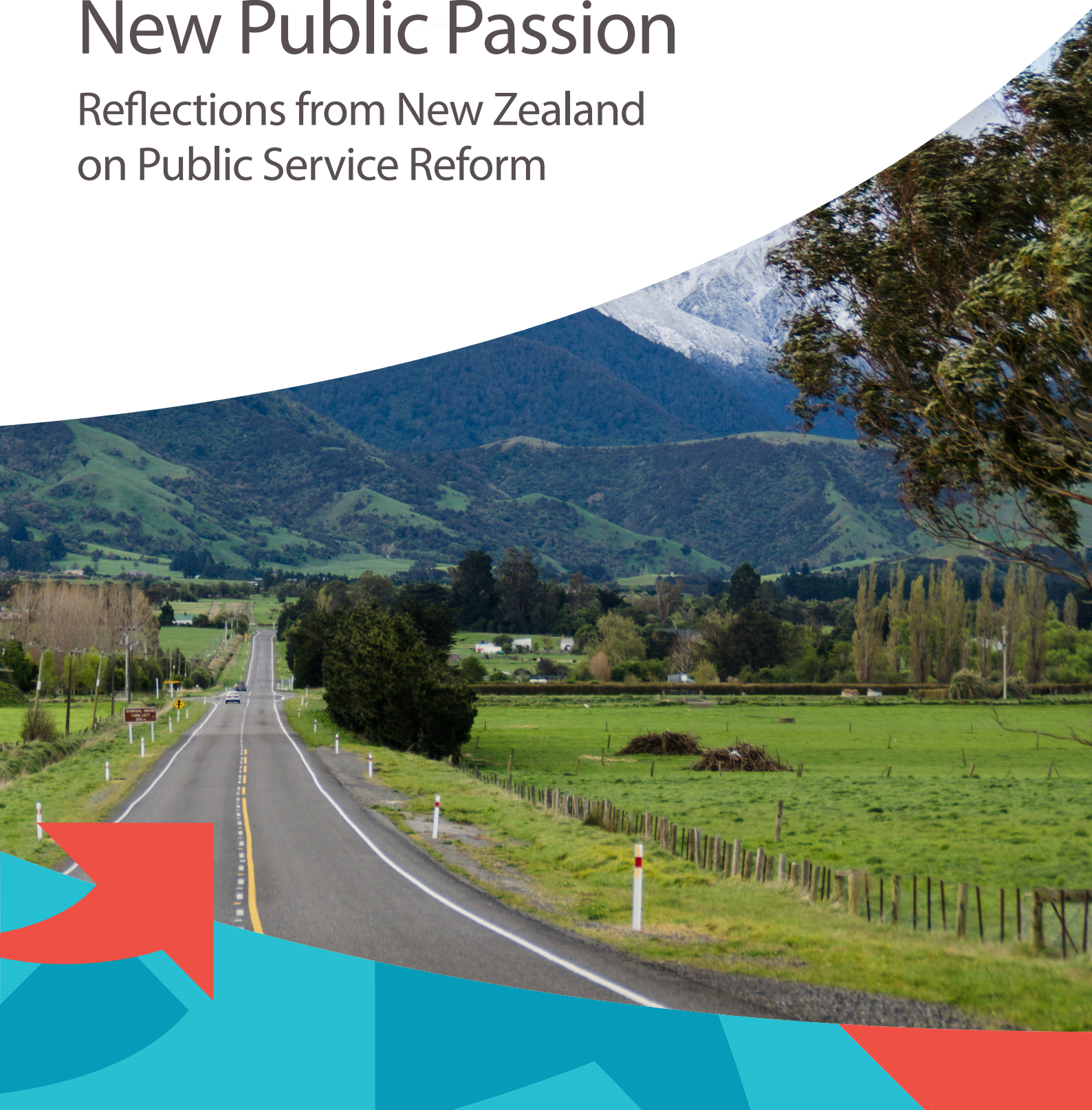


New Public Passion

Reflections from New Zealand
on Public Service Reform



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Cover image

 Tom Hall / *Long road in to Kaikoura*

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Foreword

I first had the pleasure of meeting the author of this paper, Ryan Orange, many years ago when I was Director of the Governance Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat and I was asked to sit on the jury for public service innovation in the Commonwealth. Ryan, then Deputy State Services Commissioner of New Zealand, chaired the meeting with considerable good humour, insight and competence.

Since moving to Singapore to lead the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, I have been delighted to invite Ryan to support the work of the Centre and his contribution has been invaluable. His enthusiasm for public service reform and achieving better results for the public is infectious. His phrase 'New Public Passion', as a neat summation of the dedication and commitment of most public officials to the welfare of the citizens they serve, as well as an appropriate parody of 'New Public Management' that has done so much damage to public administration around the world, has caught widespread attention. Its time has come.

In this discussion paper, he argues that too many civil services around the world focus narrowly on motivating their staff with the promise of rewards and the threat of punishment:

Intrinsic motivation is important for civil service performance and is essential to dynamism. Dynamism – the ability to adapt at pace to respond to rapid change – is essential for the civil service required in a complex and fast-changing world. If you are working on reform and not thinking explicitly about harnessing the intrinsic motivation of civil servants, you are not heading for the right destination and may be undermining the likelihood of sustainable change.

As Helen Clark, the Administrator of UNDP, has observed:

The 'New Public Passion' emphasizes that officials need to be empowered, and to feel empowered, to do what they joined the public service for in the first place, namely to serve citizens. This 'New Public Passion' seeks to nurture high job satisfaction by ensuring that all civil servants feel directly engaged in improving the lives of their fellow citizens.

Ryan's paper provides an invaluable guide for putting the concept into action. This will empower public servants everywhere to give their best in serving their populations. The message is therefore an important one for promoting the successful implementation of the '2030 Agenda' for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

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

1. Introduction

In a complex and rapidly changing world, delivering and sustaining significant improvements in public services are critical to quality of life and sustainable development. Public service reform is being pursued with mixed results in a great range of jurisdictions to respond to this changing environment. Drawing on the experience of reform in New Zealand and engagement with other jurisdictions' reform endeavours, this paper seeks to identify what is universal and what is contextually unique about public service reform. It then proposes to identify approaches in order to strengthen the chances of successful reform.

Section two of the paper focuses on the idea of New Public Passion and the importance of intrinsic motivation to sustainable reform. The statements that intrinsic motivation matters, that we will try harder if we feel we are doing the right thing, that we will be more engaged if we find our work interesting and that we will be more passionate about the pursuit of our values – do not appear to be controversial. The very idea of public service is a call to intrinsic values of service to our community.¹ However, the importance of intrinsic motivation is being underestimated or ignored in civil service reform all over the world. Too often, we fool ourselves into believing that extrinsic motivation, such as the promise of rewards and the threat of punishment – through compliance and accountability – are enough and that intrinsic

“Intrinsic motivation is important for civil service performance and is essential to dynamism”

motivation is not reliable and therefore cannot be systematized. Intrinsic motivation is important for civil service performance and is essential to dynamism. Dynamism, which is the ability to adapt at pace in order to respond to rapid change, is essential for the civil service in a complex and fast-changing world. Those working on reform need to be thinking explicitly about harnessing the intrinsic motivation of civil servants; otherwise, they will not be heading in the right direction and will undermine the likelihood of sustainable change.

While intrinsic motivation is critically important, it is only one aspect of sustainable reform. Section three sets out key lessons from reform experience to identify what else is required for successful and sustainable reform. This section emphasizes the importance of the Reform Moment and the need for reform to be sharply focussed. A Reform Moment requires a clear change gap, change readiness, a trigger opportunity or crisis, and reform leadership. A Reform Moment must arise or be created before it is worth attempting genuine reform. For the reform to succeed, it also needs a specific focus, as it is necessary to pick a few things that are important. After this, it is necessary to get on the path to reform, to get the right mandate/s, to announce one's

1. This paper does not make a distinction between Public Service Motivation (PSM) and intrinsic motivation. The core dimensions of PSM – compassion, civic duty, self-sacrifice and attraction to public policymaking – are treated here as integral to rather than as separate from intrinsic motivation. For clarity, 'recognition' is considered in this paper to be an extrinsic motivator that is given as a reward or withheld as a punishment.

intent, to move at pace and to adapt during the process. While there are universal challenges, the experience of reform in every jurisdiction is unique; section three works through the example of New Zealand's Better Public Services reforms and looks at the potential to apply these lessons to Papua New Guinea's 2016 Reform Moment. From the New Zealand Reform experience, this paper draws three conclusions: 1) do not try to fix everything at once; 2) do not focus on the things that cannot be changed directly in this Reform Moment; and 3) do not ignore intrinsic motivation.

1.1 The goal: sustainable development depends on effective public services

Effective civil services are critical to sustaining and improving the quality of life of communities around the world.² Civil services exist to ensure that governments today and in the future can be supported in effective decision-making and in the execution of those decisions, including the delivery of services to the public. While there are many ways of describing the essential characteristics of an effective civil service, this paper will use the simple, but expansive trinity of trust, responsiveness and dynamism. A civil service should be trusted by the politicians and the people it serves to act with integrity and to deliver on its commitments. A civil service should be responsive to the demands and requests of decision-makers for policy, regulatory and service delivery constancy or change. A civil service needs to be dynamic in order to ensure that it can respond to current and future changes in expectations about what and how it delivers for decision makers and citizens. A civil service that is trusted but not responsive will not be trusted for long. A civil service that is responsive but not dynamic will not be responsive for long. A civil service that is dynamic but not responsive and trusted is failing to deliver on its purpose to exist.

A trusted, responsive and dynamic civil service underpins the ability of a state to deliver on the needs and wants of its citizens. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) articulate the core development needs of countries, including eliminating poverty, protecting the environment, strengthening communities and providing access to work, education and health services, and gender equality.³ The SDGs cannot be achieved without effective civil services.⁴

Fortunately, in a complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world, the quality of civil service that a country has is still largely under the control of the citizens and their leaders, as a UNDP mission to Papua New Guinea in January 2016 made particularly apparent. Papua New Guinea is 158th on the Human Development Index.⁵ It is a land of great opportunity and challenge and has unfortunately not been able to deliver on

2. This paper focuses on the role of the civil service: a state's professional administration, excluding military, judiciary and elected politicians.

3. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

4. Clark, Helen. 2015. *Achieving the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda – The Role of the Public Service*, 2015 Manion Lecture. 26 May. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/speeches/2015/05/26/achieving-the-post-2015-sustainable-development-agenda-the-role-of-the-public-service.html>

5. Of 188 countries measured in 2015. UNDP. 2015. *Human Development Report 2015, Briefing note for countries on the 2015 Human Development Report, Papua New Guinea*. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/PNG.pdf

any of its Millennium Development Goals.⁶ It is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with 840 languages⁷ spoken by a population of more than seven million people.⁸ It is rich in natural resources, but has very high levels of exposure to movements in international resource prices.⁹ With a significant reliance on subsistence farming, many Papua New Guineans are at the mercy of the weather, as was seen in the drought of December 2015.¹⁰

Papua New Guinea cannot control its cultural context, global resource prices or the weather. It can, however, largely control the quality of its civil service within these constraints. It can leverage civil servants to support the decisions and implement the actions needed to improve Papua New Guinea's development and mitigate its exposure to social, economic and environmental risks over time. This paper will return to Papua New Guinea's Reform Moment opportunity towards the end.

Figure 1: Which is the odd one out?



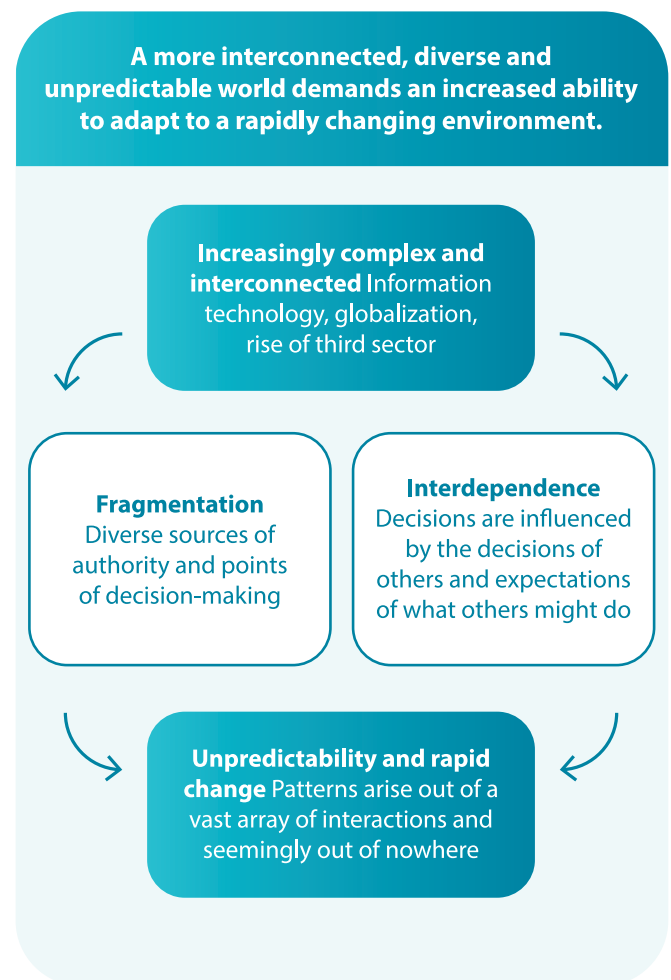
1.2 The challenge: change is accelerating, complexity abounds, money is short and morale is low

The challenge is that the goalposts keep shifting for the public, private and the non-profit sectors. The rate of change is accelerating in an increasingly complex globalized and interconnected world.

In a public management setting, Peter Ho has been a clear voice on this challenge. As Head of the Singaporean Civil Service in 2007, he spoke of the need for increasingly networked and experimental government to better cope with uncertainty and the speed of change to enable Singapore to "thrive in a turbulent

world".¹¹ This idea has underpinned most recent thinking on public management systems – grouped in this paper under the collective heading of New Public Governance. A leading example of this is the New Synthesis of Public Administration work led by Jocelyne Bourgon.¹² The key components of the environment in which a New Synthesis is required are set out in Figure 2. In complex networks, decision-making is fragmented but interdependent, leading to unpredictability and rapid change as "patterns arise out of a vast array of interactions and seemingly out of nowhere".¹³

Figure 2: change is accelerating and complexity abounds



6. Inter Press Service. 2015. *Papua New Guinea reckons with unmet development goals*. 27 May. http://www.pg.undp.org/content/papua_new_guinea/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/05/27/papua-new-guinea-reckons-with-unmet-development-goals.html

7. <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/PG>

8. The 2011 census records the population as 7,275,324. <http://www.nso.gov.pg/index.php/population-and-social/other-indicators>

9. UNDP. *Human Development Report 2015, Briefing note for countries on the 2015 Human Development Report, Papua New Guinea*.

10. ReliefWeb. 2015. *Papua New Guinea: Drought and Frost – Information Bulletin*. 5 September. <http://reliefweb.int/report/papua-new-guinea/papua-new-guinea-drought-and-frost-information-bulletin>

11. Ho, Peter. 2007. *Thriving in a Turbulent World*. Opening Address at the Public Service Staff Conference, 18 September. In: Low, Donald and Kwok, Andrew (eds.) 2009. *In Time for The Future: Singapore's Heads of Civil Service on Change, Complexity and Networked Government*. Civil Service College.

12. Bourgon, Jocelyne. 2011. *A New Synthesis of Public Administration: Serving in the 21st Century*, Queen's Policy Studies.

13. Bourgon, Jocelyne. 2009. *New Governance and Public Administration: Towards a Dynamic Synthesis*. Public lecture hosted by the Australian Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, Australia, 24 February.

If a significant increase in adaptability is required, it would be ideal to be operating in an environment with resource flexibility and an enthusiastic appetite for change. However, even as demands increase, many civil services are confronting tighter financial constraints and low levels of morale. Max Everest-Phillips argues that “morale and motivation in the public sector have collapsed in many countries across both the developed and developing worlds [...] which] represents a major obstacle to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.”¹⁴ He cites as evidence an OECD report¹⁵ showing that this is a “systemic problem, not just reflecting fiscal austerity, for while 58 per cent of OECD countries undertaking strict austerity measures reported a decrease in workplace commitment, so, too, did 36 per cent of ‘non-austerity’ countries.”¹⁶

For many civil servants, the world of increasing complexity and change is not a welcoming place, as they are devalued, disempowered and buffeted by change. Yet there is a pressing need for civil services that can deliver trust, responsiveness and dynamism in a world of change and complexity often while cutting costs and from a base of low morale. The Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without overcoming this challenge.

2. New Public Passion

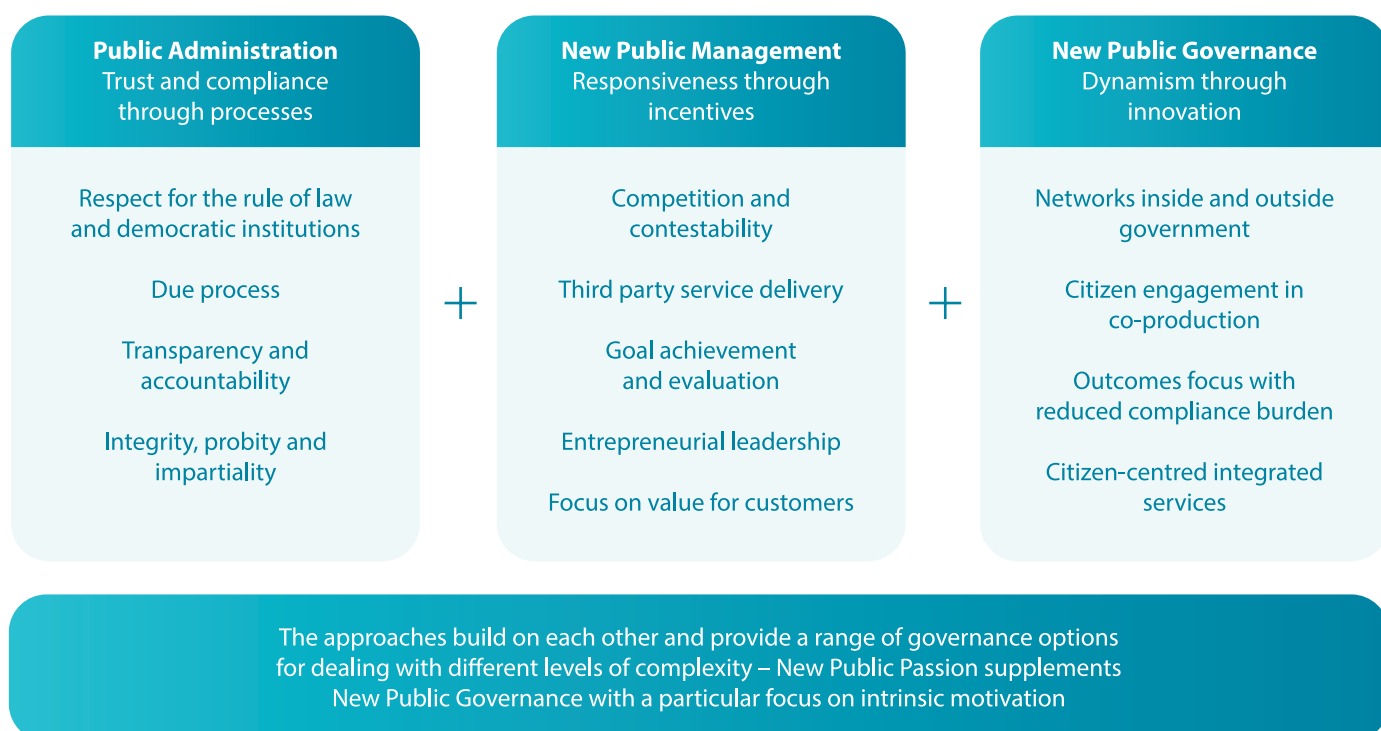
2.1 The toolkit: necessary, but insufficient

The obvious solution to this challenge is to employ superheroes in every seat. If every civil servant could only be trustworthy, collaborative, citizen-centred, creative, driven and brilliant, then surely this challenge would be surmounted. However, in the absence of a steady supply of superheroes, we have to rely on very ordinary civil service heroes and the quality of the public management systems they work in really matters.

The public management toolkits that we rely on were not designed for managing complexity and rapid change. The historical toolkit is necessary, but no longer sufficient. New Public Governance is attempting to bridge that gap. It will succeed only if it harnesses intrinsic motivation and builds New Public Passion.

It is no coincidence that three major approaches to public management of the past 100 years – Public Administration, New Public Management and New Public Governance – are centred on the three central goals of trust, responsiveness and dynamism. Figure 3 draws on Stephen Osborne’s discussion of

Figure 3: The toolkit



14. Everest-Phillips, Max. 2015. *The power of 'new public passion'*. The Strait Times. November 5. <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/the-power-of-new-public-passion>

15. Demmke, Christoph. 2014. *Public Administration Reform and reform effects in Western Europe*. SIGMA. <http://www.slideshare.net/SIGMA2013/presentation-by-dr-christoph-demmke-oecd>; and Demmke, Christoph, Moilanen, Timo. 2013. *Governmental Transformation and the Future of Public Employment: The Impact of Restructuring on Status Development in the Central Administration of the EU-27*. Peter Lang.

16. Everest-Phillips. *The power of 'new public passion'*.

the three regimes to make the case that they build on each other and provide a range of governance options for dealing with different levels of complexity.¹⁷

The values established by Public Administration remain the lifeblood of an effective civil service. Integrity, professionalism, merit-based appointment and political neutrality take different forms in different contexts, but any jurisdiction that does not have a clear and consistent approach to these issues is in trouble. New Zealand is able to draw on 100 years of largely fulsome and consistent application of these values and, as a result, it is the only non-Scandinavian country to appear consistently in the top four countries with the lowest perceived corruption.¹⁸ Effective Public Administration builds trust, and trust is critical.

Public Administration relied on the power of intrinsic motivation from the start – seeking an alignment with these values in its appointments and largely relying on voluntary compliance with codes of conduct in a pre-digital world where actions were harder to audit. But that passion for service was, and is, often channelled into routine compliance activities where the enforcement of rules and the tyranny of process supersede real service to citizens.

The primary motivation becomes one of compliance or, even worse, of self-preservation in the face of the forces of change. If change is accelerating and the civil service is rigid rather than adaptable, responsiveness is bound to suffer. Without responsiveness to political decision makers and citizens, the civil service is not serving.

Enter New Public Management. New Public Management addresses shortcomings in responsiveness through a central focus on accountability. What gets measured, gets done – and, if accountability for delivery is clearly assigned and incentives for performance aligned, then responsiveness will follow. As a result, New Public Management tends to favour competition and clarity of focus over collaboration and joint responsibility. New Zealand is a classic example of its implementation, where sharp accountability have driven high levels of responsiveness on complicated issues, but not the stewardship and dynamism required to ensure long-term delivery on complex issues where sole accountability cannot be assigned.¹⁹ Extrinsic motivation is king, with performance incentives aligned to clear accountabilities and key performance indicators.

New Public Management is a powerful tool for improving performance, but it struggles to provide a framework for effectively addressing rapid change in a complex interdependent environment. New Public Governance seeks to address this shortcoming by harnessing networks inside and outside of government to enable dynamic responses to complex issues. New Public Governance emphasizes an outcome focus with a reduced compliance burden, the integration of citizen services, and citizen engagement in the coproduction of services.²⁰

New Public Governance recognizes a greater role for intrinsic motivation as a force for enhancing public value,²¹ strengthening coproduction²² and triggering innovation.²³ There remains, however, a significant risk of underplaying the critical role of intrinsic motivation in achieving adaptability. Particularly in environments where the public discourse on public service bureaucracy is focused on waste- and cost-cutting, attempts to implement New Public Governance-style reforms may continue to exclusively rely on extrinsic incentives and measures to drive change. Or, as was the case in New Zealand, decades of New Public Management practices can make it challenging for institutions and leaders to harness intrinsic motivation beyond the boundaries of an individual agency.

The standard public management toolkit is necessary, but not sufficient and New Public Passion is an attempt to bridge the motivational gap to enable sustainable dynamism in a complex and rapidly changing environment.

2.2 The idea: intrinsic motivation really matters

New Public Passion involves harnessing the intrinsic motivation of public servants to improve performance. It explicitly focuses on the role of motivation in New Public Governance and seeks to rebalance the use of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in improving civil service delivery. The central message is that intrinsic motivation really matters – as much as professionalism, accountability and networks. As noted in the introduction to this paper, this message risks assertion of a simple truism – that what people care about impacts on what gets done – but the idea is critically important, given the tendency for civil service reform efforts to take for granted or to ignore intrinsic motivation at a time when its importance is increasing.

“New Public Passion (...) seeks to rebalance the use of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in improving civil service delivery”

Focusing primarily on accountability and managerialism, our public management systems rely too much on extrinsic motivation. The alignment of incentives to drive extrinsic motivation is a critical tool for improving performance, but will work best in partnership with the alignment of values to harness intrinsic motivation. This is to some extent recognized in the greater emphasis placed on ‘performance management’ in the civil services of a range of countries over the past decade. But many performance management systems rely too much on formality and accountability at the cost of seeking insights into

17. Osborne, Stephen P. 2010. *The New Public Governance? Emerging perspectives on the theory and practice of public governance*. Routledge.

18. Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index*, <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>

19. New Zealand Government. 2011. *Better Public Services Advisory Group Report*. November. https://www.ssc.govt.nz/sites/all/files/bps-report-nov2011_0.pdf

20. Osborne, Stephen P. *The New Public Governance? Emerging perspectives on the theory and practice of public governance*.

21. Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C. and Bloomberg, L. 2014. *Public Value Governance: Moving Beyond Traditional Public Administration and the New Public Management*. *Public Administration Review*. 74(4): 445–456. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12238

22. Pestoff, V., Brandsen, T. and Verschuere, B. (eds.) 2011. *New Public Governance, the Third Sector and Co-production*. Routledge.

23. Daglio, M., Gerson D., Kitchen H. 2014. *Building Organisational Capacity for Public Sector Innovation*. Background Paper prepared for the OECD Conference “Innovating the Public Sector: from Ideas to Impact”. Paris, 12-13 November.

what motivates an individual. Public service is often a calling as well as a career.²⁴ High levels of intrinsic motivation are the public services' natural advantage, but that advantage needs to be encouraged and stewarded or it is lost.²⁵

Harnessing intrinsic motivation enables dynamic and adaptive civil servants to respond to increasing change and complexity. While not every civil service role has to be an empowered decision maker or a change agent, these skill sets are increasingly required for every role that matters. With the increasing ability to digitize and automate rules-based services, the future role of frontline staff will be to exercise discretion and to respond to the complex needs of citizens. With new technology and increased expectations driving continuous change to business models, managers need to be change managers, not just overseers of standardized delivery.

In environments with constrained resources and low morale, more effectively harnessing intrinsic motivation is a critical lever for maintaining performance during periods of change. Too often, reforms are implemented without any real effort to engage civil servants in the drivers or benefits of reform in a language they can understand or through the lens of values they can relate to.

Reform is ultimately not sustainable if it does not understand and design around the motivation of public servants. Successful reform is dependent on the performance of civil servants and sustained performance is dependent on engagement and motivation. New Public Passion is not a brand new idea, but a timely drawing together of important thinking about the link between motivation and performance in a public service context. In addition to practical experience, the idea is based on well-established theory and the direction of private sector thinking about how to respond to the changing nature of the global marketplace.

It draws on Public Service Motivation and seeks to build the lessons from this body of research into the heart of public management models. James Perry defines Public Service Motivation (PSM) as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions".²⁶ He identifies motives that are characteristic of PSM as including attraction to public policymaking, commitment to the public interest, civic duty, social justice, self-sacrifice and compassion.²⁷

that high PSM improves the attraction, selection and retention of individuals as civil servants, that PSM matters for performance (but that there is more evidence of this at the institutional rather than the individual level) and that high PSM has an inverse relationship with preference for monetary rewards.²⁹

PSM research has shown a link between having a mission of public good, reform and effective transformational leadership. Wright found that "the importance of an organization's mission increases employee work motivation in the public sector by making the job more important, even after controlling for the effect of performance-related extrinsic rewards".³⁰ Moynihan and Pandey's research indicates that red tape and length of organizational membership are negatively related to PSM, whereas hierarchical authority and reform efforts have a positive relationship. They conclude that "public organizations have both an opportunity and a responsibility to create an environment that allows employees to feel they are contributing to the public good".³¹ Together, Wright, Moynihan and Pandey concluded that "given both the public service orientation of public organization missions and the attractiveness of such goals to many public employees, public sector transformational leaders may be in a better position to activate the higher order needs of their employees, and to encourage them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization and its clientele".³²

While the public sector has a potential advantage in motivating organizational-level performance and change, it is less clear that there is a substantial difference in the importance of individual intrinsic motivation between the public and private sectors. Houston drew on US General Social Survey data to conclude that "public employees are more likely to place a higher value on the intrinsic reward of work that is important and provides a feeling of accomplishment, and they are less likely to place a high value on such extrinsic reward motivators as high income and short work hours" compared to private sector employees.³³ However, Frank and Lewis, using 1989 and 1998 General Social Survey data, found that the differences in a range of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards between the public and private sectors did not approach statistical significance. This led to the unsurprising conclusion that an interesting job that allows one to help others, and a strong desire for job security appeared to increase the probability that one will put in extra effort and that the size of the effect appeared to be about the same in both sectors.³⁴

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