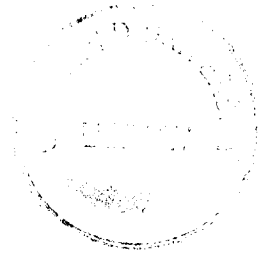




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**SWP 10/94 EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS IN PUBLIC SECTOR
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

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EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS IN PUBLIC SECTOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This paper discusses national differences in HRM within the public sector in nine European countries. Drawing on data from the PW Cranfield Survey of International Human Resource Management we examine the decentralisation of HR policy decisions and trends in the devolvement to line management of responsibility for human resource management. In particular we looked at trends in the compensation area, ie pay determination and merit/ performance related pay and its impact on performance appraisal.

Introduction

Human resource management in the public sector is a topic of increasing interest and importance. There are several reasons for this. First, in most European countries a substantial proportion of the total labour force are employed in public organisations. Second, as most public organisations are manpower - intensive, the efficiency and the effectiveness of people become a key factor in organisational success. Third, there is an increasing market or user orientation within the public sector. If the expectations or needs of the users tax payers are not met, financial resources to the organisation might be decreased. Finally, organisations are facing increasing expectations from their own employees about the organisations of work, challenging tasks, access to training and development, a healthy organisational culture and professional leadership.

These trends represent a fairly radical change in demands on public HRM over the last decade or so. Decentralisation and devolution are perceived as two potential means of coping with these demands.

Background

Over the last decade, the public sector in most OECD countries has been the target of increasing intervention and reform.

In 1989 the OECD Council of Ministers agreed that in order to achieve non-inflationary growth and long term job creation they would pursue measures designed to promote "sound public budgetary positions and promote efficient management" (OECD 1990a p.9) in the public sector. This was the

first time that the OECD formally stated that structural adjustment policies should include the reform of public management systems but this came at the end of a decade in which the public sector in most OECD countries had been the target of increasing intervention and reform. While the scope, terminology and nature of interventions vary between countries the reform programmes generally share a variety of - sometimes conflicting - objectives such as increased efficiency, quality and consumer orientation, budget cuts, decentralisation of service provision and, to some extent, decision making (Bennett 1990, OECD 1990a, Eppstein 1991, Stewart and Walsh 1992). In some countries at least the discussions have taken place amongst an overall questioning of the role of government and the state as a direct provider of services; in the UK and the Netherlands this has gone hand in hand with an extensive privatisation programme. After recent changes in government other countries such as France or Sweden are now following suit.

The public sector employment model, with its "cardinal bureaucratic principles of equity, consistency, equality before the rule, accountability and procedural propriety" (Richards 1990 p13) is increasingly being criticised as too inflexible to deal with increased demands from consumers and to deliver efficiency. In the majority of countries public sector intervention has explicitly included the area of employment and human resource management. This has been accompanied by demands for greater professionalisation of human resource management in the public sector. Particularly in the Nordic countries, and in France since 1988, human resource management and the motivation of public sector personnel have been key themes in public sector reforms (OECD 1990a). In Sweden for example in 1985 legislation was passed introducing wide ranging reforms in public sector personnel management and declaring that public sector personnel management was to be an instrument for the renewal of national administration (Gustaffson 1990 p27). Similarly, Norwegian reform programmes in the second half of the 1980s identified personnel policies as key to achieving increases in productivity and efficiency (Laegreid 1990 p.39), and the Danish government, too, highlighted motivation and job satisfaction of public sector staff in its modernisation programme (OECD 1990a p.37). In France the emphasis on human resources management has been more recent; until 1988 public sector policies were mainly limited to imposing strict cash limits on labour (and other) costs and a decentralisation of administration; after 1988 however there was a much greater emphasis on labour relations and human resource management (OECD 1990a p.50). A second unifying theme in the reforms in these countries is a willingness to collaborate with trade unions. A much less collaborative approach was adapted in some other countries, particularly in the UK. Public sector reform there is characterised by an openly hostile approach to public sector trade unions, paralleled by a fundamental questioning of the principles of service provision by non-market organisations.

While there are different approaches and types of measures used, several common policy areas emerge (OECD 1990a): a decentralisation of personnel management policy decision towards individual agencies; an increase in decision making powers of line managers; the need for

management development, and, within this, an encouragement of private / public sector mobility; an (at least partial) decentralisation of pay bargaining, linked to greater scope for individual pay variations and performance; a greater emphasis on performance management and appraisal; an increase in non-permanent employment.

In this paper we will examine the evidence of developments outlined above in the public sector in nine European countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. The paper will conclude by summarising national variations in the trends that have been observed.

The original data in this report is drawn from the Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project, the largest independent survey of organisational level human resource management in Europe. The research is based on a postal survey of personnel directors in the public and private sector; the data reported here was mainly collected during the Winter of 1991/92 and includes organisation level responses from 4500 organisations; only organisations with 200 or more employees were included in the evaluation (see Brewster et al 1994; Brewster et al 1991 for a detailed discussion of the methodology). The public sector is defined to include nationalised industries, public administration (local and central government, health, higher education) and other parts of public administration that are primarily funded by state revenue¹.

Decentralisation and devolvement of HR policy decisions

In a recent OECD publication on public sector reforms the Swedish government summed up the purpose of their major administrative reform "in three words: decentralisation, deregulation, internationalisation" (OECD 1991 p54). As part of the Swedish reform programme four country councils (mainly responsible for health and social care) and 35 municipalities have been freed, on an experimental basis, from all mandatory implementation of central legislation and regulation (OECD 1991 p56). This 'experiment' was consequently taken up in other Nordic countries, although some commentators doubt how far this has resulted in a redistribution of power in practice (Rose 1991). Few other countries have gone as far as the Nordic "Free municipality programme"; however decentralisation has a key place in many - though not all- public sector reform programmes. Decentralisation included a shift of responsibilities between and within agencies, with local bodies receiving greater discretionary powers to enable them to be more responsive to local conditions and demands. This process has not always explicitly included human resource management - France for example underwent an extensive decentralisation programme during the first term of the Socialist government which did not directly address personnel management. However even where human resource management policies themselves have not been a target for decentralisation, the implementation of such decentralisation has obvious implications for human resource management at

local level. Typically, organisational structures, tasks and job designs have changed, creating a demand for new competencies and even recruitment policies.

We will concentrate here on decentralisation and devolvement of policy making in three human resource management areas: recruitment, training and development and pay. Policies in these areas were fundamental to a distinct public sector approach to people management and have been, perhaps for this reason, the target of public sector reforms in most countries. Decentralisation refers to levels of decision making within organisations, for example from central government department to local service divisions or, correspondingly in the private sector, from national head quarters to subsidiaries or individual plants and workplaces. The decentralisation of corporate decision making was much discussed during the 1980s in relation to private sector attempts at greater differentiation and responsiveness to market development, linked with pressures for greater financial accountability of individual business units. Devolvement on the other hand refers to the redistribution of responsibility for HR policy from specialist HR departments to line managers; both are separate, if related, forms of organisational change. We will begin by examining evidence on the de/centralisation of policy making, comparing private and public sector trends in each country, and will then turn to the role of the line manager.

De/centralisation of policy making

Traditionally the image of employment policy in the public sector, compared to the private sector, is one of uniform practices and centralised policy making. The results of the survey challenge such a perception in two regards (Table 1): first they show that patterns of centralisation vary widely between countries; West Germany is the only country where policy decision in all three areas are centralised in more than three quarters of public sector organisations. Ireland is the only other country where at least half of all public sector organisations have policy in pay, training and recruitment proscribed centrally. At the other end of the spectrum however are Denmark and Finland; here HR policy decisions are decentralised for over eight out of ten organisations in recruitment and training although there continues to be more central control in the pay area.

Second the survey shows that the centralisation of HR policy making is by no means consistently stronger in the public sector than in the private sector (Table 1). Again, this traditional view of public/ private sector patterns is only confirmed in Germany and Ireland. In most other countries, (except in the pay field), there is little difference between private and public sector patterns, both showing similar proportions of centralised organisations. Indeed, differences between countries appear more significant than differences between sectors within countries. The case of Denmark is particularly interesting because here it is the public sector which leads in the decentralisation of decision making. This might be explained by the customarily high level of codetermination of trade

unions at the workplace level, with trade union and managers negotiating any relevant policy changes directly, at whatever level is relevant. Decentralisation is almost as high in Finland, another country with a strongly developed codetermination tradition, although here it applies to both private and public employers. Such levels of decentralisation raise of course important issues of monitoring and maintaining a central overview of developments.

Table 1: Centralisation of policy making at national head quarter: public / private sector comparisons (in % of organisations)

	Pay		Recruitment Training			
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Denmark	53	69	7	40	7	49
Finland	67	57	16	21	17	20
France	89	64	24	31	58	24
Germany (West)	77	56	83	36	87	57
Ireland	93	52	75	36	57	37
Netherlands +	68 +	74	18 +	36	15 +	46
Norway	92	57	39	38	43	41
Sweden	59	73	30	26	31	30
UK	89	54	39	30	42	35
+ 1991						
Source: Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project 1992						

The relatively high freedom of public sector employers in the field of recruitment and selection reflects attempts to open up the public sector to "new blood" and to give greater control to local organisations over who they employ. Recruitment and selection, particularly for career posts, for professional and managerial positions, were traditionally carried out centrally, to central guidelines. The administration of central and uniform selection criteria, based on the merit principle, played an important part in the ideology of the public servant. While the merit principle continues to be important there have been increasing criticisms of the remoteness of selection decisions; these have been paralleled by attempts in some countries to widen entry channels and make it possible for people to move into the civil service from the private sector in mid career (OECD 1990a). Having reached similar levels of decentralisation as the private sector is likely to reflect a greater opening and variety of recruitment channels and a shift in policy.

Pay policies

Given the important underlying theme of budget controls, if not reductions, and the fact that labour costs in the public sector easily constitute the highest budget item, it is not surprising that pay decisions in general remain relatively centralised. Of course "centralisation and decentralisation are not mutually exclusive" (Fowler 1988 p29). Centralised policy making has, as in the field of pay, included the decentralisation of some of the operational aspects (see below). At the same time firm control has been kept on the final outcome. This has been the case, through setting strictly cash limited budgets in France and Ireland for example.

This continuation of central decision making is also reflected in the levels of pay bargaining. Basic pay negotiations in the public sector, particularly for lower staff groups, remain typically centralised. Table 2 shows the proportions of organisations where basic pay for manual workers is determined at the national/ industry or organisational level. IUt shows that here the public sector, with the exception of Sweden, is generally more likely to follow central collective agreements than the private sector. In the central European countries there has been little movement away from the traditional pattern, a fact probably at least partly due to attempts to keep control over public sector budgets. The British Government however, in its recent White Paper "People, jobs and opportunities" stresses its determination to increase the move away nationalised bargaining during the 1990s (IDS 1992); at the same time the Treasury is continuing overall control through strict cash limits.

While organisations do not necessarily opt out of central collective bargaining, they might have additional workplace bargaining to supplement the national agreements. In Denmark, Sweden and Finland between a quarter and a third of public sector organisations negotiate pay at organisational level. Denmark and Sweden particularly have decentralised public sector bargaining during the last decade. Decentralisation in this context partly means a move from national to sectoral negotiations, as in the case of Sweden where there are now four bargaining groups rather than one (Gustaffson 1990 p35).

Pay flexibility

All countries in the study (apart from Germany) made some attempts at reforming the traditionally centralised pay negotiation systems in public services (OECD 1990a, Ferner 1991). These attempts were motivated by two objectives: to control public sector pay by making it more responsive to local conditions; and to deal with recruitment and retention problems in increasingly competitive labour markets. As has been pointed out elsewhere (Ferner 1991) the two objectives - of cost control and responsiveness to tight labour markets - did not necessarily sit easily with each other. The latter problem particularly affected certain new skills (for example computing) where the public sector had

to compete directly with private sector employers and where existing grading structures were seen as too inflexible to deal with the need to pay premiums. It coincided with an increase in job mobility of 'career' staff in some countries who previously would have stayed within the public sector but now increasingly left the public sector for more lucrative private sector appointments (Laegreid 1990).

The pressure for reforms and greater scope for differentiation in rewards was increased by professional trade unions, at least in the Nordic countries and France. These trade unions were increasingly moving against the traditionally more egalitarian and flatter pay grades in the public sector and negotiated for differentials to reflect their skill and labour market position (OECD 1990a; Laegreid 1990; Gustaffson 1990, Marsden 1991).

Such a shift in values is also expressed among individual employees, with an increasing trend towards individualism. The "old" value system stressing solidarity, helping the weakest and not promoting yourself have to some extent been replaced by a desire to document own performance and competencies, make poor performers more visible and exploit labour market gain for individual strength. IN the UK at least such a change in attitudes (and policies) took place against the background of "good times", with rapid growth and expansion during the second half of the 1980s. However to some extent these perceptions have been reinforced once the recession, restructuring and public service cuts set in earnest. The threat of closures and redundancies leads to a desire to differentiate one's own performance and to push line (and personnel) management to secure the survival of the unit/ organisation by firing the ones not capable or willing to take their share of the workload.

This change in attitudes, which even trade unions reluctantly have to accept (and perhaps even promote on behalf of their members) create a fertile ground for individualised compensation systems.

Country	D(W)	DK	E	F	FIN	IRL	N	NL	P	S	T	UK														
Private and public sector																										
National/industry-wide collective bargaining	ni	ni	75	58	43	61	16	82	85	87	63	91	72	72	25	ni	29	29	40	55	69	76		53	89	24
Regional collective bargaining	ni	ni	7	25	21	3	8	11	7	2	12	27	25	19	10	25	18	5	10	10	14	7		30	2	8
Company/division, etc.	ni	ni	29	6	26	12	41	23	14	10	25	10	19	8	9	8	29	29	40	55	69	76		50	14	36
Establishment/site	ni	ni	5	8	18	11	30	23	26	5	18	9	8	29	29	40	55	69	76	76	76		50	14	36	
Individual	ni	ni	15	11	3	4	12	13	15	0	8	10	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22		1	10	38

[illegible]

Table 3: Organisations where there has been an increase in variable pay elements in the total pay package between 1989 and 1992 (in percent)		
	Public	Private
Denmark	83	34
Finland	48	40
France	48	40
Germany (West)	47	50
Ireland	25	35
Netherlands+	48+	33
Norway	34	41
Sweden	43	53
UK	49	35
+ 1991		
Source: Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project 1992		

Table 3 shows the extent to which organisations increased variable pay elements during the previous three years and shows that, with the exception of Ireland (and Germany when only public administration is included), at least a third of public sector employers had increased variable pay; in Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands and the UK proportionately more organisations followed this trend than in the private sector. The low figures in German public administration compared to the German private sector are likely to be due firstly to the lack of scope for variable pay in the German public sector pay system (Seglow 1991) but also to the fact that public sector labour markets continue to be rather isolated from private sector competition. The picture in Ireland conforms with the previously mentioned emphasis on budget controls, and, combined with the centralised national wage accord, presents a rather typical picture of public private sector differences in response to income policies.

The link between labour market pressures and the increase in variable pay is confirmed by comparisons with the responses to this question in 1991 and 1990 (Hegewisch 1991, 1992): both Sweden and the UK were in the middle of a recession at the time of the 1992 survey; in Sweden the share of public sector organisations having increased variable pay fell from 93% in 1990 to 48% in 1991 to 43% in 1992. In the UK the movement has been less clear but there also has been a fall between 1991 and 1992 (from 56% to 49%). In Sweden moreover 'variable pay' is translated more closely to 'individually negotiated pay' and the uptake amongst public sector organisations reflects the introduction of "absolute figure salaries" in 1989 which abolished grades for municipal salaried

staff (Gustaffson 1990 p 32); as a result of which new recruits can freely negotiate their entry level wages, a practice which, incidentally, is leading to greater pay differentials between men and women, according to Swedish health service unions (Hegewisch et al 1993). On the other hand there has been a big increase in proportion in France, from less than a fifth to almost half of all public sector organisations, reflecting a change in policy as well as a buoyant economy at the time.

The highest share of public sector organisations increasing variable pay in both 1991 and 1992 is found in Denmark. There the government explicitly allocated a share of total wages (0.23 % of total salaries in 1989 and 0.15 % in 1990 to make wages and grade more flexible in response to recruitment and retention problems (OECD 1990a p38). Although this figure (less than 1 % of total wages and salaries) does not seem to be very high, the psychological impact of individualised and flexible compensation is quite dramatic. First of all it directs the focus towards assessing the performance or market value of each person, and it tends to legitimate (to some extent at least) the individualisation of HR policy. The experience so far is that most organisations tend to base the allocation of extra discretionary salary components on the function (i.e. the tasks performed in the job) rather than the performance (ie the behaviour of the person). It is believed, however, that with time there will be a greater focus on individual performance and competencies as criteria for distribution of the extra salary awards.

Merit/ performance related pay

Within a general move towards greater differentiation through variable pay, merit/ performance related pay has been introduced in several countries as part of a greater emphasis on individual motivation and performance management. Arguably this was often done as much to change employee behaviour as to put greater pressure on line managers to change supervisory behaviour (Hegewisch 1991). However undoubtedly recruitment problems also played a major role (IDS 1992 p.4). Merit/ performance related pay schemes were mostly introduced for senior managerial staff (OECD 1990a p13). Only in the UK however are there now performance related pay schemes for managers in the majority of organisations. The UK is also the only country where, at this level, there are proportionately more public than private sector organisations having introduced this practice. Similar determination in the French public sector to introduce performance related pay in the second half of the 1980s was blocked when it caused serious industrial relations problems. The Finnish public sector responses, with over a quarter of organisations having introduced performance related pay for managers, particularly reflect the nationalised industries in the sample where there have been major reforms in job responsibilities, together with the introduction of productivity bonus and merit pay (OECD 1991 p.23). Overall, in all countries apart from the UK, the introduction of performance related pay in the public sector is significantly lower than in the private sector (Table 4).



Table 4: Comparisons of the uptake of merit/ performance related pay in the public and private sector (in % of organisations)

	Management		Professional/ Manual technical			
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Denmark	38	65	43	57	29	20
Finland	23	36	34	35	27	23
France*	47	74	39	63	29	43
Germany (W)	16	21	18	43	8	36
Ireland	27	64	17	55	2	18
Netherlands+	30+	21	28+	25	30+	27
Norway	7	21	8	22	12	6
Sweden	9	14	9	8	23	30
UK	68	64	35	59	9	26
* 1990 ; + 1991						
Source: Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project 1992						

Performance related pay is not a concept that translates easily across Europe; in Denmark, with a relatively high uptake of 38% for managerial staff, and Sweden the term has been translated as pay negotiated on an individual level; as discussed above individual performance assessment continues to be rare as a basis for pay awards.

The concept in the Netherlands more easily corresponds to that in the UK. The Dutch government, as the UK one, has very much pushed private sector notions of management in its attempts to reform the public sector; it is the only country apart from the UK where the take up of this performance related pay is higher among public than private sector organisations in the sample. As in the UK (Farnham and Horton 1992) performance related pay is clearly encouraged as a way of introducing private sector practices. Unlike the UK, and in spite of much discussion of the concept, the spread of performance related pay in the Dutch private sector has been slow, reflecting perhaps a lack of scope for merit increases when these have to be additional to collectively negotiated cost of living increases.

The introduction of performance related pay for non-managerial staff groups is less common. Nevertheless in at least a fifth of organisations in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and the UK such schemes have been extended to clerical employees.

The survey does not allow an assessment of how many staff are included in each category, nor of the size of the performance related pay element; other research suggests that this is generally not very substantial. In this context may be the symbolic value of an introduction of a measure clearly at odds with previous public sector practices is of greater importance than the financial effects (Edwards et al 1992; Ferner 1991).

Performance appraisal

With an emphasis on performance management in the public sector has come a push for a more widespread use of performance appraisal. Whilst performance appraisal is already widely used in public sector organisations in many countries, there continues to be some diversity in uptake across Europe even if, in over half of the countries, the uptake in the private sector is slightly higher than in the public sector. In some countries, in Germany and parts of the British public sector for example, some form of performance management has long been part of standard public sector procedure, and here the survey reflects traditional standardised public sector practice. In others there have been changes to established procedures, trying to make them a more relevant tool in an effort to motivate staff. In France, too, after 1988 there was much emphasis on performance appraisal, and, as can be seen from Table 5, 48% of organisations have now introduced these. In practice however effectiveness and further uptake in France have been hampered by both management and trade union opposition who see this as a threat to their traditional autonomy (Marsden 1991). In Denmark, as part of the greater emphasis on motivation and career development, each employee is supposed to conduct an annual career development talk with their line managers which differ from traditional performance appraisals (a variant of the traditional performance appraisal but much more concerned with identifying development potential).

Arguably, the increased emphases on performance related pay and performance appraisal do not sit easily with each other. This is particularly so for the annual career development dialogue which are believed to be damaged by a discussion of salary issues at the same time (or between the same people at a different time). A balanced dialogue between two people who - for this purpose - are on equal terms as they both have an interest in an honest discussion of future perspectives, will not benefit from being mixed up with a salary negotiation at the same time. However, in Denmark at least, with the increasing individualisation of the work environment and a touch of "survival of the fittest", there is an increasing acceptance of - and interest in - getting performance rating data on the table. Survival in the organisation means having one's competencies documented, so the interest of employees themselves in performance assessment and performance base compensation is increasing.

Table 5: Regular use of performance appraisal in public sector organisations (in % of organisations);		
	Public	Private
Denmark	29 (68*)	48 (83)
Finland	39	67
France	48	65
Germany (West)	68	53
Ireland	48	75
Netherlands +	87 +	86
Norway	59	76
Sweden	89	83
UK	80	83
* Annual career development talk; + 1991		
Source: Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project 1992		

Thus to summarise of developments in the pay and performance management field: in most countries the government or central policy makers continue to control major pay policy decisions. Beyond this however much of what is generally associated with public sector pay policies - in terms of national bargaining, fairness, equity and emphasis on grades- has come to be challenged. Pay and rewards issues which traditionally played little role in day to day management in the public sector have clearly begun to be pushed onto the line management agenda. Compensation has become an operational parameter which, at least in theory, can be monitored to stimulate a redirection of organisational behaviour. The changing role of managers in public organisations can be explicated and reinforced by rewarding behaviour which meets these role expectations. The set of criteria determining the salary level of a given manager is signalling what really matters and is given high priority in the organisation. Examples of this symbolic connotation are compensation systems rewarding people for rotating in the organisation or undertaking a managerial job for a given period of time (hereby contributing to flexibility and mobility at managerial levels). Another example is the Danish performance based salary system for managers in governmental agencies. Managers are assessed on three criteria: the achievement of specific, predetermined goals for the particular organisational unit; people management; and the linkage with other part of the organisation and/or external bodies. The goal achievement is assessed by top management; the people management performance by the subordinates (through an anonymous survey); and managerial behaviour across

organisational boundaries by people working in those units. This system, which has got substantial popularity, is making very visible what matters in terms of "good managerial behaviour". Three areas are clearly defined, and the performance is assessed by the "client" or "recipient" of the managerial behaviour.

Line management responsibilities

So far we have discussed two major trends: the increased decentralisation of policy decision to local unit and a greater emphasis on performance management. These challenge the existing public sector model of employment and HR policy development; they also increase the responsibility and accountability of individual unit and line managers for HR issues. The decentralisation of HR responsibilities raises issues of local resources and competences to deal with the new tasks, sometimes acting as a constraint on the ability to implement such new policies (Laegreid 1990). This is not least so with regards to the new responsibilities for line managers who have to add personnel management to their existing portfolio of management responsibilities (Fudge 1990 p.96). The greater responsibility and involvement of line managers in human resource management are of course a central component of human resource management theories (Legge 1989); the desired shift from detailed regulation and rule compliance to an increased use of initiative and discretion by individual operational managers has been an important part of reform programmes (OECD 1990a p11), particularly in the Netherlands (OECDa 1990 p75) and the UK (Fairbrother 1991 p.72).

Not surprisingly, given the trends already discussed, in almost all countries in the survey line management responsibility for pay, recruitment and training has increased; in most countries moreover proportionately more public sector employers report increased responsibility than private sector employers. Training is the area seeing the greatest changes, with over six out of ten public sector organisations in Finland, France, Norway and Sweden noting an increase here. This is an area where private sector employer managers, too, have seen a shift in responsibility even if the trend is not as widespread. Changes in responsibility for recruitment and pay issues are almost as marked (see Table 9). Line managers carry increased responsibility for pay policies, even if the number of organisations where responsibility has increased is generally slightly lower than in the other two fields. This confirms that a centralisation of policy making does not preclude greater operational responsibility for day by day decisions. France shows a comparatively low level of organisations increasing line management responsibility for pay - one in three in the public sector, slightly less than in the private sector. However there has been a clear increase in the proportions of public sector organisations reporting such increases since 1990, the first year of the survey, whereas the number of organisations reporting an increase in the private sector has fallen.

Exceptions to this general trend are once again Germany and Ireland. Irish public sector employers

clearly fall back behind the private sector; almost half as few public as private sector organisations report increased line management responsibility for recruitment for example - possibly explained by the imposition of general vacancy freezes for much of the last decade; movement in the field of line management responsibility for training has also been less widespread than in the private sector. Lack of change in the German public sector in the field of training and development, particularly marked compared to trends in other countries, mirrors private sector trends there.

Table 6: Organisations reporting an increase in line management responsibility for recruitment, training and development and pay in the three years up to 1992 (in % of organisations)						
	Recruitment Training		Pay			
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Denmark	44	24	53	28	50	16
Finland	53	35	66	44	47	29
France	44	36	63	52	29	36
Germany (West)	24	16	12	14	18	17
Ireland	18	32	30	45	13	10
Netherlands +	54 +	41	72 +	50	37 +	17
Norway	60	40	62	54	42	26
Sweden	70	60	71	66	76	57
UK	42	27	51	44	39	21
+ 1991						
Source: Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project 1992						

These developments of greater line management responsibility are taking place against a background where in seven out of ten and more organisations line managers already carry shared responsibility with personnel departments for policies (with the exception, once again, of Ireland). Overall the role of the HR department is more pronounced in the pay field than in recruitment and training; in the latter generally in less than a sixth of public sector organisations policy is laid down solely by the HR department (again with the exception of Ireland and, in the case of training, Germany). Within this, public sector HR departments are marginally more likely than their private sector counter parts to still hold sole responsibility. Interestingly, however, at least in Denmark and Sweden, public sector organisations are also much more likely to give sole responsibility to line managers for both training and recruitment decisions. This reflects perhaps the diversity of developments within the public sector and that, where organisations have begun reforms, these have gone further than in the private sector.

At this point it might be interesting to highlight the case of Denmark. In a national comparison of integration (defined as the extent to which HR policy making is integrated with corporate strategy formulation) and devolvement Denmark consistently appears among the least integrated and most devolved countries (see Brewster and Holt Larsen 1992 for a detailed discussion). Differentiating between private and public sector practices, this pattern seems to mainly originate from public sector practices.

Changes in Managerial Jobs

The developments we have outlined so far show, that in a variety of ways, public sector employees, particularly managers, are faced by new developments and practices which mean a rupture from existing long established working patterns. Interestingly within this however respondents to the survey do not report a broadening of managerial jobs and responsibilities to any greater extent than in the private sector (with the exception of Sweden). In several countries indeed a greater number of organisations report a narrowing of job contents rather than a broadening. This might indicate a greater attention to managerial job roles and greater levels of control, as organisations review their overall performance. Germany poses an interesting case here. Whereas in almost all the other areas there are markedly few areas of change, here developments in Germany outstrip those in most other countries.

The issue of broadening managerial job contents in the public sector is quite controversial - especially for managers with close contact with politicians. The general trend that middle and top managers should be generalists - rather than functional specialists - does not seem to apply to the same extent in government agencies as in other public sector organisations, not to speak of private enterprises. Because of continued greater scrutiny of public administration in terms of justice and adherence to legislation there is a pressure for people in managerial positions to be experts in each field themselves, with less scope for delegation and concentration on general managerial tasks. This creates a dilemma, with no easy solutions. Managers in the public sector are at the same time expected to follow the trend and become generalists, people managers and charismatic leaders of their units - and expected to be deeply involved in the detailed subject matter of their unit, against the background of personal accountability for any illegal decision, error or invalid information. This issue- the tension between generalism and specialism in public administration - however is one that varies greatly between public sector organisations, within and between countries. In the UK for example the generalist model would typically dominate in central government whereas the specialist model of professionalism would dominate in local authorities (Kingdom 1993).

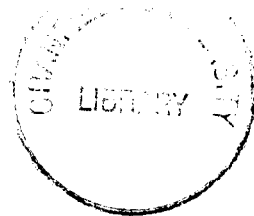
Table 7: Organisations reporting a widening or narrowing of job contents for managerial employees in the three years preceding 1992 (in % of organisations)

	Public		Private	
	Wider	Narrower	Wider	Narrower
Denmark	na	na	na	na
Finland	30	50	44	54
France	17	64	12	52
Germany (West)	57	22	61	29
Ireland	20	18	53	21
Netherlands +	na	na	28	33
Norway	37	49	42	55
Sweden	69	8	52	11
UK	43	31	46	23
* Annual career development talk; + 1991				
Source: Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project 1992				

Conclusions

Few countries during the past decade have escaped increased scrutiny of public sector budgets, and with it pressures to improve efficiency and achieve a reduction in costs. Similarly, public services have been to pressures for greater service quality and accountability to consumer demand. Several further common themes emerge: an active encouragement of private sector practices; a rethinking of the role of management and a devolvement of management responsibility further down the line; an emphasis on performance measurement and accountability; a cost consciousness.

Within these general themes however responses vary considerably between countries. Countries such as Germany and Ireland appear to have seen little change to existing practices and very little redistribution of responsibility - whether between HR departments and the line or central and local agencies. Common to these two countries is also the lack of movement in the fields of pay and rewards. While German public sector literature similarly talks about new challenges and the need for accountability and greater closeness to citizens and consumers so far this has led to few general changes in human resource management. This stability of existing practices is confirmed by the reaction to the demands of reunification: West German public sector employment practices were introduced wholesale into East Germany (OECD 1991) and rather than seeing this as a chance to introduce reforms, it at least momentarily slowed down the voices who were pushing for reform.



The Nordic countries and the UK on the other hand have seen change in many areas, often showing stronger movements than the private sector. However while reforms in the Nordic countries have happened within a general acceptance of the public sector in the UK they have been driven by a conviction that the public sector should not only learn from private sector practices but that the balance and division of responsibility between private and public sector providers should be reconsidered- thus questioning the very notion of public sector services. Within this however the Scandinavian countries, particularly Denmark and Norway have moved further in terms of decentralisation and deregulation than the UK, particularly by experimenting in the field of pay determination.

A discussion of national patterns of public sector change raises the obvious issue of political influence: public sector employment practices by their very nature are more open to direct government influence, and are thus coloured by the political convictions of the leading parties. The socialist French (prior to the last election) and the social democratic Norwegian government followed a very cooperative industrial relations policy and stressed issues of staff motivation and satisfaction, and overall supported the notion of the public sector. The conservative British government clearly saw trade unions as an interference in public sector management and continues to be hostile to the very notion of public sector management. However the French government in the early 1980s mainly pursued a policy of budget cuts and vacancies which at least initially fully matched the policy of the British government. Germany on the other hand had a conservative government throughout the 1980s yet pressures for reforms or the introduction of private sector values has been least pronounced. Lastly, Sweden where reforms have to some extent gone furthest, had a social democratic government. Nevertheless, regardless of the political colour of governments, politicians are seeking greater direct influence on management in the public sector, including the area of people management.

However, according to the survey in most countries there has been a rapid adaptation of practices implied by new human resource management theories, at least in the areas examined here. This raises several general issues:

A survey of public sector reform programmes, particularly regarding decentralisation of decision making, highlights a general issue: limits to decentralisation are as much set by lack of managerial competence (or commitment) as by trade union and employee resistance. One of the greatest areas of change has been in the role of line management; more research is needed on what such changes mean in practice and how they impact on management employee relations.

Overall, it remains to be seen how far the greater introduction of private sector notions of human resource management will make a lasting impact or whether private sector models of HR have had

more impact on how we talk about the public sector than how it works" (Olsen 1987 p.3). This will be particularly interesting given changing labour market conditions in all countries in the survey. Nevertheless it also raises the question whether the reference to private sector practices as new models for public sector management are help or hindrance. As Stewart and Walsh (1992) point out the new models are often simplified if not idealised versions of actual private sector behaviour, "often introduce without regard to the distinctive purpose condition and tasks of the public sector" (p499).

Lastly, while the survey does not allow to assess the extent of a particular practice within an organisation it does show that the spreading of practice across the public sector is not uniform. More research is needed to determine why certain organisations have not yet introduced new HR practices, and who, within those organisations that did, was responsible for the decision.

Notes

1. The composition of the public sector sample (see Table 11 below), within this definition, varies from country to country. Within the British public sector sample for example the number of nationalised industries is very small, reflecting recent privatisation policies. The Finnish and German public sector sample on the other hand is composed to almost equal parts of public businesses (and banks in the German case) and public administration. In as far as policy vary between different parts of the public sector or in as far as there are varying HRM traditions across the public sector or between nationalised industries and public administration - this should be taken into account.

Table 11 : Number of respondents in each sector									
	D(W)	DK	F	FIN	IRL	N	NL	S	UK
Public 103	129	111	62	40	103	48+	137	314	
Private	703	192	487	136	88	118	123	168	795

+ 1991

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