REF2021

Institution: University College London
Unit of Assessment: 19 Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: Shaping Management Practices for Greater Employee Voice, Work Motivation and Integrity in Civil Services
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: September 2015–2020
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:

Name(s): Christian Schuster	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Lecturer; Associate Professor; Professor in Public Management	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: September 2015–present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: September 2015–31 December 2020
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Prof. Christian Schuster's research has improved the civil service management practices of governments and the civil service reform assistance provided by international organisations. With Jan Meyer-Sahling (Nottingham), he led the largest cross-country and cross-regional survey of public servants to date, collaborating with national governments in ten countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. The survey has shaped international best practice in surveying public servants, with the World Bank, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Colombian government each changing their existing civil service survey instruments in response. It led three governments that had not previously used national civil service surveys to adopt them as management instruments across government institutions, and six governments to adopt surveys to understand employee needs during the Covid-19 pandemic, giving almost 250,000 public servants a new channel for voice. Moreover, the findings led governments to undertake a range of evidence-based management reforms of, for instance, recruitment practices in Chile and Kosovo and ethics training practices in Chile and Nepal.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Governments can only be effective if civil servants are motivated and able to implement policy and services well. In OECD government and private sector contexts, 'people analytics' – large-scale employee surveys and administrative data – are widely used and found effective for understanding and managing employees **[R1]**. Yet, 'people analytics', particularly employee surveys, have remained largely unused by governments in developing countries, reflecting a wider dearth of evidence on management practices and their effects in developing country civil services. This is in part because existing employee survey instruments focus on business and OECD contexts, rather than the challenges faced in many developing and transition country governments – including corruption, politicisation and nepotism. Schuster's civil service management research addresses this gap. With Meyer-Sahling (Nottingham), he developed (with equal contributions) a survey instrument adapted to measure and understand the particular management challenges faced by developing country governments. Building on, among others, a pilot survey experiment with public servants in the Dominican Republic **[R2]**, Schuster and Meyer-Sahling co-led the implementation of this novel instrument in the largest-ever cross-country survey of civil servants – with 23,000 respondents in ten countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, funded by a UK Department for International Development (DFID)–British Academy grant **(i)**. Three key findings emerge from this research:

1. Civil service surveys can give developing country governments a crucial evidence base for understanding employee needs and improving management practices
Schuster and collaborators' ten-country civil service survey showed that civil service management practices (e.g. recruitment practices) and civil servant attitudes (e.g. towards corruption) vary sharply *within* developing country governments – across and within state institutions – despite shared legal rules **[R3]**. Thus, prevalent practices of looking to a country's civil service legislation or to country-level (e.g. expert) assessments are inadequate for understanding how civil service management practices really operate and where civil service legislation is complied with inside the state. Micro-level civil service survey measures address this gap and, additionally, enable

organisations to give voice to employees and better understand employee needs, which has been particularly important during the Covid-19 pandemic **[R1]**.

2. The positive effects of meritocratic recruitment practices in civil services

Although meritocratic recruitment often features in lists of alleged public sector best practices, previous work did not provide evidence on whether it has positive effects on civil servants. Through a survey experiment with public servants in the Dominican Republic, Schuster and Oliveros found that merit recruitment is associated with greater work motivation as well as lower corruption and clientelism by those hired **[R2]**. Building on this pilot survey, a four-country survey experiment with public servants in Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe – part of the ten-country survey – suggested this finding generalises across developing countries **[R4]**. Meanwhile, the ten-country survey found that political and nepotistic – rather than meritocratic – criteria influenced hiring for a significant share of public servants in each of the countries surveyed **[R3]**.

3. The inefficacy of government ethics training to enhance integrity in civil services

As with merit recruitment procedures, ethics training forms part of alleged public sector 'best practice', yet prior work did not assess whether ethics training is, in fact, effective at enhancing integrity in civil services. Schuster's ten-country survey data showed that, in several surveyed countries, this is not the case. Public servants who are trained in ethics are neither more knowledgeable about ethics codes, nor more able to resolve ethical dilemmas; nor do they intend to behave more ethically in situations involving conflicts of interest **[R5/R6]**.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. Schuster, C., et al. (2020). 'Responding to COVID-19 through Surveys of Public Servants'. *Public Administration Review* 80(5), 792–96. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13246 (Peer-reviewed.)

R2. Oliveros, V., and Schuster, C. (2018). 'Merit, Tenure, and Bureaucratic Behavior: Evidence From a Conjoint Experiment in the Dominican Republic'. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51(6), 759–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017710268 (Peer-reviewed.)

R3. Meyer-Sahling, J., Schuster, C., and Mikkelsen, K. (2018). *Civil Service Management in Developing Countries: What Works? Evidence from a Survey of 23,000 Public Servants in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe*. Report prepared for DFID. https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/1674899/1 (Flagship report from grant **i**; cited by multiple books and journal articles.)

R4. Schuster, C., Meyer-Sahling, J.-H., and Mikkelsen, K. (2020). '(Un)Principled Principals, (Un)Principled Agents: The Differential Effects of Managerial Civil Service Reforms on Corruption in Developing and OECD Countries'. *Governance*, 33(4), 829–48. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12461 (Peer-reviewed.)

R5. Schuster, C., Meyer-Sahling, J., Mikkelsen, K., and González Parrao, C. (2017). *Prácticas de gestión de personas para un servicio público más motivado, comprometido y ético en Chile* [Management Practices for a More Motivated, Committed and Ethical Public Service in Chile]. Country report prepared for the National Directorate of the Civil Service, Ministry of Finance, Santiago, Chile from grant **i**. https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/1674905/1

R6. Meyer-Sahling, J., Schuster, C., Mikkelsen, K., Shrestha, S.K., Luitel, B., and Toth, F. (2018). *Civil Service Management in Nepal: Evidence from a Survey of More than 1,200 Public Servants*. Kathmandu: Report prepared for the DFID Nepal Office from grant **i**. https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/publication/1701955/1

Grant:

i. Meyer-Sahling, J., and Schuster, C. 'Civil Service Reform and Anti-Corruption in Developing Countries', UK Department for International Development (DFID)–British Academy Anti-Corruption Evidence Grant, 2016–18, GBP400,000 (Competitively awarded and peer-reviewed.)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Schuster's research findings have improved civil service management practices in governments and civil service reform assistance by international organisations. Schuster's work has (1) shaped

international best practice in surveying public servants; (2) led three governments to adopt national surveys of public servants as new management instruments, and contributed to the adoption of Covid-19 Surveys of Public Servants in six countries; and (3) provided an evidence base for management reforms, including of recruitment practices in two governments and ethics training practices in two governments.

1) Shaping international best practice in surveying public servants

Results from Schuster and collaborators' survey of 23,000 public servants **[R3]** were shared with policymakers through policy reports published with the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Commission, policy blogs published with the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, as well as country policy reports published with seven of the participating governments. Schuster presented the results in more than thirty presentations to policymakers at international organisations – the World Bank, European Commission, OECD, Inter-American Development Bank and United Nations – and to national governments, including civil service directors, government ministers, heads of public agencies and other high-level officials in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Estonia, Kosovo, Nepal, and the UK.

As a result, the World Bank and OECD changed their advice to governments and their own practice on civil service survey questionnaires, as did the Colombian government for its own civil service survey. The World Bank cites **[R3]** three times in its flagship report on innovating bureaucracy and its 'video keynotes' on measurement in public sectors **[A[1], A[2]]**. As a senior official explains, the World Bank 'has modified over a dozen questions in [its] standard civil service survey instrument in response to findings from … Prof Schuster's work to create more actionable and effective management diagnostics for government' **[A[3]]**. In addition, in 2020, the World Bank created the Global Survey of Public Servants (GSPS) with Schuster and collaborators. This 'combines Prof. Schuster's and Meyer-Sahling's as well as the World Bank's and Fukuyama's research findings about surveying public servants to create a common global standard for civil service surveys in developing countries' **[A[3]]**. The World Bank Bureaucracy Lab 'now includ[es] [the GSPS] core questionnaire in all of its civil service surveys' **[A[3]]**. This work 'significantly impacts governments around the world': the Lab surveys civil servants in 'roughly half a dozen governments every year, with 150,000 respondents in 2020 alone' **[A[3]]**. As a senior World Bank official puts it, 'a large number of governments and civil servants will thus benefit from better-formulated questions, a better understanding of employee needs to ensure their voices are heard, and better management diagnostics' thanks to Schuster's research **[A[3]]**. Moreover, as its Head of Public Employment and Management explains, the OECD drew on lessons learned from Schuster's ten-country survey in designing its cross-country employee engagement module for OECD country civil service surveys, 'in particular to move towards a multi-dimensional engagement concept, which allows countries to compare themselves in a number of underlying indicators' **[B]**. Similarly, as an official from the country's National Administrative Department of Statistics confirms, the Colombian government changed 32 questions in its annual civil service survey with over 25,000 respondents 'to harmonise them with the survey instrument Professor Schuster has co-developed […] thus allowing Colombia to compare itself in a range of indicators with other countries and collect more actionable data for civil service management reform' **[C]**.

2) Adoption of national surveys of civil servants as management instruments by governments: better evidence for people management and greater employee voice

Schuster's research has directly led not only to revisions of existing surveys in government and international organisations, but also to the adoption of new surveys in multiple contexts, including (1) national surveys of public servants as management instruments in three governments (Chile, Croatia and Slovakia) that previously had none – giving almost 100,000 public servants an additional channel for expressing their views; (2) a Covid-19 Survey of Public Servants, which gave 150,000 public servants in six governments voice during the Covid-19 pandemic; and (3) a Latin America-wide survey of public servants in National Statistics Offices, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. These impacts were due to studies **[R1/R3]**, which underscored the importance of civil service surveys to understand employee needs and management practices

across government institutions, and provided governments with a tailored instrument to measure these practices and their effects on key staff attitudes – such as work motivation.

With Chile's Civil Service Agency, Schuster and collaborators implemented the 'National Survey of Public Servants' in 2019. As the Head of Research and International Cooperation at the Chilean Civil Service explains, this gave '78,000 public servants … a new channel for voice – to systematically feedback on potential concerns ranging from workloads to leadership to pay' **[D¹]**. It gave the government a 'completely new basis for evidence-based civil service management across central government institutions' **[D¹]**. Results were, in the words of the Deputy Director of the Chilean Civil Service, 'highly influential … with over 30 newspaper articles, three television programs and three radio programs covering the results. They also helped improve personnel management practices, with numerous institutions reforming, for instance, their onboarding, performance evaluation, training or recruitment practices based on the survey results' **[D²]**. They led the government to announce new civil service legislation (see below). Underscoring its utility to government, 'the National Directorate of the Civil Service is looking to institutionalize this survey … as a regular management instrument in government' **[D¹]**.

In response to presentations of the ten-country survey **[R3]** at the European Commission, the governments of Slovakia and Croatia adopted the survey instrument. In both countries, Schuster and his collaborators implemented National Surveys of Public Servants in 2020. As the Director General of the Slovak Department of Civil Service observes, the survey there (with 11,000+ responses) 'provided detailed evidence for the Government Office to effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Civil Service Law across public administration following the adoption of the Law in 2017', and its findings were incorporated into the government's concept paper on leadership and remuneration **[E]**. In Croatia, the survey (with 7,000+ responses) enabled the government, as two heads of service in the Croatian Ministry of Justice and Public Administration note, 'to identify what it is doing well and what it could be doing better to ensure the continuous improvement of people management practices', and to revise the 'Methodology for Quality Management in public administration', which 'is applied by 118 institutions at the central and local level' **[F]**. The survey led the Croatian government to 'include a commitment to institutionalization and continuation of the national survey of public servants in Croatia' as part of a 'commitment to competent, accessible and effective Public Administration' in the 2030 Croatia National Development Strategy – underscoring its utility to the government **[F]**.

In 2020, with the World Bank and other GSPS partners, Schuster adapted the survey to help developing country governments understand employee needs during the Covid-19 pandemic **[R1]**. The Co-Director of the World Bank Bureaucracy Lab notes that 'The survey instrument has seen enthusiastic adoption by governments across the world, with over 150,000 respondents in six countries to-date (Brazil (both at the federal and state levels), Colombia, Chile, Ghana, Morocco and Kazakhstan)' **[B³]**. A Director of the Colombian National Statistics Office, explains that the survey provided 'crucial evidence to each government agency and the government as a whole to provide tailored support to the needs of public employees during the pandemic and to remote working' **[C]**. For instance, it is 'informing the legislative debate around a new law to regulate remote working in the public sector' **[C]**.

Lastly, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is conducting a survey of public servants across National Statistics Offices in 14 governments in Latin America and the Caribbean (2019–21). As a senior IDB official confirms, this USD200,000 project was created in response to 'learning about Prof Schuster's civil service survey approach,' and Schuster was appointed as PI **[G]**.

3) Impact on civil service management reforms: merit recruitment and ethics training

Beyond the impacts of Schuster's civil service surveys on management practices noted above – for instance on onboarding and performance evaluation practices in Chile **[D²]** and the legislative debate around a new law to regulate remote working in the public sector in Colombia **[C]** – findings from Schuster's surveys have led to evidence-based changes in meritocratic recruitment practices **[R2/R3/R4]** in Chile and Kosovo and ethics training **[R5/R6]** in Chile and Nepal.

In Kosovo, Schuster's research findings about the positive effects of merit recruitment **[R2/R3/R4]** were, as the Director of the country's civil service management puts it, 'instrumental for the

completion of the new Law of Public Officials. In particular, they informed the revision of the civil service recruitment procedure to strengthen the merit principle in line with international best practice.' The Law was passed in 2019 and 'applies to 18,900 civil servants' **[H]**. According to a European Commission evaluation of the new law, the 'legal framework for the merit-based recruitment … of civil servants improved with the adoption of the Law' **[H]**. As a further benefit, this positive evaluation by the European Commission 'provides significant help for the Government of Kosovo to meet the conditions for accession to the European Union in the future' **[H]**.

In Chile, the National Directorate of the Civil Service 'previously did not have hard evidence about the positive effects of public (merit-based) competitions for public sector recruitment in Chile' **[D1]**. Schuster's research findings **[R6]** 'backed up a new 2017 decree … by the National Directorate of the Civil Service, which mandated merit-based recruitment in public sector institutions and was a milestone in the government's civil service professionalisation efforts' **[D^1]**. Since the passage of the decree, the number of vacancies advertised publicly on the government's online public sector job portal has increased by more than 300% (from 1,798 to 7,487 per year) **[R6]**. Subsequently, the 2019 National Survey of Public Servants, implemented in Chile as a result of Schuster's research (and with Schuster as PI), found that, while meritocratic recruitment practices had increased in government, a third of public servants continued to be hired through nepotistic connections. In response, the government announced a new civil service law: as the country's Minister of Finance and Civil Service Director put it, 'the results … allow us to construct better evidence to discuss, seriously, new rules of the game for public employment. … Therefore, the Government will introduce a new law to construct a new public employment' **[D^3]**, in which 'meritocracy is the engine of public service development' **[D^4]**.

Schuster's research has also underscored the inefficacy of ethics training for public servants, including in Chile and Nepal **[R5/R6]**. In Chile, presentations of this finding led 'several institutions [to] revise the design of their ethics trainings', including 'the Treasury of the Republic, the National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture, and The Public Prosecutor's Office' **[D^1]**. Learning about the inefficacy of their ethics training, the Nepalese government 'asked for … assistance in designing an ethics training that would be effective at enhancing integrity' **[I]**. These demands contributed to a 2019–21 DFID Global Integrity Anti-Corruption Evidence Programme to fund a GBP350,000 field experimental best practice ethics training programme in Nepal and Bangladesh, led by Schuster and Meyer-Sahling. In 2020 the project began a programme to train 1,200 public servants in ethics **[J]**.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

A. Evidence from the World Bank including (1) report *Innovating Bureaucracy for a More Capable Government* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2019); (2) World Bank Bureaucracy Lab YouTube content: Big Data Revolution in the Public Administration (2019); (3) testimonial from Co-Director, World Bank Bureaucracy Lab.
B. Testimonial: Head of Public Employment and Management, OECD.
C. Testimonial: Director of Methodology and Statistical Production, National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Government of Colombia.
D. Evidence relating to Chile. Testimonials from (1) Head of Research and International Cooperation, National Directorate of the Civil Service, Government of Chile; (2) Deputy Director of the National Directorate of the Civil Service, Government of Chile; newspaper articles in (3) *El Mercurio* and (4) *La Tercera*.
E. Testimonial: Director General, Department of Civil Service and Public Service, Government of Slovakia.
F. Joint testimonial: Head of Service for Quality Management and Head of Service for Ethics and Integrity; both Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, Croatia.
G. Testimonial: Lead Institutional Capacity of the State Specialist, Inter-American Development Bank.
H. Testimonial: Department of Management Public Officials, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Kosovo.
I. Testimonial: Director, Inland Revenue Department, Government of Nepal.
J. Global Integrity report (2020), *Civil service reform and anti-corruption: Does ethics training reduce corruption in the civil service?* (report, 2020).