A Measurement of Employee Engagement in Teagasc

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme

of study leading to the award of B.A. (Hons) in Human Resource Management is entirely

my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that

such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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1   INTRODUCTION

What do you think of when you hear the word engagement? Do you picture a sparkling ring and a happy couple with smiling faces? This is the image that comes to many peoples' minds. In becoming engaged the couple is showing their willingness to commit to each other. They care a great deal about each other and they are likely to share many of the same views, beliefs and values. It could be argued that employee engagement is not too dissimilar than marital engagement. In the same way that the couple is willing to commit to each other an engaged employee is one who is committed to their organisation. In the employee engagement relationship the employee cares about the organisation and the organisation cares about the employee. They too are likely to share the same views, beliefs and values.

Nowadays there is an increased focus on the realisation that people are the key to achieving sustained competitive advantage. Organisations are increasingly having to do more with less and so are continually looking for ways to achieve efficiencies. Having an engaged workforce that is willing to go the extra mile is an important step in achieving this. Employee engagement is a mutual concept which is beneficial to both the employee and the organisation. It is a 'win-win' approach which produces enhanced organisational performance with increased employee well-being. It is especially important in times of organisational change where buy-in and involvement of employees is essential to ensuring the success of the change programme.

The CIPD suggest that engagement is 'about creating opportunities for employees to connect with their colleagues, managers and the wider organisation. It is also about creating an environment where employees are motivated to want to connect with their work and really care about doing a good job. It is a concept that places flexibility, change and continuous improvement at the heart of what is means to be an employee and an employer in the 21st century workplace' (CIPD, 2009).

Following their 2006 study on the topic the CIPD concluded that the main drivers for employee engagement are having opportunities to feed views upwards, feeling well informed about what is happening in the organisation and thinking that your manager is committed to the organisation.

The concept of employee engagement forms the basis for my study. I have chosen to undertaken this study on employee engagement as I believe it to be an important and interesting topic. The importance of employee engagement in times of uncertainty and change is referred to in the work of many authors (for example Graen (2008), Vosburgh (2008) and Frese (2008)). There is no denying that we are currently experiencing a significant period of uncertainty and change and so feel that it is important to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the subject.

In undertaking this study I have reviewed the current literature (Chapter 2) and have critically analysed what the authors have to say about employee engagement. I have formed my research question and set out the objectives which I hope to achieve by

undertaking this study (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4 I outline what methods I undertook in order to achieve my research aims and objectives and have detailed my analysis and findings in Chapter 5. Following on from these I have discussed the findings in the context of the theories on the subject in Chapter 6 and reach my conclusion in Chapter 7.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Chapter Introduction

Employee engagement is a relatively recent phenomenon with the majority of papers on the subject having been published in the last ten to fifteen years. It has become a very popular term which is widely used (Robinson et al., 2004; Saks, 2006). Interest in the concept has come predominantly from consultancy firms and HR practitioners who advocate the beneficial aspects of having an engaged workforce with claims that it is the key to improving performance and addressing problems such as turnover, absenteeism and even the challenges brought about by introducing organisational change. However, the academic world has been relatively slow to produce much empirical research on the topic (Robinson et al., 2004; Schaufeli et al, 2002). As a result of this lack of research some commentators are unconvinced by the concept and speculate that employee engagement may be just another management trend with little to back it up (Saks, 2006). Others feel that employee engagement is not a separate construct in its own right but is in fact an amalgamation or overlap between existing constructs which have been studied and researched in great detail (Griffin et al, 2008). They highlight the problem of the lack of a framework for integrating this range of constructs. In general however the writings and research to date refer to both the organisational and individual benefits which can be achieved from having an engaged workforce.

To suggest that employee engagement is merely about organisations getting more from employees would be misleading as it is indeed far more than that. It is a mutual concept which is beneficial to both the employee and the organisation. It is a 'win-win' situation which produces enhanced organisational performance with increased employee well-being (CIPD, 2006; Macey et al 2009). Perhaps Kahn (1990) best supports this premise when he says 'people who are personally engaged keep their selves within a role, without sacrificing one for the other'.

Despite the fact that there is a lack of consensus on an exact definition of the term it is generally accepted that having an engaged workforce is something which is beneficial to organisational performance. It is sought after by organisations because it is felt that achieving engagement among employees is the key to achieving enhanced individual, and therefore by default, organisational performance. In general the thinking behind the concept is that organisations achieve more when they have an engaged workforce, that engaged employees give more of what they have to offer and that an engaged workforce is a more productive workforce (Macey et al, 2009; Welbourne, 2007; Harter et al, 2002).

Some writers suggest that employee engagement has become a hot topic in HR circles in recent years because of the increased focus on the realisation that human resources are the key to achieving competitive advantage (Cook, 2008). The importance of engaging a workforce has become all the more clear since the onset of the recession. Organisations have been under pressure to remain buoyant, achieve profitability and have had to focus on cost cutting. They are increasingly having to do more with less and are continually

looking for ways to achieve efficiencies and improve performance. With significant rationalisation in organisations the emphasis on maximising the contribution of every employee has come to the fore. For organisations to ride out the current downturn it is clear that having an engaged workforce is a key contributing factor to survival. It is not surprising then that employee engagement has become such a popular topic, particularly of late.

2.2   The Great Debates

As mentioned previously one of the great debates in the literature on employee engagement reaching a consensus on what the concept is all about. Whether referring to literature from HR practitioners and consultancy firms or from academia what has become clear is that despite the increased interest in the topic there is no agreement on a conclusive definition of the term. Many of those who work in the area of human resource management refer to employee engagement as the discretionary effort which employees have to give when they are engaged (Kahn, 1990) while others talk about employees going the extra mile for their organisation (CIPD, 2008). Guest wonders if engagement is an attitude, a behaviour or an outcome (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009) while others suggest that it is made up of all three (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Some view engagement as a performance construct which is defined by exceeding some typical level of performance (Wellins & Concelman, 2005). Others such as Saks (2008) question whether engagement is indeed anything to do with giving extra effort claiming that it is about 'how you do what you are supposed to be doing' not how much extra you do or give. There would appear to be little agreement in the literature with this view of engagement as the majority

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of writers agree that engagement leads to employees giving more of themselves in work situations (Kahn, 1990).

The lack of consensus on a definition is troubling for those who advocate its importance in improving business performance. It creates a void which I'm sure will be filled in the coming years with increased research into the concept. The importance of understanding and defining employee engagement is stressed by Macey & Schneider (2008) who state that those who seek to measure engagement must be able to interpret the results into actionable implications which organisations can then concentrate on. Despite the fact that there is yet to be agreement on what employee engagement actually is what is clear from the literature is that organisations want it. It is perceived to be the key to enhancing organisational performance and gaining competitive advantage. There is also agreement on the fact that having engaged employees is most important during times of change or uncertainty. This is borne out by the writings of Graen (2008), Vosburgh (2008) and Frese (2008). Indeed the commissioning of a report into employee engagement by the British Government in late 2008 can be attributed directly to the perceived importance of employee engagement in assisting organisations through the current recession and the necessary changes which this global climate has thrust upon them.

Another of the great debates in the literature on employee engagement, related to the lack of definition of the concept, is the question of whether engagement equals satisfaction or whether the two are just simply linked to each other. Research conducted by Harter et al (2002) refers to their measurement of engagement as the 'satisfaction-engagement'

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measure. In this study they defined engagement as 'the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work'. Many other writers dispute this direct link and feel that engagement is more than just simply satisfaction (Erickson, 2005; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Indeed we are reminded by the CIPD (2008) that 'it is reasonable to expect that engaged employees are likely to be committed to, and satisfied with, their work. But conversely, it is not reasonable to expect that all satisfied and committed employees will be actively engaged in their work'.

2.3   The Literature

In the previous section I have provided an introduction to the concept of employee engagement and have briefly spoken about why it has gained increased interest in recent years. I have referred to the fact that there is no one definitive definition of the term. In reality there are many different thoughts and propositions on what constitutes an engaged workforce. In the following section I will provide an outline of some of the main theoretical models and research on employee engagement which have been formulated to date. It is these models and research which have led to my specific research question and the objectives which I have set out to achieve in writing this paper. These objectives are set out in Chapter 3.

2.3.1   Maslach and Leiter

One view of employee engagement is found in the work of researchers on burnout. The seminal work in the area of burnout is by Maslach and Jackson (1981). They developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) which still continues to be used

and referenced by burnout and engagement researchers today. The three core dimensions of burnout as measured by the MBI are *exhaustion, cynicism* and *inefficacy* (lack of personal accomplishment). Subsequent research by Maslach and Leiter (1997) found burnout to be an erosion of engagement. They measured engagement scores as the opposite of the three dimensions of burnout on the MBI and found engagement to be characterised by *energy, involvement* and *efficacy*, the positive antithesis of burnout. Analysis of this view of engagement has found it to be a distinct construct to already established constructs such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job involvement (Maslach et al, 2001).

Maslach and Leiter (1997) formulated a model of burnout which focuses on the mismatch between the employee and six key areas of the working relationship, namely:

- *Sustainable workload*
- *Feelings of choice and control*
- *Appropriate reward and recognition*
- *Supportive work community*
- *Perception of fairness and justice*
- *Having work which is meaningful and valued*

Their view was the greater the mismatch between the employee and these areas the more likely they were to experience burnout. If engagement is the positive antithesis of burnout then it stands to reason that the greater the match between the employee and these six key areas the higher the engagement level is likely to be. In support of this thinking they conducted studies of two hospital units and found engagement scores on the MBI of staff in these units to be the opposite of burnout scores. For example, staff in one unit scored high on exhaustion and cynicism and scored low on efficacy. They were found to be suffering from burnout whereas staff in the second unit were much more engaged with lows scores on exhaustion and cynicism and high efficacy scores. They also found that staff in the second unit, where employee engagement was high, showed predominantly favourable scores in terms of the six key areas mentioned previously. The results of these studies are very useful for organisations that are trying to increase engagement. They point to central aspects of the employment relationship on which to focus potential initiatives.

2.3.2 <u>Schaufeli et al</u>

Contrary to Maslach and Leiter (1997) Schaufeli et al (2002) do not feel that engagement can be measured as the opposite of burnout on the MBI. While they agree that engagement is the positive antithesis of burnout they feel that the two are separate concepts which should be measured independently. Based on the theoretical framework of Watson and Tellegen (1985) they have defined engagement as 'a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind'. They further go

on to say that engagement is characterised by *vigour, dedication* and *absorption*. They also suggest that engagement is not a momentary or specific state but is 'a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour'. According to Schaufeli et al (2002) vigour is displayed by high levels of energy, mental resilience and persistence in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterised by enthusiasm, inspiration and pride while absorption means being engrossed in work with time passing by very quickly and almost unnoticed.

2.3.3 Kahn

Another model of employee engagement is put forward by Kahn (1990). In formulating his model of engagement he interviewed counsellors working in a children's summer camp and employees of an architecture firm. Kahn based his study on the assertion that people can use varying degrees of themselves in the performance of their work and the very fact that they can do so has implications for their work and their experiences while in work. His guiding assumption was that 'people are constantly bringing in and leaving out various depths of their selves during the course of their work' (p.692). His study is therefore concerned with how much of oneself a person gives in the performance of their work.

Kahn's view of engagement is that it is voluntary. In other words an individual can control how much or how little they give of themselves in the performance of their work. This view would appear to be at odds with Macey & Schneider's

(2008) 'trait engagement' (p.6) whereby the authors suggest that this element of engagement is innate with people predisposed to feelings of enthusiasm and energy towards their work. I refer to this model of engagement in greater detail later.

Unlike Schaufeli et al (2002) Kahn refers to periods of engagement and his research was specifically concerned with these periods of engagement and the conditions which drove people to be engaged – the drivers of engagement. Behind Kahn's qualitative study of the summer camp workers and the architecture firm is the premise that there are certain psychological conditions which, when present to an appropriate level, encourage employees to give more of themselves *physically*, *cognitively* and *emotionally* thereby becoming engaged. In conducting this study he defines personal engagement and personal disengagement. He refers to the behaviours people display and the harnessing of themselves. He goes on to state that 'in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during their role performance' (p.694). Disengagement, according to Kahn, is the withdrawal of oneself physically, cognitively and emotionally from work. Three main psychological conditions emerged in the study – *meaningfulness*, *safety* and *availability*. The presence of these conditions influenced people to engage in work and their absence caused people to disengage. Further analysis showed that each of these psychological conditions has their own influences.

- Psychological meaningfulness, the extent to which an individual feels valued and worthwhile, was found to be influenced by *task and role characteristics* and *work interactions.*

- Psychological safety, feeling trusted and without fear of negative consequences, was found to be directly influenced by '*interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style and process, and organisational norms*' (p.708).

- Psychological availability, the emotional and physical resources necessary to engage, was found to be influenced by *physical and emotional energies, insecurity* and issues in people's own *personal lives.*

Appendix 1 further defines these conditions and their influences.

2.3.4 May et al

May et al (2004) empirically tested Kahn's (1990) model of employee engagement. They found that meaningfulness, safety and availability were all significantly related to engagement. Their study also showed that certain aspects of the employment relationship were specifically linked to the three psychological conditions of engagement as identified by Kahn. They found that *job enrichment* and *role fit* were positive predictors of meaningfulness, *supportive supervisors* and *good relations with colleagues* were positive predictors of safety while *resources available* to employees was a positive predictor of psychological availability.

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They also identified some negative predictors namely *adherence to group norms* on safety and participation in *outside activities* on availability.

2.3.5 <u>Saks</u>

Robinson et al (2004) view engagement as a two-way relationship between employer and employee. In a similar fashion Saks (2006) proposes a social exchange theory as a theoretical explanation for employee engagement. In this theory there are 'rules of exchange' (p.603) where one person's actions are responded to by the actions of another. For example, an employee who is performing well at work is rewarded by their employer with a bonus or a promotion while the employer benefits from the increase in performance. Saks proposes this social exchange theory in response to the frameworks put forward by Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al (2001). He feels that these frameworks do not fully explain why employees respond to the conditions they put forward, the drivers or antecedents, with different levels of engagement. His work is aimed at identifying the antecedents of employee engagement and the consequences of such engagement. By understanding what drives engagement and the outcomes this engagement will lead to organisations have the opportunity to ensure that they are providing the right type of work environment in which employees will go the extra mile and give their discretionary effort to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation.

Figure 1 shows Saks' theoretical framework of employee engagement.

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Figure 1

Antecedents		Consequences
Job characteristics Perceived organisational support Perceived supervisor support Rewards and recognition Procedural justice Distributive justice	**Employee Engagement** Job engagement Organisational engagement	Job satisfaction Organisational commitment Intention to quit Organisational citizenship behaviour
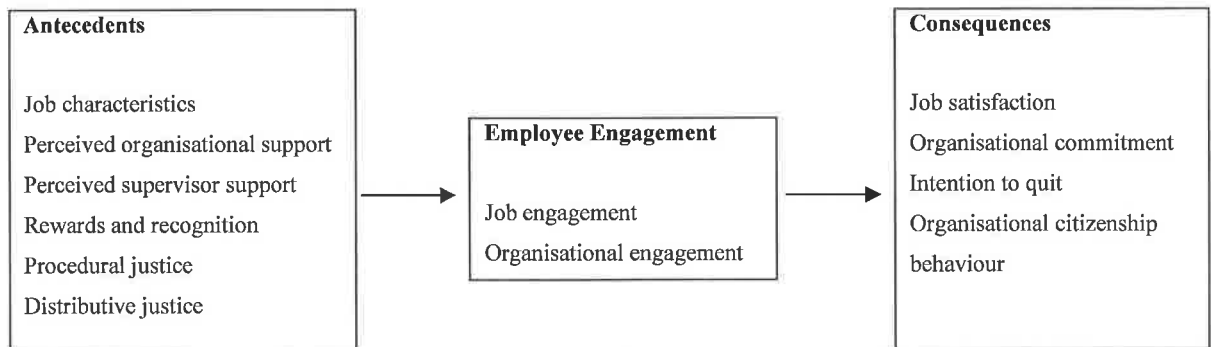
A model of the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement (source: Saks, 2006)

Saks focuses on both *job* and *organisational* engagement, a distinction which many other writers have not made when discussing employee engagement. Drawing on the work of Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al (2001) he puts forward six possible antecedents of employee engagement (pp.604-606):

- *Job characteristics*

- *Rewards and recognition*

- *Perceived organisational support*

- *Perceived supervisor support*

- *Perceived procedural justice*

- *Perceived distributive justice*

In his work Saks also identifies the consequences of employee engagement. I mentioned previously how there is a general consensus that having an engaged workforce leads to greater organisational performance. Concerned that there was

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little by way of empirical research to back this claim up Saks also identifies and researches potential consequences of employee engagement (p.604):

- *Job satisfaction*

- *Organisational commitment*

- *Intention to quit*

- *Organisational citizenship behaviour*

The results of Saks study showed that the social exchange theory put forward by him is an appropriate framework for understanding employee engagement. For example he found that employees who are provided with challenging work where there is a variety of duties, where they have the opportunity to use different skills and where they feel that their contribution is appreciated (job characteristics) will reciprocate with higher levels of engagement.

He also found the following (p.613):

1. Job and organisation engagement are related to the attitudes, intentions and behaviours of employees.

2. Perceived organisational support is a predictor of job and organisation engagement.

3. Job characteristics predict job engagement.

4. Procedural justice predicts organisational engagement.

5. Both job and organisation engagement positively predict job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to quit and organisational citizenship behaviour.

6. Job engagement and organisation engagement are two distinct constructs.

2.3.6 Macey & Schneider

Macey & Schneider (2008) suggest that engagement is made up of many facets. Similar to many views on the topic they feel that it is a concept whose antecedents, consequences and components have 'not been rigorously conceptualised much less studied' (pp.3-4). They do concede that some research exists which demonstrates that employee attitudes referred to as engagement are related to outcomes such as turnover and productivity (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002) but suggest that these attitudes do not conceptually reflect the notion of engagement. They put forward 14 propositions of employee engagement to outline their framework in which they claim that engagement has three main components – *trait engagement*, *state engagement* and *behavioural engagement*.

In putting forward trait engagement as one of the main components of the construct Macey & Schneider are referring to the employee's disposition toward work characterised by feelings of enthusiasm and a positive view of life and work. This is something which organisations should bear in mind when selecting new recruits as they may wish to tailor their recruitment process and factor this characteristic into their selection methods. State engagement refers to feelings of

energy and absorption with work, involvement, commitment and empowerment while behavioural engagement is observed by the discretionary effort which employees display during the course of their work. They argue that state or psychological engagement is a precursor of behavioural engagement. They also suggest that other organisational factors can have a significant impact on the components of engagement. For example trust in management, work attributes such as variety, autonomy and challenge and whether the organisation has transformational leaders or not.

They propose the following framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement:

Figure 2

Trait Engagement	State Engagement	Behavioural Engagement
(Positive views of life and work)	(Feelings of energy, absorption)	(Extra-role behaviour)
Proactive personality	Satisfaction (affective)	Organisational Citizenship
Autotelic personality*	Involvement	Behaviour (OCB)
Trait positive affect	Commitment	Proactive/Personal Initiative
Conscientiousness	Empowerment	Role expansion
		Adaptive

* People who engage in activities for their own sake rather than for specific gains or rewards.

Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement (adapted from Macey & Schneider, 2008)

See Appendix 2 for full framework.

The authors believe that engagement as a psychological state is central to the engagement issue and that the measures of engagement in this state include four categories – *job satisfaction, organisational commitment, psychological empowerment and job involvement*. They propose that satisfaction is a facet of engagement which should not be assessed in terms of the employee being fully satisfied (satiation) but assessed as feelings of energy and enthusiasm about the organisation or job. Organisational commitment is measured in terms of pride in the organisation and personally identifying with the organisation. While the authors agree that job satisfaction, organisational commitment, feelings of empowerment and job involvement all have relevance to the state of engagement they go on to suggest that there are newer facets of engagement which need to be considered also. These are engagement as *positive affectivity* and engagement as a *psychological state of the self*. Positive affectivity is characterised by feelings of persistence, vigour, energy, absorption, enthusiasm, alertness and pride while the psychological state of the self refers to an investment of oneself in work and the perceived importance of achieving work outcomes and being a part of the organisation. They suggest that these last two facets of engagement are newer more recent facets however what they describe, for example vigour, absorption, energy, pride etc have been referred to previously by writers such as Schaufeli et al (2002) and Maslach and Leiter (1997) suggesting that they are not newer facets identified by the authors but elements which have already been studied. In summary they suggest that engagement as a state is displayed by high levels of involvement (passion and absorption) in the work and the organisation (pride and

identity) as well as affective energy (enthusiasm and alertness) and a sense of self-presence in the work.

According to Macey & Schneider (2008) behavioural engagement is an observable, extra role and atypical behaviour. This is at odds with Saks (2008) who feels that engagement does not involve extra role behaviour but is about how an employee does what they are supposed to be doing. They suggest that behavioural engagement can be observed in terms of citizenship behaviour, role expansion, proactive behaviour and demonstrating personal initiative all strategically focused towards achieving organisational objectives. They appear to agree with Kahn's view of engagement as a voluntary concept and refer to the discretionary effort which employees can choose to give. They also stress the difficulty in measuring effort.

Drawing on research conducted by the Gallup Group (Harter el al, 2003) the authors suggest that there are certain work conditions which enhance engagement behaviours and lead to increased productivity. Central to this is the *role of the manager* where effective managers are defined as those who get the work done with the people they have, do not try to change them, and attempt to capitalise on the competencies their people have, not on what they wished they had. Other work conditions include *work attributes, variety and challenge* and *autonomy*.

By breaking engagement down into these three components Macey & Schneider have taken a complex and confusing concept and made it clearer for organisations to see and understand its components. The underlying idea is that trait engagement, as mentioned earlier, is something which is inherent in individuals thereby suggesting that it is something organisations should be conscious of when recruiting and selecting new employees. Not all writers agree however. In response to their framework Saks (2008) argues that by creating three components of engagement Macey & Schneider have muddied the waters and have made engagement a complex construct thereby further confusing efforts to define the term.

2.3.7 Further thoughts on Employee Engagement

Kahn's research has been very influential on the writings on the topic of employee engagement. Many of the subsequent definitions follow his three levels of engagement - physical, cognitive and emotional. His work has also carried over into much of the practitioner/management literature. In their studies the ISR (2004) identified three dimensions of engagement, that is, *cognitive* (think), *affective* (feel) and *behavioural* (act). Research conducted by Kingston Business School and Ipsos MORI on behalf of CIPD in 2006 found two of the main drivers of employee engagement were having the opportunity to have your views heard and feeling well informed about what is happening in the organisation. In their report they defined engagement in simple terms as feeling positive about your work and they broke engagement down using Kahn's three conditions as outlined

above. Sarah Cook (2008, p.3) in her book The Essential Guide to Employee Engagement refers to the three aspects of engagement as *feeling, thinking* and *doing*. She states that 'engagement can be summed up by how positively the employee thinks about the organisation, feels about the organisation and is proactive in relation to achieving organisational goals for customers, colleagues and other stakeholders'. She puts forward the 'WIFI' model of engagement which concentrates on four main aspects of the employee/employer relationship – *well-being, information, fairness and involvement.*

While it is fair to say that there has been limited academic research to date on the topic of employee engagement it is nevertheless a hot topic particularly among practitioners. The literature I have reviewed stems from the academic world and despite the fact that there is no one general definition of the term there are some similarities. Saks (2008) claims that Macey & Schneider have made engagement complex by defining it in terms of trait, state and behaviour however, his framework of engagement with its antecedents and consequences is in some ways similar. In Macey & Schneider they propose trait engagement as the antecedent to state and behavioural engagement. They claim that aspects such as work attributes, variety, challenge and transformational leadership have an impact on the latter two elements of engagement just as Saks proposes that job characteristics, organisational and supervisor support have an impact on job and organisation engagement. He proposes organisational citizenship behaviour as a

consequence of job and organisation engagement just as Macey & Schneider suggest that it is a facet of behavioural engagement in their framework.

Saks (2006) proposes social exchange theory as a theoretical framework for explaining employee engagement. By social exchange he claims that employees will engage to higher levels if specific antecedents are present. He suggests that engagement has not been viewed in this context previously however I would argue that the underlying current in all of the literature referred to previously is organisational initiatives in exchange for higher levels of employee engagement. Certainly the literature from HR practitioners and consultancy firms is consumed with what organisations should be doing in order to engage their staff.

Two of the major similarities in the literature which have carried through to the consultancy firms are the importance of providing meaningful work which is interesting, valued and worthwhile (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Kahn, 1990; May et al 2004) and also the importance of the manager/supervisor in enhancing engagement among employees (Saks, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008; May et al, 2004). One significant difference among the literature is whether engagement is constant and persistent (Schaufeli et al, 2002), you are either engaged or you are not, or whether you experience moments of engagement (Kahn, 1990). My thoughts on this matter are more aligned with Kahn. I think that people can waiver between engagement and disengagement depending on the circumstances. I also see merit in Macey & Schneider's argument that some people are more

predisposed to feeling positive and enthusiastic about their work however, like Maslach & Leiter (1997) I feel the state of engagement can be eroded leading to feelings of disengagement and burnout.

3   RESEARCH QUESTION

3.1   Background

As a starting point for formulating my research question I refer to and agree with Kahn's (1990) guiding assumption that 'people are constantly bringing in and leaving out various depths of their selves during the course of their work' (p.692). I believe that this assertion is at the very heart of the employee engagement argument. That is, given the right working environment and conditions, employees become engaged and give more of themselves physically, emotionally and cognitively while carrying out their work. Throughout my review of the literature on the topic it has become clear that organisations must work hard to ensure that they provide the right type of working conditions and environment to foster a culture of engagement and increase engagement levels among their employees. As can be seen from the literature, the research to date on the topic of employee engagement has been approached from a number of different theoretical points of view. While there are differences of opinion among the authors there are also points on which they appear to agree. Or at least there are certain commonalities among their work. For example, many of the authors reviewed have concerned themselves with the elements of the working relationship which will encourage a culture of engagement. These elements are often referred to as the antecedents of employee engagement (Saks, 2006) or sometimes called the drivers of employee engagement (CIPD, 2006).

Despite the fact that there is yet to be agreement on a conclusive definition of the term employee engagement it is clear from the literature is that organisations want it. It is perceived to the key to enhancing organisational performance and gaining competitive advantage. There would also appear to be agreement on the fact that having engaged employees is most important during times of change or uncertainty as mentioned previously.

The following table (Table 1) shows a list of antecedents of / influences on employee engagement as identified in the works of Kahn (1990), Maslach & Leiter (1997), May et al (2004), Saks (2006) and Macey & Schneider (2008).

Table 1:   Summary of Antecedents of / Influences on Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990)	Maslach & Leiter (1997)
Task & role characteristics	Workload
Interpersonal relationships	Control
Group and intergroup dynamics	Reward
Management Style	Community
Organisational norms	Fairness
Physical and emotional energies	Values
Insecurity	**Saks (2006)**
Outside life	Job characteristics
May et al (2004)	Rewards and recognition
Job enrichment	Organisational support
Role fit	Supervisor support
Supportive supervisors	Procedural justice
Rewarding co-worker relations	Distributive justice
Availability of resources	
Macey & Schneider (2008)	
Work attributes	
Variety	
Challenge	
Autonomy	
Transformational leadership	
Trust	

As can be seen there are a number of items on this list which have been identified by more than one author. These are:

- *Job/work characteristics or attributes*

- *Reward and recognition*

- *Organisational and supervisor support*

- *Fairness/justice*

- *Sense of community/co-worker relations*

My research is focused on this list. The aim of my research is to determine if these antecedents / influences have a positive impact on engagement levels. It is expected that the outcome of this research will provide evidence to support the proposition that they do have a positive effect on engagement levels. Another aim of my research is to highlight any aspects of the employment relationship which could potentially be improved upon in order to increase engagement levels. I have chosen to focus my research on the organisation which I work in – Teagasc.

3.2   Organisational Context

Teagasc is the agriculture and food development authority in Ireland. Its mission is to support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and the broader bioeconomy that will underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability. Teagasc provides integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industries and to rural communities. It was established in September 1988 under the Agriculture (Research, Training and Advice) Act, 1988 when ACOT and An Foras Taluntas were amalgamated. The organisation is funded by State Grant-in-Aid; the National Development Plan 2007 to 2013; fees for research, advisory and training services; income from national and EU competitive research programmes; and revenue from farming

activities and commodity levies. Teagasc employs approximately 1,300 staff at 75 locations throughout Ireland. It has an annual operating budget in excess of €170 million. In the last decade Teagasc has undergone two periods of significant restructuring and is currently in the process of implementing a third restructuring programme. This current change programme has been driven by a number of factors including the deteriorating budgetary situation which the organisation finds itself in, the large number of retirements over the last two years coupled with the current moratorium on recruitment and promotions in the public service and the requirement to generate additional capital funds to invest in new facilities through the rationalisation of organisational assets.

The rationalisation plan set out the in the change programme includes the:

- Sale of certain assets including farm land and a number of offices.
- Termination of a number of land and office leases.
- Cessation of certain research programmes identified as low priority.
- Reduction in senior management structure from six to three directorates and alignment of key services into a programme driven structure.

Like many public sector organisations Teagasc is under pressure in terms of finances and resources with significant successive budget cuts and reducing staff numbers whilst also trying to maintain services to clients and stakeholders. By implementing the change programme Teagasc is facing up the fact that drastic changes to the way the organisation currently does its business will have to take place in order to secure its future. Staff are

also feeling the pressure with reductions in pay, pension and tax levies and many staff have had to on additional duties as a result of the non-replacement of those who have retired. It is inevitable that times like these can lead to negative effects on staff morale and motivation. The importance of having an engaged workforce at this time is key to the organisation succeeding in its implementation of this change programme. If, as suggested by the literature, engaged employees are satisfied, committed people who understand the business needs, who act as advocates for the organisation and who, through their discretionary effort, help the organisation to improve its performance, then having an engaged workforce is vital for Teagasc at this present time. As indicated by the works of Kahn (1990), May el al (2004) and Saks (2006) managers play a vital role in engaging staff. Managers in Teagasc will have to demonstrate that they are capable of being supportive and of communicating effectively with staff in these times of uncertainty.

3.3   Employee Engagement in Teagasc

Over the last number of years Teagasc has invested a lot of financial and human resources to ensure that the organisation meets the needs of its clients, stakeholders and staff and to achieve its organisational goals. The initiatives introduced by Teagasc were aimed at fulfilling the organisation's HR vision and despite the fact that it may not have been explicitly stated they have also attempted to improve engagement levels in the organisation. This is clear from the HR vision as set out in the Teagasc HRM Strategy 2003-2008 - '*Teagasc intends to be an employer of choice that recruits and retains a highly qualified, competent and fulfilled workforce committed to meeting the changing needs of our clients*'. It further states that '*staff will be valued and developed to their full*

potential through continuous learning and participation in the planning and delivery of high quality services. The excellence of our people will be recognised as the most important factor in providing high quality services to our clients'. Underpinning this HR vision is a number of guiding values which influence the everyday behaviour of employees in the organisation. These values are service driven, respect and esteem, participation, commitment to continuous improvement, supportive working environment and public sector ethos.

Specific initiatives introduced by Teagasc are identified in the following paragraphs. As you will see these initiatives can be categorised among the list of antecedents / influences of employee engagement as identified earlier.

1) **Partnership** – In January 2005 a National Partnership Committee was established in Teagasc. Its role was to actively promote and the lead the management of change in Teagasc through a partnership approach. When partnership was introduced in Teagasc it was envisaged that it would provide an improved and more productive workplace where all staff had an opportunity to contribute to the development of the organisation. It was felt that by adopting a partnership approach that employees would have a direct input to the decision making process in the organisation and that the contribution of staff would enrich the quality of the decisions made. It was also hoped that partnership would be starting point for an improved industrial relations climate in the organisation by reaching a consensus through joint decision making.

2) **PMDS** – Teagasc introduced a Performance Management Development System (PMDS) in 2003 as part of its commitment to modernisation and change in the public service. PMDS links the organisational goals set out in the Statement of Strategy to the individual work plans and objectives of each staff member through the annual business planning process of each management unit. The system helps employees to set out their goals and objectives for the year (linked to the unit's business plan) and to identify the milestones and key performance indicators which can be measured to ensure that they are on target. PMDS helps employees to clarify their role whilst providing an opportunity to highlight any developmental needs and identify appropriate learning and development interventions which are aimed at addressing those needs. It also allows employees to clearly see their contribution to the organisation in terms of achieving organisational goals and objectives. Through PMDS, two-way communication between the employee and their manager is promoted. In the last few years with the introduction of the competency framework (referred to below) PMDS has become a more comprehensive career planning tool. The link to competency profiles enables employees to compare their skills, knowledge and behavioural attributes to those of their own grade and other grades in the organisation. The Staff Training and Development Unit in Teagasc has also complied a database of appropriate learning and development initiatives which are linked to the competency framework.

3) **Competency Approach** – A comprehensive competency framework outlining the knowledge, skills and behavioural attributes for each staff level in the organisation was developed. The recruitment and selection process in Teagasc has shifted to a

competency based system. Interview boards in Teagasc are trained is competency interviewing. This has enabled Teagasc to employ and promote the best people based on their competency to perform their job, link people management to performance outcomes and provide a structure for succession and career planning. The use of competency profiles has also helped staff identify skills and behavioural attributes necessary for their job and in order to help with their career planning.

4) **Communications** – Teagasc's commitment to ensuring open and honest communications in the organisation was reaffirmed in the HRM Strategy 2003-2008. It stated that 'commitment only comes with participation' (Teagasc, 2003) and set out three cornerstones of participation – communication and consultation, staff involvement through teamwork and formal partnership (see above). Partnership is the main mechanism for communication in the organisation. In addition to this managers are expected to hold regular team meetings with their staff in order to update them on any issues, to afford employees a formal opportunity to discuss these issues, ask questions and to put their thoughts and suggestions forward. This face-to-face meeting is particularly important for an organisation like Teagasc which has such a wide geographical spread with many staff located remotely to their managers.

5) **Dignity of Staff** – The previous policy on bullying, harassment and sexual harassment was reviewed and a new Dignity at Work policy was launched in 2006. Supervisors and managers were provided with training while all employees attended awareness sessions on the new policy. A number of designated contact persons were identified and trained to act as a support to those who felt they were the victim of bullying or harassment.

6) **Staff Wellbeing** – The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in Teagasc is operated through an external company. The EAP is aimed at assisting employees identify and resolve personal concerns by providing short-term support, counselling, assessment and referral in areas such as stress or emotional issues, addiction, depression, debt management, legal problems, bereavement and work-life balance. In order to promote staff well-being and support employees in attaining a healthy work-life balance a working group was established to research and recommend flexible working arrangements which could be introduced. Specific actions arising out of this were the availability of 'hot-desks' in all the major centres, a pilot e-working programme was established to allow staff work from home where appropriate and a special unpaid leave scheme was introduced. This scheme is different to some of the statutory leave schemes in that it caters for those employees who, for family reasons, might not qualify to take unpaid leave under the existing schemes available. In addition, an organisation wide health check programme was run in 2007 with Teagasc making a contribution to cost of this health check and facilitating staff in attending the check up with time off work.

Other actions taken by the organisation include the introduction of a comprehensive induction process for new entrants which includes a welcome pack with the Teagasc Staff Handbook, a dedicated section on the intranet for new employees with relevant and interesting information on the organisation, a local induction process with their manager or supervisor and a national induction day organised bi-yearly. In addition, the appointment of two HR Advisers based regionally, not in Head Office, to work directly

with and support managers and staff in implementing HR policies and procedures. They act as the first point of contact for staff in relation to specific queries for examples on the dignity at work policy, the grievance procedure etc.

3.4   Summary

In this chapter I have referred to the importance of having an engaged workforce and reiterated the importance for Teagasc to ensure that its staff are engaged in order to successfully implement the current change programme. This change programme is primarily aimed at securing the organisation's future. I have also identified the initiatives which have been introduced by Teagasc over the last number of years. These initiatives can be categorised among the antecedents / influences of employee engagement as mentioned previously. Through conducting this research I hope to show that these initiatives have been successful in improving engagement levels in the organisation and will therefore show that the organisation is in a good position from an employee engagement perspective as it embarks on its current change programme.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Aims and Hypothesis

There were three main aims to my research. Firstly I hoped to determine if the initiatives introduced by Teagasc which I categorised among the antecedents of / influences on employee engagement had an impact upon engagement levels in Teagasc. Secondly I wanted to identify aspects of the employment relationship which could be improved to increase engagement levels. Having identified engagement levels and areas which could be improved the third and final aim of my research was to make recommendations on how to and by what means Teagasc could maintain and improve engagement levels.

In order to determine if Partnership, PMDS, adopting a competency approach, improved communications as well as promoting staff dignity and wellbeing had a beneficial impact on engagement levels in Teagasc it was necessary to collect primary as well as secondary data. Primary research was conducted in the form of a survey of all Teagasc staff while secondary data was collected by reanalysing the results of a previous survey which was conducted in Teagasc in 2004. I then set up a focus group with representatives from across the organisation to consider the primary and secondary data collected and to consider ways to improve engagement levels. The focus group allowed me to gather qualitative data.

I adopted the following hypothesis in relation to my research aims:

Engagement levels in Teagasc will be positively impacted by the introduction of initiatives which relate to the following aspects of the employment relationship – job/work characteristics, reward and recognition, organisational and supervisor support, fairness and justice and sense of community/co-worker relations.

I feel that this hypothesis is appropriate and justified by the fact that these initiative (Partnership, PMDS, adopting a competency approach, improved communications and promoting staff dignity and wellbeing) are all concerned with aspects of the employee / employer relationship. Also, in line with Kahn's (1990) guiding assumption, I believe that, given the right working environment and conditions, employees become engaged and give more of themselves physically, emotionally and cognitively while carrying out their work.

4.2   Research Design

I chose to focus my research on the organisation in which I work for two main reasons. Firstly, as a practitioner-research (Saunders et al, 2007) I was guaranteed research access thus eliminating a potential obstacle which is faced by many researchers. Secondly, given that my organisation is currently in the process of implementing a change, the third significant change programme in the last decade, I was interested to learn more about engagement in the organisation. I also felt that the results of my research would be beneficial to my organisation and would potentially influence the new People, Leadership and Change Strategy (HR Strategy) which is being drafted presently.

When undertaking any form of research it is important to consider the research design which you are going to adopt. Saunders et al (2007) state that the research design is a 'general plan of how you will go about answering your research question'. They outline three types of research purpose – exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. My research can be described as both explanatory and descriptive. It is explanatory in that shows a causal link between the initiatives introduced by Teagasc, referred to previously, and the level of employee engagement in the organisation and is descriptive in that it provides a clear picture of engagement in terms of its antecedents and influences. It is a cross-sectional study in that it compares results at different points in time as opposed to a longitudinal study which continues over a significant period of time.

4.3   Data Collection, Reliability and Validity

As indicated previously, in the course of conducting my research I collected both primary and secondary data. For my primary data collection I used a mixed method of research using both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Quantitative data was collected by means of a staff survey while qualitative data was collected through the setting up of a focus group. I decided to use a mixed method of research as opposed to a mono method, multi-method or mixed model (Saunders et al, 2007) as I felt that this method provided a better opportunity for me to answer my research question (aims). The setting up of a focus group to examine and consider the survey results meant that I was able to obtain both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis enhanced the reliability and validity of the quantitative results as they confirmed the causal relationship outlined in my hypothesis. In order to further enhance the reliability

of my survey results I tried to reduce the risk of participant error and participant bias (Saunders et al, 2007). I sent the survey out mid-week as I felt that participants would complete it there and then and that they were less likely to be feeling down about the working week ahead, as potentially experienced on a Monday, or excited about reaching the end of the week and heading into the weekend, as potentially experienced on a Friday. In order to avoid participant bias I encouraged participants to be completely frank and honest with their answers, to say what they felt not what they thought they should say and explained that this would lead to more reliable data.

4.4   **Ethical Considerations**

In conducting this research I was conscious of ethical considerations. I wanted to ensure that participants were providing their consent based on accurate information on the purpose of the study. I contacted the participants of my focus group by telephone and explained the purpose of my study, that participation in the group was entirely voluntary and outlined how I intended to collect data. I gave assurances regarding the anonymity of discussions which would take place during the group and explained that results would be included in my dissertation. In relation to my survey I outlined this information in the email / letter which was sent to participants.

4.5   **Sampling Techniques**

When deciding on the appropriate sampling techniques to use for my research I considered three possibilities – probability sampling, non-probability sampling or alternatively no sample at all. For my survey I did not apply a sample instead choosing to

circulate the survey to all staff in the organisation i.e. the entire population. By circulating the survey to the majority of participants online I was not constrained by budget or time limitations.

4.6   The Survey

The decision to incorporate a survey into my study as a method of collecting primary data was based on a number of factors. Firstly, while conducting my literature review I noted that a number of that the authors reviewed had used this method in their studies, for example May et al (2004), Schaufeli et al (2002) and Saks (2006). Also the majority of HR consultants and practitioners advocate using a staff survey to measure employee engagement, for example Cook (2008), CIPD (2006), the Corporate Leadership Council (2004), Towers Perrin (2005) and IDS HR Study (2009). Secondly and most importantly I felt that the use of a survey was the most appropriate method for achieving my research aim of measuring engagement levels in Teagasc. Through my review of the literature on the subject the belief that engagement is about employee attitudes as well as behaviours and outcomes became very apparent. I felt that a survey was the best way to measure employee attitudes in Teagasc thereby helping me to achieve one of my research aims. The use of a survey or questionnaire is also suited to descriptive and explanatory studies and as indicated early in this chapter my research is both descriptive and explanatory.

4.6.1   Administering the Survey

Saunders et al (2007) identify a number of different ways in which a survey could be administered. For example, interviewer-administered surveys, where responses

are recorded by the interviewer on the basis of the respondents answers, telephone surveys administered over the telephone where the respondent is asked a number of questions and the answers are recorded by the person doing the questioning and self-administered surveys which are completed by the respondent and have the potential to be anonymous. Surveys may be administered online, by post, or delivered and collected by hand. For my research I chose a self-administered online survey for the majority of participants (1,180). Given the wide geographical spread of employees in Teagasc I felt that an online survey, emailed to each participant was the most suitable approach. In order to ensure that each staff group was represented equally I chose a self-administered postal survey for farm and domestic staff (217) by post. I decided upon this method of distribution for this group of staff as they typically have limited access to email and felt they would be more likely to respond if they received a hard copy of the survey in the post. The online self-administered survey significantly reduced costs and also time as data entry was automated. Data entry was necessary for the responses received via the postal survey. Overall the survey was administered to 1,397 people. An email was sent to each participant, with the exception of farm and domestic staff, on 31st March 2010. I also posted the survey along with a letter to each farm and domestic employee on 31st March 2010. I followed up with reminder emails / letters on 14th April 2010. Responses were received by 19th April 2010.

4.6.2 Designing the Survey

The survey was designed online using SurveyMonkey.com. It consisted of 32 questions / statements broken down into six sections. The first section contained demographic questions relating to the respondent while the remaining five sections contained statements based on the list of antecedents / influences identified in Chapter 4. To recap these are – job characteristics, reward and recognition, organisational and supervisor support, fairness / justice and a sense of community / co-worker relations. The statements I used in each of these sections were influenced by previous studies by Saks (2008), Kahn (1990), May et al (2004) and also by Hackman and Oldham's (1974) Job Characteristics Model. Participants were asked to provide a response to each of these statements based on a four point Likert-style rating scale. Possible responses were:

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

I chose a four point rating scale in order to force respondents to express their feelings towards each of the statements. Statements were based on three types of data variable – opinion, behaviour and attribute (Dillman, 2000). I felt that the mixture of data variable types was especially appropriate to the topic of my research i.e. employee engagement, since it is a concept which is concerned with employees opinions and behaviours.

4.6.3 Reliability Testing

Foddy (1994) emphasises that 'questions must be understood by the respondent in the way intended by the researcher and the answer given by the respondent must be understood by the researcher in the way intended by the respondent'. To ensure that the survey which I drafted read well, was understandable and had no typos or spelling errors I conducted a pilot test by sending the survey in draft format to six colleagues in my department. Their feedback also allowed me to determine the length of time the survey would take to complete, if the instructions provided were clear and understandable and if the layout was attractive, inoffensive and appropriate. The responses received resulted in some amendments to the instructions and wording of some questions. Appendices3 and 4 show the survey prior to the pilot test (Appendix 3) and the version of the survey which was administered to all staff and which incorporates feedback received during the pilot test (Appendix 4).

4.7 Secondary Data

In order to fulfil my research aim of determining if the initiatives which have been introduced into Teagasc in the last number of years have had an impact on engagement levels in the organisation it was necessary to source secondary as well as primary data. In the course of completing this research I collected secondary data in two ways. Firstly through the use of a previous staff survey which was completed in 2004. This survey was conducted prior to the implementation of the initiatives which I referred to in Chapter 4. I

extracted questions which related to the elements of employee engagement as referred to previously and compared the results to those generated in my own survey.

The second form of secondary data was collected through my focus group. The members of this group and I conducted a benchmarking exercise. We reviewed the engagement strategies and actions of a range of public and private organisations. The data collected through this exercise helped me achieve my aim of suggesting ways of improving employee engagement in my organisation.

4.8   The Focus Group

I set up a focus group in order to provide qualitative data to back up the quantitative data from the survey. The aim of this focus group was to:

- Provide qualitative data which would either support or contradict the findings from my survey.

- Conduct an industry review in order to obtain benchmark data from other organisations.

- Review the results from my survey and consider recommendations which could be put forward to improve engagement levels in the organisation.

I commenced the process of setting up a focus group in April 2010. At this time my survey had been distributed to all staff in the organisation so employees were aware of the study that I was doing. I first considered who I would invite to participate in this focus

group. I wanted to ensure that the views of every staff category in the organisation were represented i.e. administration, farm and domestic, advisory, teaching and research whilst also including representatives with and without people management responsibilities. As one of the aims of my research was to compare engagement levels prior to, during and after the introduction of certain initiatives by Teagasc it was important to consider the demographic make up of the group. I did this by ensuring that some of the members of the group had been with the organisation prior to the introduction of these initiatives. I also wanted to include representatives from staff who had recently joined the organisation as I felt that through their participation they would introduce perspectives on employee engagement from previous companies they worked with and be able to compare with those of Teagasc.

Once I had compiled a list of potential participants, having considered the points I raised above, I contacted them by telephone. I explained the study which I was undertaking, referred to the survey which they had received, and outlined the purpose of the group. I explained that their participation in the group was completely voluntary and assured them of the confidentiality of any input they would make to the group.

My role in the group was as a facilitator. In order to ensure that participants were familiar with the concept of employee engagement I provided them with summary from my literature review and encouraged them to research the topic themselves. Following the completion of the survey and the analysis of the results the group met in Head Office on Thursday, 6th May 2010. I distributed the survey results to the group members along with

the results from the previous surveys which I had collected as secondary data. We discussed these results. Each group member's input was invaluable in providing a broader reflection on employee engagement in Teagasc. The diversity of the group resulted in some very interesting discussions. I found that each group member's contribution to the discussions was frank and honest and I feel that this added to the reliability and validity of these discussions.

Following a benchmarking exercise with other public and private sector organisations the group reconvened again on Wednesday, 2nd June 2010. At this meeting the group discussed the outcomes of the industry review and shared the results of the benchmarking exercise. We also considered aspects of the employment relationship which scored low in the survey results suggesting that improvements could be made. We discussed these areas in light of the benchmark data. This provided me with the necessary information to make recommendations. These recommendations are outlined in Chapter 6.

5   ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1   Chapter Introduction

In this chapter I outline the analysis I undertook following data collection and also the main findings from my survey and focus group. The chapter is broken down into two main sections and covers two of my research aims. The first aim of this study is to determine if the initiatives introduced into the organisation had a positive effect on engagement levels. As outlined in Chapter 4 Research Methodology I set about achieving this aim by collecting both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected by way of a staff survey while secondary data was collected from a previous staff survey which had been undertaken in the organisation in 2004. Both these surveys were distributed to all staff in the organisation. The second aim of my research was to identify aspects of the employment relationship which could be improved in order to increase engagement levels. This aim will be achieved by analysing the survey results from my survey and the previous survey conducted and also through qualitative data collected through my focus group. My final aim was to make recommendations on how to improve engagement levels. This aim is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

5.2   Data Analysis

The first step before analysing the data was to input the results from my survey. As the majority of survey participants completed the survey online using SurveyMonkey.com data entry was limited to the participants who completed the survey in hard copy format

and posted their completed surveys. I completed the data entry online in the same manner as the other online participants. This ensured that all results, both online and postal, were entered in the same manner and into the same database. The next step in analysing the data was to compile the results in terms of percentages and then compare them to the results from the previous survey to determine if there was an increase or decrease in engagement levels. In doing this had to examine the previous survey and extract the questions which related to the five influences of employee engagement as identified in Chapter 3.

In order to determine what constitutes a good, satisfactory or poor level of engagement I based my analysis on the writings of Cook (2008) who states that survey results over 75% indicate a high degree of engagement; 55% - 74% indicates an average degree of engagement while anything under 54% would indicate a low degree of engagement.

5.3 Survey Response Rate

As mentioned in Chapter 4 the survey was distributed to 1,397 people in total which represented the entire population of the organisation. Of the 1,397 to whom the survey was distributed a total of 740 people responded equating to an overall response rate of 53%. Of the 217 postal survey recipients a total of 92 responded – a response rate of 42% while 648 people completed the survey online – a response rate for this group of 54%. When ineligible or unreachable participants were taken into account the active response rate was calculated at 55%. The response rate is very pleasing especially considering a

reasonable response rate for an online or postal administered survey is 30% (Saunders et al, 2007).

5.4   Survey Findings

The survey was divided into six main sections. Firstly, demographic questions relating to age, gender, staff category, grade and directorate. Sections 2 to 6 included statements which related to the antecedents / influences of engagement – job characteristics, reward and recognition, organisational and supervisor support, fairness / justice and a sense of community / co-worker relations. The results from each of these sections are summarised below with an illustration of the breakdown of some of the key findings. In addition, the results from the previous survey conducted in 2004 are also illustrated.

5.4.1   Section 1 – Demographics

A breakdown of the numbers employed in each staff category in the organisation is outlined below as well as the survey response rate for each of these categories.

Organisational Breakdown by Staff Category

14%   19%
17%
16%   34%

- Administration
- Advisory/Training
- Farm/Domestic
- Research
- Technician/Technologist
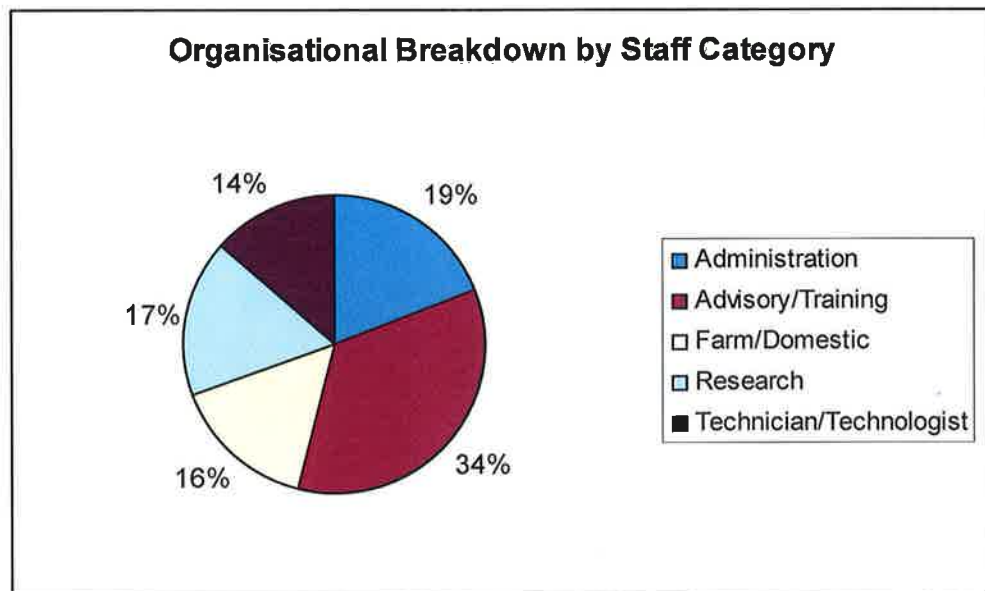
Figure 3 – Organisational breakdown by staff category

Survey Response Rate by Staff Category

65%   53%   42%   49%   54%

Administration   Advisory/Training   Farm/Domestic   Research   Technician/Technologist
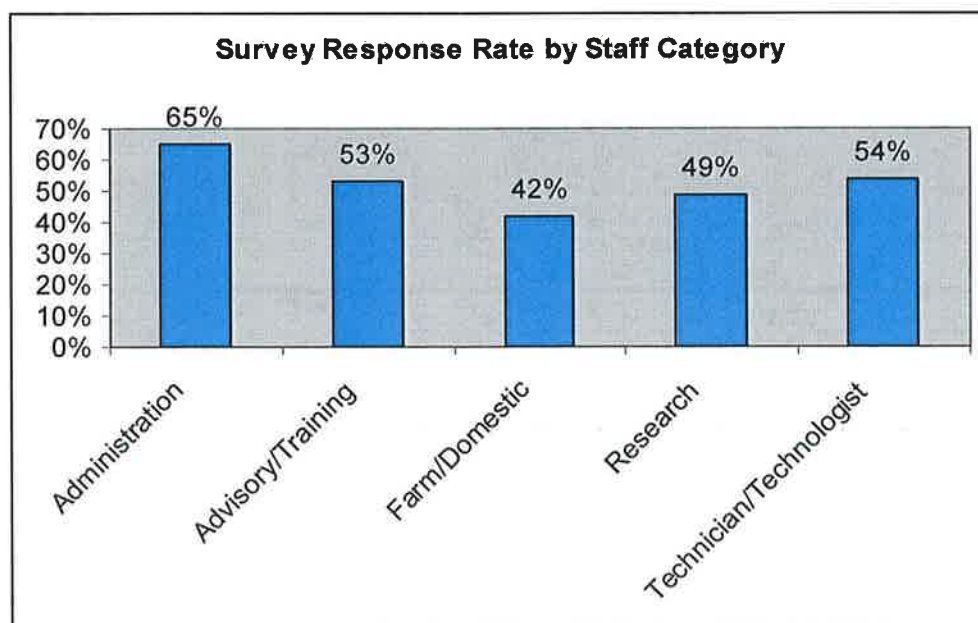
Figure 4 – 2010 Survey response rates by staff category

5.4.2 Section 2 – Job Characteristics

Table 2 – 2010 Survey -Job Characteristics	% Agreeing
I am aware of the competencies required for my role.	97%
I have a real opportunity for job-based learning in the next 12 months.	10%
My job permits me to decide how to go about doing my work.	75%
My job makes good of my skills and abilities.	85%
I am bored in my job.	15%
I regularly receive feedback on my performance	57%
I am clear about what is expected of me in my role	63%

Results from this section of the survey indicate a positive response in relation to autonomy, awareness of competencies required and appropriate use of skills and abilities in the current job. The results regarding feedback on performance point to a lack of consistency across the organisation with 43% of respondents disagreeing that they regularly receive feedback and 57% agreeing with this statement. A breakdown of these results is shown below in Figure 5. There is some improvement on 2004 results in the same area where only 43% of respondents said that their manager talked to them about their progress in the last 12 months.

I regularly receive feedback on my performance

Strongly Disagree: 16%
Disagree: 27%
Agree: 44%
Strongly Agree: 13%

■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree □ Agree ▣ Strongly Agree
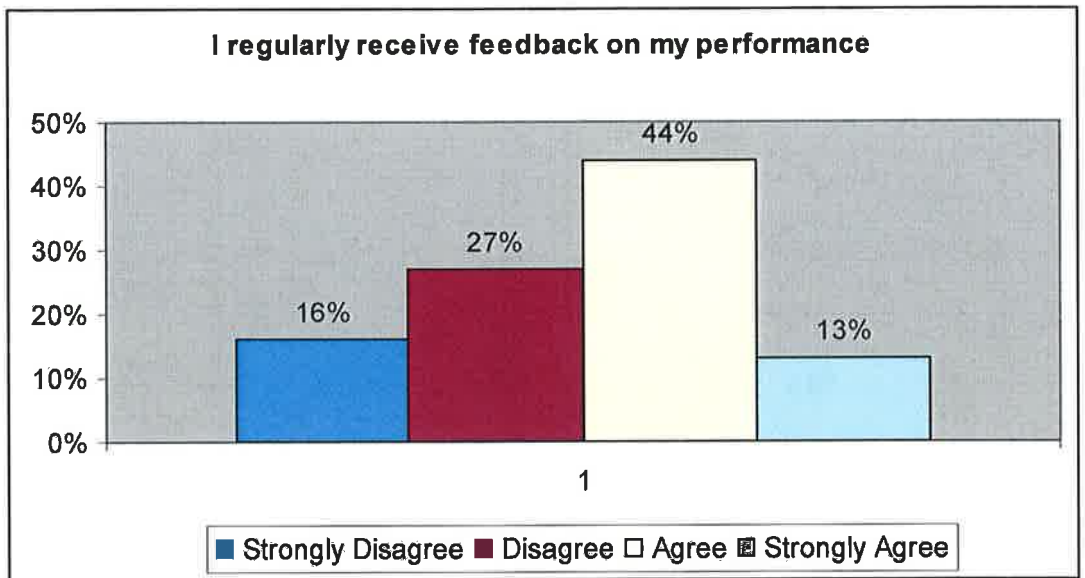
Figure 5 – 2010 Survey response rates on performance related feedback

A comparison of the 2010 survey results with those from 2004 also shows an increase in relation to clarity of job expectations which perhaps can be attributed to the completion of the role profile as part of the PMDS process.

Table 3 - 2004 Survey – Job Characteristics	% Agreeing
I understand how my work contributes to the achievement of objectives of my department/unit	93%
My work objectives are realistic	72%
I feel motivated by the work I do	79%
Overall my workload is reasonable	68%
People are given roles which make the best use of their skills and abilities	37%
In the last 12 months my manager has talked to me about my progress	43%
I am clear about the activities I need to perform in order to achieve my individual objectives	58%

Perhaps an area for improvement is in relation to promotions and job-based learning. Only 10% of respondents felt that they had an opportunity for job-based learning in the next 12 months. Prior to the introduction of the current moratorium on recruitment and promotions in the public service a significant amount of job-based learning was provided by way of acting-up appointments to higher grades to cover periods of leave, maternity leave for example. The moratorium has meant that the organisation is no longer in a position to offer acting-up appointments. The implementation of an internal redeployment policy to fill priority posts is likely to have a positive impact upon job-based learning with some employees being assigned to new roles.

5.4.3   Section 3 – Reward and Recognition

Table 4 - 2010 Survey - Reward and Recognition	% Agreeing
I am aware of the formal recognition programmes in operation in Teagasc	66%
Teagasc is good at recognising exceptional performance	48%
My manager always acknowledges a job well done	71%
There are regular opportunities for promotion in Teagasc	9%
I feel I am paid appropriately for the job that I do	75%
Teagasc is good at supporting my learning and development	77%

Table 5 - 2004 Survey - Reward and Recognition	% Agreeing
I am offered training which will help me keep up with advances in technology which affect my job	54%
In Teagasc there are opportunities for promotion	35%
Career paths exist for someone like me in this organisation	31%
My manager gives me credit for my contributions	69%
Teagasc assists me with my longer term career development	40%

A comparison of results from the two surveys shows a decline in employees feeling that they have the opportunity to be promoted. In 2004 a total of 35% of respondents agreed that there was an opportunity for promotion however this figure dropped significantly in 2010 with only 9% of respondents agreeing. A likely cause of this low score in the 2010 survey is the current moratorium which restricts the organisations' ability to promote employees.

The area of training and development has seen a large increase in positive feelings towards the organisation in terms support for career development, 77% in 2010 compared with 40% in 2004. The introduction PMDS in late 2003 / early 2004 means that there is a now a formal process for assessment of training needs and methods of addressing those needs whether that be through a formal training course, mentoring or on the job learning.

Teagasc is good at supporting my learning and development

- Strongly Disagree: 6%
- Disagree: 17%
- Agree: 69%
- Strongly Agree: 8%
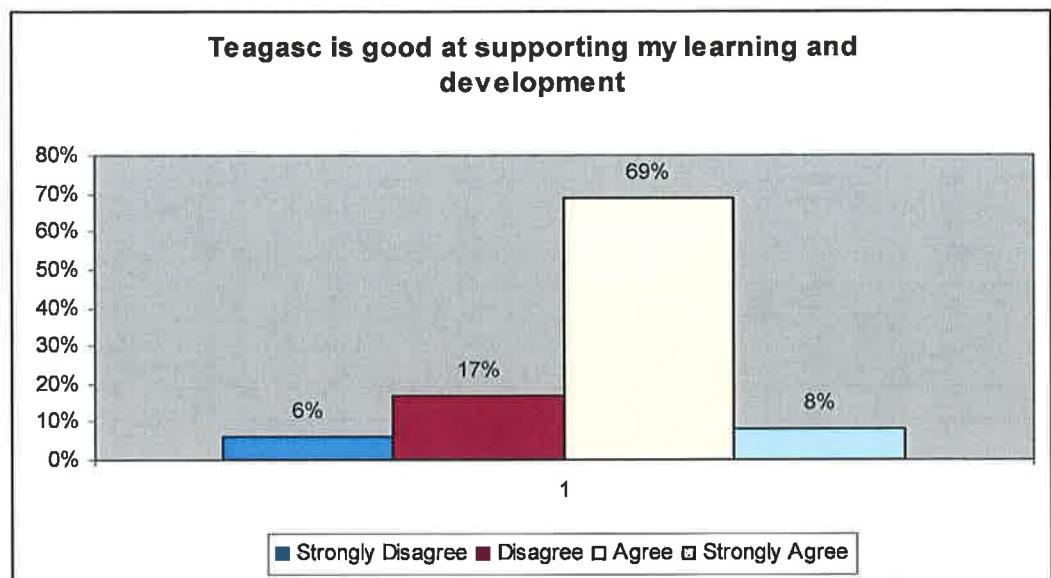
Figure 6 – 2010 Survey response rates on learning & development support

Another area where Teagasc seems to be doing well with regard to reward and recognition is acknowledgement from managers of a job well done with 71% agreeing that they receive acknowledgement from their manager a slight increase on the 2004 result of 69%. These high scores do not follow through to structured, organisational recognition of performance with just under half of 2010 respondents agreeing that the organisation is good at recognising exceptional performance.

5.4.4   Section 4 – Organisational / Supervisor Support

The 2010 survey results indicate that overall employees are happy with the support they receive from their manager in terms of career development with 70% of respondents agreeing. This is an improvement on the 2004 survey where only

63% felt that their manager supported their personal and professional development. Again this indicative of the benefits achieved since the introduction of PMDS specifically the formal structure for performance meetings between manager and staff member. A significant improvement in terms of respect can be seen in 2010 compared with 2004.

Figure 7 – 2010 Survey response rates on respect from manager

It is disappointing to see a decrease in the numbers feeling that their views and opinions are valued, 45% in 2010 compared with 58% in 2004. This perhaps suggests that Partnership is not having the impact in terms of involvement and consultation as was intended.

Table 6 - 2010 Survey - Organisational/Supervisor Support	% Agreeing
My manager actively supports the development of my career	70%
My manager regularly keeps me informed of issues that are relevant to me	74%
I am always treated with respect by my manager	79%
Teagasc actively promotes good work life balance	52%
My views and opinions are valued in Teagasc	45%
Teagasc is a caring organisation	61%

In 2004 only 49% felt that Teagasc was caring organisation however this figure increased to 61% in 2010. The introduction of initiatives like the Employee Assistance Programme, the Dignity at Work policy and schemes aimed at improving work-life balance as well as a health check in 2007 have gone a long way toward addressing this.

Table 7 - 2004 Survey - Organisational/Supervisor Support	% Agreeing
My ideas are valued	58%
Teagasc is a caring organization	49%
I feel trusted and respected	37%
My manager promotes my personal & professional development	63%

5.4.5 Section 5 – Fairness / Justice

Overall the results from the fairness and justice section of the survey are positive with high to medium scores in relation to promotion of equality, consistency in operation of policies and procedures, tolerance of bullying and awareness of the

grievance procedure. The main area where scores are low is in relation to internal promotions. The 2010 survey results show no increase on the 2004 results where only 30% of respondents felt that promotions in Teagasc were not fair or based on merit. This is a disappointing result considering the move away from seniority based promotions to a competency based selection process.

The 2010 survey also yielded a low score in relation to openness and honesty of communications where only 42% of respondents agreed that there is a culture of open and honest communications, a decrease of 10% on the 2004 survey.

Table 8 - 2010 Survey - Fairness/Justice	% Agreeing
Internal promotions at Teagasc are based on merit	30%
Teagasc attracts and retains high-calibre staff	72%
I am aware of the grievance procedure	87%
I feel that Teagasc policies are operated consistently across the organisation	57%
Teagasc actively promotes equality among employees	82%
There is a culture of open and honest communications in Teagasc	42%
Teagasc culture does not tolerate any form of bullying	72%

Table 9 - 2004 Survey - Fairness/Justice	% Agreeing
Information is not withheld as a means of preserving power in this organisation	46%
This organisation keeps its policies and procedures relevant and up-to-date	56%
In Teagasc I have not experienced bullying in the last 5 years or less	71%
I feel favouritism is not a problem in my department	68%
I feel there is open and honest communications in the organisation	52%
Job promotions are fair and equitable	30%

5.4.6   Section 6 – Sense of Community / Co-worker Relations

This section yielded the highest scores overall of the whole 2010 survey. The results show that the majority of respondents feel there is mutual trust and respect between co-workers and indeed suggest that colleagues genuinely like each other with 71% of respondents agreeing that they enjoy socialising with each other.
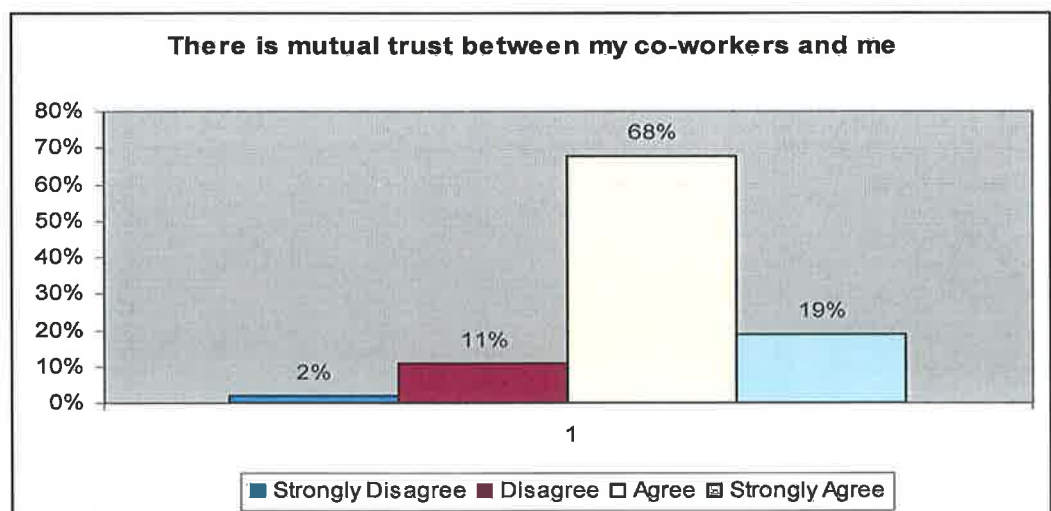

Figure 8 – 2010 Survey response rates on trust between co-workers

The results also indicate that the area of team-based working has become more commonplace in everyday working life than in 2004. In 2004 only 42% of respondents felt that different parts of the organisation worked well together whereas 67% in 2010 agreed that there is a strong culture of team based working in Teagasc.

Table 10 - 2010 Survey - Sense of community / co-worker relations	% Agreeing
Teagasc has a strong culture of team-based working	67%
Teagasc has good arrangements in place to support team working	52%
I am treated with respect by my colleagues	90%
I am proud to work in Teagasc	91%
There is mutual trust between my co-workers and me	87%
I enjoy socialising with my work colleagues	71%

Table 11 - 2004 Survey - Sense of community / co-worker relations	% Agreeing
I understand how my department/unit contributes to the organisation as a whole	89%
Different parts of the organisation work well with each other	42%
People are proud to belong to this organization	65%
Conflicts of views/opinions are resolved by discussion and mutual agreement	49%

5.5   Overall Engagement Levels

After collating all the results from the 2010 survey and comparing them with those from the 2004 survey the next task I undertook was to categorise the survey results into high, average and low degrees of engagement as per Cook (2008) and as referred to at the beginning of this chapter. This analysis showed that out of 32 statements 11 fell into the

high and average categories respectively while 10 statements returned a low score. Overall this is a pleasing result which shows that engagement levels in Teagasc are on average satisfactory whilst also acknowledging that there are certain areas which require attention. Of the 26 statements chosen from the 2004 survey only 3 statements resulted in a high score while 10 were average and 13 were low. This comparison shows that there has been a significant improvement in engagement levels in Teagasc between 2004 and 2010.
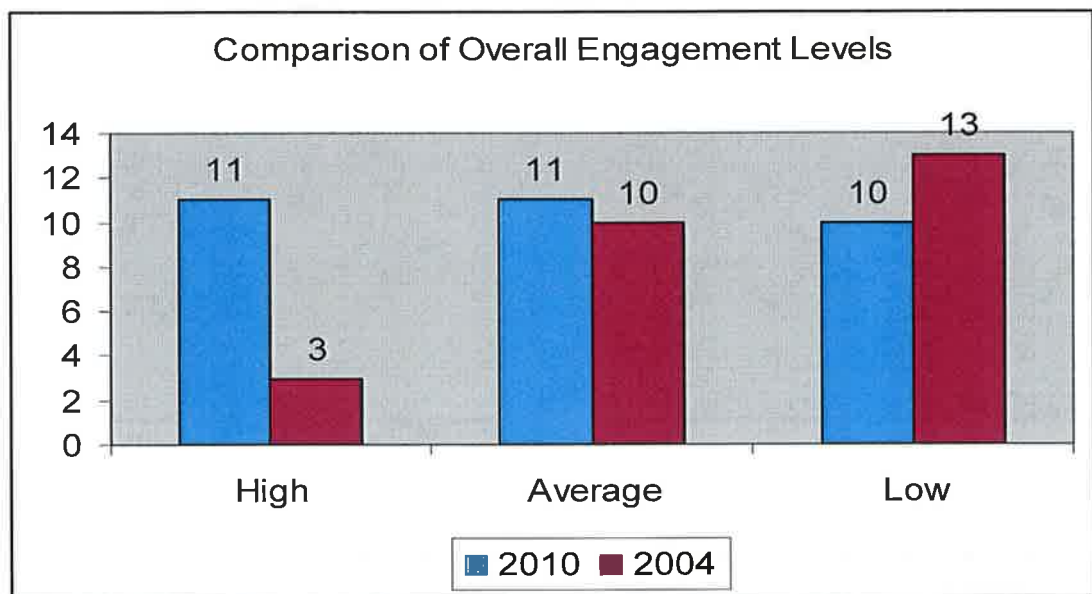

Figure 9 – Comparison of Overall Engagement Levels

5.6   Focus Group Findings

As indicated in Chapter 4 the aims of my focus group were as follows:

- To provide qualitative data which would either support or contradict the findings from my survey.

- To conduct an industry review in order to obtain benchmark data from other organisations.

- To review the results from my survey and consider recommendations which could be put forward to improve engagement levels in the organisation.

5.6.1 Qualitative Data Findings

A summary of the 2010 survey results was sent to each member of the focus group in advance of meeting. This provided the group with an opportunity to review and consider the results, to garner the views of their work colleagues on employee engagement in the organisation and to think about their own views and opinions in relation to the topic.

In general the group felt that the survey results were an accurate reflection of the level of employee engagement in the organisation and also felt that the engagement levels has increased in the last number of years as indicated by the survey results. They agreed that this increase in engagement levels could be primarily attributed to the number of initiatives which Teagasc has introduced in the last decade. They supported the view that the majority of employees were proud to work for the organisation and the findings in relation to co-worker relations, the supportive nature of the organisation and managers in terms of learning and development. Those members of the group who have worked for the organisation for in excess of 10 years concurred with the findings that career

development was supported to a greater extent in Teagasc now than it previously had been. It was felt that this was directly attributable to the training needs assessment with formed part of the PMDS process.

The discussion also showed that the finding of inconsistency in terms of managerial feedback on performance was accurate. Among the group there was an almost even spilt between those who did receive regular feedback and those who felt they didn't receive any worthwhile feedback. This latter group felt that their manager didn't really buy-in to the PMDS process and gave the impression that they were only 'going through the motions' when it came to PMDS.

In terms of opportunities for promotion and job-based learning the group agreed with the low score from the survey. They felt that the organisation has not done enough to afford staff the opportunity to enhance their career by providing them opportunities for lateral job moves. They expressed their concern that sometimes people can become disengaged as a result of staying in the same job for too long. They did understand that as a public sector organisation there are certain limitations in terms of promotions however the consensus was that the organisation should become more creative in the way that jobs are structured and should ensure that jobs have sufficient challenge and variety.

In relation to the survey findings on the fairness of internal promotions some members disagreed with these findings stating that they felt the competency

approach to recruitment and selection had made the process much more transparent and fair. They felt a possible reason for this low score was that some members of staff had formed incorrect perceptions of inequality in recruitment practices, possibly due to a disappointment of their own in the past, and that these perceptions would be very difficult to change.

5.6.2 Industry Review Findings

The main theme with all of the public sector / semi-state bodies is that Partnership and the resultant staff involvement and contribution are the key to their success in the area of employee engagement. They also point to the importance of:

- the role of departmental and line managers
- an effective and inclusive communications policy
- undertaking a staff survey on regular basis, publishing the results and acting on the findings.
- involving staff in the decision making process
- seeking feedback from staff (e.g. through a staff forum or town hall type meetings)
- team working
- shared vision of organisational goals between management, trade unions and staff.

The industry review showed that private sector companies could be more creative in the ways they sought to encourage engagement among their employees. This is primarily due to fewer restrictions imposed upon them compared to their public sector counterparts. This review was based on the IDS HR Studies (2009). The private sector companies which were the focus of this industry review are Sainsbury's Supermarkets and Mace, an international consultancy and construction company.

Mace believe in ensuring their recruitment and selection process is effective in recruiting people with the right attitude who are predisposed to being engaged with their work. They provide work which is challenging and varied and which gives employees autonomy and independence. They do not believe in micro-management. They also actively support their employees training and development needs through mentoring, coaching, soft skills training, apprenticeships and a graduate programme. Mace also stresses the importance of the line manager in engaging employees. All managers attend a 'Managing people at Mace' course which covers such areas as recruitment, induction and performance appraisals.

Other key factors in engaging employees at Mace are:
- effective use of technology for communications (e.g. online forums and blogs)

- employee participation through a two-way communication process which allows for open and honest expression of views and feedback on company policy.

- corporate social responsibility (CSR) including the appointment of a CSR Manager, the formation of a charity and allowing employees the opportunity to give back to the community in which they work.

- staff benefits package including increasing the company contribution to employees' pension scheme, an additional two days annual leave, health checks for all employees' with more than one years service the introduction of an employee assistance programme.

Sainsbury's Supermarkets carry out an annual employee survey as a means of testing engagement levels in the organisation. They have been carrying out these annual surveys for many years and have found the following to be the key drivers of engagement in their company:

- clear understanding of career progression for staff

- ensuring that staff feel valued

- demonstrating a commitment to the environment

- ensuring that staff feel a sense of achievement in their daily working lives

- ensuring that actions are taken as a result of the findings of the survey.

6 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Chapter Introduction

The authors reviewed in Chapter 2 identify a number of key areas of the employment relationship which are key to ensuring that employees are engaged. These key areas are referred to as the antecedents / influences of employee engagement and are as follows:

- *Job/work characteristics or attributes*

- *Reward and recognition*

- *Organisational and supervisor support*

- *Fairness/justice*

- *Sense of community/co-worker relations*

Through my research I have found that engagement levels in Teagasc are greater now, in 2010, than they were in 2004 and that this increase can be primarily attributed to the initiatives introduced in that timeframe.

6.2 Recommendations

The survey findings show that in 2004 only 37% of respondents felt that people were given roles which made the best use of their skills and abilities. In 2010, in response to a similar statement about jobs making the best use of skills and abilities, the response rate increased to 85%. This points to the successful implementation of the competency approach whereby recruitment and promotions are awarded as a result of a competency

based interview procedure and not based on seniority as was the case previously. The importance of work role fit in terms of employee engagement is stressed by May (2003) in his study which found that it had a significant influence on meaningfulness as experienced by employees. Meaningfulness is one of the three psychological conditions of employee engagement as indentified by Kahn (1990).

Feedback has been identified by authors such as Maslach et al (2001) and Hackman & Oldham (1974) as important characteristics of jobs. My survey results show a lack of consistency across the organisation in providing feedback with only 57% of respondents agreeing that they regularly receive feedback from their manager. This is disappointing considering the emphasis the organisation has put on PMDS. The result has improved since the 2004 survey however it is still a score which is at the lower end of average and needs improvement.

Recommendation 1

Providing regular feedback to staff members should be included as a key objective in all management role profiles and will be a key performance indicator against which their own performance will be measured. A refresher course on PMDS should also be run for managers.

The importance of appropriate reward and recognition practices in engaging employees is referred to in the writings of Saks (2008) and Maslach and Leiter (1997). The industry review conducted by the focus group also found that Mace listed it as one of the key

drivers of engagement in their company. The findings show that this is an area for improvement in Teagasc. I acknowledge the fact that Teagasc, as a public sector organisation, is limited in terms of how it can reward its employees however, this fact and the current moratorium does not restrict the organisation from becoming more creative in terms of how it rewards and recognises the contribution of employees. The survey results showed that 75% of respondents felt that they were paid appropriately for the job they. It also showed that only 48% felt that Teagasc was good at recognising exceptional performance. These two findings suggest that employees do not expect recognition through solely through monetary incentives. While there are formal recognition programmes in operation in Teagasc only 66% of employees were aware of them. The focus group felt that many staff had the perception that the current recognition programmes were only appropriate to staff whose performance and contribution had already recognised through promotion to high level posts within the organisation and that staff at lower levels felt they shouldn't waste their time in putting forward an application to the programmes.

Recommendation 2

I recommend that Teagasc broaden the scope of the formal recognition programmes currently in operation in the organisation (e.g. Gold Medal Award and the Innovation Award) and do more to promote these recognition programmes among employees and make employees feel that they are available and appropriate to them.

Having an opportunity to feed views upwards was found to be a main driver of engagement by the CIPD (2006). My survey showed that only 45% of respondents felt their views and opinions were valued, a decrease of 13% on the 2004 findings. This, along with findings from the focus group, suggests the perception that Partnership does not result in more employee involvement in decision making and also that two-way communication is not taking place to a great enough extent. The view of some representatives on the focus group was that some employees perceived Partnership to be a 'talking shop' between trade unions and management. There was a general lack of understanding of the part partnership plays in decision making and some employees didn't know how to refer an issue through partnership.

Recommendation 3

In light of these findings I recommend that Partnership be promoted to a greater extent among all employees. Providing examples of previous issues which have been resolved through the partnership process is one way of promoting it as well as involving new members on the National Partnership Committee who are not already affiliated with a trade union.

A very low score (30%) was achieved in relation to the perceived fairness of internal promotions in Teagasc. The 2010 survey showed no increase in this area from the 2004 survey. As mentioned in the previous chapter this is very disappointing as the organisation has put a huge effort into moving away from seniority based promotions to competency based recruitment and selection methods. Perceived fairness and justice are

listed among the influences on employee engagement by Maslach & Leiter (1997) and Saks (2008) while Kahn (1990) and Macey & Schneider (2008) refer to the importance of trust in the employment relation. The perception that promotions in Teagasc are not based on fair and transparent methods is having a detrimental effect on engagement levels and could potentially undermine the credibility of other initiatives introduced by the organisation. The competency approach to recruitment and selection has only been introduced to Teagasc in the last 3 to 4 years. It is possible that a large portion of the organisation have not been involved in the recruitment and selection process in the capacity of either interviewer or interviewee. It may be the case that the perception is as a result of lack of knowledge and understanding of the competency approach. As acknowledged by the focus group it is probably not possible to change the views and opinions of all staff members however this should not prevent the organisation from trying.

Recommendation 4

All interview board members must undergo training in competency based recruitment and selection methods prior to participating on interview boards. All internal interviewees should also be trained on how best to approach a competency based interview.

Kahn (1990) believes that safety is a psychological condition of employee engagement. He defines safety as 'being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career'. He believes that safety is influenced by group and intergroup dynamics. In my survey I included some statements regarding

team-working in Teagasc. 67% of respondents agreed that Teagasc has a culture of team working. This is encouraging for an organisation with such a wide geographical spread of employees. It is difficult to attribute this primarily to any of the specific initiatives introduced by Teagasc as the 2004 survey did not address the issue of team working.

May et al (2004) list rewarding co-worker relations as an influence on the psychological condition of meaningfulness as identified by Kahn (1990). In my survey I found that there was high degree of mutual trust and respect between co-workers indicating that employees found this element of their working life rewarding and engaging. The high scores achieved in this section of the survey can be attributed to the launch of a new dignity at work policy and the training and awareness sessions which followed this policy launch.

6.3   Research Limitations and Chapter Conclusion

This study has shown that engagement levels in Teagasc have increased over the lifetime of the implementation of initiatives such as PMDS, competency based recruitment, Partnership, dignity of staff and wellbeing of staff. It shows that overall Teagasc staff are relatively engaged while also pointing to some key areas which need to be improved upon. While I am extremely pleased at the outcome of my research and feel that my aims, as outlined in Chapter 3, have been achieved it is important to note the limitations to this study also. It must be acknowledged that although the survey results have shown an overall increase in engagement levels, both surveys did not include the same statements and so an exact comparison is difficult. In order to increase the likelihood of a more

conclusive comparison between both surveys I extracted statements from the 2004 survey which best fit into the categories of job characteristics, reward and recognition etc.

Acknowledging the contribution of the focus group I am satisfied that by taking an overall view of both survey results it is fair to conclude that engagement levels have risen in Teagasc between 2004 and 2010 and that the primary reason for this increase is due to the initiatives introduced into the organisation.

7 CONCLUSION

In undertaking this study I set out to determine the current levels of engagement in my organisation. My main aim was to show that the initiatives introduced by Teagasc as discussed in Chapter 3 had a positive impact to the extent that they resulted in a more engaged workforce. The second aim of the study was to identify aspects of the employment relationship which could be improved to increase engagement levels while my third aim was to make recommendations on how to address the issues identified through my second aim. The research methodology discussed in Chapter 4 was chosen in order to fulfil my research aims. I am satisfied that through my research my three main aims have been achieved.

The findings outlined in Chapter 6 show that engagement levels in Teagasc have increased since 2004. A comparison of the results from the two surveys and the qualitative data collected through the focus group also shows that this increase in engagement levels is primarily attributed to the initiatives referred to in Chapter 3. Through my findings I have also been able to identify the areas of the employment relationship where scores were low indicating a low level of engagement in these areas and have been able to make recommendations to improve these scores.

In conclusion it can be said that overall Teagasc has a satisfactory to good level of engagement. As a member of the organisation I am pleased that my colleagues feel

engaged and hope that this will help the organisation to successfully implement the current change programme and secure the organisation's future for many years to come.

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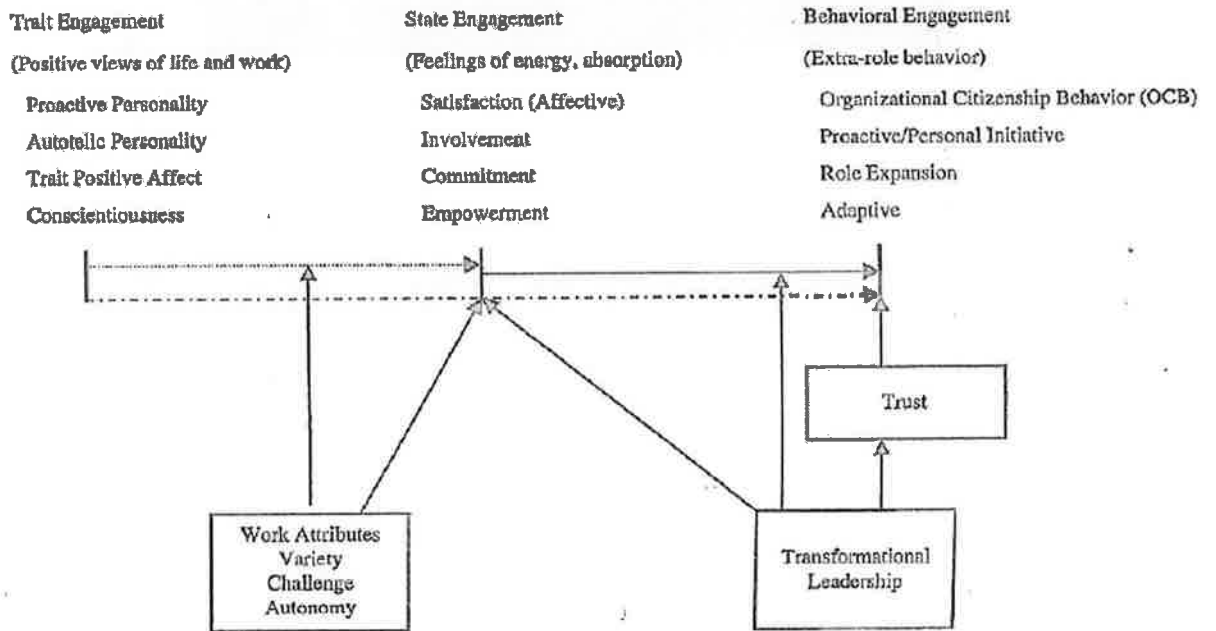
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Appendix 1

TABLE 1
Dimensions of Psychological Conditions

Dimensions	Meaningfulness	Safety	Availability
Definition	Sense of return on investments of self in role performances.	Sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career.	Sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances.
Experiential components	Feel worthwhile, valued, valuable; feel able to give to and receive from work and others in course of work.	Feel situations are trustworthy, secure, predictable, and clear in terms of behavioral consequences.	Feel capable of driving physical, intellectual, and emotional energies into role performance.
Types of influence	Work elements that create incentives or disincentives for investments of self.	Elements of social systems that create situations that are more or less predictable, consistent, and nonthreatening.	Individual distractions that are more or less preoccupying in role performance situations.
Influences	Tasks: Jobs involving more or less challenge, variety, creativity, autonomy, and clear delineation of procedures and goals. Roles: Formal positions that offer more or less attractive identities, through fit with a preferred self-image, and status and influence. Work interactions: Interpersonal interactions with more or less promotion of dignity, self-appreciation, sense of value, and the inclusion of personal as well as professional elements.	Interpersonal relationships: Ongoing relationships that offer more or less support, trust, openness, flexibility, and lack of threat. Group and intergroup dynamics: Informal, often unconscious roles that leave more or less room to safely express various parts of self; shaped by dynamics within and between groups in organizations. Management style and process: Leader behaviors that show more or less support, resilience, consistency, trust, and competence. Organizational norms: Shared system expectations about member behaviors and emotions that leave more or less room for investments of self during role performances.	Physical energies: Existing levels of physical resources available for investment into role performances. Emotional energies: Existing levels of emotional resources available for investment into role performances. Insecurity: Levels of confidence in own abilities and status, self-consciousness, and ambivalence about fit with social systems that leave more or less room for investments of self in role performances. Outside life: Issues in people's outside lives that leave them more or less available for investments of self during role performances.

Source: Kahn, 1990

Appendix 2

Trait Engagement
(Positive views of life and work)
  Proactive Personality
  Autotelic Personality
  Trait Positive Affect
  Conscientiousness

State Engagement
(Feelings of energy, absorption)
  Satisfaction (Affective)
  Involvement
  Commitment
  Empowerment

Behavioral Engagement
(Extra-role behavior)
  Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)
  Proactive/Personal Initiative
  Role Expansion
  Adaptive

Work Attributes
Variety
Challenge
Autonomy

Trust

Transformational
Leadership

Source: Macey & Schneider, 2008

Appendix 3

2010 Employee Engagement Survey – Draft

Dear Colleague,

I am currently completing a BA (Hons) in Human Resource Management. As part of this degree I am undertaking a study in employee engagement. To assist me with this study I would be very grateful if you could take a few moments to complete the survey below. Participation is voluntary and is completely anonymous. The results of this survey will be included as findings in my completed dissertation.

Thank you in advance for your assistance

Vanessa Bailey

Job Characteristics
I am aware of the competencies required for my role.
I have a real opportunity for job-based learning in the next 12 months.
My job permits me to decide how to go about doing my work.
My job does not challenge me
I am bored in my job.
I regularly receive feedback on performance
I am clear about what is expected of me in my role

Reward and Recognition
I am aware of the formal recognition programmes in operation in Teagasc
Teagasc is good at recognising exceptional performance
My manager always acknowledges a job well done
The quality of my work is not recognised
There are regular opportunities for promotion in Teagasc
I am satisfied with my salary
Teagasc is god at supporting my learning and development

Organisational/Supervisor Support
My manager actively supports the development of career
My manager regularly keeps me informed of issues that are relevant to me
I am always treated with respect by my manager

Teagasc actively promotes good work life balance
Teagasc culture does not tolerate any form of bullying
My views and opinions are valued in Teagasc
I am aware of the services available to me under the Teagasc EAP

Fairness/Justice
Internal promotions at Teagasc are based on merit
Teagasc attracts and retains high-calibre staff
I am aware of the grievance procedure
I feel that Teagasc policies are operated consistently across the organisation
Teagasc actively promotes equality among employees
I receive appropriate training & development to help me do my job
Poor performance is not tolerated in Teagasc.

Sense of community / co-worker relations
Teagasc has a strong culture of team-based working
Teagasc has good arrangements in place to support team working
I am treated with respect by my colleagues
I feel like a valued member of staff at Teagasc
There is mutual trust between my co-workers and me
There is a real sense of community in Teagasc
I never socialise with my work colleagues

Appendix 4

2010 Employee Engagement Survey - Final

Dear Colleague,

I am currently completing a BA (Hons) in Human Resource Management. As part of this degree I am undertaking a study in employee engagement. To assist me with this study I would be very grateful if you could take a few moments to complete the survey below. Participation is voluntary and is completely anonymous so please feel free to be completely honest with your answers.

This survey is not being conducted on behalf of Teagasc and is solely for research purposes as part of my studies. The results of this survey will be included as findings in my completed dissertation.

Thank you in advance for your assistance

Vanessa Bailey

Job Characteristics
I am aware of the competencies required for my role.
I have a real opportunity for job-based learning in the next 12 months.
My job permits me to decide how to go about doing my work.
My job makes good of my skills and abilities.
I am bored in my job.
I regularly receive feedback on my performance
I am clear about what is expected of me in my role

Reward and Recognition
I am aware of the formal recognition programmes in operation in Teagasc
Teagasc is good at recognising exceptional performance
My manager always acknowledges a job well done
There are regular opportunities for promotion in Teagasc
I feel I am paid appropriately for the job that I do
Teagasc is good at supporting my learning and development

Organisational/Supervisor Support

My manager actively supports the development of my career

My manager regularly keeps me informed of issues that are relevant to me

I am always treated with respect by my manager

Teagasc actively promotes good work life balance

My views and opinions are valued in Teagasc

Teagasc is a caring organisation

Fairness/Justice

Internal promotions at Teagasc are based on merit

Teagasc attracts and retains high-calibre staff

I am aware of the grievance procedure

I feel that Teagasc policies are operated consistently across the organisation

Teagasc actively promotes equality among employees

There is a culture of open and honest communications in Teagasc

Teagasc culture does not tolerate any form of bullying

Sense of community / co-worker relations

Teagasc has a strong culture of team-based working

Teagasc has good arrangements in place to support team working

I am treated with respect by my colleagues

I am proud to work in Teagasc

There is mutual trust between my co-workers and me

I enjoy socialising with my work colleagues

Appendix 5

2010 Employee Engagement Survey - Summary of Results **Job Characteristics**	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I am aware of the competencies required for my role.	1%	2%	77%	20%	100%
I have a real opportunity for job-based learning in the next 12 months.	58%	32%	8%	2%	100%
My job permits me to decide how to go about doing my work.	4%	21%	59%	16%	100%
My job makes good of my skills and abilities.	3%	12%	64%	21%	100%
I am bored in my job.	31%	54%	9%	6%	100%
I regularly receive feedback on my performance	16%	27%	44%	13%	100%
I am clear about what is expected of me in my role	5%	32%	49%	14%	100%
Reward and Recognition					
I am aware of the formal recognition programmes in operation in Teagasc	8%	26%	53%	13%	100%
Teagasc is good at recognising exceptional performance	14%	38%	43%	5%	100%
My manager always acknowledges a job well done	7%	22%	48%	23%	100%
There are regular opportunities for promotion in Teagasc	51%	40%	8%	1%	100%
I feel I am paid appropriately for the job that I do	6%	19%	68%	7%	100%
Teagasc is good at supporting my learning and development	6%	17%	69%	8%	100%
Organisational/Supervisor Support					
My manager actively supports the development of my career	11%	19%	55%	15%	100%
My manager regularly keeps me informed of issues that are relevant to me	8%	18%	62%	12%	100%
I am always treated with respect by my manager	5%	16%	55%	24%	100%
Teagasc actively promotes good work life balance	10%	38%	45%	7%	100%
My views and opinions are valued in Teagasc	12%	43%	41%	4%	100%
Teagasc is a caring organisation	7%	32%	56%	5%	100%
Fairness/Justice					
Internal promotions at Teagasc are based on merit	27%	43%	28%	2%	100%
Teagasc attracts and retains high-calibre staff	8%	20%	65%	7%	100%
I am aware of the grievance procedure	4%	9%	62%	25%	100%

I feel that Teagasc policies are operated consistently across the organisation	13%	30%	43%	14%	100%
Teagasc actively promotes equality among employees	5%	13%	56%	26%	100%
There is a culture of open and honest communications in Teagasc	15%	43%	38%	4%	100%
Teagasc culture does not tolerate any form of bullying	9%	19%	59%	13%	100%

Sense of community / co-worker relations

Teagasc has a strong culture of team-based working	6%	27%	59%	8%	100%
Teagasc has good arrangements in place to support team working	9%	39%	47%	5%	100%
I am treated with respect by my colleagues	0%	10%	67%	23%	100%
I am proud to work in Teagasc	2%	7%	66%	25%	100%
There is mutual trust between my co-workers and me	2%	11%	68%	19%	100%
I enjoy socialising with my work colleagues	3%	26%	57%	14%	100%