# REDISCOVERING PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION WITHIN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

**Mauro ROMANELLI**
*University of Naples Parthenope*
*13 via G. Parisi, 180132, Napoli, Italy*
*mauro.romanelli@uniparthenope.it*

**Abstract.** *Public organizations have to rediscover the importance of public interest as result of dialogue and respect for people and sustain the public service motivation of employees for managing change and promoting collaborative relationships with citizens moving towards a better responsiveness. Training and education contribute to hybridize the administrative and organizational culture of public institutions overcoming legalistic and bureaucratic logics by exerting influence on ethics and behaviors of public employees for driving change.*

**Keywords:** *public service motivation; public interest; public sector organizations; training and education.*

## Introduction

Public sector organizations serve the interest of national community rather than the generation of profit for government and differ from private sector organizations (Parker & Gould, 1999). Public and private organizations differ mainly with regard to objectives and setting (Lane, 2009): governments accomplish social objectives delivering services in the interest of a national community, whereas private enterprises do business to make money by maximization of profit for their owners; private management is oriented towards the market that shapes the success of enterprises determining opportunities for profitability. Differences between private and public sector with regard to human resource management, organizational policies and practices seem to rely on the persistence of a public service ethos among public employees (Boyne, Jenkins, & Poole, 1999). Effective government agencies tend to have high attractive mission and valence, high levels of public service motivation as a general motivation to serve the interests of a community of people in terms of contribution to general and valuable public service. The perceived linkage of the mission to public service values can contribute to enhancing mission valence and mission motivation. Different factors contribute to enhancing public service motivation (PSM): high mission valence or attractiveness; a strong organizational culture; effective leadership behaviors in terms of commitment to mission, effective goal setting and administrative and political coping (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). Public organizations have to promote investments in human capital reinforcing training and professional education of public employees in order to support public sector reform leading to a managerial and cultural change in terms of new norms and values, practices and behaviors. Education and training contribute to developing change leading employees to learn values coherently with new public service and interest as a mission of public organizations. The aim of this paper is to explain that changing public organizations following the public interest should rediscover the importance of public

service motivation of employees for managing and sustaining an enduring change. The study is based on archival data relying on a literature review to sustain the discussion with regard to: rediscovering responsive public organizations beyond promises of Npm; understanding the concept of public service motivation; developing training and education of public employees as strategic source to sustain motivation of public employees for leading government to restore trust with citizens.

**Understanding the service motivation within public organizations**

Fredrickson and Hart (1985) refer to the patriotism of benevolence as the love of one's country and non-instrumental of the others, founded on knowledge of and belief in democratic values and important motivation for public servants and public administrator driving a responsible organization in order to reconcile bureaucracy and democracy (Burke & Clark, 1989). Public employees tend to manifest higher attention to service than private employees. Public service motivation (PSM) as a universal concept tends to be an important issue in studying public administration having an impact on human resource management. The attention to more institution-conscious motivation is useful for better understanding the difference between private and public sector organizations (Wise, 2000). PSM leads to behaviors that benefit the public (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010). The term public service motivation implies the specific motivation associated with public service and the desire to engage in meaningful public service. PSM is a broad, universal but multifaceted and elusive concept varying over time, in relation to the public image of government service, taking different forms in different agencies and service areas (Rainey, 1982). Public service motives are at the roots of the behaviors and actions taken to achieve outcomes that serve the public interest (Wise 2000). The nature of public service demands a sense of loyalty on the part of public employees. There is not a wide accepted definition of PSM. There are many and different definitions of PSM proposed in several studies. «PSM is the motivational force that induces individuals to perform meaningful public service» (Brewer & Selden, 1998, p. 417). PSM is still defined «as a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, or human kind» (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999, p.23). Following an institutional and organizational path, PSM is defined as «an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations» (Perry & Wise, 1990, p.368). PSM is likely to be positively related to the organizational commitment of an individual (Perry & Wise, 1990) as «the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest or organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate» (Vandenabeele, 2007, p.547). A wide definition of PSM incorporating ethics, roles and beliefs comprises «the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest or organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that induce, through public interaction, motivation for targeted action» (Vandenabeele, Scheepers & Hondeghem, 2006, p.15). PSM tends to exert influence on public sector attractiveness in terms of the preference for working with public employers and does not replace other types of motivation. Individuals with high PSM will be more likely to seek public employment. PSM tends to exist before entering government at a pre-entry level (Vandenabeele, 2008). Rational (as participation in the process of policy formulation), norm-based (as a desire to serve the public interest, loyalty to duty and to the government as a whole), and affective (patriotism of benevolence) theoretical

bases are identified (Perry & Wise, 2000). Thereby, PSM is part of a behavioral process in which public service motives lead to behaviors that benefit the public. According to Perry (1996), the typology of motives driving service motivation comprises at least four dimensions: attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest and civic duty, compassion, and self-sacrifice. Public service motives are based on self-sacrifice and fall into three categories: instrumental motives are related to behavior; the value-based motives are related to value and ethics; the identification motives are related to attitude (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010).

According to Kim and Vandenabeele (2010), PSM emerges as a combination of attraction to public participation, commitment to public values, compassion and self-sacrifice. Historical and institutional differences might explain the different pattern of PSM in different countries. Values, beliefs, and attitudes concerning public service are not the same in the countries (Vandenabeele, Scheepers & Hondeghem, 2006). The institutions in which individuals operate are embedded within the environment, embracing public service values (interest in politics and policy making, self-sacrifice, democratic values) and responding to basic psychological needs located within each individual in order to better internalize the individual's public service identity (Vandenabeele, 2007). PSM is an issue of organizational environment in which employees operate. Self-sacrifice can drive employees with higher PSM to support organizational change (Wright, Christensen & Isett, 2013). Public organizations should create an environment in which employees feel they can contribute both to the public goal and to an organization performing valuable services (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). The importance of the organizational mission may increase employee work motivation in the public sector (Wright, 2007). Public organizations should support the motivational power of public service (Wright, 2007) and adopt strategies that complement PSM for managing an important resource as individuals strongly motivated to perform public service when they believe that the public service mission could be compromised (Brewer & Selden, 2000).

## Changing responsive public organizations rediscovering the public interest

In 1980s-1990s, new public management (Npm) doctrines have driven cultural and managerial change within public sector organizations emerging as theoretical and managerial response to inefficiency of the traditional model of managing *res publica* leading public organizations to import managerial practice from the private sector focusing on re-organization of public bureaucracies disaggregated into agencies more flexible and output oriented, on financial efficiency and performance measurement, on separation of politics from management, reducing government functions through privatization (Hughes, 1994): stressing the private sector styles of management practice towards flexibility in hiring and rewards; a stress on greater parsimony and discipline in use of resources doing more with less, by cutting direct cost and resisting to union demands (Hood, 1991). Thereby, public management reforms driven by Npm ideas have shown difficulties of applying, some limits and contradictory effects. There are some constraints of the management state (Lane, 2009): neglect of meaning, no preservation of intangible values, unresponsiveness to requests and demands of citizens, democratic deficit within institutions. Npm reforms stimulating competition mechanisms increased the chances of unethical behaviors associated with individualistic values reversing equity and legality as traditional values of public

servants (Maesschalck, 2004). Npm doctrines contributed to deteriorating the corporate culture, the traditional work ethos and non-functional values, increasing a decline in motivation and work satisfaction, greater workload and stress (Diefenbach, 2009).

The need of achieving efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness do not comprise all values and principles informing dynamics and life of public organizations. Innovation and traditional values of public service tend to coexist within public management reform. Thereby, public management reforms tend to be also inspired by postmodern values that emphasize the demand for greater social equity as justice as fair treatment, inclusiveness and equity in compensation, policies to harmonize the differences in the conditions of employment between government and the private sector; the humanization that refers to the employee as an individual manifesting specific needs as growth and development and implies to support programs for training/educational opportunities for sustaining the human resource development as related to lifelong learning for a better quality of life in which learning is a shared goal between the employee and the employer; the democratization and empowerment relate to expand access to power and influence on decision-making by engaging citizens, promoting participative decision-making (Wise, 2002). Even if the interaction between public and private organizations is leading to a new public service ethos concerning honesty, community service and competition, consumer choice (Brereton & Temple, 1999), lawfulness, incorruptibility and impartiality tend to emerge as prevailing and specific values within context of public organizations (Van der Wal, De Graaf & Lasthuizen, 2008).

Creating public value relies on public manager sharing responsibility with other officials and citizens to decide what is valuable to produce with public resources by interacting with people to determine and organize the ends and means of service delivery and production (Moore, 1995). Public institutions have to serve the public interest as result of shared leadership based on respect for people dealing with producing public services positively judged by citizens moving towards a better responsiveness and effective collaboration with citizens as partners in the work of government (Vigoda, 2002a). Responsiveness of public administration relying on the quality of human resources system and public servants (Vigoda, 2000) implies a listening administrator in order to promote democratic accountability and administrative effectiveness, by helping public servants to engage in reciprocal communication with the public (Strivers, 1994). Public organizations producing high performances tend to serve the people leading to involvement and participation of citizens sharing ideas and knowledge with public officials (Vigoda, 2002b). Public organizations should ensure that principles of democracy are maintained serving the public interest as result of dialogue about mutual or overlapping interests. Public servants should attend to law, community values, professional standards and citizen interests (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003). The public interest is better advanced by public servants committed to making a meaningful contribution to society by helping citizens to meet their shared interests (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000) for building collaborative relationships with citizens involved in government activities, encouraging shared responsibilities and understanding of public values (Bourgon, 2007).

**The role of training and education as means for promoting motivation to public service**

Human resources practices help to improve and achieve high performances in public sector organizations (Gould-Williams, 2003). Sustaining successful change within public organizations relies on providing resources in terms of training employees, developing new processes and reorganizing the structure, on employees able to learn new behaviors drawn by new policies or innovation in order to effectively institutionalize change as embedded in the institutional context (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). Reinventing government relies on investing in human resources and professionalism of public employees by sustaining education and training as oriented to improve the quality of public services for citizens and society (Crozier, 1988). Change may proceed through the people educated to values, beliefs, and ideas that effectively serve to restore the relationship of confidence with people as co-producer of public value. Change cannot proceed merely by laws but requires new professional skills and behaviors of public employees to ensure coherent processes and available outcomes (Dente & Lo Schiavo, 1999). Change occurs as new organizational behaviors experienced by people are introduced and implemented through explicit and tacit tasks (Solari, 2007). Education and professional socialization tend to exert influence on levels of public service motivation of employees feeling to contribute to the public goal (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Competencies and expertise of personnel help to improve the responsiveness of public administration being positively related to citizen's satisfaction with public services quality. Citizens are likely to perceive public administration as more responsive and sensitive to their demands when to believe that public policy is implemented coherently with clear ethical standards. These findings stimulate to better design and improve training systems for public administrators (Vigoda, 2000).

The quality of personnel in terms of competencies, motivation and commitment to goals and mission of public organizations constitute a strategic resource in order to develop and sustain a responsive public administration (Valotti, 2000). New public administrators should be trained in principles of public administration that provide the necessary foundation for growing administrative system (Moe & Gilmour, 1995). New public managers should have a different style in terms of values, orientations and attitudes, being able to formulate strategic goals and programs, identify citizen needs and actively communicate, including politicians in the management process, advising political decision makers and motivating their staff and employees. It should be necessary to promote a network of new public management teachers through the exchange of information about programs, their organization and success as the first step for a common understanding about appropriate subjects areas (Reichard, 1998).

Sustainable management education relies on involving students, educators, organization and societies willing to participate in interdisciplinary innovative and external communications (Starik, Markus & Clark, 2010) following some principles (Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2011): generation of sustainable value for business and society; effective learning experience for responsible leadership; interacting in a partnership with scientists, business and local government for meeting social and environmental responsibilities and jointly facing these challenges; facilitating the debate and dialogue among government, civil society, business, interest groups and other stakeholders about the issues and questions regarding social responsibility and sustainability.

Employee training and development should be part of a long-term learning strategy including reflection about the expansion of organization knowledge systems (Haugh & Talwar, 2010). Sustaining change relies on competencies, enforcing motivation and commitment of personnel as a strategic resource for building more and more responsive public organizations (Valotti, 2004; Quaglino & Rossi, 2007). Reinventing government implies to design a professional path for education and training programs and methods (Fontana, 1998) leading personnel to assume new tasks learning new values and playing coherent behaviors and roles (Sinatra & De Martiis, 2004). Cultural, professional and social values tend to drive strategic and organizational change with a learning process by sustaining civil service personnel aware to actively contribute to increasing both motivation of personnel and effectiveness of public service delivery (Rebora, 1988).

Different approaches for designing training and education initiatives tend to emerge (Borgonovi, 2004): *training as a strategy of change for services delivery:* training and education initiatives serve to share competencies, knowledge, skills and behaviors to implement processes of innovation and improve the quality of service delivery. *Training as origin or stimulus for change* helps to weaken old pattern of behavior within public administrations where resistance to change is dominant and organizational inertia are pervasive of behaviors and mindset. *Training as a response to specific needs and demands:* by introducing new decrees or act, the disengagement and compliant of citizens for the low quality of services lead to the development of new knowledge, renewing competencies and skills of personnel. Changing and increasing professional skills of public servant contribute to redesign work organization. *Training as a driver for* diffusion of *innovation and creativity sharing* and cultural orientation in order to stimulate and foster the creativity of people.


**Conclusions**

Public institutions serve the public interest as result of dialogue and respect for people. Changing public organizations tend to rediscover the importance of public interest and relevance of public service motivation of employees for driving change and sustaining collaborative relationships with citizens. Public organizations should behave as responsive institutions in order engage citizens relying on employees strongly motivated and committed to public service. Sustaining public service motivation as a source for building change within public organizations should contribute to restoring public trust between citizens and public institutions often perceived as distant and far from needs and demands of citizens and people not always satisfied about how public services are offered and provided. Sustaining public service motivation within public organizations serves for leading public sector reform to proceed beyond a merely legalistic and mandatory compliance driven by laws and contribute to overcoming bureaucratic culture and embed values coherently with ethical and responsible behaviors of public servants by sustaining openness and transparency within the administrative culture. Public organizations tend to create public value and build transparent public administration by sustaining education and training of public employees as a strategic source to drive change and improve the relationship between public institutions and citizens. Public management reform leading to change requires investments on human capital in order to improve professional competencies and education of public employees. PSM can contribute to the cultural change of public

administration if continuously and effectively supported by commitment and education of employees to public values and ethical principles. Training and education may exert influence on ethics and behaviors of public servants as agents of change. Training and education initiatives should be focused more and more on principles and values coherently with the new public service rather than on merely management techniques. Training and education programs can be planned and oriented to hybridize the administrative culture by breaking bureaucratic logics for sustaining the cultural change of norms, values, and behaviors.

## References

Bourgon, J. (2007). Responsive, responsible and respected government: towards a New Public Administration theory. *International Review of Administrative Sciences,* 73(1), 7-26.

Borgonovi, E. (2004). *Ripensare le amministrazioni pubbliche. Tendenze evolutive e percorsi di approfondimento*. Milano: Egea.

Boyne, G.A., Jenkins, G., & Poole, M. (1999). Human Resource Management in the Public and Private Sectors: an empirical comparison. *Public Administration,* 77(2), 407-420.

Brereton, M., & Temple, M. (1999). The New Public Service Ethos: An Ethical Environment for Governance. *Public Administration*, 77(3), 455-474.

Brewer, G.A., Selden, S.C., & Facer II, R.L., (2000). Individual Conceptions of Public Service Motivation. *Public Administration Review,* 60(3), 254-264.

Brewer, G.A., & Selden, S.C. (1998). Whistle Blowers in the Federal Civil Service. New Evidence of the Public Service Ethic. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 8(3), 413-439.

Burke, J.P., & Cleary, R.E. (1989). Reconciling public administration and democracy: The role of the responsible administrator. *Public Administration Review*, 49(2), 180-186.

Crozier, M. (1988). *Stato modesto, Stato moderno. Strategie per un cambiamento diverso.* Roma: Edizioni Lavoro.

Denhardt, R.B., & Denhardt, J.V. (2003). The New Public Service: An Approach to Reform. *International Review of Public Administration*, 8(1), 3-10.

Denhardt, R.B., & Denhardt, J.V. (2000). The New Public Service: Serving Rather than Steering. *Public Administration Review*, 60(6), 549-559.

Diefenbach, T. (2009). New Public Management in Public Sector Organizations: the darks sides of managerialistic 'enlightenment'. *Public Administration,* 87(4), 892-909.

Fernandez, S., & Rainey, H.G. (2006). Managing Successful Organizational Change in the Public Sector. *Public Administration Review*, 66(2), 168-176.

Fontana, F. (1998). La formazione nelle aziende pubbliche. *Azienda pubblica,* 1(2), 11-18.

Fredrickson, H.G., & Hart, D.K. (1985). The Public Service and the Patriotism of Benevolence. *Public Administration Review,* 45(5), 547-553.

Gould-Williams, J. (2003). The importance of HR practices and workplace trust in achieving superior performance: a study of public-sector organizations. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 14(1), 28-54.

Haugh, H.M., & Talwar, A. (2010). How Do Corporations Embed Sustainability Across the Organization? *Academy of Management, Learning & Education*, 9(3), 384-396.

Hood, C. (1991). A Public Management for all seasons? *Public Administration*, 69(1), 3-19.

Kim, S., & Vandenabeele, W. (2010). A strategy for building public service motivation research internationally. Public administration review, 70(5), 701-709.

Hughes, O.E. (1994). *Public Management & Administration. An introduction.* London: MacMillan Press.

Lane, J.E. (2009). *State Management. An enquiry into models of public administration and management.* London: Routledge.

Maesschalck, J. (2004). The Impact of New Public Management Reforms on public servants' ethics: towards a theory. *Public Administration*, 82(2), 465-489.

Moe, R.C., & Gilmour, R.S. (1995). Rediscovering Principles of Public Administration: The Neglected Foundation of Public Law. *Public Administration Review,* 55(2), 135-146.

Moore, M.H. (1995). *Creating Public Value. Strategic Management in Government.* Cambridge: Harvard Business Press.

Moynihan, D.P., & Pandey, S.K. (2007). The role of Organizations in Fostering Public Service Motivation. *Public Administration Review,* 67(1), 40-53.

Perry, J.L. (1996). Measuring Public Service Motivation: an Assessment of Construct Reliability and Validity. *Journal of Public Administration and Theory,* 6(1), 5-23.

Perry, J., & Wise, L.R. (1990). The Motivational Bases of Public Services. *Public Administration Review,* 50(3), 367-373.

Quaglino, G.P., & Rossi, A. (2007). La formazione nelle organizzazioni pubbliche: leva a sostegno delle scelte di cambiamento. In Quaglino, G.P. & Periti, E. (Eds.), *La formazione del management delle università* (pp.31-42). Bologna: IlMulino.

Rainey, H.G., & Steinbauer, P. (1999). Galloping Elephants: Developing Elements of a Theory of Effective Government Organizations. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 9(1), 1-32.

Rainey, H.G. (1982). Reward Preferences among Public and Private Managers: In search of the Service Ethic. *American Review of Public Administration,* 16(4), 288-302.

Rebora, G. (1988). Il cambiamento organizzativo nella pubblica amministrazione. *Azienda pubblica,* 1, 47-102.

Reichard, C. (1998). Education and Training for New Public Management. *International Public Management Journal*, 1(2), 177-194.

Shachter, H.L. (1995). Reinventing Government or Reinventing Ourselves: Two Models for Improving Government Performance. *Public Administration Review*, 55(6), 531-537.

Sinatra, A., & De Martiis, E. (2005). Il ruolo della formazione nel processo di cambiamento della Regione Lombardia. In Sinatra, A. & Alberti, F. (Eds.), *Cambiamento strategico e legittimazione istituzionale. Il caso della Regione Lombardia* (pp.143-193). Milano: Guerini e Associati.

Solari, L. (2003). Viaggiare nel cambiamento. In Solari, L. (Eds.), *Cambiamento organizzativo* (pp.3-10). Milano: Este.

Stachowicz-Stanusch, A. (2011). The implementation of Principles for Responsible Management Education in practice – research results. *Journal of Intercultural Management,* 3(2), 241-257.

Starik, M., Rands, G., Marcus, A.A., & Clark T.S. (2010). In Search of Sustainability in Management Education. *Academy of Management Journal, Learning & Education*, 9(3), 377-383.

Stivers, C. (1994). The Listening Bureaucrat: Responsiveness in Public Administration. *Public Administration Review,* 54(4), 364-369.

Valotti, G. (2004). *Management pubblico. Temi per il cambiamento*. Milano: Egea.

Van der Wal, Z., De Graaf, G., & Lasthuizen, K. (2008). What's valued most? Similarities and differences between the organizational values of the public and private sector. *Public Administration*, 86(2), 465-482.

Vandenabeele, W. (2008). Government calling: public service motivation as an element in selecting government as an employer of choice. *Public Administration,* 86(4), 1089-1105.

Vandenabeele, W. (2007). Toward a Public Administration Theory of Public Service Motivation. An institutional approach. *Public Management Review,* 9(4), 545-566.

Vandenabeele, W., & Scheepers, S. (2006). Public Service Motivation in an International Comparative Pespective: The UK and Germany. *Public Policy and Administration,* 21(1), 13-31.

Vigoda, E. (2002a). From Responsiveness to Collaboration: Governance, Citizens, and the Next Generation of Public Administration. *Public Administration Review*, 62(5), 527-540.

Vigoda, E. (2002b). Administrative Agents of Democracy? A Structural Equation Modeling of the Relationship between Public-Sector Performance and Citizenship Involvement. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 12(2), 241-272.

Vigoda, E. (2000). Are you being served? The responsiveness of public administration to citizens' demands: an empirical examination in Israel. *Public Administration,* 78(1), 165-191.

Wise, L.R. (2002). Public Management Reform: Competing Drivers of Change. *Public Administration Review,* 62(5), 555-567.

Wise, L.R. (2000). Bringing Society In: Toward a Theory of Public-Service Motivation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 10(2), 471-488.

Wright, B.E. (2007). Public Service and Motivation: Does Mission Matter? *Public Administration Review,* 67(1), 54-63.

Wright, B.E., Christensen, R.K., & Isett, K.R. (2013). Motivated to Adapt? The Role of Public Service Motivation as Employees Face Organizational Change. *Public Administration Review*, 73(5), 738-747.