The Australian Public Service:

- is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner;
- is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit;
- provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves;
- has the highest ethical standards;
- is openly accountable for its actions, within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public;
- is responsive to the Government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government's policies and programs;
- delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public;
- has leadership of the highest quality;
- establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, co-operation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace;
- provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace;
- focuses on achieving results and managing performance;
- promotes equity in employment;
- provides a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for APS employment;

- is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia's democratic system of government;
- provides a fair system of review of decisions taken in respect of employees.

- 1 The original title was the Office for Values and Ethics.
- 2 A case in point in the Irish context has been the replacement in 2004 of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission with two new bodies: the Public Appointments Service which acts as the principal recruitment and selection agency, and the Commission for Public Service Appointments which acts as a regulatory body overseeing the work of all recruitment bodies in the public sector.
- 3 The role and corresponding values of local government have been the subject of frequent and fundamental debate in political science and public administration, best epitomised by Sharpe: 1970.
- 4 Technically, some of these terms may not be considered as values *senso stricto*, according to the definition of values used in this study (above). Instead they are concepts or issues related to performance.
- 5 Following a cost-reduction review of government operations in 1994 which resulted in a downsizing of the public service, the Canadian government funded a study of values and ethics in the service. The resulting 1996 report 'A Strong Foundation' (also known as the Tait report) advocated a far-reaching restatement of values and ethics (including the use of a new Code) and identified the need for leadership by example.
- 6 See for example the report by the UK's National Audit Office and Comptroller and Auditor-General on shared services for the delivery of corporate functions (2007).
- 7 The term 'agency head' in Australia also includes the Secretary of a Department
- 8 The key questions addressed in each workshop were adapted in line with the participants' areas of employment and the phrasing adapted slightly in light of experience in the preceding workshop.
- 9 In this section, values are identified as an important element of organisational culture, with culture change being one means of instilling desired values. The role of organisational culture in values development, and more generally, is discussed further in a related CPMR study: O'Donnell and Boyle (forthcoming), *Understanding and Managing Organisational Culture*, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.
- 10 I am grateful to my colleague Evelyn Blennerhasset for her help in the development of this schema.
- 11 While several texts recognise leadership as a core component of transmitting values, in her study of the professional development of Australian civil servants, Stewart (2007) also

NOTES

recognises the bottom-up manner in which some departments and agencies develop their own cultural values.

- 12 http://www.ssc.govt.nz/upload/downloadable_files/Public_Service_code_of_Conduct_2005.pdf
- 13 Government of Australia Public Service Act 1999 (Canberra, 1999), also available at <http://www.apsc.gov.au/values/index.html>

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