The perceived effectiveness of interviews in comparison to assessments among managerial staff in the public sector

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of Master of Business Administration (Project Management) is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study was to measure the effectiveness of job interviews in comparison to other assessment activities from a manager's perspective for public sector jobs. The study also aimed to analyse what happened after a candidate was hired in terms of finding out if the performance management system in the public sector was used to review the recruitment and selection process. The researcher conducted 4 interviews with staff in the Public Appointments Service to gather their opinions about the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process. A qualitative thematic analysis was used in order to measure the opinions of staff members. These findings showed the staff in the Public Appointments Service perceived the assessments as a slightly more effective method of hiring candidates in the public sector. However, they believed a combination of interviews and assessments to be the most effective in predicting job performance.

General Introduction

The public sector recruitment competitions in the civil service is conducted by the Public Appointment Services. A report issued by the Institute of Public Administration in 2018 reported that just under 15% of employment positions in Ireland are public sector jobs. The Public Appointment Services are responsible for running recruitment competitions in order to find the most suitable candidates for these public sector jobs. The model used by the Public Appointments Services revolves around core competencies for both interviews and assessments (Boyle, 2018).

However, there isn't a study which analyses the effectiveness of the interviews and assessments within this recruitment model. Considering 15% of the country's population is hired by the public sector an effective recruitment model is crucial to in order to hire the most suitable candidates for such a large scale of jobs. Previous literature has also argued that the success of an enterprise is directly linked to the performance of the people who work for that particular organisation. The results of this study will fill an important gap in knowledge in this regard and inform the Public Appointments Services of the ongoing development in relation to the effectiveness of their recruitment model (Ekwoaba et al, 2015).

There are various possible assessments depending on which type of position a candidate is applying for. The unsupervised online testing is the most common first step for any large scale testing the Public Appointment Services run. These assessments usually consist of separate Verbal Reasoning, Numerical Reasoning and Job Simulation tests. Candidates will then need to pass all three tests and if they do, they'll get a ranking based on

the score they've achieved over the three assessments. If the candidate fails any of the tests they will be eliminated from that particular competition (Public Appointments Services, 2018).

If the candidate scores highly enough in these tests they'll be invited to the next stage of the competition which is the supervised tests. The supervised tests are the same type of tests as the unsupervised ones previously mentioned. The aim of the Public Appointment Services with the supervised tests is to confirm each candidate has taken the previous test themselves which will ensure no one can go far by cheating (Public Appointments Services, 2018).

The next stage of the competition can differ based on which competition a candidate is participating in. A Clerical Officer (entry level position) will usually have their competency-based interview at this stage. An Executive Officer (junior management position) will usually have their e-tray at this stage. An e-tray exercise consists of tasks to complete which include creating rosters, replying to emails and writing letters. The idea is to test how a candidate prioritises tasks and analyses how efficient they would work in reality (Public Appointments Services, 2018).

To explain recruitment and selection it's important to define them separately as they are two different processes. "Recruitment is the process of searching the candidates for employment and stimulating them to apply for jobs in the organisation" (Devi et al, 2014). It is a continuous process where an organisation attempts to develop a group of qualified candidates for future human resource needs even if a specific vacancy doesn't exist (Devi et al, 2014).

"Selection is the process of picking individuals who have relevant qualifications to fill jobs in an organisation" (Kumari, 2012). The role of the selection process is a lot more important than just choosing the best candidate for the job. The key aspect with selection is to create a balance between what the candidate can and wants to do and what the business requires (Kumari, 2012). Recruitment of employees is a fundamental aspect to a functioning organisation and there is a number of reasons why "getting it right" is crucial. Inappropriate selection decisions decrease organisational effectiveness, diminish reward and development strategies and they can be stressful for managers who have to deal with unsuitable employees (Rees et al, 2010).

There is increasing importance given to human resources. It's the people within an organisation that offer perspectives and values to organisational life. Poor recruitment and selection in terms of hiring an unsuitable candidate can come with a huge negative cost. It's an expensive process to hire someone new into the organisation so hiring a person who isn't suitable just increases costs. The organisation's reputation is also negatively affected if unsuitable candidates are hired (Ekwoaba et al, 2015).

A good recruitment process should help to create a number of qualified talented candidates, increase the success rate of the selection process by attracting capable applicants and assist in identifying promising candidates for specific positions. Other reasons why selection is important is because of performance and legal obligations. An employee with the right skills for a job will perform well for the organisation and the owner. An employee who

doesn't possess these appropriate skills for the job will not perform at the level required and the businesses performance will dip as a result (Kumari, 2012).

There are a few legal obligations that an employer needs to be made aware of with a selection process. An equal opportunities policy should be implemented which outlines the organisation's commitment to treating everyone equally. An employer should also ensure the appropriate background checks are made in relation to an applicant's criminal record. Ignoring this process and making a negligent hire could result in trouble for the business. If an employee accesses a customer's address through the business and commits a crime the organisation could be made liable (Conroy, 2019).

It's crucial to look at the applicant's perspective of recruitment and selection as all previous literature recognises the importance of the applicant's reactions to the selection process. Previous literature suggests that the behaviour of the recruiter has a significant impact on the applicant's reactions to the selection process. Another part of the selection process that has an even bigger impact on the candidate is how the application forms are constructed. Generally, the applicant reacts favourably when no discriminatory questions are asked and the candidates also react well to an application form which includes how the organisation has an equal opportunities policy (Anderson et al, 2002).

A competency-based interview is the last stage of the hiring process. The interview focuses on the candidate's ability to show that they have "core competencies" valued by the civil service citing specific example in relation to their career history. The specific "core

competencies" will be analysed later on. The key issue in which this study is based on is the differences between the interviews and the assessments. Currently there is not enough research into the topic area to suggest whether one recruitment method is more effective than the other. This study will analyse each one and find out which recruitment method is more effective according to the managers who conduct these competitions in the public sector (Public Appointments Services, 2018).

Literature Review

This literature review will focus on recruitment and selection which is the main theme of this dissertation. Information and evidence have been collected to explain the concept of recruitment and selection. Recruitment and selection will be discussed more broadly in the first part of the literature review and the second part will include more specific studies in relation to public sector recruitment and selection. Other topics of importance within the first part of the literature review include the challenges in recruitment and selection, the factors that affect recruitment and selection and the main strategies used in recruitment and selection generally.

Finally, recruitment and selection will be studied from a public sector aspect in relation to the background of the Public Appointments Service Competency Based Model including structured interviews, assessments and the current trends in public sector recruitment and selection. This section of the literature review will be narrowed down through three common themes specific to this research study. They will be interviews, assessments and the competency-based model which are all used as part of the Public Appointments Services recruitment model. The gap in knowledge will be identified and the research question will be offered.

1.1 Challenges in Recruitment and Selection

The challenges in recruitment and selection has evolved over the last number of years with the change in business, economics, legal and political environments. In business a large majority of people worked in factories for two thirds of the twentieth century carrying out specific tasks so individual knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO's) where used to identify those jobs and people were selected based on (KSAO's). However, work became more specialised so the number of qualified applicants in some areas decreased and competition for these applicants with advanced skills contributed to job mobility which shaped a greater need to understand how to source and attract top candidates (Ployhart et al, 2017).

One of the current challenges in recruitment is that employers are still using their "gut instinct" when hiring employees which is an unconscious subjective approach. A study in the USA in 2008 which involved more than 200 recruiters found that 3 out of 4 supported and followed subjective hiring decisions (Rozario et al, 2019). This "gut instinct" can be called intuition. Experts argue that there are several different types of intuition but social intuition is more relevant in regards to interviews. The social intuitions for the interviewer are unintentional and very difficult to control. Previous studies highlighted the "interview illusion" which is where there is a gap between the interviewer's impression of a candidate and the reality (Miles et al, 2014).

Inefficient HR planning has been identified as a problem in recruitment and selection. Strong and clear recruitment and selection policies which include assessing criteria, procedures and talent auditing are important in finding the suitable employees at the right time. Previous studies indicate that the competency level of HR managers has a significant impact on recruitment and selection (Kaplan et al, 2004).

There are many potential challenges when an organisation hires internally or externally or both. There are obvious benefits to doing both as well. Hiring someone internally will mean the applicant will understand the culture of the organisation and will have developed skills that is specifically relevant to that organisation. The employer knows the candidate which makes it less likely to be a catastrophic hire. However, the challenges an internal hire brings is it limits the amount of new knowledge and ideas an external hire might bring. The worker might also become lazy and complacent because there's no threat of an external candidate competing for a position (DeVaro, 2016).

The major benefits of external recruitment are a person can bring in new ideas to the organisation. They're also not involved in office politics which makes them less likely to become unproductive as a result. There is stronger potential with external candidates as they are unknown quantities. A benefit that's sometimes forgotten when you hire externally is, you're filling a vacancy in the organisation whereas when you hire internally another position has to be filled. However, hiring externally is much more expensive and there is a much bigger risk for the organisation. An external employee wouldn't be familiar with organisational culture and may take longer to settle into their new position (DeVaro, 2016).

In the last number of years it has been difficult for organisations hiring candidates externally because of the Global Talent Challenges (GTC) that exist. Global Talent Challenges includes managing an organisation to ensure the appropriate amount of talent at the right place, the right time and the right price when there is shortages of talent and when there is a surplus of talent. Organisation's manage these Global Talent Challenges to gain a competitive advantage. Many HR actions are taken by global organisations to manage talent which include training and development, performance management and compensation. This is why it is important for large organisations to think and act global. Some type of performance management system is required to grade employees and how their salary compares to the value of the business. In the public sector there is a performance management system called PMDS which documents an employee's performance on a yearly basis (Schuler et al, 2009).

There is also another challenge a recruiter needs to be aware of which is managing the emergence of Generation Z candidates moving into the labour market. The importance of understanding the characteristics of the Generation Z (1997-2013) candidates should not be underestimated. For example, early research on Gen Z indicates that they are the more likely generation to decline leadership responsibilities than the Millennial Generation (1981-1996) and Generation X (1965-1980) due to fear of failing and a lack of confidence required to lead. The early research on this generation suggests that due to the broader social culture of protection and safety afforded by their parents, Gen Z tends to show a fixed mindset in which they hold a strong desire to 'look smart', are of showing incompetence work tasks, demonstrate a reluctance to take on more challenging work, and are defensive when

presented with constructive advice. The emergence of Gen Z into the workforce means that organisations must identify a new type of leader across management levels (Groves, 2018).

A trend in the last number of years is the ever-increasing time it takes to hire an applicant. This "slow motion hiring" is caused because of a number of reasons. One of them is that there are sometimes more job openings than applicants to fill them. In relation to this study it could be suggested that there is a lag in hiring candidates in the public sector due to the number of job openings required to be filled. Experts also claim that the current lag in hiring candidates could date back to the last recession and relates to the increase in the number of qualifications required for a position during this time period. There are some strategic recruitment reasons which has led to a delay in hiring a person. Common strategic issues are longer interviewing with more people, more focus on passive candidates not looking for a job and the increased use of pre hire screening tools (Maurer, 2016).

1.2 What are the factors that affect Recruitment and Selection?

There are a number of reasons why an organisation chooses a specific recruitment and selection strategy. In a tight labour market, the majority of employers are likely to recruit more actively than in a time where there is labour shortages. The number of part-time or full-time employees is also likely to affect recruitment and selection strategies. It's more likely that an organisation with a larger number of part-time employees will result in the recruitment of employees through the existing workforce and social networks (Henkens et al, 2005). Technological factors have influenced recruitment and selection. Experts have stated

that organisation's need to be prepared to recruit people who can operate in a non-structured or virtual organisation (Orlitzky, 2019).

1.3 What are the main strategies used in Recruitment and Selection generally?

As previously mentioned KSAO's were previously used to identify the appropriate person for a specific job which is also known the traditional approach in recruitment. In recent times recruitment has become more strategically driven (Millmore, 2003). An effective recruitment strategy requires extensive understanding of the decision-making process of potential applicants. Recent recruitment strategies have been based around the theories of social psychology which helps to predict how a potential employee will perform. This is one of the reasons why online assessments are used so often now in many industries and organisations including the public sector. It's seen as a proactive recruitment strategy if an organisation emphasises the benefits for person-job fit for an individual throughout the process. It entails presenting more specifics about the particular job for that individual. It aims to show the potential employee the characteristics required for the position, the tasks in the position and roles the employee is expected to take up in the position (Lievens and Chapman, 2019).

Recruitment strategies is quite a broad area. The size of the organisation, the industry it's in, the supply of people and the country it's in are all variables that need to be considered by any organisation before choosing an effective strategy. Paul Windolf carried out the most comprehensive general review of recruitment strategies. He identified five distinct

recruitment strategies. Windolf used a typology of recruitment strategies which is separated into quadrants as seen below (Orlitzky, 2019).

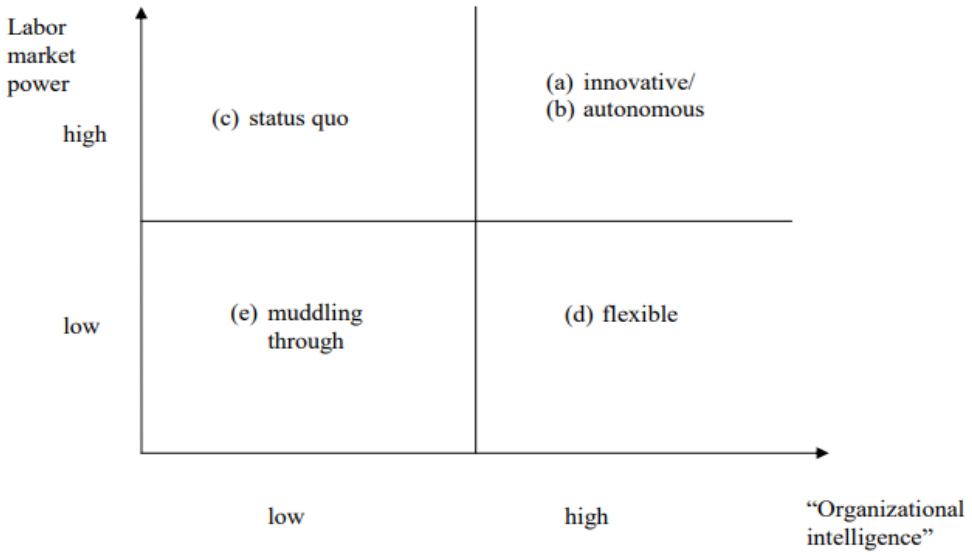

Figure 14.2 Windolf's Typology of Recruitment Strategies
Source: Windolf (1986)

Figure 1 Windolf's Typology of Recruitment Strategies

(Orlitzky, 2019)

An innovative recruitment strategy is aimed to attract a group of creative applicants and draws on a large number of recruitment sources. It's used by companies that have high organisational intelligence and has high labour market power. The autonomous strategy gathers the exact definition of the ideal applicant in relation to age or skill. This strategy is utilised by independent firms and they usually implement specific recruitment channels like job centres or social media advertisements and newspapers. An autonomous strategy is also used by businesses with high organisational intelligence and high labour market power. However, the two strategies differ slightly because organisation's that use an innovative

strategy have normally scored highly in technical complexities and organisation's that use an autonomous strategy usually score quite low in technical complexities (Orlitzky, 2019).

The status-quo strategy is aimed to attract a homogeneous set of candidates and is based on socio-economic status and demographics. The status-quo organisations aren't affected by changes in job requirements or technology. Status-quo organisation's usually have high labour market power and low organisational intelligence. These organisations rely on referrals or social networks. Flexible recruitment strategies are usually implemented by organisation's with weak market positions which then forces them to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Therefore, organisations who implement this strategy normally has low market power but high organisational intelligence. The muddling-through recruiters is the last strategy identified by Windolf but this strategy draws less on strategic thinking than flexible employers. This strategy is quite unsophisticated so firms that implement this strategy usually have a high staff turnover (Orlitzky, 2019).

Recruitment and selection can increase an organisation's competitive advantage if implemented efficiently. Previous studies suggest that selection needs to be given a more strategic role in an organisation than it usually is. Organisation's acquire knowledge by creating effective HR practices to hire the appropriate candidates. This method of acquiring knowledge through selection is called "grafting". However, this method needs to acquire knowledge which is aligned with the desires of the business. The framework for acquiring knowledge through selection is outlined below (Palekar, 2006)

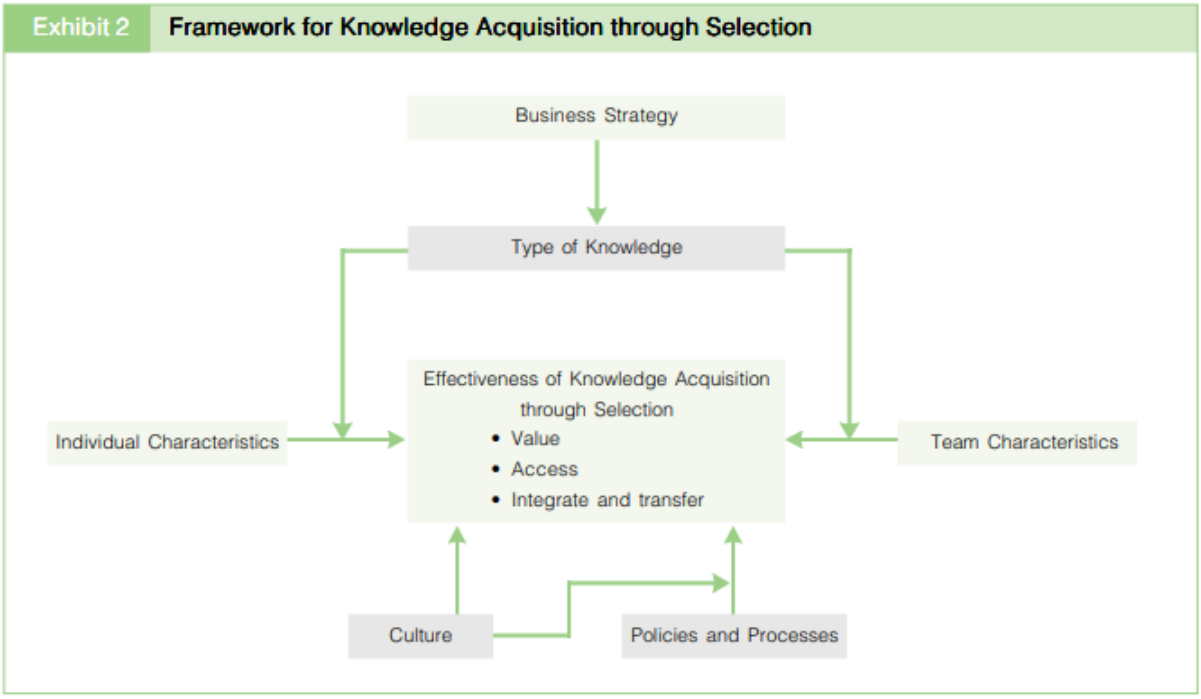

Figure 2 Framework for Knowledge Acquisition through Selection

(Palekar, 2006)

Another crucial part of this framework is culture. The culture in an organisation is important in facilitating access to the knowledge of the new employee. An organisation with more interaction allows the new employee to be more comfortable and promotes effective integration and transfer of knowledge (Palekar, 2006).

Recruitment and selection form a huge part of an organisation's overall strategy. Previous studies have shown that implementing an effective recruitment and selection process has a positive relation to organisational performance. There was a study carried out on the hospitality industry in Nigeria which assessed the influence of recruitment practice on organisational performance. The study focused on employee performance but also concluded crucially that the recruitment practice had significant effects on the performance of the hospitality Industry (Abomeh et al, 2013). A study which looked at the significance of HR

practices in small and medium enterprises in Albania found that the impact of quality of human resources on SME's is substantial (Cucllari et al, 2014).

There is no definitive way to claim one recruitment strategy is more effective than any other because there's no recruitment procedure that has one hundred per cent validity. Therefore, it is not feasible to expect one recruitment strategy to be greater than any other one even if concepts were put in specific context. A shortage of large, generalisable, direct effects of recruitment practices indicates that the effectiveness of implementing recruitment strategies usually relies on a number of other contextual variables. Recruitment research has suggested that the implementation of recruitment strategies may hinge on the hiring practices of other organisations, labour market conditions and industry context (Orlitzky, 2019).

The reasons behind an organisation's choice of any particular recruitment strategy is primarily based on the people they want to hire. Who is being hired and for what purpose? For example, the mainstream education, training and economics industries are usually driven by policy concerns and are normally based on two assumptions. Research and selection are operated under a model which is simply the best qualified gets the job and skills defined within this process is purely based on qualifications. It's also important to establish what is being recruited? (Keep and James, 2010)

The answer to this question for most organisations is defined by a couple of limitations. The labour market establishes limits on what organisations can expect to recruit. In situations where you have tight labour markets or if the job available isn't attractive in

relation to better choices been available then the issue for any organisation becomes a recruitment issue. This is where it becomes increasingly difficult for the recruitment strategy to match requirements of the organisation and the employee which is what an ideal recruitment strategy should try and achieve according to previous literature. Therefore, organisations in tight labour markets have to search around for fitting applicants and may be required to take what they can get instead of what they desire (Keep and James, 2010).

Another major limitation is that organisations recruitment and selection preferences are usually extremely varied which makes it difficult to gauge. This can be an easier limitation to control if an organisation outlines their core competencies in a recruitment process which is what PAS have done. Competencies will be discussed in further detail later on but they are effective in outlining a detailed job analysis and if they're used correctly, they show off the values of the organisation. The details discussed assists this study in relation to understanding the job analysis perspective of recruitment.

This initial job analysis will inform the rest of the decisions in relation to the recruitment and selection strategies. Organisations often fail in their recruitment strategy by not conducting this job analysis efficiently. A thorough job analysis will inform the rest of the recruitment and selection strategies, will add a structure and framework going forward and will improve the chances of implementing a successful recruitment and selection strategy (Keep and James, 2010).

2.1 Interviews

The topic area of structured interviews has been researched before. There was a study carried out which measured the validity of structured and unstructured interviews by Huffcut and Arthur in 1994. Validity was broken down into three main categories which were the content of the interview, how the interview is conducted and the nature of the criterion. The results of this study showed that interview validity depends on the content of the interview (situational, job related, or psychological) and how the interview is conducted (structured vs unstructured; board vs individual). It's important to note for this particular study that competency-based interviews are situational. Structured interviews were found to have higher validity than unstructured interviews. Situational interviews had higher validity than did job-related interviews, which, in turn, had higher validity than did psychologically based interviews (Zhang et al, 2018).

This study fills an important gap in knowledge as it confirms competency based structured interviews is a valuable recruitment tool. However, this study doesn't compare competency-based interviews with competency-based assessments. The methodology described above would also not be appropriate for this study as it's based on a manager's opinion. Meta-Analysis was used as a form of quantitative analysis but in this study, interview's will be carried out as a basis of qualitative analysis which will be examined in further detail later on (Zhang et al, 2018).

There was a study carried out about the validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology by Schmidt and Hunter in 1998. This study also used the meta-analysis conducted by Hunter and Schmidt in 1990. The study presented the validity of 19 selection procedures for predicting job performance and training performance and the validity of paired combinations of general mental ability (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998).

The results showed that the three procedures for predicted job performance with the overall highest validity score as general mental ability with a work sample test, general mental ability plus an integrity test and general mental ability plus a structured interview. Again, structured interviews appear as they are viewed as a crucial part of predicting future job performance. However, a work sample test or an integrity test doesn't confirm if the competency-based assessments is an accurate prediction of future employee performance. This is an area which will need to be examined further (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998).

There are many selection processes in organisations which are semistructured in that they include the collection of information based on the interviewers perception of the candidate. This means the selection of candidates are highly subjective and inspired by vague feelings of overall suitability. The decisions on how well interviewers have performed in selecting candidates is based on informal observations rather than any type of review or analysis. The research on interviews indicates that unstructured procedures are vulnerable to a number of biases that can have a negative impact on decisions. Research shows the evidence that structuring the process is a way to eliminate these biases and improve decision making. In the middle of an interview there are always verbal and nonverbal interactions that

happens when the interviewer is collecting information on the candidate's qualifications (Dipboye, 1994).

A structured approach would significantly reduce these interactions by following a certain framework of questioning with all the candidates. The reason why this is done is to take away the impact of the interviewer's gut instict or intuition based on their perception. This will also ensure the focus of the interview is on the candidate's qualifications rather than the behaviour of the interviewer. A lack of restraints in unstructured interviews could encourage a number of biases in the conduction of interviews. When an interviewer gathers information on candidates and starts to measure them against the requirements of the position a decision must be made whom to hire or promote. In an unstructured process quite often the interviewer doesn't make the decision based on an analysis of benefits and costs associated along with each candidate (Dipboye, 1994).

Structured interviewing procedures is centered around the rusult of a formal job analyses and is consequently more job-related than unstructured procedures. A job analyses is conducted by PAS which then informs their decision around the competencies. Evidence has found that higher validities were linked with procedures that were based on formal job analyses than those based on informal or no job analyses. One of the reasons why structured interviews would be advantageous in this sense is because it leads to better understanding of behaviour from both the interviewer and the candidate. Another major reason that a job analysis may be beneficial for the selection process is that it presents a common viewpoint for the interviewer on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in the job. The figure below outlines common concepts associated with both structured and unstructured interviews (Dipboye, 1994).

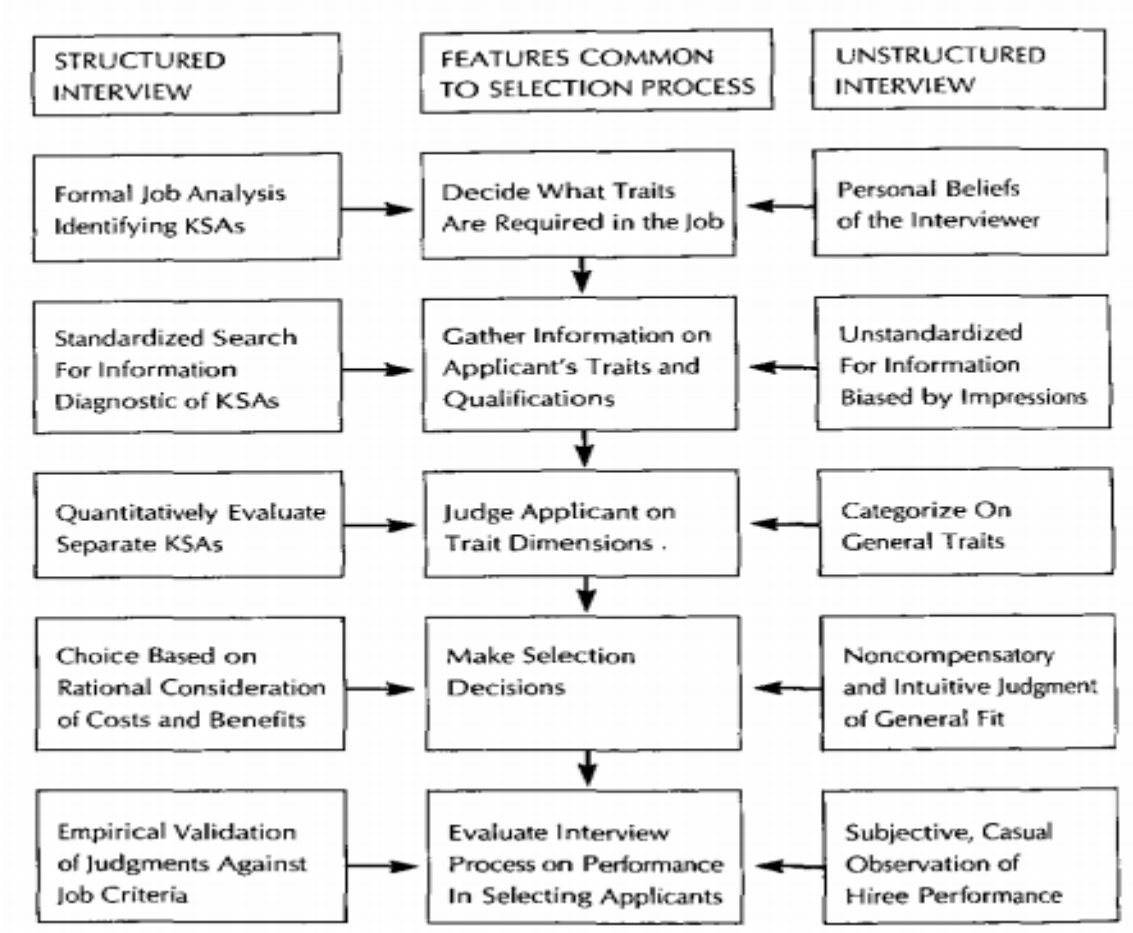

Figure 3 Structured v Unstructured interviews

(Dipboye, 1994)

This figure outlines how unstructured interviews can lead to an unconscious bias. The interviewers in the unstructured approach are dependent on their own ideas about the attributes of the qualified candidate. The foundation of the structured process is built around knowledge, skills, and abilities that would emerge from a formal job analysis. The foundation of the unstructured process is built around the interviewers own ideas of a qaulified candidate. The only way some unstructured interviews carry validity is if there is an expert in the topic that may have more complex, reliable and accessible knowledge structures than a nonexpert. Therefore, experts who conduct unstructured interviews may not have as much of

an impact on the decline in the quality of the recruiment process. However, it would be unlikely that all knowledge acquired by the interviewer even if they have a wealth of experience would match the quality of a well designed job analysis and interview structure. This is when an unstructured interview process can push a reliance on personal ideas about specific job needs and may lead to a decline in the validity and reliability of interviewer judgments (Dipboye, 1994).

2.2 Assessments

One of the biggest issues in HRM is validating testing instruments and other pre-entry requirements. It is usually the case that screening devices are found to be faulty predictors of job performance. That's why it is crucial for any test protocol to be validated for job-relevancy. The pressure to devise valid exams has led to the growing adoption of performance-based tests which is what PAS have implemented in their recruitment strategy. PAS have developed these assessments around their core competencies which is what they use to gauge the performance of a candidate. The core competencies are what PAS use as their job relevancy measurement tool when designing any assessments or interviews (Lavigna and Hays, 2004).

These tests have a number of forms and it is the systematic approach rather than the form itself that is key. The job analysis would usually have an impact on the systematic approach. There are certain standards in the structure of a test that are also necessary for it to be genuinely regarded as a proper psychometric instrument. The standards are supported by bodies such as the British Psychological Society (BPS) or American Psychological

Association (APA) and essentially cover the research requirements necessary to set up a psychometric test. These include the development of a suitable and systematic means of interpretation. These tests are of little use when it comes to recruitment if they don't meet such standards. The most widely used assessments are those psychometric instruments that pose questions with alternative answers. The questions may involve propositions or statements as in the Personality Factor Questionnaire or can be in a form such as identifying which of a number of diagrams fits a set of other diagrams (Edenborough, 2007).

The Public Appointment Service use unsupervised testing as the first method of assessing if a candidate is suitable for a position. Applicants can create an account on publicjobs.ie and their details are saved on any application forms they wish to populate for any public sector job. At this point the candidate will be invited to take part in a questionnaire and unsupervised testing. Research suggest that this type of e-recruitment which PAS use in the initial stages of their recruitment "speeds up the front end of the recruitment process". This type of recruitment allows organisations to process candidates in a matter of minutes and also saves jobseekers time (Barber, 2006).

Research also indicates that jobseekers could be turned off by online e-recruitment platforms that are difficult to use. Jobseekers would be more inclined to use certain e-recruitment platforms because they have had a good experience in terms of enjoyment. If an e-recruitment platform can make jobseekers feel enjoyment, interest, fun, and excitement while they look for a job to apply for on a web site the job seekers may be more likely to have more intention in completing their application form. As previously stated PAS is

responsible for such a large scale of jobs so it is crucial to get the first stages of the e-recruitment process working efficiently and effectively (Brahmana and Brahmana, 2013).

An article in the International Journal of Selection and Assessment analysed the predictive validity of individual psychological assessments in selecting UK public sector senior managers. The study examined the use of IPAs with 115 middle and senior management level candidates in a civil service context. The idea was for all candidates to complete a set of psychometric testing and have an in-depth interview with a psychologist. The ratings made by the assessors were correlated with a measure of potential for promotion derived from multisource feedback ratings obtained on these candidates some months later. There were four attributes the assessors rated that were used in order to measure the potential for promotion. The four main attributes were relating and influencing, leadership, motivation and resilience and managing change and complexity (Weldon et al, 2017).

The results showed that three of the four attributes rated by assessors correlated significantly with the potential for promotion. Interestingly, from an assessment point of view the results showed that there was a high correlation with the attribute of managing change and complexity with scoring highly in the verbal and numerical reasoning tests which indicates that the assessors tapped into a cognitive aspect of the research. This study gives the assessments element of the proposal some context. The study analysed and proposed both include numerical and verbal reasoning tests as part of the recruitment model. The fact that this study analyses recruitment in a public sector environment also provides interesting context for this particular piece of research. This study fills a gap in knowledge because some

of the attributes described is the same as the core competencies within the public sector in Ireland. Although, there was a correlation with managing change and complexity with scoring highly on the numerical and verbal reasoning test this was the one attribute which didn't correlate with demonstrating potential ratings in terms of promotion (Weldon et al, 2017).

2.3 Competencies

Competencies in recruitment can be described as the unique and special need for a job position. An organisation prioritises which competencies they value most in a specific position in their competency modelling which are then called core competencies. These core competencies are commonly developed by estimating the criteria of valued qualities such as emotional intelligence, motivational qualities, comprehension and experience (Sangeetha, 2010).

Competences are a way that enable organisations to achieve performance and sustained competitiveness. The resource-based view of the organisation can be positioned somewhere in between soft and hard HRM strategies in the sense that it offers a framework for balancing the interests of the potential employee and balancing the interests of the organisation. Employee competences are viewed as valuable assets to any organisation. An organisation who adapts a core competency model also makes it difficult for other organisations to copy a service or product (Heijde and Heijden, 2006).

Walmart and Apple are examples of two companies which have continuously shown the effectiveness of core competencies. Walmart's core competencies are its buying power and supply chain management. The large bulk of Walmart's operations means they can purchase products in huge quantities for a lesser price than their competitors. Apple's core competency is innovation. Apple have a unique history of developing innovative technology products which creates a huge demand from customers even at large market prices (Heijde and Heijden, 2006).

However, there is also need to analyse competencies from an industry to industry perspective. Research shows that competencies can be more relevant in some organisations. For example, service industries usually experience higher competency gaps than any other industries. A competency gap means that employees do not have the required level of competencies to perform well in the job. Therefore, it can be assumed that competencies are regarded less important in-service industries like hospitality and universities in comparison to manufacturing industries like automotive, computer and electronic equipment. We can see this in particular with the Apple example previously mentioned. Their core competency of innovation is at the heart of what they do on a daily basis which you can see in their products which is as a result of them implementing a competency-based model. The concept of competencies is very closely correlated with the concept of talent. That means if candidates can show they have a high degree of competencies required for the job then they can be deemed as the most talented (Karimi, 2018).

The Public Appointment Service competency model below which was released in 2018 outlined core competencies the civil service is looking for from candidates under each position from entry level to senior management. The competencies outlined under each heading is defined as “core competencies” (Public Appointments Services, 2018).

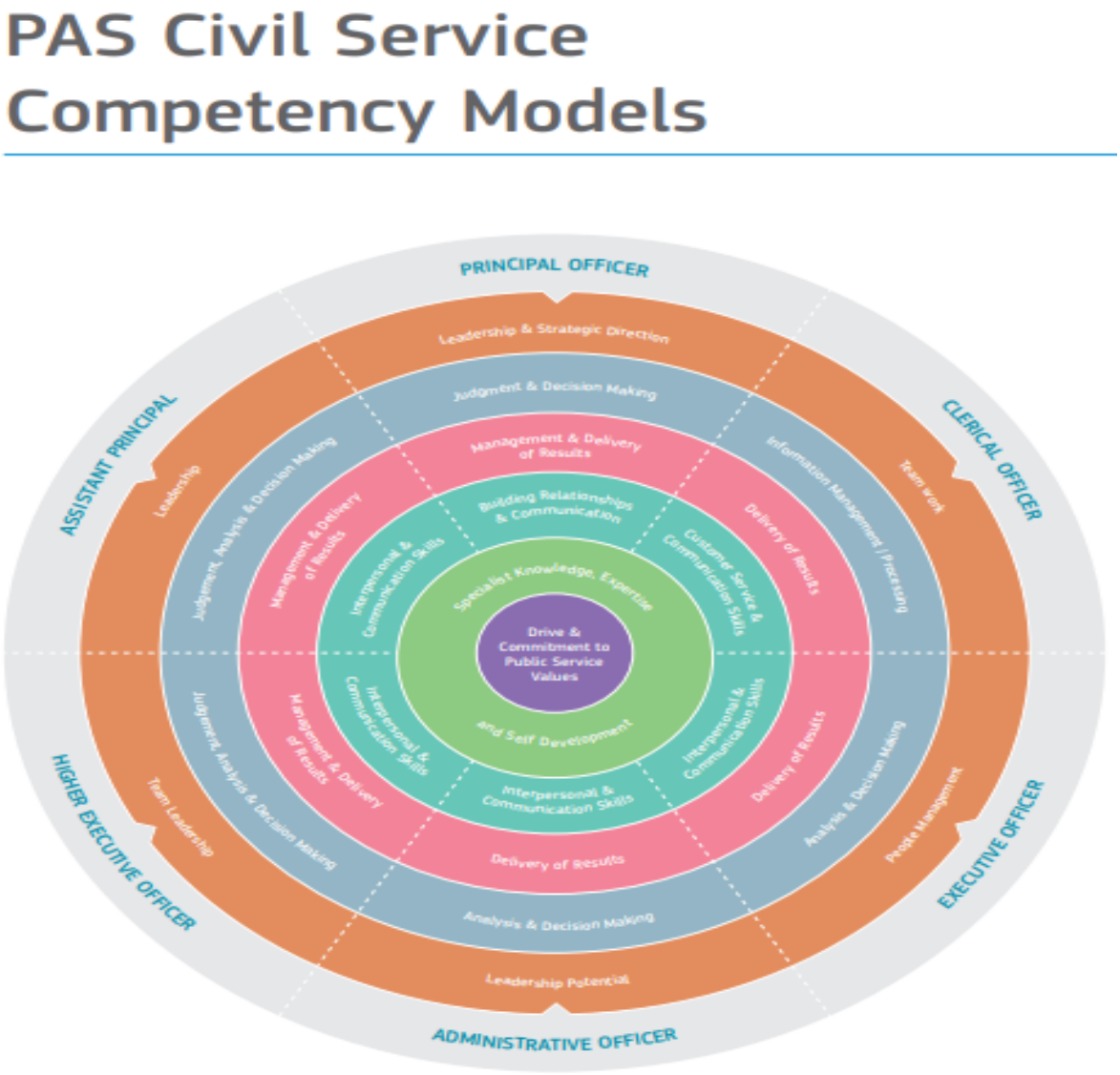

Figure 4 PAS Civil Service Competency Models

(Public Appointments Services, 2018)

An important piece of research carried out in the topic area of competencies is the emergence of Generation Z candidates. Gen Z is more highly educated, achievement-oriented, and ethnically and racially diverse. It is important that the public sector is aware of these differences in general characteristics of new candidates applying for jobs and it's something that might need be taken into account by the interviewer or assessor when conducting recruitment competitions. It's more likely that Gen Z candidates haven't worked through college as much as previous generations so there's a strong possibility the "delivery of results" competency in the public sector for a clerical officer position would be discussed in terms of a result from a specific college assignment rather than job experience. This article adds value to the topic area as it explains how characteristics from Gen Z could have an impact on how well these candidates perform in certain competencies in the public sector competitions. The research also adds value in relation to fact that Gen Z are the more likely generation to decline leadership responsibilities which could have an impact on how Gen Z candidates perform in senior management roles (Groves, 2018).

2.4 Literature Review Conclusion

Firstly, this literature review has aimed to investigate recruitment and selection broadly in order to understand concepts, challenges, strategies and importance in relation to the topic area. The research carried out has provided a basis for a number of questions to be asked at the interview stage in this study. These questions will intend to add value to the overall aim of the project which is to measure the effectiveness of job interviews in comparison to other assessment activities from a manager's perspective for public sector jobs.

Lastly, this literature review aimed to take a closer look at studies specifically relating to interviews, assessments and the competency-based model. The research carried out has provided a basis for a number of questions to be asked at the interview stage in this study and these questions will also attempt to add value to the overall aim of the project.

2.5 Research Question

This study aims to measure the effectiveness of job interviews in comparison to other assessment activities from a manager's perspective for public sector jobs. Therefore, the overarching research question is:

What is the perceived effectiveness of interviews in comparison to assessments among managerial staff in the public sector?

This study is primarily interested in finding out how useful the competency-based model is and if there can be a comparison made between the interviews and assessments according to manager's in the public sector. A literature review has been carried out to help answer the research question. There is enough literature to conclude that the competency-based recruitment model is useful if implemented efficiently. The interviews with the public sector managers will help in answering the rest of the research question (Sangeetha, 2010).

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the research methodology used and aims to thoroughly investigate the research question. Qualitative analysis was chosen as the most appropriate for this research study. A qualitative analysis was used because the study is based on a manager's opinion which is subjective so a qualitative analysis was more relevant. Semi-structured interviews were carried out because it was important for the participants to answer a certain number of questions but the researcher wanted to leave time for open ended discussions. The author believes that the research methodology chapter enhanced their understanding of the research topic.

3.2 Participants

In order to recruit participants, it was crucial for the researcher to formulate a sampling plan. In research a sample is a group of people or objects that are chosen from a larger population for measurement. A sampling plan is an official plan specifying a sample method, size and procedure for recruiting participants. It was crucial for this study to discover the most effective way to extract the manager's opinion of how effective the recruitment process is. The researcher needed to create an environment which lent itself to an open discussion about the process but also enabled the interviewee to speak as honestly as they could without any colleagues alongside. A 1-1 semi-structured interview with PAS managers was chosen as the most effective method. The author also needed to carry out an appropriate number of interviews in order to provide a large enough sample (Coyne, 1996).

A qualitative sampling plan was chosen as the most appropriate plan for this study. A qualitative sampling plan outlines how many focus group discussions, cases or interviews are needed to guarantee that the findings will provide rich data. There are also two main types of sampling that is widely used in research. Probability and non-probability sampling. There are many different types of random sampling that could be used as part of probability sampling but the author decided that this type was not appropriate for the study. This study required the expression of a manager's opinion who is involved in the running of the PAS recruitment process (Conroy, 2019).

The researcher was dependent on the availability of these managers so a random sample was not possible. As a result, the author decided that purposive sampling as a part of non-probability sampling was the most appropriate for this study. Purposive sampling was also used because it was crucial for the researcher to recruit participants who met certain criteria. The author determined by using their own judgement that in order to achieve a representative sample suitable for the needs of the study it was imperative to recruit participants with direct influence on the PAS recruitment process (Coyne, 1996).

Critical case sampling and homogenous sampling were the two types of purposive sampling the researcher identified as the most suitable for the study. The participants are psychologists within the Public Appointments Service so their data could offer decisive insight and the interviews could offer detailed results into specific issues. The author contacted the Public Appointments Services through email and explained the details of the research topic. Assistance in regards to possible interviews were discussed between the researcher and the employee. Thankfully, the employee directed the author to the most appropriate unit whose staff members offered to take part in the interviews.

The researcher felt that the most effective method to collect primary data was through 4 semi-structured interviews. These individual interviews would allow the author the use of probing questions in order to get to the heart of the topic. It was important to label the interviews as semi-structured because it allows the interviewee an opportunity to explain their perception of the recruitment process in relation to the experiences they've had in their role. However, a structure and a list of questions was important to steer the desired direction of the interviews from the researcher's point of view. It was important for the interviewee to express their opinion on crucial research questions put to them. Conducting 4 interviews was chosen in order to offer a wide variety of opinions on an extensive number of issues relating to the main topic of the study. The difference of opinions in relation to the topic area may not become apparent if focus groups were used instead of individual interviews. Conducting these individual interviews allowed the researcher to assess the variety of opinions on how managers perceive the effectiveness of the PAS recruitment process (Moser and Korstjens, 2018).

3.3 Design

The first step in the research design was to establish the methodological choice. Research methodology can be defined as a process which is organised in order to identify a solution to the research problem. There are 5 main types of research: critical realism, pragmatism, postmodernism, positivism and interpretivism. The researcher recognised interpretivism as the research approach which best suited the author's research design. Interpretivism has been identified as a form of qualitative methodology which allows the author to research through observational methods and interviews. The use of an interpretivist

research approach can yield new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts (Saunders, 2009).

Research philosophy has been defined as the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. It's crucial to underline the requirement of awareness regarding the philosophical commitments that are made as a result of the chosen strategy of research. This will have a huge effect on how research is taken and how the data collected is understood (Mkansi and Acheampong, 2012).

A research paradigm is a philosophical framework that guides how scientific research ought to be conducted. Quantitative data is precise and can be taken at various points in time and in different contexts which is associated with a positivist methodology. Qualitative data is normally transient, understood only within context and is associated with an interpretivist methodology that usually results in findings with a high degree of validity. In this study the research aimed to measure the participants opinion on the research topic. This opinion would be subjective and also contain non-numerical data. Therefore, qualitative was the obvious methodological choice (Alharti and Rehman, 2016).

It's difficult to discuss variables when conducting a qualitative method because it's easier to estimate the effect of individual causes with quantitative. The net effect of a variable can be easily measured from a quantitative perspective. Concepts and categories are established more with a qualitative method. However, the researcher discusses the concepts

below in this study and they were established based on some of the knowledge acquired in the literature review (Mahoney, 2006).

The effectiveness of the assessments and the interviews are dependent on a number of key concepts around the structure of the PAS recruitment model. What type of interviews\assessments have been selected as part of the recruitment process? It was established in the literature review how crucial it was for the suitable competencies to be used to conduct the appropriate interviews\assessments in order to recruit the most fitting candidates. The decision making in these steps would then impact the effectiveness of the PAS recruitment model. What way does the interviewer behave and react towards the interviewee? The researcher recognised in the literature review the impact a good/bad interviewer has on the recruitment model. It will also show the how efficient the training and development is viewed in PAS which is part of the recruitment process. How suitable and well aligned are the competencies for each job position in the PAS recruitment model? It was established in the literature review how the impact the utilisation of the competencies in matching the appropriate recruitment competition has on the efficiency of the recruitment process. The discussion around these key concepts was crucial in this study (Coyne, 1996).

As previously stated, the researcher conducted 4 interviews with PAS staff who are involved in the recruitment process on a daily basis. The author has also mentioned that the interviews were semi structured. One of the reasons why semi structured interviews were used was for an exploratory study. This type of interview allowed the researcher to ask open ended questions and gain insights into the recruitment model (Mahoney, 2006).

The study is based on the employee's perception of the recruitment model so it was crucial to find out their experiences. As the researcher didn't know the employee's experiences before the interview it was impossible to envisage the appropriate questions to be asked. However, the author developed a set of interview questions that's crucial to the study. When the researcher started to understand the experiences the interviewee had with the recruitment process the researcher could start to probe with the list of questions. At this stage the author would know what questions the interviewee could answer effectively based on their previous experiences with the recruitment process (Mahoney, 2006).

Then the researcher developed the interview into an evaluative study by comparing and contrasting the recruitment interviews and assessments based on what's already been established on both. The interviews were also a narrative inquiry. Particpants were asked about their specific experiences in their role within PAS. The researcher started the interviews by discussing how long the participant had worked in their role and what their role was specifically on a day to day basis (Mahoney, 2006).

3.4 Materials

The author begun the process of asking volunteers to take part in the study by emailing the PAS contact mailbox. The staff in PAS were very helpful and volunteered to be interviewed. Unfortunately with Covid 19 it wasn't possible to meet participants in person. The interviews were conducted over Zoom instead. The participants were asked 17 important and open-ended questions. The interview was broken down into two separate parts. There was 9 questions put to the particpants based broadly on their opinion of the PAS recruitment

and selection process. These questions were designed as an exploratory study to establish certain details about the recruitment and selection process including if the participants thought the process was effective based upon the very definition of an effective recruitment and selection process outlined in the literature review.

There was 8 questions put to the participants in the second stage of the interview. These questions were more specific and probed into the perceieved effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process from the participants perspective. These were used as part of an evaluative study to compare the interviews and the assessments while also investigating the perceived effectiveness of the core competencies. When the audio had been transcribed it was ready for codification, theme identification and data analysis. Interview questions, information sheets and consent forms were provided to the interviewees in advance in order to make them feel comfortable in preparation for the interview.

Sample questions from the interview:

Table 1 Sample of Interview questions

Question 1:	Do you believe the PAS recruitment process has helped to create a number of qualified talented candidates?
Question 2:	Do you believe the recruitment practices in PAS have led to a rise in organisational performance over the last number of years?
Question 3:	How suitable do you think the competencies are for each job position in the PAS recruitment model?
Question 4:	Overall, would you view the structured interviews or assessments as a more effective recruitment tool and why?

Note: Information sheets and consent forms are available in the appendices section of the dissertation.

3.5 Procedure

Each interview lasted between 20-45 minutes to assist in having a broad discussion around the participants role within the recruitment and selection process. There was a debriefing included in the information sheet provided by the researcher before the interview. The author explained how any personal identifying information would be removed at the transcription stage of the interview, how the participants have the right to cease participation at any stage of the interview and how the researcher will follow strict ethical guidelines.

A consent form was also included for participants to indicate they were voluntarily taking part in an interview. The participants were made aware of the recording and how their answers would be used for further analysis after the interview. Participants were first asked about their role within PAS recruitment and selection and their experiences with the PAS process. This question was used as an ice breaker to make the participants feel more comfortable but also to gain some valuable insight into their role within the process. There were 17 questions asked in the semi-structured interviews but certain questions seemed to yield a more detailed discussion.

3.6 Ethics

"It is of paramount importance that educational researchers respect the rights, privacy, dignity, and sensitivities of their research populations and also the integrity of the institutions within which the research occurs" (Drew et al, 2008).

The author discussed with the supervisor if there was a need to obtain approval from the DBS Research Ethics Committee. It was decided that this study didn't need any such approval as long as standard methods for conducting research was followed and anonymised data was used. Possibly the most sensitive element of this study from an ethical perspective was the participants rights to anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher was aware that the participants were expressing an opinion on a process they are currently involved in on a daily basis so an anonymous, confidential interview was proposed from the start. It also made the participants feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics without putting them in awkward situations (Smith, 2003).

Consent sheets were also used in this study by the researcher.

"The consent process ensures that individuals are voluntarily participating in the research with full knowledge of relevant risks and benefits" (Drew et al, 2008).

The researcher ensured that the participants understood that they were voluntarily agreeing to take part in this research study. It was explained by the researcher that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any

question without the need to provide reason and without fear of negative consequences. It was outlined that digital recordings would be stored under password protection for some time until the approval of the researcher's dissertation by the examination board, at which point recordings would be permanently deleted. It was important to inform participants that their data would undergo de-identification during transcription and would be rendered anonymous for retention and for the purpose of subsequent publications.

3.7 Data Analysis (Qualitative)

Thematic analysis is a process used to pinpoint certain patterns or themes within qualitative data. Before conducting the thematic analysis, it was important to address a number of questions and make some decisions prior to carrying out the analysis. It was crucial for the author to make a decision in regards to what counted as a theme in this study. The researcher needed to identify what was going to be the most prevalent and crucial pieces of data in the interviews. The researcher focused on coding the data with particular reference to how relevant it was to the overall research question (Braun et al, 2006).

The researcher decided that an inductive approach to the research was most appropriate to this study. This study started off with an observation and a specific research question. Gradually, this study has broadened as other issues in relation to the research topic has emerged in the literature review (Burney and Saleem, 2008).

The researcher believed that the data could be coded and themes could be identified on a semantic and latent level. A large part of the interview revolved around what type of research methods are used by PAS and what the participant's roles are within the process. In these descriptive passages it was more appropriate to code the data on a semantic level. However, towards the end of each interview participants were asked about their opinion on certain topics. In order to code this part of each interview the theme would be identified on a latent level. The researcher also decided on an essentialist/realist thematic analysis. The researcher had a largely unidirectional relationship with the participant and the language used was straightforward for both parties (Braun et al, 2006).

3.8 Limitations

A limitation of this research by the author was how specific the sample needed to be. The researcher was entirely dependent on the help of the PAS staff members. The gathering of 4 appropriate interviewees was very time-consuming. It was also quite difficult for the researcher to schedule a specific time for each interview as the staff members in PAS have been under incredible pressure since the outbreak of Covid 19. The lack of available time to carry out individual interviews was another deficiency noted by the author. The author thought as though some of the interviews carried out felt in some way rushed due to some time constraints. Another difficulty was the fact that each interview had to be conducted over Zoom. The author felt as an inexperienced interviewer that this made it more difficult to control the flow of the interviews and more difficult to create a comfortable environment for the participants.

Results

The analysis of this study will be carried out by examining and comparing the 4 interviews against each other to assist in identifying common themes. The researcher will use Braun and Clarke's 6 step guide for coding relevant data in the interviews. The analysis will be structured and will discuss each identified theme individually. In order to keep interviewees anonymous, no individuals' names will be revealed.

4.1 Coding of Data

The data was initially coded in accordance to Braun and Clarke's six step guide and proved to be useful in carrying out a thematic analysis. The process began when the researcher started to look for and notice patterns of meaning and issues of interest when conducting the interviews. It is important to note that this wasn't a linear process. However, the author didn't engage with the literature in the early stage of analysis as an inductive approach was chosen as the most appropriate analysis. This helped in broadening the analytic field of vision and allowed for flexibility in the decision-making of themes to assist in answering the research question.

4.2 Coding Steps

1. **Familiarise yourself with the data –** The author collected the data through interactive means so they did have some prior knowledge of the data and some initial analytical interests and thoughts. The researcher was carrying out qualitative analysis so it was crucial to keep reading and re-reading the transcripts. It was essential to take

time in transcribing the interviews as it provided the groundwork for the following analysis (Braun et al, 2006).

2. **Generating initial codes –** In the second stage it was important to generate initial codes from trends and ideas emerging from the data. An inductive approach was used to generate initial codes as they were data driven. It involved organising the data into meaningful groups to assist in developing themes for the next step. The process of transcription and coding was done manually as the research was based on opinions so behaviour and attitudes needed to be monitored closely (Braun et al, 2006).

   Codes were highlighted below from the relevant data that was extracted from the interviews before any codes transitioned into themes. It was also crucial to keep the passages of text and codes relevant to the research question which revolved around the interviews and assessments. The researcher could broaden this concept to the relevance of any passages of text or codes to the PAS recruitment and selection model as the interviews and assessments are based of the model (Braun et al, 2006).

Table 2 Generating initial codes

Data Extracted	Initial Codes
Interviewee A: "We are definitely implementing a process that would help identify high quality candidates by using research evidence-based information."	Confident in the research. Self-assured in role.
Interviewee B: "I certainly do think we help to identify high quality candidates. We have evidence to show that as well." Interviewee D: "I think that having multiple people on the board means you have to explain your rationale and your reasons for the scores your suggesting. It's all evidence based."	Belief in the process.

Interviewee A: “I mean, no process is perfect but our interviewed board members are well trained and supported.” Interviewee B: “Now, as you know, if you're reviewing selection processes, there's no one selection procedure or assessment that would have 100% predictive validity. Therefore, you're going to get some people who slip through the net.” Interviewee D: “There's never a perfect selection system so you’re not going to get it right all the time and we never would say that we do but we do our best.”	Acceptance of weaknesses. Emphasis on learning.
Interviewee A: “Everyone's given a fair chance to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and abilities in an interview in the most fair and professional way. Some of these interviewers will have extensive experience in interviewing candidates.” Interviewee B: “Of course, you have to adapt to meet the needs of a generation, but also you have to be mindful of previous generations that went before because you can't discriminate against on any grounds of age at all.” Interviewee D: “It’s also important that we’re conscious about fairness and diversity which should wove into everything so that we're not discriminating against anybody. This will mean that everybody has an equal opportunity.”	Fair process. Diversity and inclusiveness Equal playing field
Interviewee A: “Some of these interviewers will have extensive experience in interviewing candidates. This includes internal and external experts.” Interviewee C: “Certainly, I feel within PAS that they are very strong or	Interviewer experience viewed as a necessity. External opinions valued.

impressive professionals that come from strong backgrounds which includes legal, diversity of inclusion and executive search so there are very strong people who are influential." Interviewee D: "However, we need to be aware of DEPR and the policy departments. We've worked really hard particularly over the last couple of years to make sure that we're close to DEPR."	Good relationships understood as crucial in process
Interviewee A: "But I can speak generally about what I think of PMDS. I think this idea of satisfactory and on satisfactory which is all the options that you can give isn't great. I feel like it's a lot to say to someone that they're unsatisfactory. I feel it seems kind of limited." Interviewee B: "I think that's effective but I think PMDS itself hasn't reached its full effectiveness as of yet. And I'm afraid that an awful lot of people don't trust it." Interviewee D: "I remember we use to look at it years ago. I remember when you had a scoring system for PMDS and you had to get a three or above remember. I think now you have to show that you're satisfactory which is a form your own HR have to fill in. But I wouldn't say PMDS feeds into it at all anymore."	Performance management system viewed as limited. Lack of trust form staff members in the performance management system. Performance management system not inclusive of any recruitment or selection processes.
Interviewee A: "We pride ourselves on keeping competencies up to date and relevant. If we discover they aren't relevant when we're reviewing them, we would change them. We certainly don't just keep going for the sake of it." Interviewee B: So basically, we start every recruitment process with the job analysis and what the competencies are themselves for that job. So, if I was running a competition for an EO I'd go to an actual EO and enquire about their job and what it entails.	Emphasis on relevance of competencies External view a necessity on reviewing competencies. Competencies viewed as more important the further up you go.

Interviewee C: I think if you're doing large scale Clerical Officer or Executive Officer the competencies are there but they're not tailored in a big way."	
Interviewee B: "Leadership in particular is where you need experience. You have to learn how to lead and It's not something that you can read up in a book." Interviewee C: "I would think that the younger generation or graduates wouldn't generally have the experience to score well in the leadership competency." Interviewee D: "I think if you're applying for a Principal Officer but you've never managed anybody then you're going to be in trouble and rightly so but that's down to experience rather than a generational issue."	Experience viewed as essential to perform in leadership competency. Clear disagreement with the trends in leadership competency. No generational issue identified for leadership competency.
Interviewee A: "I think an interview on its own isn't ideal. The best thing is to combine things and always come back to the competencies." Interviewee B: "And interviewing isn't as reliable and as valid as an assessment would be. So, I think it's important, and I think it's necessary, but it wouldn't be as reliable and valid as their cognitive assessment or presentation." Interviewer D: "Yeah, I think they work really well together. I think from an interview you can hear about what people have done and their experiences. I think sometimes with the exercise you can get people to project into the role specifically."	Lack of trust in the interview. Favouritism towards an assessment. Assessment viewed as more job related.

3. **Searching for themes** – The next stage consisted of sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. A mind map was used to help the researcher in thinking about the relationship between codes, themes and different level of themes (Braun et al, 2006).

4. **Reviewing themes** – The next step is crucial in order to ensure that there is enough suitable and appropriate data from the interviews available to justify the discussion of a theme. It is important not to use a theme that doesn't have enough relevant data to support the discussion. When each theme was developed the researcher made sure to clearly distinguish one theme from another. Each theme should be completely separate to one and another. Some themes showed a pattern of actively positive opinions of the recruitment and selection process in general.

5. **Defining and naming themes –** In the fifth step the themes were defined and further refined. It was important to identify the essence of what each theme was about and to make a decision on what aspect of the data each theme captured. In naming the themes it was crucial to make them concise, punchy and clear for the reader to understand.

6. **Producing the report –** In the last step it was time to write up the final analysis of the report. The researcher provided evidence of the themes within the data which included vivid examples directly quoting passages of text from the interviewees. The researcher went beyond description of the data and makes an argument of what the data represents in relation to the research question.

4.3 Main themes

There were 8 main themes identified from the interviews as outlined below. The discussions at the interview stage led to a number of responses from the interviewees. They were categorised and analysed to assist in further understanding the opinions of managers within PAS on the recruitment and selection model. These responses were compared, coded, observed and filtered in order to develop themes within the data.

Table 3 Main themes

Codes	**Themes**
Confident in the research. Self-assured in role. Belief in the process.	Theme 1: Workplace values.
Acceptance of weaknesses. Emphasis on learning.	Theme 2: Self-development in achieving organisational objectives.
Fair process. Diversity and inclusiveness Equal playing field	Theme 3: Forward thinking.
Interviewer experience viewed as a necessity. External opinions valued.	Theme 4: Awareness of environment.

Good relationships understood as crucial in process	
Performance management system viewed as limited. Lack of trust form staff members in the performance management system. Performance management system not inclusive of any recruitment or selection processes.	Theme 5: Performance management system concerns.
Emphasis on relevance of competencies External view a necessity on reviewing competencies. Competencies viewed as more important the further up you go.	Theme 6: Job analysis and its relevance.
Experience viewed as essential to perform in leadership competency. Clear disagreement with the trends in leadership competency. No generational issue identified for leadership competency.	Theme 7: The importance of experience in leadership competency
Lack of trust in the interview.	

Favouritism towards an assessment. Assessment viewed as more job related.	Theme 8: Interview weaknesses and assessment strengths

Theme 1: Workplace Values

"Personal values refer to the beliefs, principles or ideas that are important to people's lives" (Lee and Kawachi, 2019).

The first theme is based around the concept of positive work values. The beliefs, principles and ideas that the PAS staff have has a direct effect on how they think the PAS recruitment and selection process is run. If staff members belief in working in an environment with an efficient process to help people's lives, if they have principles around working in an environment which promotes fairness and equality and if they have ideas around the benefits to continually improving the process in order to help others then they will more than likely provide a well-informed opinion of the process. This would then help in answering the research question (Lee and Kawachi, 2019).

There are examples throughout the interviews which prove that the interviewee's really value what they're doing on a daily basis in working with PAS. Interviewee A said "I do think that our selection methods are relevant, up to date, and really tap into what the actual job would entail." It's fair to assume from this answer that the interviewee believes in what PAS are trying to achieve with their recruitment and selection process. Interviewee C also articulated their opinion of the PAS recruitment and selection model when they said "I think one of the advantages of the approach from PAS is it's very inclusive and that's the key aim at

the moment." This sentence is important in the sense that the interviewee is discussing inclusiveness as an advantage to PAS which also shows how much they value inclusiveness individually.

The interviewees constantly highlighted the positive values they worked by in PAS and also indicated they were the values they believed in personally. It was an alignment of positive values between PAS and the employees which was one of the main themes that ran through in all of the interviews. Interviewee D also followed this theme when they said "I think once we get the right people applying for us it's around assessing the key skills in a systematic fair and objective way." The interviewee using words like "right people", "systematic", "fair" and "objective" would all be considered positive in a recruitment and selection process.

Theme 2: Self-development in achieving organisational objectives

"Self-development means seeking and using feedback, setting development goals, engaging in developmental activities, and tracking progress on one's own" (London and Smither, 1999).

There are many examples in the interviews of employees accepting that the PAS process "isn't perfect" but how they are thriving to continually improve the process. The fact that the training programme is discussed in detail is another example of how PAS value the development of employees. As previously established in the literature review an interviewer in the recruitment and selection process has a huge influence on whether it leads to a

successful hire for the organisation. It is crucial for employees to be aware their own biases in terms of selection so they need to continually review their choices in the process.

Therefore, employees will become better interviewers and will add value to the interview side of the selection process. This helps to answer the research question as it'll determine whether an interview or an assessment is a more effective method of hiring a candidate in PAS. Interviewee A encapsulated this theme of self-development with the comment "I mean, no process is perfect but our interviewed board members are well trained and supported. And we're not just doing the same thing for everything." This sentence shows a recognition that the recruitment and selection model isn't perfect but explains the togetherness in the team to improve and indicates the need to tailor and develop the process depending on which competition is been run.

There's also evidence of employees expected to carry out self-training at home with the eLearning system. The rigorous training summarised by Interviewee B's comment "Then there's other eLearning bits on unconscious bias, on disabilities, the role of the chair" shows what is expected of a PAS employee. These self-development tools mainly revolve around self-awareness on interview boards and emphasise how crucial it is to extract the detail out of a candidate in an interview. This theme of self-development is further seen when interviewee D states how "there's never a perfect selection system so you're not going to get it right all the time and we never would say that we do but we do our best." Again, we see there's an acceptance of possible weaknesses in the process but an acknowledgement that staff members are working hard to continually develop the process.

Theme 3: Forward thinking

Forward thinking can be defined as “the act of thinking about and planning for the future, not just the present” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020).

Forward thinking is a theme that emerged throughout the interviews. Words like “fair”, “equal” and “diversity” were used by the interviewees very often. Each interviewee explained how processes were reviewed regualarly to ensure they were fair for every candidate which shows how PAS were preparing for the future. “Of course, you have to adapt to meet the needs of a generation, but also you have to be mindful of previous generations that went before because you can't discriminate against on any grounds of age at all.” This sentence from interviewee B shows how PAS value candidates from all age groups and how they’re conscious about been discriminatory in any way. This would be described as progressive and forward thinking. It also means that there is hard work done to eradicate any biases an interviewer may have and adds value to the overall research question. PAS also carry out a lot of training in terms of eradicating the “gut instinct” away from the hiring process which also promotes fairness and equality.

Interviewee D stresses this theme when they say “It’s also important that we’re conscious about fairness and diversity which should wove into everything so that we're not discriminating against anybody.” These statements around fairness and equality is evident in every interview. The employees in PAS are also well aware of the added advantages a diverse workforce would offer. This is particularly true for an organisation that is responsible for

hiring such a large number of the workforce in this country as the research has already established.

Theme 4: Awareness of environment

It is crucial that the researcher defines what is meant by the word environment in the context of a theme in the interviews as it could be easily misunderstood. Environment is simply meant as "surroundings" in this instance and the theme is not based around nature in anyway (Soas, 2020).

PAS have made a point of emphasising how they are aware of the external environment and how important it is to the process itself. Interviewee A states that "Some of these interviewers will have extensive experience in interviewing candidates. This includes internal and external experts." When further discussed in this interview the interviewee explained how important it was to have both external and internal interviewers to eradicate any unconscious bias from the interviewers. It was explained to the researcher in the interview that often these interviewers wouldn't know each other as well and it was very important in order to carry out a fair selection process.

Interviewee D also went on to explain how important it was to be aware of other policy department and what they're doing. "we need to be aware of DEPR and the policy departments. We've worked really hard particularly over the last couple of years to make sure that we're close to DEPR." DEPR make the decisions on certain policy around recruitment. For example, DEPR decide if an external or internal competition is run. It's clear to see that

PAS view their relationship with DEPR and any other policy organisations as crucial if they're to run an efficient recruitment and selection competition.

Theme 5: Performance management system concerns

One of the only negative themes that was apparent in the interviews was the attitude towards PMDS which is the performance management system used by staff members in the civil service after they've been hired. This negativity about the performance management system is relevant to the research question in the sense that it could potentially be a way of either finding out if someone was a successful hire from the recruitment and selection process or it could potentially be a way of considering internal candidates when they apply for a promotion.

Interviewee A explained that they feel PMDS "seems kind of limited." PMDS wasn't designed to be limited so these comments definitely throw up some concerns which were apparent across the interviews. PMDS was designed so staff members could track their goals each year in the civil service and review them on a constant basis to see if they were on track. It's a way for the employee to understand what is expected of them. It's also an opportunity for PAS to use one of the resources that is available to them.

"I think PMDS itself hasn't reached its full effectiveness as of yet. And I'm afraid that an awful lot of people don't trust it." The second sentence in this quote is interesting when you analyse it. Ironically, all the evidence in the interviews would suggest that PAS don't trust PMDS enough to include it as part of their recruitment and selection process in any way. Further evidence of this theme is provided by interviewee D. "But I wouldn't say PMDS

feeds into it at all anymore." There is definitely a reluctance for PAS to consider PMDS at any point in the process. This theme adds value to the research question as it establishes that PAS don't track how employees are doing after they're hired through the performance management system. This could influence the accuracy of the interviewee's views when they're explaining their perception of the recruitment and selection process. It means that it's difficult for the employees to have an accurate opinion about the effectiveness of a recruitment and selection process if they don't have sufficient data on how well the employee is performing after they're hired.

Theme 6: Job analysis and its relevance

A job analysis is what's used by PAS to inform them of the competencies required for each job position in upcoming recruitment competitions. This was highlighted when interviewee B explained that "we start every recruitment process with the job analysis". The job analysis is a vital theme that emerges throughout the interviews. It was crucial in examining the research question to find out what is the reason for the structure of the competencies and how relevant they are to each role. How are they determined for each role and what piece of work is undertaking to define them?

Interviewee A stressed just how important it is to keep reviewing these competencies. "We pride ourselves on keeping competencies up to date and relevant. If we discover they aren't relevant when we're reviewing them, we would change them. We certainly don't just keep going for the sake of it." The word "pride" in this context is clearly used to emphasise the importance of the task in terms of "keeping the competencies up to date and relevant".

Interviewee C brought up an interesting point in terms of relevance again. “I think if you're doing large scale Clerical Officer or Executive Officer the competencies are there but they're not tailored in a big way.” It’s important to analyse the part where interviewee C says “the competencies are there but they're not tailored in a big way” in this sentence. It can be determined that Interviewee C is questioning the relevance of the competencies in this passage. It’s also clear that the interviewee thinks the competencies aren’t as crucial in these roles because they’re considered entry level jobs and there’s a huge number of candidates who apply for this position in comparison to any other positions in the civil service.

Theme 7: The importance of experience in leadership competency

There was an emerging theme established through the interview’s which revolved around the discussion about the leadership competency. The researcher asked the interviewees about a question which was based on emerging research suggesting that Generation Z candidates are struggling generally in the leadership competency more and more as the years are progressing. The common theme was that all the interviewee’s argued against this piece of research claiming that the younger generation can’t be expected to score as well in the leadership competency as they haven’t got as much job experience as older candidates generally. Interviewee B stated that “Leadership in particular is where you need experience. You have to learn how to lead and It's not something that you can read up in a book.”

The research suggested that the concerns around the leadership competency was a generational issue but Interviewee D also argued against this. “I think if you're applying for a

Principal Officer but you've never managed anybody then you're going to be in trouble and rightly so but that's down to experience rather than a generational issue." Again, experience is highlighted as the issue rather than anything else which interviewee C also agrees with. "I would think that the younger generation or graduates wouldn't generally have the experience to score well in the leadership competency."

Theme 8: Interview weaknesses and assessment strengths

This theme is crucial as it gets to the heart of the research question. There were signs throughout the interviews that there was a slight preference for the assessments rather than the interviews as a selection method. Interviewee B indicated this theme most when they stated "And interviewing isn't as reliable and as valid as an assessment would be. So, I think it's important, and I think it's necessary, but it wouldn't be as reliable and valid as their cognitive assessment or presentation." Although, interviewee B has said they think the interview stage is important they pointed out quickly how they think the assessments are more reliable.

Interviewee D didn't quite express that one was more reliable than the other but did explain how an assessment would seem more fitting for the job role. "I think they work really well together. I think from an interview you can hear about what people have done and their experiences. I think sometimes with the exercise you can get people to project into the role specifically." Interviewee D clearly thinks that an assessment is more effective for assessing if a candidate would be suitable to carry out their duties in the specific role. Interviewee A also raised concerns about the effectiveness of an interview. "I think an interview on its own isn't ideal. The best thing is to combine things and always come back to the competencies." Although, interviewee A states that the best thing to do is to combine the two methods it is concerning that the interviews are spoken in a somewhat negative fashion again. It's clear to

see that there are concerns highlighted around interviews and more positive language spoken about the assessments generally.

Discussion

In this section of the dissertation the researcher will explain all relevant interpretations of the findings from the analysis and how it fits with previous research and theories. The focus of this section will be to give a detailed explanation and interpretation of this study. The researcher will highlight the relevance of the findings with the overall aim of the study. The researcher will reintroduce the aim of the study, describe the results, discuss the findings in relation to the theory and research, highlight strengths and weaknesses of the research, mention possible avenues of future research in the topic area, discuss implications of the study and restate the main findings of the research.

This primary aim of this study was to measure the effectiveness of job interviews in comparison to other assessment activities from a manager's perspective for public sector jobs. Considering the Public Appointments Service is responsible for hiring 15% of the workforce in the country it's crucial for them to have an efficient recruitment and selection model. The competency-based interviews and assessments are the selection methods that are used by PAS in hiring candidates. However, there was never any studied carried out to compare the two methods. The study also aimed to analyse what happened after a candidate was hired. Is the performance management system used to review if it was a "successful hire" or if it was used to hire internal candidates? (Public Appointments Services, 2018)

To achieve the primary aim, the researcher interviewed managers within the Pubic Appointment Services who conduct these recruitment competitions and gather their opinions on the effectiveness of the interviews and assessments. The results were able to address and assist in achieving the aims of the study in all regards. The researcher was able to measure the

mangers perspective in PAS on the effectiveness of the job interviews in comparison to the assessments. The results showed the interviewee's broad perception of the recruitment model implemented by PAS but then assisted to reach the specific aim set out which was to measure the effectiveness of the interviews in comparison to the assessments. The researcher will begin by discussing the findings in relation to the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process broadly but will conclude with the discussing the specific primary aim which is measuring the effectiveness of the job interviews in comparison to the assessments. The thematic analysis was able to show 8 key themes which helped in answering the research question.

One of these key themes showed that PAS staff have strong workplace values which is clearly an indication of the culture within the organisation. In the literature review it was established that culture in an organisation is important in facilitating access to the knowledge of the new employee. As a recruitment and selection organisation it's important for PAS to lead the way in this regard. An organisation with more interaction allows the new employee to be more comfortable and promotes effective integration and transfer of knowledge (Palekar, 2006).

Interviewee A and interviewee C are in their job in PAS under a year and it was evident in the interviews that they've quickly adopted these workplace values. It all feeds into the public values element of the competency-based model. This theme that is evident in the results section supported the answering of the research question which is "What is the perceived effectiveness of interviews in comparison to assessments among managerial staff in the public sector?" These workplace values adopted by PAS helps to promote effective integration and transfer of knowledge which will make the running of the recruitment and

selection process more efficient. This will then improve the performance of PAS staff at assessment and interview stage (Palekar, 2006).

The findings from another theme also helped to support the hypothesis of this study. The results showed how much training and development PAS staff carried out to eradicate unconscious bias away from the job interviews. In the literature review unconscious bias or interviewer's using their "gut instinct" was analysed extensively. Employers are still using their "gut instinct" when hiring employees which was highlighted as a current challenge within recruitment and selection in the literature review. A study in the USA in 2008 which involved more than 200 recruiters found that 3 out of 4 supported and followed subjective hiring decisions. When discussed in the interviews all PAS staff agreed that it's an ongoing challenge in the recruitment and selection process but they did not support it in any way (Miles and Sadler-Smith, 2014).

They acknowledged that you could never fully eradicate unconscious bias. The concept that the bias is unconscious means that it can never be fully eradicated. This finding means that a previous study which highlighted the "interview illusion" challenge in recruitment and selection needs to be considered when analysing the effectiveness of the job interview in the process. The "interview illusion" occurs when there is a gap between the interviewer's impression of a candidate and the reality (Miles and Sadler-Smith, 2014).

In each of the interviews PAS staff emphasised the necessity for the job interviews to stick to the competencies. It needed to be structured and each board member is required to note down the reason why candidates scored well or poorly in a specific competency. The literature review highlighted the importance of these key tasks PAS carry out in the job

interviews as one study claimed that unstructured interviews can lead to an unconscious bias. The interviewers in the unstructured approach are dependent on their own ideas about the attributes of the qualified candidate. The foundation of the structured process is built around knowledge, skills, and abilities that would emerge from a formal job analysis. The foundation of the unstructured process is built around the interviewers own ideas of a qaulified candidate. Therefore, this proves how effective the structured interviews are in PAS with removing unconscious bias as much as it possibly could be from the process (Millmore, 2003).

One of the results that emerged from the interviews was the amount of discussion about diversity, fairness and equality. The findings support the hypothesis as it also revolves around the subject of unconscious bias again. A recruitment and selection process that is fair and objective which doesn't discriminate against anyone will have a direct impact on how effective that process is. This was analysed in the discussion around Generation Z candidates in the literature review. The emerging research around the Gen Z candidates was put to the interviewees. It was clear that interviewees didn't want to discuss any generational issues in too much detail as they believed the research to be stereotyping an age group. Although, a detailed discussion about fairness and equality wasn't specifically intended, the results do add value to the aim of the study and support the hypotheses (Groves, 2018).

Another important finding was the details about the job analyses and how it fitted in to the recruitment and selection process. It was highlighted in the literature review how important the job analayses is for a structured job interview. Structured interviewing procedures is centered around the rusult of a formal job analyses and is consequently more job-related than unstructured procedures. Evidence has found that higher validities were

linked with procedures that were based on formal job analyses than those based on informal or no job analyses. The results showed that PAS use competencies as a template for the job analyses. It was also explained in the interviews how the staff in PAS form a specific job analyses by discussing the role with individuals who are or were in that position in the public sector (Keep and James, 2010).

The literature review explains that a thorough job analysis will inform the rest of the recruitment and selection strategies, will add a structure and framework going forward and will improve the chances of implementing a successful recruitment and selection strategy. There is enough evidence from the results to determine that a thorough job analyses is carried out by PAS for each of the roles from Clerical Officer to Principal Officer. The findings add value to answering the research question as the thorough job analyses used for each role shows how effective the start of the recruitment and selection process is (Schuler et al, 2009).

An important finding from this study comes from the discussion about the performance management system in the civil service. In the literature review it was established that some type of performance management system is required to grade employees and how their salary compares to the value of the business. A performance management system could be used to find out if the recruitment and selection process has been successful. In the public sector there is a performance management system called PMDS which documents an employee's performance on a yearly basis. A concerning theme from the interviews with PAS was the issues with PMDS (Schuler et al, 2009).

One interviewee expressed that they think the performance management system is limited. Another interviewee said there is a lack of trust from staff members in the performance management system. It was also clearly stated from multiple interviewee's that the performance management system doesn't come into any recruitment and selection process at any point. There is noticeably a lack of trust from PAS in the performance management system. In one intrview an interviewee mentioned that PMDS hadn't reached its full potential. This finding is worrying as PAS don't use the performance management system in front of them to see how staff are progressing. This helps in answering the research question as it shows something that PAS may be lacking as part of their recruitment and selection model.

A finding that follows on from performance management is based around external or internal competions and PMDS again. It was crucial to find out what factors are considered when choosing to run an internal or external competition for promotion in the civil service. The researcher was also interested to find out if PMDS was a factor in assessing a candidate when they applied for internal promotion. The literature review established that hiring someone internally will mean the applicant will understand the culture of the organisation and will have developed skills that is specifically relevant to that organisation. On the other hand, the major benefits of external recruitment are a person can bring in new ideas to the organisation. They're also not involved in office politics which make them less likely to become unproductive as a result (DeVaro, 2016).

The public sector run internal and external competitions. It was revealed in the interviews that PAS are not involved in making the decision on whether to hire candidates internally or externally. That side of the recruitment and selection process is decided by the

Department of Expenditure and Public Reform. However, one interviewee did reveal that it's based on the supply and demand of job positions and candidates. PAS have explained that they keep in close contact with DEPR and all of the policy organisation's as that is what's required to run an efficient recruitment and selection process. The results also revealed that PAS do not use PMDS in any capacity when hiring candidates. As previously stated not using a performance management system that is so readily available to them is concerning. These findings assist in answering the research question as the fact that the public sector run internal and external competition means that they'll take on the advantages and disadvantages internal and external candidates bring. However, the disregard of the performance management system from PAS doesn't help to increase the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process (DeVaro, 2016).

Previous literature also indicated that one of the current challenges in recruitment and selection is managing Global Talent Challenges. Global Talent Challenges includes managing an organisation to ensure the appropriate amount of talent at the right place, the right time and the right price when there is shortages of talent and when there is a surplus of talent. This is why it is important for large organisations to think and act global. It was discovered in the interviews that it's DEPR who decide on which recruitment competiton is run and why. Therefore, it was difficult to get any insight on how they manage Global Talent Challenges. However, it was established in the literature review how crucial it is to use a performance management system in order to compare employee's salary and the value they bring to the business. Again, this finding shows how PAS not using a performance management system could weaken the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process. The fact that PAS don't use PMDS to assess internal candidates, don't use PMDS to review

hiring and don't use PMDS to match the value of the employees to their roles reduces the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process (Schuler et al, 2009).

A key piece of the study discussed in the literature review was about Generation Z candidates and how there was a trend in terms of the declining ability in the leadership competency. The early research on Gen Z indicates that they are the more likely generation to decline leadership responsibilities than the Millennial Generation (1981-1996) and Generation X (1965-1980) due to fear of failing and a lack of confidence required to lead. This piece of research was put to the interviewee's and they all overwhelming rejected the comment. Interviewee's explained that they thought younger people generally struggle more with the leadership competency and it wasn't a generational issue at all in their mind (Groves, 2018).

The researcher asked if there was a current trend to this nature at all in respect of Generation Z candidates. The interviewee's explained that they hadn't noticed any downward trend with the performance of the leadership competency. Interviewee's were also very quick to point out how it's important not to generalise or stereotype any group of candidates from their point of view. The findings from this theme is that even though it's important not to generalise any group of candidates it's crucial for PAS to be aware of trends within age groups. The previous research shows that it is important to review competencies as they do sometimes need to be adjusted to reflect the changing nature of the job and the differences in characteristics between different generations. This supports the hypothesis as the suitability of the competencies has a direct influence on how effective the interviews or the assessment are in the recruitment and selection process (Groves, 2018).

The behaviour of the interviewer was highlighted in the literature review as a potential issue in the recruitment and selection process. It's crucial to look at the applicant's perspective of recruitment and selection as all previous literature recognises the importance of the applicant's reactions to the selection process. Previous literature suggests that the behaviour of the recruiter has a significant impact on the applicant's reactions to the selection process. It was explained to the researcher that every staff member in PAS is trained on how to conduct a competency-based interview and that most of the training is based on been aware of your own biases so you can make fair and objective decisions. Job interviewers are also instructed to base every decision in relation to the competencies. This supports the research question as the extensive training for all staff members on conducting interviews increases the effectiveness of those job interviews in the recruitment and selection process (Anderson et al, 2002).

One of the other findings is in relation to competencies which was also highlighted in the job analysis and its relevance in the results section. Competencies are a way that enable organisations to achieve performance and sustained competitiveness. Competencies offer a framework for balancing the interests of the potential employee and balancing the interests of the organisation. Employee competences are viewed as valuable assets to any organisation. It was established in the literature review how competencies are the core values of any organisation. They can't be copied and are completely unique to that organisation (Keep and James, 2010).

Competencies are essentially designed to be the starting point for any organisation as a template to what they're looking for. PAS certainly agree with the research on competencies which was evident in the interviews with staff. PAS are constantly training

staff members to understand the competencies so they're ready for conducting a competency-based interview. Interviewee A highlighted that "We certainly don't just keep going for the sake of it" in relation any new competitions been run. There is reviews of every recruitment competition and if there is a competency that is viewed as less relevant in any way it'll be changed.

Interviewee B also alluded to the fact that they're in the process of changing a competency now which will be released in a new recruitment and selection model shortly. It's difficult to find a flaw in the structure of the competencies for PAS. At the heart of each model is public sector values which is the core value for each job position. The only immediate concern is the emerging research of the leadership competency which was already mentioned. The findings in regards to the competencies in PAS is that they are efficiently managed and add value to the overall effectiveness of the recruitment and selection model. They are also a good basis to go on for the interviews and assessments.

In terms of assessments the online implications were discussed in detail as a result of Covid 19. It was also established in the literature review of how research indicates that jobseekers could be turned off by online e-recruitment platforms that are difficult to use. Jobseekers would be more inclined to use certain e-recruitment platforms because they have had a good experience in terms of enjoyment. If an e-recruitment platform can make jobseekers feel enjoyment, interest, fun, and excitement while they look for a job to apply for on a web site the job seekers may be more likely to have more intention in completing their application form (Barber, 2006).

Interviewee B pointed out that they've developed a new way of monitoring candidates during the assessments. Remote proctoring is used which means a PAS employee can view candidates through their screen when they're doing their assessment. This development has huge potential to speed up the recruitment and selection process. PAS also use the "three click" approach for a candidate filling in an application on publicjobs.ie. The findings in regards to the new development from PAS in terms of speeding up the recruitment process and making it easier for candidates to apply for a job coincides with the literature in what makes an efficient e-recruitment model. This will ensure the effectiveness of the assessments are strong and supports the research question.

Another finding in relation to assessments revolves around the validity of the assessments and interviews which is a crucial discussion in terms of the relevancy to the research question. In other words which method is viewed as a more effective one from the perspective of interviewees. The validity of the assessments were discussed in detail in the literature review and two of the stronger tests used by PAS were dicussed in the interview. There was a common theme that PAS viewed the numerical and verbal reasoning tests as a strong method for candidates acquiring the abilitites to perform their duties in the role. Interviewee C described these tests as the baseline needed in order to prove the candidate has the ability for the role. However, Interviewee C believes that the numerical and verbal tests only act as a baseline and isn't useful for measuring any of the soft skills needed to perform in the role (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998).

Interviewee B described the assessments in a more general way but put it bluntly. Interviewee B said "interviewing isn't as reliable and as valid as an assessment would be. So, I think it's important, and I think it's necessary, but it wouldn't be as reliable and valid as their

cognitive assessment or presentation." It's clear to see that interviewee B has a preference for the assessments over the interviews. Although, interviewee B also states that they believe the job interviews is a necessary step in the recruitment and selection process.

Interviewee A thinks that all of the assessments and interviews used by PAS carry a strong validity to them so they didn't express a preference for one. Interviewee A explained how they thought combining the assessments and the interviews as the best way of predicting future performance of an employee.

The interviewees generally spoke more positively about the assessments. They discussed the advantages of the different types of assessments. For example, interviewee be stated that "a work sample would be good at measuring most of the skills in a job and a roleplay exercise or presentation exercise is good at measuring concrete skills, that wouldn't be as good as an interview." Interviewee C was also quick to point out the negative side of the job interviews. "The downside to an interview is people that are good at talking can put a good spin on everything no matter what they're skills are."

Interviewee D also followed this pattern. "It means you can get them to replicate what they will be doing themselves instead of them just talking about what they've done." It can be devised from the interviews that there is a view from the interviewees which perceive the effectiveness of the assessments as a stronger selection method. This also follows on from the results section. It is very important to note that all the interviewees thought that the most

effective way of predicting performance in the role is to combine the competency-based interview and the assessment. However, there was enough evidence in the results and the interviews to determine that the staff in PAS perceived the assessments as a slightly more effective method of hiring candidates in the public sector.

5.1 Weaknesses

There is one main weakness to the study carried out which had practical implications for the findings. Unfortunately, the researcher could only conduct 4 interviews with PAS staff members. The researcher planned to conduct 5-6 interviews but it wasn't possible. This smaller sample size meant the researcher didn't uncover the variety of opinions which was intended. It also reduces the power of the study and increases the margin of error.

In this regard the researcher could also have broadened the sample size to all managerial staff in the public sector instead of just the managers that work in PAS. Managers across all the departments would have experiences of staff coming through the recruitment and selection process and they more than likely would have taken part in a PAS recruitment competition themselves. This would have broadened the study and possibly have given a valuable contrasting perspective of the recruitment and selection process. In hindsight, it also would have helped to find out what their perception of the staff hired by PAS as they have direct experience of working with them.

5.2 Strengths

The small sample size was highlighted as a weakness to the study but the actual sample themselves was a strength. The purposive sampling used in this study was aimed at analysing a very specific group of people. All participants had the characteristics needed in order to facilitate in answering the research question. The opinions the interviewees offered were from experts within their field so it was a huge advantage to the study. Purposive sampling usually involves a small sample as well as the data from this sample is information-rich.

The research itself is also important in relation to the business world. As highlighted in the introduction PAS is responsible for hiring 15% of the workforce in the country. That is a huge amount of people and it's crucial that they have an efficient recruitment and selection process. The research also gathered the opinion of the actual workers within the organisation so the data taken from the interviews gave the study excellent context in regard to the opinion managers had of the day to day running of the recruitment and selection process.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

As previously mentioned, a broader perspective in terms of sample size would benefit the research. Managers across all departments could give their perspective of how staff members perform after they're hired. It would also mean these managers could offer a more informed opinion in terms of performance management. It was established in the literature review how important it was to monitor the performance of staff to find out if it was a

successful hire or not. Managers who track performance on a daily basis could fill this gap in relation to the research.

Another avenue of further research which follows on from the previous point is interviewing entry level staff members that have went through the recruitment and selection process. This would completely broaden the study but it would offer another perspective of the process. It was established in the literature review how important it is to understand the candidate's perspective of the recruitment and selection process. Although, it was clear when interviewing PAS staff members that they trained the team to be aware of any biases it would be interesting to find out what the candidates think of the process.

The job analysis was discussed in the literature review and how crucial it was to get this right as it's the first step of the recruitment and selection process. However, during the interviews it was revealed that the Department of Expenditure and Public Reform are involved in choosing an internal or external recruitment process and are involved in the job analysis. It would be interesting to find out how those decisions are made in future by interviewing members of staff in DEPR.

5.4 Implications of research

The research carried out in this study has gathered the opinions of the employees in PAS and what their perception of the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process is. This study will inform public policy makers of the expert's opinion on the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process. Although, the development of these recruitment methods is very much evidence based the staff members can have a massive impact on how they're implemented with the vast experience they have in the field.

This study will also inform the public about the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process ran by PAS. A candidate who is considering applying for a role in the civil service could learn about the strengths and weaknesses the recruitment process has by reading this research paper. This will inform candidates of how the process works from the job analysis to the competencies to the assessments and finally the job interview.

Conclusion

The research findings in this study indicate that the performance management system doesn't come into any recruitment and selection process at any point. There is noticeably a lack of trust from PAS in the performance management system. This finding is a concern as PAS don't use the performance management system in front of them to see how staff are progressing. Previous literature has established that a performance management system is an effective way of assessing internal candidates, reviewing hiring decisions and matching the value of the employees from their production in the job with their salary.

Another main finding of the research was the disagreement of participants in terms of the declining ability in the leadership competency for Generation Z candidates. This piece of research was put to the interviewee's and they all overwhelmingly rejected the idea that there is a current downward trend of the leadership competency amongst this generation of candidates. Interviewee's explained that they thought younger people generally struggle more with the leadership competency but it wasn't a generational issue at all in their mind.

The main finding from this research was the interviewee's perception of the recruitment and selection process. It was devised from the interviews that there was a view from the interviewees which perceives the effectiveness of the assessments as a stronger selection method. All the interviewees stated that they thought the most effective way of predicting performance in the role is to combine the competency-based interview and the assessment. However, there was enough evidence in the results and the interviews to show that the staff in PAS perceived the assessments as a slightly more effective method of hiring candidates in the public sector.

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Appendix 1: Interviews

Interviewee A

Date: 31/07/2020

Duration: 38 minutes

Interviewer: Ok, so I'll probably to start off by just getting your name, what your role and your involvement in the recruitment process itself.

Interviewee A: So just for me tell you about my role is it?

Interviewer: Yeah, I have a list of questions here but this is going to be a semi structured interview. I just want to get a feel of what you do on a daily basis and your involvement within the recruitment process.

Interviewee A: Okay, so an overview of my role?

Interviewer: Yeah, exactly.

Interviewee A: So just to say I started on the 30th March this year so I'm very new.

Interviewer: That's good to get the thoughts of someone who is new to their role in PAS.

Interviewee A: Yeah, I've never actually been in the office before so some things are still very new to me. I work as part of the assessment services unit and there are 7 psychologists that work there. So basically, I work with different recruitment teams when there is a campaign. We advise on what methods to be used in order to recruit the candidates. This includes psychometric testing, work sample, role plays, group exercises or interviews etc. We would support those methods by going out to a test provider and getting a test or in this case we're doing a lot of remote proctoring which is getting previous paper based assessments hosted on an online system by external providers and then they have people who will

supervise you while you do your test. This is called remote proctoring. obviously, we also support interview boards. We also provide feedback on personality questionnaires and we form parts of the management board team. We also support various other teams as well within PAS. That's kind of generally what we do. We're involved with lots of projects as well. I'm pretty new so I wouldn't be as involved as some of the other people you will be chatting to but that's what we do generally.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. It's good to chat to someone who's new and to get their view of the recruitment process so far. I'll start off with the first question now. So basically, I started looking at Recruitment and the definition of what an effective recruitment process should look like. The expert's opinion is that a good recruitment process will create a pool of talented candidates. So, do you think the PAS recruitment process is good for creating a pool of qualified or talented candidates?

Interviewee A: Well, I think our recruitment process is very much evidence based. And we use methods that are appropriate to the job. So, everything has been well researched and everything is evidence based. And I think because we have a group of psychologists that work alongside the recruitment team for advice, the evidence based decisions, the strategic thought and research on planning and specifics that go into implementing our recruitment process we do have a recruitment process which is good for creating a pool of qualified or talented candidates. We are identifying as best as one possibly can the right people to recruit. I mean, no process is perfect but our interviewed board members are well trained and supported. And we're not just doing the same thing for everything. Anytime a particular role is advertised we don't just implement the same thing. We consistently review whether it's still a suitable process in terms of the questions and we have feedback from all of those involved. We're constantly looking to improve our services. So, I would say despite being new my sense would be we are definitely implementing a process that would help identify high

quality candidates by using research evidence-based information and keeping things up to date and being open to feedback and getting feedback as part of that process.

Interviewer: And would part of that be reviewing competencies?

Interviewee A: You wouldn't review competencies all of the time. To actually do a job analysis is a big undertaking. It would be reviewed on a regular basis as is advised and best practice. I think the methodologies that you use to assess candidates and the interview questions and the process is consistently being reviewed and kept up to date. And if competencies are deemed to be no longer valid because the nature of the job has changed of course they would obviously be looked at and they're reviewed on a regular basis. But you couldn't do a whole job analysis all the time. You might review competencies to make sure they're still relevant and if they are ever deemed not to be relevant then they will be reviewed.

Interviewer: Yeah, I found that very interesting because I came in as a Clerical Officer in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. I also went for the Executive Officer and I got hired through the two of them from external competitions. But it was just really interesting to go through the process of the interview and assessments in PAS. That was my first experience of going through a structured recruitment process after college. So, the next question is: Do you think the PAS recruitment and selection processes has resulted in candidates with the appropriate skills for the appropriate jobs getting hired? This question is in regards to the selection process.

Interviewee A: Well, I think my other answer is probably more related to what you just asked me. My work is more around the selection process. In terms of recruitment it is primarily based around advertising. I wouldn't know as much about that side of things because I'm more involved in the selection process but it's based on planning, marketing and reaching out to candidates. And just to answer that last question at the moment we're currently looking at ways of targeting job seekers much more specifically instead of blanketly. We're looking at

Twitter, Instagram and Facebook in terms of recruiting candidates. Lately, we're doing a much more targeted type of advertising to get candidates aware of the job which is the first stage of the process. If you don't know about the job, you're never going to apply. My work is more around selection methods and picking the right people but if you don't have methods to get people in terms of recruitment then you can't select the appropriate candidates. I think we're consistently getting better at advertising in the best possible way and that's all about targeting. I think it's a case of being specific rather than a blanket process for advertising. In terms of hiring people I do think that our selection methods are relevant, up to date, and really tap into what the actual job would entail. We recently developed role plays for a particular role. The role plays were relating back to the competencies and the candidates were able to show their skills, their knowledge and their abilities in the area. We're always developing and innovating to come up with the best possible ways of assessing candidates in relation to the role rather than a blanket rule to try and get the best people in.

Interviewer: Yeah, I imagine the time it takes to run a competition for such a large scale of jobs is a big challenge.

Interviewee A: Yeah, there's a lot of work that goes in behind the scenes. If you just applied the same process to everything like doing a verbal, numerical test and an interview it would be very hit and miss. You wouldn't get the right people. There's a lot of thought put into what assessment methods are used for each particular campaign and it is always mapped right back onto the competencies. We always try and measure the competencies in a variety of ways as well so you're not just getting one look in. You might get an interview and you might get a test or a role player or a group exercise. At the moment we're bringing everything online and we've actually successfully kept all of our campaigns going and moved it all online. Everyone has been working very hard and I think everyone is doing really well to keep things going.

Interviewer: Yeah, I suppose it’s so different but I’ve had new experiences with working in social welfare during these challenging times which also provided some tough challenges. Would you know much about the actual interviewers?

Interviewee A: Do you mean in terms of training?

Interviewer: Yeah, exactly. The type of training the interviewers would get and why they’re trained on those things.

Interviewee A: All our board members would be trained around the basics of interviewing and obviously more recently around zoom interviewing. They would be trained in everything from a quality, diversity and best practice around how you would develop questions in an interview. Then the do's, the don'ts and all of that is covered. Then training on how to structure the interview with questions around equality, legislation, how you would evaluate candidates and how you would give feedback to candidates. Recently there has been training around unconscious bias that we all have so the training is around how we’re able to counteract those to ensure that every candidate has a fair and just process so that no one is discriminated against. Everyone's given a fair chance to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and abilities in an interview in the most fair and professional way. Some of these interviewers will have extensive experience in interviewing candidates. This includes internal and external experts. Some of the boards for more senior positions could have five or six people on them to evaluate a candidate. In my own experience I had four people on my panel and they're all there for very specific reasons. They have skills in the area to be able to assess the candidate all the panel members would take on competencies to evaluate on.

Interviewer: That’s a serious job to get everyone trained on how to interview a candidate considering the amount involved in it.

Interviewee A: Yeah, it is. We've got the online training modules as well. There's obviously training that we do in person as far as I know but because I’m new I've not been involved in

that. We also have a personality questionnaire we use for senior positions. Candidates might fill that in towards the end of the recruitment process. As psychologists we would sometimes advise interviewers on some of the key points that came from that so that it can inform their decision as well. It would all feed into the process that way.

Interviewer: That's great. Thanks for that. You kind of answered this already a bit but how are the application forms put to the candidates? Is an equal opportunities policy included in the application form?

Interviewee A: I don't work with the application forms so I'm not sure but I imagine there is. As far as I know there is.

Interviewer: Do you think the PAS recruitment model has been given enough of a strategic role in the organisation?

Interviewee A: What did you say was the first part of this question?

Interviewer: Do you think the PAS recruitment model has been given enough of a strategic role in the organisation?

Interviewee A: It's our bread and butter to get the right people in and to select the right people. We have management meetings and these things are discussed, agreed and processes are continuously being reviewed. I think it is absolutely given enough of a strategic role.

Interviewer: This question probably isn't applicable to yourself because you weren't in PAS until recently. But is there anything to show you that the recruiting process has led to a rise in organisational performance over the last number of years?

Interviewee A: Yeah, I wouldn't know. I hope so. But I actually couldn't say.

Interviewer: No problem. That's really a question for someone who's worked in PAS for a number of years

Interviewee A: Some of my other colleagues that's worked here for years will be able to give you loads of more information. Apologies for that.

Interviewer: No need to apologise. It's a semi structured interview so not every question has to be answered. Do you think the PAS model has led to less interviewers using their gut instinct or intuition?

Interviewee A: We would always say that it's not about your gut instinct. You need evidence that somebody is capable and there's a scoring system for each of the competencies. You have to provide evidence that the person is capable so you can't do that with your gut instinct or intuition. You can't hire a candidate because you like how they dressed and now you're going to hire them or they spoke well so you're going to hire them. We're always talking about how you cannot base something on how someone dresses or how someone presents themselves. You can evaluate only what you see in the interview so not what you know about them or if you knew them in the past life. You evaluate them by what you see on the day and you evaluate them on that only and not on anything else. You have to find evidence of that and there has to be documentation to back that up. If you have an appeal and it show someone didn't get a job on something other than how they performed in the interview then it defeats the purpose of the process.

Interviewer: Yeah, I see that with the way the interview is scored and how you get feedback. It's quite structured. The unconscious bias was coming up a lot in my literature review and how it still goes on in a lot of organisations. I found this has been due to organisations not having the right procedures in place. Would you agree?

Interviewee A: Yeah, when the procedures are loose, when there isn't a good structure and when good training isn't provided unconscious bias can appear. When people don't know their role and when they don't know why they are there these problems can appear. It's important to have clear processes that are understandable so that people who are conducting an interview can provide evidence of why someone was hired. A structured process allows

other people to stand over the process. When people make appeals, they're going to see that information so it's going to be made public if the person requested it with freedom of information. You can't write opinion-based details or whatever. In terms of unconscious bias training we were all on it's been a really good one for highlighting that we all do have unconscious bias and we need to be aware of that.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. So, for the PAS recruitment competitions, what factors are considered on whether they decide to run an internal or external competition?

Interviewee A: I actually don't know. I don't know if it's something that would be agreed by the client. I actually don't know. You might be better off asking somebody else because I'm just very new on that.

Interviewer: No problem at all. Do you know much about PMDS? themes?

Interviewee A: I have some idea of PMDS. Yeah, I've done it. I worked on it when I worked for the prison service.

Interviewer: That's a bit changing role as well then which is interesting. So how effective do you think PMDS is when considering the internal applicants for PAS run competitions? My own experience on working with PMDS is that it can be viewed as a tick the box exercise a little bit.

Interviewee A: I don't know how it's looked at I'm new so I don't know how seriously it's taken. But I can speak generally about what I think of PMDS. I think this idea of satisfactory and on satisfactory which is all the options that you can give isn't great. I feel like it's a lot to say to someone that they're unsatisfactory. I feel it seems kind of limited. I think it depends on the manager and the staff member. If you put generic comments then it's no use to anyone. But if you're somebody who sets clear goals and follows up on it and you really buy into the process then it can be useful. If someone really puts effort into it and writes it genuine and doesn't write opinion-based information then I think it can be useful. For

example, if they write constructive criticism by putting it positively and they really buy into it then it can be useful but I think people are afraid to put things on paper anymore. In my previous experiences of PMDS I only had a three-month probation so I can't speak for PAS but I've found that it depends on how the person is willing to engage in the process. I mean that from the managers perspective where some people just see it as a tick the box exercise and even if the person is performing very poorly, they're afraid to write unsatisfactory because that's a big statement to make.

Interviewer: Yeah, I suppose I'm thinking of it logistically as well. In illness benefit you'd have a HEO who would be responsible for everyone's PMDS and it's difficult for them to know and assess everyone.

Interviewee A: Yeah, I think sometimes the culture in the organisation can be a factor. But I really have no experience really of PAS in that way so I couldn't comment on it.

Interviewer: How suitable do you think the competencies are for each position in the PAS recruitment model?

Interviewee A: I'm limited in my experience but I've come across quite a number at this stage and I would say they are. They seem up to date even to the language that's used. In terms of the questions which I've been involved in writing to the application forms or whatever we've been doing I found the competencies suitable. What we've done is drafted questions based on the competencies. Then the interview board have been involved and confirmed they were happy with the questions. The people who know the jobs are saying that the questions are relevant and we're basing the questions on the competencies so I would say yes to the question. I'm not an expert in every job that existed because I couldn't be but somebody who knows the field would be so they would advise. We pride ourselves on keeping competencies up to date and relevant. If we discover they aren't relevant when we're reviewing them, we would change them. We certainly don't just keep going for the sake of it. If you get the wrong

people in the room with the wrong idea about what the job is you recruit for the wrong things. So, unless your competencies are rock solid, you're not going to have a good outcome. We would always ensure the competencies are suitable.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. One of the pieces of research I found was that there's an emergence of Generation Z candidates coming into the recruitment process in the last number of years and they would struggle more with the leadership competency in an interview. They might struggle with this competency and it could lead to a dip in organisational performance for that organisation. Do you see a trend of the Generation Z candidates struggling on the leadership competency within the PAS recruitment process?

Interviewee A: I just think it's very hard to have that leadership experience when you're young. I would say there are exceptions to the rule with advocates like Greta Thunberg who is an amazing leader at such a young age. There are exceptions but generally I don't think they have the competence or the confidence to be a good leader yet. I don't think that happens. It will never happen for some people. It's not what they want like myself. I like project management. I don't like managing other people. But I like managing projects and people are involved in that so I think it's hard in most senses without years of experience to feel like you have what it takes to lead others. I mean there's a possibility that people will say that the younger generation were mollycoddled. But I think that what was required as a leader for the previous generation was a different type of leadership. So, I would say it depends on how you are measuring that. Are you measuring the same leadership skills? Maybe you are. My dad would talk about how his managers needed to monitor you differently. You would be threatened of disciplinary action if you didn't do the right thing in previous generations for example. The current generation would be more inclusive in bringing people along with inspiring and empowering others to see your vision. All these newer types of leadership or more common ones are the ones that really probably work best. I couldn't tell you the answer

to that question though. Maybe some other colleagues may be able to give you an answer to that. I wouldn't have enough experience to answer that query definitively. I just think leadership means something different now.

Interviewer: Yeah, no problem. Do you think the structured interviews and assessments are good recruitment tools in order to predict job performance?

Interviewee A: I think an interview on its own isn't ideal. The best thing is to combine things and always come back to the competencies. I think if you are using evidence-based assessment methods that are relevant to the job and ideally more than one you're increasing your likelihood of success. And that's what we know. I think that using ability testing, work samples and interviews are highly regarded as very good at predicting job performance. If you combine some of those you would obviously increase the validity. You need to have a job sample or ability test that's relevant to the role and relates to the competencies. It looks at competencies or questions that really relate to job and you have a way of having really good people that understand the job and understand how to score and evaluate it. It needs to be done in a fair way to give everyone a fair chance. It needs to be well organised the process is perfect. If you have interviewers that don't know what they're doing, you don't have a clear idea, who asks are questions that aren't relevant then the tools aren't that effective. If you have people that don't know how to score things properly or choose irrelevant work samples then it's difficult. PAS are using multiple methods which are up to date, that are relevant and that are fair. No recruitment processes are flawless but if you do the right things and can stand over all the methods then they can be very effective.

Interviewer: I know this depends on the type of interview and the assessments and how relevant they are to specific jobs but is there any general differences that you see between what type of skills the assessments and the interviews show?

Interviewee A: Okay, so you're saying an interview versus another assessment?

Interviewer: Yeah, exactly.

Interviewee A: Well, best practice says you should measure each competency twice. Okay, so for example, measuring someone's communication skills through an interview. You can also measure it through some form of group exercise or roleplay. In an interview, there are things that are harder to measure. In an interview you're asking someone to talk about their competencies so they can talk about anything. They can make up all sorts or elaborate on things that aren't true. A good interviewer will probe you and probably be able to realise if you're lying or not but you can still lie. if you get someone to do something practically like a typing test it shows you can do it or a role play where they have de-escalated a situation of some description it shows your practical skills. Another example is in a group exercise where they have to plan something and use team working skills. You can talk about your team working skills give an amazing interview but when you get into a group exercise where you have to actually be a team player and all of a sudden, you're shouting at everyone you can clearly see that maybe their team playing isn't great. Each method should bring something. You don't want to measure two's assessment which is measuring the exact same thing and nothing else. You want them to measure every competency and ideally in two different ways. Some exceptions are certain things like numerical ability which is hard to measure in an interview. So, they do measure different things but they shouldn't be ad hoc. There should be a plan. There should be a grid or a table with all the competencies and then you need to think about all the best ways of measuring them as broadly and robustly as possible.

Interviewer: I suppose there's no definitive way to say whether one is more effective than the other? It's fair to say they're complimentary. You wouldn't have an opinion of what's more effective from your point of view? The interviews or the assessments.

Interviewee A: I think in research they say work sampling is the top one for predicting performance. You can correct me if I'm wrong. But some people would say that if you did a

new study numeric tests would be higher. Then you've got a competency-based interview which would be up there as well. They're all very close. However, the best way is combining them. So, when you talk about assessment centers, we've combined values which means you're increasing validity. I mean, I couldn't say I have enough experience to say which one I think is most effective. I can only go on what the research is saying. I would say the best thing is a combined one. Like I said, I think at the moment it's work sampling is number one but a work sample has to be relevant to that specific role. It's just important that it's robust and related to the job. Then it's important that the people evaluating everything are well trained and are able to understand the correct behaviours fairly. Someone recently said to me that they think ability testing is probably considered just as good as a work sample. It would also vary from role to role. I would say the best thing is a combined method which taps into the competencies. And ideally, twice.

Interviewer: Great. That's all the questions there. Thanks very much for everything. I really appreciate it.

Interviewee A: It was a pleasure Michael. If you need anything else at all just send me an email.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee B

Date: 07/08/2020
Duration: 31 minutes

Interviewer: We're good to go now. I'll probably start off by getting your name, what your role is and your involvement in the recruitment process itself.

Interviewee B: Yeah, just for the tape then. I'm an occupational psychologist for the Public Appointment Service. I also manage one member of staff. I've worked in the Public Appointment Service since 1998 so it's a long time and I've had extensive experience prior to that with working in the industry.

Interviewer: Yeah, I was actually chatting with one of your colleagues last week who's been working there since March so it's interesting to get a different perspective on the recruitment process. So, some of the research that I've been conducting has been looking at what makes an effective recruitment process. According to research an effective recruitment process helps to create a number of qualified talented candidates. Do you believe that the PAS recruitment process does this?

Interviewee B: I certainly do. We have evidence to show that as well. We've done some validity studies in the past and shown that we get the client what they want and we constantly review our selection processes. So, we would go back to personnel officers and talk to them about whether they think that they're getting what they need. Now, as you know, if you're reviewing selection processes, there's no one selection procedure or assessment that would have 100% predictive validity. Therefore, you're going to get some people who slip through the net.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's brilliant. Thanks for that. Do you think that the appropriate candidates for the appropriate jobs generally get selected as a result of the process?

Interviewee B: Yeah, definitely. I think I answered that question when I was discussing recruitment as well.

Interviewer: Do you know much about the training when it comes to the interviewers?

Interviewee B: Yeah, I actually train them. Okay, so they first of all, do modularised eLearning. it's blended training. So, it's a modularised eLearning courses on the LMS which is the learning management system. They have to do that at home and that's 75 minutes for the main module for interviewing. Then there's other eLearning bits on unconscious bias, on disabilities, the role of the chair and the role of the PAS representative. There's all of that which is the first thing they get trained on. So, everybody who acts on a board for us, regardless of what type of board it is, has to do that. Then to reaffirm that message they come in and usually do an in-house course where they would do a practical and they're assessed on how well they get on. And then once they've done that, they're let loose and observed on a couple of interview boards before we finally sign them off.

Interviewer: Thanks. That’s brilliant. I found that concept around unconscious bias very interesting. What I’ve found is it’s all about making the candidates the priority and the centre of attention. It’s not about the interviewer in anyway. Their job is just to get the best out of the candidate.

Interviewee B: Yeah, absolutely. Have you done a PAS interview Michael? You must have actually. How did you get on?

Interviewer: I have. Yeah, I done 2 of them. I like the structured way of the interviews. I got feedback as well on how I done. It suits me personally. I used the situation, task, action and result method to study for the interviews. I had a positive experience. I like going through that kind of stuff when preparing for an interview.

Interviewee B: Yeah, that’s good. Well, it's a form of strengths-based assessment in the sense that you're looking at what people have done in the past to show that they would be able to do it in the future.

Interviewer: Yeah, I liked going through the process. Do you know much about the application forms?

Interviewee B: I don't know much about the application forms. I don't have much to do with them. I know we use a three click approach for some competitions which I think works because it enables people to apply if they want to and they don't have to fill out many forms. Then that filling out comes up later on in the process. Yeah, I think that works better. And I personally feel all you need to put on an application form is your education and your career history. That's the way we've been going on a number of campaigns so that you don't have to write out all this competency stuff. And you can prepare that for yourselves but you don't need to write it all in the application form. But some campaigns still do it. They get the candidates to still write the competencies out. It’s more for the candidates help than ours. But to answer your question the campaigns that I work on the application forms is either the three clicks approach or the application form is at the beginning and the longer application comes later on.

Interviewer: Yeah, I understand what you mean. Thanks for that. Do you think the PAS recruitment model has been given enough of a strategic role in the organisation?

Interviewee B: We actually don’t use one model because our recruitment model is campaign based. It’s there to meet the needs of the client and the candidate. So, every campaign is reviewed before we actually go ahead and design the campaign because they change on a continuous basis. Recruitment is also at the heart of the organisation so it has to be given enough of a strategic role because that's our business.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Do you believe the recruitment processes have led to a rise in organisational performance over the last number of years?

Interviewee B: I would say it has. I think it's continuously changing and improving. And actually, during COVID the fact that our office was able to get up and running within a month or so and have everybody working from home on a laptop was testament to how good things are in the civil service? What do you think Michael?

Interviewer: Yeah, that's how I've seen it in the civil service recently as well.

Interviewee B: What department are you in Michael?

Interviewer: I'm in illness benefit in social protection. I kind of landed in that role in and amongst an organisational change in terms a new IT system coming in.

Interviewee B: Oh, right. Oh, that's tough. All that changes at once

Interviewer: I think that it was definitely interesting and it was an experience though. What I find interesting about working in the civil service is that you can move department and move job within your own department.

Interviewee B: Yeah, I personally can't because I'm a professional but other people can have a whole wealth of experience working in marketing, communications, illness benefit or whatever it might be. So, over the course of your career, you will have a whole range of jobs under your belt.

Interviewer: I suppose that means that there's less of this institutionalisation concept that people are stuck in the same job for years which was probably a criticism people had of the civil service.

Interviewee B: Yeah, in recruitment you want to stay away from those general stereotypes. We assess candidates and assess board members in terms of their interviewing. It's not to stereotype and not to generalise. And that Marc MacSharry guy really annoys me because we've been working flat out since COVID in our office and it was such a disingenuous, nasty

thing that he said. It alienated so many people who are trying to work hard. I cannot stand up and say there's nobody in the civil service who isn't doing their job properly. But you have that in every profession. I can't say that because there always will be people in every organisation who won't work you can't help that. But as long as that's to the minimum it's fine. You have to work with that people to get the best out of them.

Interviewer: Yeah, I was trying to say that I think recent changes in terms of staff moving around even within their own unit is helpful. It means you can use the experienced staff that are there years which now have a wealth of knowledge and experience in all areas. I don't mean to infer that we shouldn't value experience anymore.

Interviewee B: Yeah. Just I refer to that because there is a general perception about a lot of civil servants. And it's totally unfair.

Interviewer: Yeah, I know what you mean. So, do I think the PAS recruitment model has led to less interviewers using their gut instinct or intuition.

Interviewee B: I hope so. That is what I train them to do. That's the aim so we tell them to do it. You could never one hundred percent eliminate it because it's unconscious. It's like unconscious bias. So, we train them not to use their gut instinct and focus on the evidence.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Do you know what factors are considered on whether PAS decide to run an internal or external competition?

Interviewee B: Yeah, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform decide that. So, they tell us what we're doing. What happens as well is the recruitment manager would know whether there's vacancies on that panel. So, they would discuss it with DEPR so say for argument's sake they might say we need EO's in the Department of Defence. And in defence they're on the EO panel so they work all that out between themselves. It's all about demand and supply.

Interviewer: That's great. It's good for me to find out what the process is like.

Interviewee B: Do you know about the job analysis, benchmarking and all of that through to the end?

Interviewer: I have an idea but I'd love to know more.

Interviewee B: Well, a full research project is used to enable us to define the competencies and what the job description is which you get from your job analysis. So basically, we start every recruitment process with the job analysis and what the competencies are themselves for that job. So, if I was running a competition for an EO I'd go to an actual EO and enquire about their job and what it entails. I'd go through a whole load a list of questions about your job and what you do and how you do it. And you'd also send out questionnaires, trying to work out what an EO does and what they want to do going forward. So, we combine that information, and then we go to a Higher Executive Officer or an Assistant Principal. Usually it probably would be an AP at that level. And we'd say, Okay, so this is the EO role. If you took a good one and a poor one why is the good one good and the bad one bad. What's the difference between the two? And they do they do what we call the repertory grid technique with them? Yeah, we would also send out questionnaires to line managers and EO's themselves. We would go further up again by going up to the assistant secretary level and saying where do you see EO's going? What sort of roles will they be doing? That sort of thing. So, then you collect all that information, and you have to group it and theme it and boil it all down to the competencies.

Interviewer: Brilliant. Thanks very much. How effective do you think PMDS is when considering internal applicants?

Interviewee B: I don't think it should be used in relation to recruitment. I think they should have the same indicators and the same competencies, which they do. I think that's important because then what you've done in your current role. I think that's effective but I think PMDS itself hasn't reached its full effectiveness as of yet. And I'm afraid that an awful lot of people

don't trust it. I think it became much better when you took away the rating scales. It didn’t work because certain managers would mark someone a 1 when in reality, they were a 3 or vice versa. So, it was actually totally meaningless. But I think the process of discussing your goals with your manager is excellent. Yeah. I think the idea of actually setting out your goals for the year and measuring performance during the year is excellent. I think that idea is good. It’s just that rating scales at the end of the year or anything like that aren't very helpful. I don't they're helpful for anybody. And because they don't mean anything, they can upset some people. I think it's good to measure those goals and see where you got to in the end and see how you can improve or what training needs you might have. From that point of view, it's good. From a rating scale point of view, I don't think it works.

Interviewer: I know what you mean and it probably gave a little bit more power to the managers as well.

Interviewee B: Exactly. And, you know, part of the problem with that is it’s based on a relationship between a manager and an employee and the relationship mightn’t be good for whatever reason and an employee who’s performed well might get scored low.

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely. How suitable do you think the competencies are for each job position in PAS?

Interviewee B: I think very suitable because we've done the job analysis.

Interviewer: Yeah, you explained that already when you went through the job analysis.

Interviewee B: And just for your information we'll be updating the competencies for at the end of this year. They’ll be going through a review process

Interviewer: That’s interesting because it follows into the next question as well. It’s about the Generation Z candidates coming into the labour market. Has the PAS recruitment model changed in any way as a result of this new generation coming in?

Interviewee B: This group will only be coming into the workforce on stream now. Of course, you have to adapt to meet the needs of a generation, but also you have to be mindful of previous generations that went before because you can't discriminate against on any grounds of age at all. So, if you adopt things too much for a younger generation, then you're alienating the old generation. Usually, you have to find an optimal solution for both. You have to try and bring along the older candidates but you have to help them and reassure them and all the rest. You can't discriminate against anybody but at the same time you've got to move with the times. So, I reckon, and based on my experience, going to conferences and things like that, the future of work will look very different. I say in five or 10 years, if you look at if you look at recruitment, it's changing all the time. So, we've been pushing for online groups for years and years and then all of a sudden it took off. If you would have said to me in the 1990s, in 30 years' time, you'd be doing everything on computer and you can do this I wouldn't believe it. My job changes all the time and you can see that considering remote proctoring has come into it because of COVID now. I've been creating different types of exercises that will work on Zoom so you change to meet the demands. I think you have to continually change.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Do you think the younger generation have struggled with showing the leadership competency generally?

Interviewee B: In fairness you wouldn't expect somebody who was 16 or 17 to have those skills. And just because somebody is of a younger generation doesn't mean to say you have to wipe out experience. People to gain experience and earn your stripes and stuff. These experiences very useful. Because if I said the only important thing is education then I think I'd be very wrong. I think it has to be a combination of the skills that you learn on the job as well and all the different experiences in life. Make sure you are a rounded person so I wouldn't rule out experience. Leadership in particular is where you need experience. You have to learn how to lead and It's not something that you can read up in a book.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Do you think structured interviews and assessments are good recruitment tools in order to predict job performance?

Interviewee B: Yes, I do. I think the ones that we use are very good. We work hard at them. There's an article from Smith 2018 about the validity of selection assessments. It just shows you that in particular cognitive assessments have the most predictive validity and trying to get that across to candidates and staff is very challenging because nobody likes doing an assessment test. But actually, they do have the highest predictive validity. So that's one reason for using them. And also, our candidate population goes up and down so if you have 30,000 candidates you've got to find some fair and consistent way of reducing them down to a manageable number. You can't interview them all. And interviewing isn't as reliable and as valid as an assessment would be. So, I think it's important, and I think it's necessary, but it wouldn't be as reliable and valid as their cognitive assessment or presentation.

Interviewer: Great. Thanks for that. What skills do you think the assessments and the interviews show generally?

Interviewee B: Every job is done on the matrix. So, you take the, you take the competencies which are defined at job analysis stage, and you do a matrix of assessments to ensure that you're measuring each of the competencies twice.

Interviewer: But would you say there is a general difference between the interviews and the assessments.

Interviewee B: Well, you wouldn't necessarily ask in a structured interview whether somebody could do a mathematical equation. So cognitive tests will be best with looking at things like reasoning and logical problem-solving skills. Because they're better at measuring that whereas, a work sample would be good at measuring most of the skills in a job depending on what the work sample is. A roleplay exercise or presentation exercise is good at measuring concrete skills, that wouldn't be as good as an interview. So, I tend to view the

interview with looking at the things that are more nebulous skills like drive and commitment, interaction, interpersonal skills, communication skills and leadership skills. That wouldn't be so well measured elsewhere. The only way you can measure leadership skills is through a work sample test. And you would get them to demonstrate it either in a roleplay or in a presentation exercise or something like that. But to assess leadership as a quality it’s best to be asking them to describe to the interview board where they have demonstrated it in the past.

Interviewer: That’s all I need. Thanks a million for that. I really appreciate it.

Interviewee B: No problem. Just drop me an email if you have any further questions or you couldn't understand what I said when read your notes or whatever.

Interviewer: I will do. Thanks again.

Interviewee C

Date: 10/08/2020
Duration: 43 minutes

Interviewer: I'll probably start off by getting your name, what your role is and your involvement in the recruitment process itself.

Interviewee C: I've been working with Public Appointment Service as an employee for a year. Yeah, so I'm still fairly new. My background was I was a civil servant in the UK for about eight years and I did a psychology degree in the evening. When I moved to Ireland, I then worked as a consultant in an organisational psychology consultancy called SHL Ireland at the time and I was there for several years. Then I became self-employed. So, I have worked with PAS in the past on a self-employed basis as a consultant. I moved to the Middle East in 2014 and I was there for about four or five years. So, I moved back a couple of years ago. So, I'm working with PAS on a temporary basis part time.

Interviewer: Very good. That's a wealth of experience you have.

Interviewee C: I was just looking through your questions and I think that there's some questions I wouldn't have the experience to answer that well. But in other instances, I think I can give a perspective how things are done in other organisations in comparison with PAS

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. One of you colleagues was only in PAS since March so she was able to give her perspective in comparison to another who worked in PAS for over 20 years. That's what makes the study interesting.

Interviewee C: Yeah, I thought one of my colleagues would have the perspective on the questions around graduates. Because she's involved in the graduate recruitment which I have very little experience around that

Interviewer: So, I was doing some research into what a good recruitment process is, and it's meant to help create a number of qualified, talented candidates. That's what a process is meant to do when it's working well. Do you believe that that the process of PAS helps to create a number of qualified candidates when they go to interview or do assessments?

Interviewee C: Yeah, I do. I think one of the advantages of the approach from PAS is it's very inclusive. And that's the key aim at the moment. I'm involved in developing an eLearning course for disability awareness for interview board members. And I was also involved in putting together an eLearning module for unconscious bias. So, there's a big emphasis on diversity. There's all that research showing what diverse employees bring in terms of innovation and so on. I think and again, I have to caveat this a lot, because of my limited experience but the impression I get and it's not based on any research or anything is that maybe things have been in the past a bit slow moving. There's an emphasis on trying to speed things up to keep good candidates. They have been trying to make the process quicker so the people applying actually get to sit in an interview. So, you keep on board, those candidates who have lots of choice in terms of another organisation they can apply for by reaching them quicker. I think in the recent past you lost something because you're trying to go through the full process and it can be quite slow. I think PAS absolutely do create a number of qualified candidates though. In terms of having a diverse group of applicants and having a particular type of high potential candidate there is always an emphasis on trying to keep that sort of person interested.

Interviewer: Yeah, I actually found that when I researched the issues with the length of time a recruitment process can take. Based on research I found lots of issues around the concept of “slow motion” hiring in terms of recruitment. I think what PAS do is make sure people have an account online and it feeds into eRecruitment a little bit. So, certain details in terms of the application forms are already filled in from registering the account so when they go to apply

for a job the application forms are already populated. That's my experience with it and I think PAS do that side of recruitment very well. The other question I have is in relation to selection. A previous colleague mentioned that they don't think you can ever get rid of unconscious bias with selection. What's your opinion on unconscious bias and do you think the processes in PAS lead to the right people getting hired?

Interviewee C: Yeah, I think with unconscious bias it's based on a very natural process because what we do as human beings in the world is rely on our instinctual judgement based on experience. If we see patterns enough then we start to process things cognitively and we take that pattern as a given. You start to see patterns of associations. That's how stereotyping comes about. It's an adaptive process in the way we deal with the world. Because, you've got two decision making processes. The automatic and then you've got the reflective. Both are important and both will always happen. But in certain instances, for example, in recruitment, you don't want to rely on the automatic processes because these associations become stereotypes, and then they become prejudices. And you say, well, that type of person is too young for this job, so you can't stereotype but my colleague is right because you can't get rid of unconscious bias completely. I put this module together with other people were we're saying is we want you to be aware that this is the way the brain works and be aware of their potential biases. And then once you're aware of this, you can do something about it. But I think the key thing from the PAS perspective is the more objective and structured the process you have, the less scope there is for individual subjective biases to come through. So yeah, I think PAS is very strong on ticking all the boxes about a structured approach. The training has an unconscious bias module so that it's very structured. So, you really do limit the scope for people to kind of let their own biases come into the process.

Interviewer: Yeah, it’s like with the competencies there has to be a reason why someone had scored well and as an interviewer you have to write why they scored well on a specific competency.

Interviewee C: Yeah, I was talking to someone about this the other day. We were talking about health and the prevention of cancer or people who tend to be less affected if they get the COVID-19. When you look at what the science and advice is, it's always exercise, good nutrition. Maybe some mindfulness. It's the same thing and whatever you're looking at in terms of problems like unconscious bias or wanting to have a more inclusive, diverse workforce it always comes down to if you have a good structure. It always comes back to your structure and it has to be a good one and continually reviewed to ensure it’s working. if you do that and you stick to the structure all these other issues that an organisation can have will be resolved.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's brilliant. Do you know anything about the training of the interviewers themselves?

Interviewee C: I know one of the other colleagues you were interviewing does a lot of it. It's based on best practice, competency-based training. The differences now are they've moved a lot of the training online and it's broken down into modules. eLearning it’s called. But usually you would’ve come in for a workshop for a day or half a day and put into action the skills and get an opportunity for feedback and observe other people and give other people feedback. Yeah. So, it’s the structures and It's the usual things like best practice around assessing people and interviewing. It’s all about what that looks like. And talking about the funnel technique for example with competencies. it's good training and I can see that based on the perspective of being involved in training with other organisations.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's so crucial, isn't it? I was looking at it and thinking the process is responsible for hiring 15% of the workforce in the country which shows how important these structures are.

Interviewee C: Yeah, when I talked about everything comes back to a good structure, the training is part of that structure. It's a fundamental piece of putting a good structure in place and training is always a part of that. And that's very much what PAS would do. There's a strong emphasis on training.

Interviewer: Yeah, Thanks for that. Do you know much about the application forms and if there is an equal opportunities policy?

Interviewee C: I know in terms of the equal opportunities policy it's almost something you don't see anymore because it's just always there.

Interviewer: So, I asked one of your colleagues if she thinks PAS gives recruitment enough of a strategic role in the organisation and she explained how recruitment is there job and of course they give it enough of a strategic role. What's your thoughts on it?

Interviewee C: I suppose this is where I would have limited experience. Certainly, I feel within PAS that they are very strong or impressive professionals that come from strong backgrounds which includes legal, diversity of inclusion and executive search so there are very strong people who are influential. In terms of conversations on a strategic level that's normally made above us so I wouldn't know much about that. I think PAS has a lot of autonomy in a sense of a lot of weight in terms of recruitment, innovation and best practice. I do think they're very strong advocates for a particular sort of recruitment. However, I think they're preaching to the converted in a sense because I see a very strong message around having in the government as a whole in having very good recruitment processes to get the best people in.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think PAS have a very fair structure and process across the board.

Interviewee C: It's so fundamental. It's part of the DNA of the organisation. I'm very aware that I need to do everything correctly, because I get the sense that there's no room to go wrong. I'm a bit nervous about doing everything properly. You don't get that in other organisations. You don't get that so much in the private sector were things have to be done properly and be seen to be doing things properly.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's brilliant. Thanks. So, we got to discuss this next question actually. It's a good question but I think you've discussed it. Do you think the PAS recruitment model has led to less interviewers using their gut instinct or intuition when hiring Candidates?

Interviewee C: Well, in many instances there are three interview board members. They might know each other but not in a strong way. They generally get a chair who might be independent or someone outside of the recruiting organisation. And sometimes you get an expert in like a legal researcher. They get three people in that don't have their own agenda because they don't know each other that well. It makes the process more objective and they're in there to get the right person. The you have the PAS representative who is the note taker in the interview. They're extra insurance in the process. All three board members will be trained. Then my role also comes into the process. So, I'm from the Assessment Services Unit and in a competition, I'd be reviewing the criteria which are the competencies and how they're going to be assessed. Then we would go along and do a quality assessment. So, for a large competition if you had three interview boards going over a few days we'd just go in and sit on the interviews to ensure there's consistency. In the results on a regular basis, you'd be making sure that the interview boards are on the same level. So, there's no board being harsher. There's lots of levels of in there.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's interesting with people coming from the outside as well. The fact that there's not just the one organisation or the one place that are working together.

Interviewee C: Yeah, one of the interview boards I was involved in recently the chair I'd come across I use to work with many years ago in SHL Ireland and she's self-employed and as a lot of experience working in different organisations. She also worked In America. She does a lot of interview board chair. She would have that experience and have that confidence to keep a tight eye on things. We would say it's a very transparent process. The benefit of having three board members is no one person is perfect and you need to understand how crucial it is to be prepared to challenge one another and be prepared to be honest with yourself. You need to acknowledge that you may be putting too much weight on looking for certain attributes. Another thing that can happen if there is just one interviewer is sometimes you can get tired and maybe lose track of your questioning and what you're really looking for. What's important is assessing the person as best as you can and part of that is to challenge one another and accept the fact that sometimes you might be personally wrong but the board come to the right decision in the end. You will always come back to the criteria because it's easy for anyone to think that a person of a certain age wouldn't suit a specific role or whatever the bias is. Most of the time it's well intentioned because you'd be concerned for the person if they got the job and they struggled. You might know the environment of where they're going to work so you might just be trying to protect them. The important thing to remember is if a certain competency is required for a job it'll be in the criteria so trust the process.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Do you believe the recruitment practices have led to a rise in organisational performance over the last number of years? So, this wouldn't be as applicable for yourself unless you have something to add?

Interviewee C: I Just have to say that there have been a few changes in one of the competitions I was involved in to make it a bit more streamlined. But, there's a cost benefit to that. Sometimes if you make it more streamlined you inevitably lose something or you lose a

stage of it. So, we're going to go in and organise some workshops over the summer and go back to departments who have taken in the candidates from the new streamlined process. It's been about a year so I think it's about going in and saying what have they noticed in terms of difference or anything. For example, have they noticed things about the candidate like is it taking longer for them to get up to speed or whatever it may be? That's a built-in process that we would go and review. When we change something, we go back and talk to line managers or people who we've taken in. I'm sure in time through PMDS or whatever it maybe we'll get a feel for how the candidates are doing in terms of progression since the introduction of this new process. It'll be interesting to see the consequences of all these recent changes down the line.

Interviewer: Have you noticed changes in the speed of the process with the recent changes?

Interviewee C: I'm not aware of the process been faster or slower but it's very much a case of business as usual. It's about getting people online. A colleague may have told you about the roleplays. It's been quite innovative. It'd be interesting to see how things progress in the near future. For example, I could imagine if there were some candidates who for whatever reason couldn't make the testing session would depending on the reason be accommodated for. It might be easier to do it on zoom and get the interview board together on zoom. It's one thing I can think of around the stragglers or people that needed to be retested. So, I'm not aware of anything getting quicker in the process but I could see how the process could be made more efficient down the line.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. What factors are considered on whether they decide to run an internal or interdepartmental competition or an open external competition? One of your colleagues told me that DEPR make the decision but do you know anything else around this question?

Interviewee C: No, unfortunately I don't know anything about that topic.

Interviewer: No problem at all. How suitable do you think the competencies are for each job position in the PAS recruitment model? I know you mentioned that they're constantly reviewed and developed.

Interviewee C: So, on the PAS websites you'll see that there are competencies each grade from CO to PO. I'm involved in recruiting for this specialist position at the moment for people who've got legal experience and who'll have done law degrees. For this position I use the competencies as a guide. They could be grouped under headings like personal effectiveness which can include your own commitment and drive and your own results. They can be grouped differently but what I think makes a difference is how those competencies are scored. We call them behavioural indicators. So I've talked to people who will be employing these individuals who already have people in those jobs. I'd be talking to them for advice about what the differences is between a person who has performed really well and what have they done. Then, somebody who's coming in and performed poorly and what the difference is to make sure they're reflected in the behavioural anchors. Those behavioural indicators are the core of the structure because they will determine what are the best questions to ask. I think if you're doing large scale Clerical Officer or Executive Officer the competencies are there but they're not tailored in a big way because you're recruiting across departments in a very general mainly.

Interviewer: Yeah, I've seen that in Clerical Officer competitions myself when there's 35,000 people applying and I could imagine how difficult it is to tailor it down to the competencies. Thanks for that. I found another piece of research in regards to the new Generation Z coming into the workforce and it suggests that they struggle more on performing in the leadership competency generally. Do you find that this is the case with the younger generation?

Interviewee C: I would think that the younger generation or graduates wouldn't generally have the experience to score well in the leadership competency. I think you need to ask what

are you looking for from your graduates? In my limited experience I do get the impression the graduate programme was also opened up internally in order to get in candidates with more solid experience around leadership. But in my view, you're comparing apples with oranges because you can't expect all candidates to have the same set of skills and experience. However, I think graduates are changing and actually developing more leadership skills at an earlier age than in the past because of group work and all sorts of things in college. For example, my daughter is giving presentations all the time and working in groups and I never did any of that so that is really important in colleges. This means that anyone coming in has the potential to be a leader because they have demonstrated an ability to take a leadership role in a college project. I think another change but maybe for the negative is I talk to a lot of academics and they would say that the first year at university or college is about getting them students to speed because they don't hit the ground running. They don't have the same level of literacy or writing abilities.

Interviewer: Yeah, I understand what you mean. I felt at 20 I didn't have the maturity that I needed to even think of the leadership role but through college and job experience I would have more confidence now.

Interviewee C: I think that's built in now in terms of looking internally for graduates and recognising the blend of someone with college experience and work experience as a potentially lucrative one from a recruitment perspective. It's also attractive for the candidate themselves as the organisation can support them when they are getting educated as they're working in the job.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. I'll just ask you one more question. It's just based on the interviews and the assessments. I know there's a various number of assessments and interviews and they change depending on what role is been applied for but is there any

general differences between what you'd find in the interviews in terms of skills that are shown in comparison to skills shown in the assessments?

Interviewee C: There's quite a lot of research into this. The difference with a numerical test for example is that they don’t assess interpersonal skills. The strength of them is to what they do assess ability and they assess it very well. In any job you need a level of ability and what is really important is you understand the level of ability and what type of ability you're looking for. And you choose the appropriate test. It’s also important that you set the test at the appropriate level. I think tests are very good as a like a baseline mark to achieve for a particular job. I think the interview is really good for standing out as a candidate in a recruitment and selection process. Roleplays can be brilliant because they can assess both the interpersonal skills you have and the ability you have. The downside to an interview is people that are good at talking can put a good spin on everything no matter what they’re skills are. However, Interviews can be great if you have proper recruitment and selection structure in place.

Interviewer: That’s brilliant. I have everything I need. Thanks for that.

Interviewee D

Date: 11/08/2020
Duration: 22 minutes

Interviewer: I'll just start off by getting some information about yourself and your role within the PAS recruitment process?

Interviewee D: Yeah, I'm the senior occupational psychologist here in PAS. I'd be the head of the Assessment Services Unit. We're involved in both development and design and the selection processes that we use in PAS.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Previous research dictates that a good recruitment process helps to create a number of qualified talented candidates. Do you believe the PAS recruitment process helps to create a number of qualified candidates?

Interviewee D: I think we do. The first thing we need to this is to attract the right people. You can have the best selection process but If you don't have the right pool of candidates then you won't get the right people in. I think once we get the right people applying for us it's around assessing the key skills in a systematic fair and objective way. It's also to make sure that we're measuring the right things. It's crucial that we're assessing what's important for performance in the role. It's also important that we're conscious about fairness and diversity which should wove into everything so that we're not discriminating against anybody. This will mean that everybody has an equal opportunity.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Do you believe that the PAS selection process results in the candidates with the appropriate skills for the job getting hired?

Interviewee D: I think so. We know quite quickly if they're working or not. There's never a perfect selection system so you're not going to get it right all the time and we never would say that we do but we do our best. That's why there has to be systems like probation and things like that. However, I think the majority of the time we get it right.

Interviewer: Yeah, through research I've found that there's not one assessment that has one hundred per cent validity so I could imagine that you can't get it right all of the time.

Interviewee D: Yeah, It's interesting. We talked to other public sector organisations, we talked to test suppliers and we talk to other recruiters to constantly see how we can improve the process. We've found out by talking to other organisations there's not one tool we should be using that we're not using. Anything we can do to improve our recruitment and selection process we do.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Do you know anything about the training that the interviewers get?

Interviewee D: My colleagues and I developed eLearning modules that covers everything getting started in the job to understanding the job and then moving on to the interview building, rapport key skills around questioning, assessments and unconscious bias. And then if people are sitting on our boards, we'd also do kind of them. So, they do the eLearning skills first and then a practical skills session in which you actually go and put the skills you've learned into practice. You'll be observed and get feedback from one of the team of psychologists. Then, if you're coming in for a particular competition or campaign, you'll get an additional briefing like new developments around video interviewing. We're doing even more training on new techniques to make sure the board members are comfortable and confident and know how to use them.

Interviewer: I imagine that's been accelerated recently with the virus. A lot of the research I've done points to the fact that unconscious bias is still prevalent today in hiring decisions. How to PAS deal with unconscious bias?

Interviewee: We often talk about unconscious bias and having a clear structure and having multiple board members, so it's important that it's not just one person going in there. It's important that we have the competencies and we're not just having a general chat. You can't

cure unconscious bias because we're all biased as human beings. I'd work with some brilliant people who would be so aware of their own biases. We do everything we can but we acknowledge that we're not perfect. We also ensure that staff are doing the IASD test. It's the Harvard Implicit Association test. It's well worth having a look at it because we give that link to all of our board members. You go in and it will measure your unconscious bias so it'll tell you what you're biased towards. It's a good objective measure that we can use our board members to get the conversation going. We do everything I think that they recommend you do to mitigate against unconscious bias but I think it's to make people aware of themselves and to look at themselves as an individual. I think that having multiple people on the board means you have to explain your rationale and your reasons for the scores your suggesting. It's all evidence based.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's a good insight. Thanks for that. I have another question here in relation to the PAS recruitment model. Do you think the PAS recruitment model has been given enough of a strategic role in the organisation?

Interviewee D: It is what we do so recruitment has to be given a strategic role. However, we need to be aware of DEPR and the policy departments. We've worked really hard particularly over the last couple of years to make sure that we're close to DEPR. So, we could be doing recruitment and not being as strategic as we need to be. But I think by working with DEPR on the policy side we're looking at really good research on the future of work and what will work. We put a lot of effort in particularly at a management board level to really keep a strategic focus on things and it's probably harder than it sounds because you get sucked into the detail and the operations. But ultimately, we need to have that strategic guiding principles or else we're just like a factory.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. Yeah, one of your colleagues explained to me how DEPR decide on whether an external or interdepartmental competition is run so I won't ask you about that. When considering internal candidates do PAS take PMDS into account?

Interviewee D: I remember we use to look at it years ago. I remember when you had a scoring system for PMDS and you had to get a three or above remember. I think now you have to show that you're satisfactory which is a form your own HR have to fill in. But I wouldn't say PMDS feeds into it at all anymore.

Interviewer: No problem. Thanks for that. How suitable would you say the competencies are for each job position?

Interviewee D: Just to let you know I'm biased on this because I've been heavily involved in developing the competencies. The wheel of competencies that you can see on our website for each job position is easily readable and candidates or staff members can easily see what we value and what they need in order to progress in their career. We wanted to show if you're a Clerical Officer or an Executive Officer how you would progress. We introduced the middle area around specialist knowledge, expertise and self-development. I think that was a new thing that we developed when we put that in. The concept was that in any job you need to have some level of expertise in something. I think that was a good addition that we had added in there. I'm a bit biased, but I do think they're good. I've done a lot of European meetings and look at the member states and how they're doing and the numbers are tight. Other member states have recognised the effectiveness of our competency-based model. I think the competencies are a really good foundation for the selection process.

Interviewer: Thanks for that. I was looking at this piece of research recently. It was about Generation Z candidates and it suggests that younger people struggle with the leadership competency. Do you see younger people generally struggle with the leadership competency?

Interviewee D: I think the important thing is and could be crucial for the millennials is having a job with a purpose. That's what I see is important for the younger generation generally. It's so they can understand what they're doing is important. The attractive thing for them is that they're making their own decisions and are not just doing what their boss is telling them. I think the fact that we've got the public sector values in the middle of the competencies is also useful for millennials. We've talked about what we do in the competencies with people in the role, their line managers and external people to benchmark. We ask them and ourselves what are the kind of behaviours we need to demonstrate to be effective? I think we set all of those out in the competencies. We'd also always keep a really good eye on the performance of different age groups and things like that. If there was something that we were figuring wasn't working we would change it or whatever but I don't think there's any general differences between and any other generation. I think if you're applying for a Principal Officer but you've never managed anybody then you're going to be in trouble and rightly so but that's down to experience rather than a generational issue.

Interviewer: I remember coming in as a as a Clerical Officer and what I liked about going through the structured process was that I lacked actual job experience at the time but once I was able to show that I had the competencies for the job through my college or whatever it was PAS were happy. I liked that I had a chance to show that I've developed my competencies through going to college and being an active member of a club.

Interviewee D: Our line is if you can show us the behaviours that's all we want. We don't really mind too much where you got those behaviours and skills in terms of a job or a society or through extra volunteer work or whatever. We're open to looking at whatever once you can give us enough evidence.

Interviewer: Yeah, I found that when I was going through the process. The last question is just in relation to the interviews and the assessments. What differences generally would you find between the interviews and the assessments?

Interviewee D: Yeah, I think they work really well together. I think from an interview you can hear about what people have done and their experiences. I think sometimes with the exercise you can get people to project into the role specifically. It means you can get them to replicate what they will be doing themselves instead of them just talking about what they've done. I think based on what the research has shown in relation to the studies that looked at the predictive validity of different selection tools they'll indicate that using a number of different ones is better than just using one. However, I think combined with an interview it is good and really powerful. We always try to do is have a mix and I think it works quite well for us.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's brilliant. Thanks for all that. I really appreciate it.

Appendix 2: Information sheets

INFORMATION SHEET FOR Participants

Research project title: The perceived effectiveness of interviews in comparison to assessments among managerial staff in the public sector

Student Researcher: *Michael Whelan.* **Email address:** *10544694@mydbs.ie*

About the Project

I am a masters student at Dublin Business School and I am carrying out my dissertation project under the direct supervision of Kunwar Madan on the subject of the PAS recruitment model.

Supervisor name: Kunwar Madan

Supervisor email address: kunwar.madan@dbs.ie

Aims: The aim of the project is to **measure the effectiveness of job interviews in comparison to assessments from a manager's perspective for public sector jobs.**

Request/Invitation: I would like to invite you to take part in an interview.

What would be required? As a participant in the study you would be required to answer questions about the PAS recruitment model. The interview will take about 40 minutes.

Data Protection

For Interviews: Interviews will be recorded for the sole purpose of facilitating later transcription of the data. Precise transcripts are important in research to ensure that data is recorded accurately, to allow the interviewer to be more present in the conversation and, importantly, to support greater accountability and scientific integrity. During the

transcription phase your data will undergo de-identification involving the removal of all personally identifying information thereby rendering them anonymous for retention. The original recordings will be digitized and kept under password protection. Upon graduation all recordings will be permanently deleted. Your data will be used strictly for academic purposes and will not be shared with used or shared with anyone for commercial purposes. The researcher will adhere to strict ethical guidelines and principles and will not anecdotally share any personally identifying information about you with anyone.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?

In addition to providing much appreciated assistance to the student researcher, the main benefit of taking part in this study will be your contribution to academic research, which aims to expand knowledge and generate new insights. There will be no risks posed to you as a participant in this study, either physical or psychological, beyond that which is normally expected of day-to-day activities.

If you are interested in taking part…

If you are interested in taking part please review the information provided in the consent form and if you are happy to proceed with the study then please indicate your willingness to take part by ticking the appropriate box / signing your name where appropriate.

You are under no obligation to take part in this study or to provide a reason if you decide not to take part. You may choose not to take part without fear of penalty. If you agree to take part you have the right to cease participation and withdraw your data at any time for any reason without fear of penalty. The data will not be used by any member of the project team for commercial purposes.

I or/and Kunwar Madan will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time.

Appendix 3: Consent Forms

Consent Form

I _____ voluntarily agree to take part in this research study.

I understand that I am not obliged to take part in this study and that my participation in the study is entirely voluntary.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any question without the need to provide reason and without fear of negative consequences.

I understand that digital recordings will be stored under password protection for some time until the approval of their dissertation by the examination board, at which point recordings will be permanently deleted.

I understand that my data will undergo de-identification during transcription and will be rendered anonymous for retention and for the purpose of subsequent publications.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

Name & Signature of research participant Date

_____ _____

Name & Signature of researcher Date

Michael Whelan

_____ _____