

in-touch

Newsletter



Silver jubilee for PAI



Claire Cameron and Slava Gromlyuk, PAI Directors, enjoying a socially-distanced drink

2020 has been an extraordinary year for people all around the world in view of the challenges brought about by coronavirus, which has affected all our lives in so many ways. We hope that you and your families and colleagues have all been keeping safe and well over these last difficult months.

Here at PAI, however, there is cause for celebration. We marked our 25th birthday on 31 October 2020. We are very proud of the international development work we have done since our launch back in 1995. Since then we have managed over 200 projects in more than 75 countries and have welcomed more than 3,500 participants from 160 different countries to our professional development workshops. We have also expanded our network of associate consultants to well over 4,000 people.

The range of areas in which we are providing consultancy advice has grown in many ways, both in terms of sectors and geography. We are currently managing projects to develop competencies for the civil service in Mongolia, conducting an institutional review of the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, supporting the Government of Albania with its plans to reform the civil service and advising on public sector transformation in the British Virgin Islands. These are just a few of our assignments and you can read a bit more about our new projects on page 3. We are very grateful to our experienced consultants who are willing to take on these important assignments and who have adjusted rapidly to doing a lot

of their work remotely from their homes because travel and health restrictions have prevented them from working in-country. We are also grateful to our development partners for their support and advice, both in the various countries where we are working and in the bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies which are providing funding.

The other key aspect of our work – our range of workshops for senior policy makers and managers – has, of course, been affected by the current situation and we have greatly missed being able to run our usual programme of workshops in our training centre in central London. As you will see, also on page 3, we have been running quite a few free webinars and have been happy to see so many people, including former participants, associate consultants and new contacts, join us for these events. And we are adapting some of our workshops to run virtually. We are offering a full programme of face-to-face workshops in London and other locations for 2021 and very much hope that we will be able to go ahead and welcome you – or welcome you back – to PAI in the New Year.

As we raise a glass to PAI and a brighter future for us all, we would like to say a big “thank you” to our staff, consultants and advisers, trainers, workshop participants, consultancy and development partners throughout the world. Your collaboration, advice and friendship mean a great deal to us. We look forward to continuing to work together on new projects and programmes. And to meeting again!

Federal versus unitary governance – not a black-and-white issue

Professor Gavin Drewry, Emeritus Professor of Public Administration, Royal Holloway, University of London and PAI Advisory Panel Member

Last January I contributed to a PAI workshop on Local and Regional Government, attended by three distinguished Cuban professors from Havana. We discussed a wide range of issues to do with the constitutional and economic pros and cons of different models of sub-national governments. The workshop was based in London, but included a two-day study visit to Cardiff, Wales's capital city, to learn about the workings of the devolved Welsh Parliament and the Welsh Government.

I found the workshop enjoyable and stimulating and I feel sure that our Cuban colleagues did too. But, as our discussions went on, we found ourselves increasingly challenged by the idiosyncrasies of a 'devolution' model which seeks to reconcile the distinctive interests of the four constituent countries of a supposedly 'unitary' UK (in which about 80 percent of the population lives in England and only 20 percent is distributed between Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). And to do so by a means which looks a bit like 'federalism' - but isn't.

The constituent parts and institutional arrangements of the UK have evolved in a piecemeal way over many centuries, and without the support of a codified constitution.

Apart from the peculiarity of the UK case, there are broader issues: what do terms like 'federal' and 'unitary' really mean and are they helpful to our understanding of the working of nation states and their constitutions?

There seems to be an innate human tendency to try to simplify life's many complexities by reducing complicated issues and personal experiences to neat, black-and-white, binary forms. However, such an approach is often at odds with a real world in which a binary black/white turns out to be some murky shade of grey. This phenomenon is reflected in the many attempts that have been made over the years to label nation states as being either 'federal' or 'unitary' – the former involving a constitutionally entrenched division of powers and functions between national and sub-national governments, the latter characterised by a very strong, even monopolistic, concentration of power at the centre.

Once we start looking at real-life instances, we quickly find that the black/white binary blurs into greyness. So, picking at random just a few examples from a long list of 'federal' countries across the continents, we find Nigeria, Malaysia, the USA, Canada, St Kitts and Nevis, Brazil, India, Australia, Switzerland and Germany. Looking at this list, we can begin to see the disparate nature of the states that cluster beneath the federal flag. Some federations are 'asymmetrical', as in India, where more autonomy is



accorded to some state governments than to others. Most federations are republics, but Malaysia is a monarchy. Most federations are territorially big and have large and sometimes disparate populations (a clue as to why they prefer a federal model); St Kitts and Nevis is a federation of just two islands, with a combined population of not much more than 50,000.

This is a good example of the old adage - one size does not fit all. There are no universal templates either for federalism or for the unitary model, and real-world states invariably exhibit hybrid characteristics of the two forms. There can be few more vivid examples of this hybridity than in the untidy devolution arrangements of the United Kingdom. We are currently experiencing some very real adverse consequences of this untidiness – not least in the bitter squabbles between, on the one hand, the UK central government and, on the other, the three devolved administrations and some of the metropolitan local authorities in England about who should be responsible for what in tackling the COVID-19 crisis. Come and visit us at PAI, as soon as you can, and we will be happy to show you what we mean.

New projects and some new countries for PAI

We are very pleased to have won some interesting projects over the last few months, in Croatia, Lesotho, Mongolia and the Republic of Ireland. Mongolia and Ireland are new countries for us so it is particularly exciting to be starting work with partners and colleagues in those countries.

Our first project in Mongolia



Our project in Mongolia is funded by the United Nations Development Programme and its main purpose is to help the Government of Mongolia to develop, institutionalise and roll out a new Civil Service competency framework. Our work will include developing a common competency framework and toolkit design, as well as piloting it at two selected Government entities. The framework will apply to all grade levels. We have an excellent team of former UK civil servants leading this assignment and look forward to working with our counterparts in Mongolia.

Reviewing Civil Service grading in Ireland



We are delighted to be awarded a contract financed by the European Commission to carry out a review of the grading structure in the Irish Civil Service to gain good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and provide recommendations for tackling the challenges identified. The project will be implemented over the next twelve months in a consortium led by our colleagues in KPMG Ireland.

Institutional review of the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation



We're also excited to be working in Lesotho again, where we are conducting an institutional review of the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation. The project is funded by the African Development Bank, which is also a new development partner for us. Our team of UK and African consultants are reviewing the structure and functions of the Corporation, carrying out a benchmarking exercise to compare best practices in tourism development and setting options for the future development of the Corporation and the tourism sector in Lesotho.

Digital transformation of the Croatia Tax Administration



We have also been awarded a contract financed by the European Commission to contribute to institutional, administrative and growth-sustaining structural reforms in Croatia through advancing the digital transformation of the Croatia Tax Administration by improving and re-engineering its core information system. We are implementing the project in collaboration with our colleagues from KPMG Croatia.

Webinars and virtual learning

We are committed to the goal that our clients and participants can continue to learn and develop during the global pandemic. We have been keeping in touch with you by email and in the summer introduced a series of free webinars. These are about 90 minutes long and include a presentation from our Workshop Directors, guest speakers and question and answer sessions. We have kept them as interactive as possible with live poll questions and a chat room to share ideas and thoughts. They have proved to be very popular. We plan to continue these sessions next year, so do check our website regularly to see what is coming up. The webinars are topical. For example, our recent webinar on Delivering Judicial Services in the Wake of the Global Pandemic included discussions on approaches to clearing backlogs, using electronic case management, strategies for recovery and reform of the courts and holding virtual hearings.

As well as the webinar sessions, we have developed a

range of virtual workshops. These involve a mixture of live webinars, self-study and group exercises. Led by our Workshop Directors, they include input from practitioners, trainers and academics with in-depth knowledge of their subject areas and wide international experience. Our contributors follow developments around the world and as part of the workshops they will draw on the latest case studies and strategies to identify any potential pitfalls and what works best for you.

We have published our schedule of professional development workshops for 2021. While we hope very much that we will be able to offer face-to-face workshops, none of us can predict what the situation will be when these are due to take place so we have made provision for participants to benefit from the workshops remotely and to dial in to all or some of the sessions. To supplement the workshops and webinars we are also offering on-line coaching sessions. These give you the opportunity to talk through with one of our qualified coaches any issues you are facing, and you may also be keen to benefit from using self-assessment tools such as the Performance Leader Identifier. Please get in touch and sign up and please do contact us if you would like more details.

Tribute to Noel Floate

It is with great sadness that we report the death on 24 May this year at the age of 87 of our colleague and friend, Noel Floate. Noel was one of PAI's founding Directors. He was born and educated in India. He came to live in England in 1955 and joined the Royal Air Force, receiving a commission later that year. He served in the RAF until 1974, retiring as a Squadron Leader.

On leaving the RAF, Noel embarked on a new career as a management consultant in the Royal Institute of Public Administration (RIPA). He quickly made his mark as a most able and effective consultant. His professionalism, meticulous planning, attention to detail and unflinching charm, ensured that his public service reform consultancy projects and training programmes invariably won wide support and met their objectives in full.

In 1975, the RIPA was awarded the contract for a major institution building programme in Khartoum. Noel was responsible for supporting and advising on the formation, development and effectiveness of the new Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform where he rapidly secured top-level commitment from senior counterparts. The work in Sudan, which lasted into the 1980s, spanned much of the public sector including Railways, Police, Health, Education, Regional and Local Government. The creation of fifty Departmental Management Services Units to facilitate the programme gave Noel a thorough grounding in major public service reform projects.

Noel's work took him to Russia where, between 1992 and 1996, he delivered a Human Resources Management Programme for the staff of former Higher Party Academies of Administration. There were formidable obstacles to be overcome, including opposition to civil service reform within Ministries; disagreements with partners over the objectives of reform; and finally the decision in 1994 to abolish Roskadry, the Russian state institution that the project aimed to support. In the face of crumbling foundations, Noel and colleagues worked with EU and Russian officials to ensure that the project continued with its training activities. The programmes emphasised that in market economies the primary



objective of the civil service is the efficient delivery of services to the public. Despite the considerable difficulties, the programme was received with great enthusiasm, particularly by younger staff.

In 1998, Noel began work in Bulgaria where he oversaw a major capacity building project funded by DFID based in the National Social Security Institute. The success of the project resulted in the award of a follow-on contract to further develop and complete the human resources work and ensure that it was fully sustainable. The next contract centred on performance appraisal, pay and career progression in the State Administration and institutional development of human resource management policies and practices, including introduction of a performance management system, performance appraisal and a pay and grading review which were essential elements in preparation for Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007. Noel will be greatly missed by his family and friends and will be remembered fondly by PAI colleagues, workshop participants, fellow consultants and project counterparts across the world.