Chapter 5

Recruitment

One of the major characteristics of public services in developmental states is that they are merit-based. That is, recruitment into the service is based on merit – entrance exams, qualification, talent and capability, etc. This is the case in China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mauritius, the Philippines, Singapore, Botswana and Brazil.

The nature of recruitment: A comparative perspective in developmental states

Who appoints?

Ministers are not involved in the appointment of public servants in developmental states – they do not sit on interview panels. This is the responsibility of an independent agency – public service commissions in Malaysia and Mauritius, and career civil servants in countries such as China. In Botswana, interviews are conducted by the Appointment Boards established for each line department.

In developmental states there is limited political influence in appointments, except in China where party membership and loyalty influence appointment. Party members make up 5% of the total population but they hold 80% of the civil service posts (Burns, 2007 cited by Poocharoen and Brillantes, 2013). The Party holds absolute power over cadres because political positions and civil service positions are fused into one, unlike other developmental states such as Japan and Thailand. This enables career mobility between political and administrative positions. Officials of the Communist Party are regarded as bureaucrats, and bureaucrats are referred to as “cadres”.

In Singapore, the ruling party, the People’s Association Party, also exercises considerable leverage in the recruitment of public servants, especially the administrative leadership.

The public services in both China and Singapore can be termed “cadre organisations”. But in both countries, the ruling political parties have ensured that those deployed are qualified. The point therefore is not whether a ruling party deployed its cadres to public service positions but rather whether those deployed are qualified and have the ability to perform the job.

Brazil also offers an interesting contrast as commissioned-position appointments into the Direcao Assessoramento Superiores (DAS) system are conducted through discretionary processes by political and administrative leaders of the public service. The DAS system “comprises about 22,000 positions including most of the management and senior management positions and also less senior positions” (OECD, 2010). These discretionary appointments are not part of the “career” civil service and are not permanent positions.

These discretionary appointments allow political leaders to appoint candidates of their own choice, from both inside and outside the public service. Through this, the various political parties that are part of the governing coalition bring their people into government.
Appointees to these positions come and go with the political and administrative leadership that appoints them.

There are six ranks in the DAS system, DAS 1 - DAS 6. DAS 1 is the lowest management position – a Division Chief/Head (equivalent to Director in South Africa), while DAS 6 – the Vice Minister (equivalent to a Director-General in South Africa) – is the top management position in the public service. Although political authority in each ministry and agency makes discretionary appointments into these positions, they are required by law to appoint 75% of DAS 1 to DAS 4 from within the public service. For DAS 4, appointments from outside the public service increase to about 50%. This is higher for DAS 5 and DAS 6.

In practice, 90% of top managers are technocrats appointed from within the public service. Similarly, ministries such as Finance, Trade and Industry, Foreign Affairs, and Planning, and agencies such as the Comptroller-General’s Office (CGU) are increasingly being professionalised with appointment of career public servants into the DAS positions.

As a consequence, ruling parties influence appointments but the deployment of cadres has not undermined the meritocratic nature of the public service. Even in Brazil where ministers have discretionary powers to appoint those in the DAS categories, the trend is to appoint technocrats, based on experience and qualifications.

Therefore, in most developmental states, political appointments into the bureaucracy are largely minimized. In most of the developmental states, it is only the minister who is a political appointee. All other officials are technocrats; appointments are based on their talents, qualifications and experience. The appointment process is conducted by independent bodies or civil servants – a routine administrative duty. This has powerful positive developmental effects. Because appointments are not made on the basis of political and other primordial considerations, civil servants act authoritatively in the national interest. Their loyalty is to the state and not to political patrons. Because they are not appointed on the basis of political considerations, bureaucrats are supposed to be above politics and they can act in the national interest. Bureaucrats fear being made subservient to political parties or politicians. They therefore jealously guard the principle of non-political appointment into the public service.

Appointment requirements: Education profiles of public servants in developmental states

Human Capital Development, which is partly reflected in academic qualifications, has a powerful positive impact on the productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of a workforce and organisations.

Table 1: Educational attributes of public servants in developmental states (%)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four-year degree</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Data in this table are derived from different sources. Those of China and Malaysia are based on interviews by the PSC with top civil servants in both countries. The Brazilian data are from the IPEA.
Table 1 shows the number of public servants in developmental states with four-year degrees. In 2012, 92% public servants in China at the national level had four-year degrees or more. Most (60%) had Master’s degrees. In Brazil, an emerging economy like South Africa, 50% of public servants at the federal level had four-year degrees or more. Given the social and economic advances in Japan and Korea, it is likely that the proportion of public servants with four-year degrees will have increased since 1987/88.

Educational qualification is a crucial factor for entrance into the bureaucracy. Higher qualifications are even more imperative for top-ranking positions in the public service. As an example, by 1987 in Thailand, “61% of C9 through C11 rank officials had Master's degrees or higher... and one-fourth of the serving permanent secretaries held PhDs in their fields of service” (Christensen, 1992). Currently (2014) most top-ranking civil servants in Malaysia and China have a minimum of a Master’s degree. Whilst in Botswana entry to the public service required a minimum of a three-year degree with Economics as a major, senior managers hold at least Masters Degrees in Economics and other technically relevant subjects.

The Korean case also illustrates the importance that is attached to educational qualifications. The recent reforms, which resulted in 20% of senior positions (142) being designated as Open Post System (OPS), did not diminish the importance of educational qualifications. Of those appointed through the OPS, 46% and 30% have Master’s and Doctor’s degrees respectively (Kim, 2003).

**Selection method**

**Entrance examination**

Merit is achieved primarily through open, transparent and competitive examinations. The benefits of open competitive examinations cannot be overemphasized. As the chairperson of the Korean Civil Service Commission, Professor Chang-hyun Cho, observed, “Open competitive exams have been playing a significant role in establishing the merit system and professionalism of the Korean government since 1966, when the present form of the open competitive exam began. Thanks to the open competitive exams, civil servants in Korea enjoy legitimacy and pride in their jobs. ... The result of the exam is the only criterion to determine who will work for government” (Cho, no date).

There are a number of reasons for an institutionalised entrance examination as the selection method. As a Brazilian top government official interviewed by the PSC delegation in September 2013 observed, one reason that the government does not rely on interviews as the first and main criterion for recruiting career public servants, is that it is believed that interviews are subjective and that interview panels are likely to be biased and could favour particular applicants for factors other than merit. As a consequence, the Brazilian state resorted to an open, transparent competitive entrance examination as the criterion for selection and appointment. Furthermore, the official argued that results of job interviews are likely to be contested in courts. The entrance examination is used in the selection process because of the belief that it engenders fairness, and that it minimises patron-client relationships in the appointment of public servants. It is fair because everybody takes the same exam.
Examination centrally-administered

The entrance examinations in developmental states are generally centrally administered. In countries such as Malaysia and Mauritius, where there are Public Service Commissions (PSCs), the entrance examinations are administered by the PSCs. In China, recruitment into the public service is centralised and administered by the State Administration of Civil Service (SASC) in the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS).

In Brazil, the entrance examinations are administered centrally by the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, but the exam itself is outsourced to statutory agencies and private sector organisations. The statutory agencies include the National School of Public Administration and the National School for Finance.

Content of Exams

In all studied countries applicants are assessed on the following broad areas:

- General Knowledge/Studies (history of the country and the public service, current economic, social and environmental issues and events)
- Aptitude Test (comprehension, logical reasoning, analytical ability, decision-making, problem-solving, basic numeracy and basic interpretation of data)
- Communication in the official language/s (writing skills)

Examinations take the form of multiple-choice questions and written essays. The other aspect of assessment is the Personality Test/interview which assesses candidates’ suitability for a career in the public service.

Competitiveness and rigour of the exam

The entrance examinations in the public services of developmental states are some of the most competitive, rigorous and thorough. For example, of the 4 million applicants who applied to the Chinese public service, only 160,000 public servants are recruited at all levels each year. This means that only 4% of applicants are eventually recruited. Similarly, in Brazil, for 100 positions advertised, there might be up a 100,000 applicants, meaning one thousand (1,000) applicants to one advertised position.

The recruitment process into the Malaysian public service is similarly highly competitive. In 2013, the PSC of Malaysia received about 130,000 applications for the administrative and diplomatic cadres. Of these, less than half, 68,000, had the minimum qualifications of a four-year degree and were called for the entrance examination. Six thousand (6,000) of these passed the examination and had to go through the competence and interview stages. This means that less than 10% of the candidates passed the entrance examination. Only 23.5%, i.e. 36,105 of the 153,497 candidates who applied for permanent posts were employed in 2012. Similarly, only 16% of candidates for permanent positions in 2013 were subsequently employed. This points to the fact that appointment into the Malaysian public service is done through a highly competitive process. (See table in Annexure A).

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1 Information received during interviews held during study visits.
Similarly, in July 2014, over 2,000 candidates in Mauritius sat for about 100 entry level positions of the administrative cadre, i.e. the position of Assistant Permanent Secretary, highlighting the competitiveness of the recruitment process.

To illustrate the rigour of the exam, people go for preparatory courses before they sit for the exam. This rigorous process is to enable the state to appoint the best and brightest in society into the public service in particular and the public sector in general. The recruitment process takes months to complete. In China, it takes nine months, September to June, for a candidate to go through all the various stages of the process.

**Prestige of the bureaucracy**

An important element of meritocracy is the prestige of the bureaucracy. This is a major factor that contributes to the competency of public services in developmental states. The Japanese, Korean, Singapore as well as the Malaysian bureaucracies were founded on a prestige model. In these countries (and more recently China and Brazil since the Lula administration), there was a considerable degree of administrative elitism in the form of a ‘mandarin’ class, with the administrative leadership playing a considerable role in policy formulation and management of the development process.

The bureaucracies in these countries have always been treated with respect by the political leadership, business and ordinary citizens. Their prestige is derived from several, but inter-related, factors. First, the bureaucrats are the best talents in their respective nations. In these countries, society as a whole recognises that it is only the best that are appointed. This confers respect and, coupled with their influence not only in government but in society, creates a sense of prestige among bureaucrats, especially among top bureaucrats.

Second, most bureaucrats in developmental states are recruited from the top universities in their respective countries. As an example, the Japanese public service was dominated by graduates of the University of Tokyo, that of Korea from the Seoul National University, and that of Singapore from the National University of Singapore. Two universities, the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University, dominate the higher echelons of the Japanese civil service. Tokyo University alumni hold 89% of the higher-level public service jobs in the Ministry of Finance, 76% in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and 66% in the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The University of Tokyo is the largest supplier of bureaucratic elites (Kim, 1992). The situation is not much different in China. A top Chinese official in the SASC in MOHRSS told the South African PSC delegation that most public servants in the country are from the 20 leading universities – all are national universities, with the University of Beijing being most represented in the public service. Similarly, in Brazil, the national universities, foremost among them the University of São Paulo, have more of their alumni appointed into the bureaucracies through the open and competitive entrance examination.

Third, the public service is a career of choice in developmental states. Whilst we do not have recent data, the work of Chalmers Johnson (1982) highlights the fact that in Japan, those with first class degrees chose the public service as the career of choice. The same phenomenon is currently being experienced in Brazil – those who passed with first-class chose the public service, partly because the entry level salaries for graduates are higher than those offered in the private sector, and partly because of the prestige that public servants in Brazil enjoy in society.
Due to these factors, the administrative leadership in these countries enjoys a high level of prestige. This engenders a sense of esprit de corps, which in turn promotes cohesiveness in the public service.

**The nature of recruitment in South Africa**

**Key features of recruitment and selection**

Since 1994, the recruitment system has been open in the sense that all posts, including promotion posts, are advertised inside and outside the public service. It is not a closed career system with entry only at the entry grade and promotion only from within the ranks of the public service. It is standard practice that promotion posts are advertised outside the public service. The discretion in and the rigour of the selection process is largely in the hands of selection committees.

The process starts with the creation of a post. Before a post is created a job specification is prepared and the job evaluated. The job specification will specify the tasks of the job and the knowledge and skills requirements:

> For each post or group of posts, an executing authority (the minister of a department) shall establish a job description and job title that indicate, with appropriate emphasis on service delivery:

- (a) the main objectives of the post or posts in question.
- (b) the inherent requirements of the job.
- (c) the requirements for promotion or progression to the next salary range, in accordance with a relevant career path. (Public Service Regulations, Chapter 1, Part III, Section I.1).

Specific requirements for specific categories of jobs are laid down for certain occupational categories or in “occupational specific dispensations” or for the middle and senior management service, but in many cases the discretion for setting the job specifications rests with the relevant minister. Determining job specifications, within the broad parameters set by the Minister for Public Service and Administration, has been decentralised to departments.

> To assist an executing authority (the relevant minister) in designing a job and/or career path linked to the salary scale, the Minister of Public Service and Administration shall determine –

- (a) a code of remuneration (CORE) for an occupational category; and
- (b) an occupational classification system.

For each salary range in a CORE, the Minister may provide advice on:

- (a) the possible job content;
- (b) the necessary and desirable competencies for the job;
- (c) indicators of those competencies; and
- (d) desirable characteristics for employment and promotion within the occupational category. (Public Service Regulations Chapter 1, Part III, Section I.3 and I.4).
The job is then advertised. The duties and requirements in the advertisement are derived from the job specification. Posts in the Senior Management Service must be advertised nationwide (Public Service Regulations Chapter 1, Part VII, Section C.2.3). Other posts may be advertised within the department as a minimum but may also be advertised elsewhere in the public service and outside the public service (Public Service Regulations 1/VII/C.2.4). In practice all key posts in the public service are advertised outside the public service.

A selection committee is then constituted and applicants shortlisted and interviewed. The chairperson of a selection committee is an employee. A selection committee shall, where possible, include adequate representation of historically disadvantaged persons (Public Service Regulations 1/VII/D.3). The selection committee makes recommendations on appointments to posts:

The selection committee shall make a recommendation on the suitability of a candidate after considering only –

(a) information based on valid methods, criteria or instruments for selection that are free from any bias or discrimination.
(b) the training, skills, competence and knowledge necessary to meet the inherent requirements of the post.
(c) the needs of the department for developing human resources.
(d) the representativeness of the component where the post is located.
(e) the department's affirmative action programme. (Public Service Regulations 1/VII/D.5).

After considering the recommendation of the selection committee, the minister of the department, or the person to whom the power of appointment has been delegated, makes the appointment.

Appointment of members of the Senior Management Service

The process for appointment of members of the Senior Management Service is the same as for lower level staff with the addition that competency assessment has been introduced for applicants for posts in the Senior Management Service.

Appointment of DGs / HoDs and DDGs

These appointments follow essentially the same process except that these appointments are also ratified by Cabinet. The power of appointment rests with the President or a Premier of a province, who can delegate to executive authorities (ministers/ members of the provincial executive councils). Ministers/ Members of the Executive Councils on provincial level therefore have a direct role in the appointment of DGs, other HoDs and DDGs. Candidates for posts of DG and DDG are recommended by a selection panel, which include ministers and deputy ministers. DGs are appointed by the President with the concurrence of the Cabinet while DDGs are appointed by Ministers after concurrence with the Cabinet. Again, all are required to meet knowledge, skills and competence criteria.

Appointments on policy considerations

The South African Constitution does not preclude the appointment of a number of persons on policy considerations (Section 195(4) of the Constitution). Such appointments are made
to advise the executive authority (the relevant minister) on the exercise of his/her powers and duties or on the development of policy (Section 12A of the Public Service Act).

Such advisers can be appointed without advertising a post, which means that such a post can be filled without a competitive process. However, appointees must still meet the inherent requirements as stated in the guidelines for the appointment of advisers.

Staff directly supporting a Minister can also be appointed without advertising a post and such staff are appointed on contract and their terms are linked to that of the Minister or a three-year contract.

Who appoints?

The power of appointment in South Africa is assigned by section 3(7) of the Public Service Act to ministers on national level/members of the executive council on provincial level. Ministers can delegate the power to officers within their departments. The rationale for having this in 1994 was the need to transform the apartheid public service. The question going forward is whether appointment at all levels should remain in the hands of the Executive Authority.

Appointment requirements

Appointment requirements in advertisements are derived from job specifications. Very specific requirements may be set in advertisements but some of the advertisements may not be as clear and specific as required.

Public service training courses are not set as a condition for permanent appointment, though compulsory induction has been introduced (for new public servants).

For Middle and Senior Management Service, the requirement is a three-year degree but in many cases not a specific degree. In the case of technical and professional jobs, specific degrees are required and some technical and professional jobs may also require professional registration. In such cases, the requirements set by professional bodies must also be met.

Education profiles of South African public servants

Table 2 below gives the distribution of educational qualifications of South African public servants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education achieved</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-ABET/Lower than Grade 3 or Std 1</td>
<td>4,902</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABET/Grade 3 or Std 1</td>
<td>2,205</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABET/Grade 5 or Std 3</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABET/Grade 7 or Std 5</td>
<td>2,532</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABET/Grade 9 or Std 7</td>
<td>7,339</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 DPSA PERSAL, 28 February 2013.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NQF Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/Grade 9</td>
<td>NQF Level 1/Grade 9 or Std 7</td>
<td>31,479</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/Grade 10</td>
<td>NQF Level 2 / Grade 10 or Std 8</td>
<td>30,598</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/Grade 11</td>
<td>NQF Level 3/Grade 11 or Std 9</td>
<td>31,914</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/Grade 12</td>
<td>NQF Level 4 Grade 12 or Std 10</td>
<td>481,343</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/Higher</td>
<td>NQF Level 5/Higher certificate</td>
<td>92,182</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/Diploma</td>
<td>NQF Level 6/Diploma/Advanced Certificate</td>
<td>168,257</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/Bachelor</td>
<td>NQF Level 7/Bachelor degree/Advanced diploma</td>
<td>289,031</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/Honours</td>
<td>NQF Level 8/Honours/Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>39,107</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/Master</td>
<td>NQF Level 9/Master’s degree</td>
<td>8,010</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/Doctoral degree</td>
<td>NQF Level 10/Doctoral degree</td>
<td>14,054</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Unknown/unspecified</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.002%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,203,918</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While entry into the senior management service requires at least an NQF level 6 qualification, the task requirements for such positions are very demanding and cannot be met by any degree/diploma. It seems clear and accepted that a university degree/diploma does not prepare a candidate to readily serve in the public service without additional on-the-job training. The issue is whether the public service and its National School of Government (NSG) will be able to develop and run training courses and programmes that will bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge (acquired from universities) and the practical demands of the public service, as it is done in all the countries visited.

**Employment Equity**

In addition to the advertised requirements, representativeness considerations also play a role in appointments. Representativeness is a specific constitutional and legal requirement. Representativeness considerations and the job requirements are considered together and the one is not prioritised over the other. Representativeness considerations are applied in accordance with the provisions of the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998, as well as departments’ employment equity policies and employment equity plans that must meet the specific legal requirements of the Act. It should not undermine the constitutionally-defined merit principle. Representativeness requirements and how these are applied are contested and the courts have clarified some of the legal principles. A recent case of the Constitutional Court is pertinent (*South African Police Service v Solidarity obo Barnard [2014] ZACC 23*). The majority judgement “underlined the requirement that beneficiaries of affirmative action must be equal to the task at hand. They must be suitably qualified people in order not to sacrifice efficiency and competence at the altar of remedial employment. The Employment Equity Act sets itself against the hurtful insinuation that affirmative action measures are a refuge for the mediocre or incompetent.”
**Selection method**

The main selection tool is an interview. Selection committees are appointed by the authority with the power of appointment, who is the Minister or the Member of the Executive Council for the department, or the officer to whom the minister has delegated his power of appointment. Selection, after minimum requirements have been met, is not based on rigorously defined objective criteria. The PSC found that departments continue to be faced with significant challenges in the application of recruitment processes and procedures. In particular the PSC found that:

- The majority of departments did not have job descriptions for posts that had been advertised.
- Advertisements for posts were rarely approved prior to their publication.
- Shortlisting criteria were in many instances not documented. There also appeared to be no consistency in the application of scoring systems for shortlisting.
- Potential conflicts of interest of selection committee members in their relationship with candidates were rarely identified (They should be identified, but rarely are).
- There was little evidence of proper record-keeping by departments of the entire selection process.

The PSC concluded that these “deficiencies are of a serious nature and impact negatively on the credibility of the process and its outcome”.

In 2009, the PSC found that the major implications in this regard were that:

- The public service fails to place people with the right skills and competencies in the right places.
- The public service is at risk of not delivering on its mandate due to failure to attract/source suitable skills.
- There are areas where there is little or no accountability for ensuring efficient and effective recruitment processes.

In order to make interviews more rigorous, the PSC has published a Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection. The Toolkit requires pre-set questions and pre-set rating scales so that candidates can be scored consistently. The DPSA commissioned research into recruitment and selection best practices in 2000. One of the recommendations was that competency-based recruitment and selection should be adopted (DPSA, 2000). Despite this, large variation can occur in the scores that members of selection committees may award candidates. Since there is no set of objective criteria against which candidates are scored, it is to be expected that large variations would occur, with the implication that one panellist’s best candidate is not the next panellist’s best candidate.

**Competency assessments**

Competency assessment has been introduced for members of the senior management service. The competency framework contains generic management competencies and does not replace the functional criteria for senior management service jobs. In other words, the competency assessment is not linked to the task requirements of a specific job or category of jobs. Functional criteria are derived from job specifications and may be set as specific
requirements in job advertisements. Competency assessments are used in conjunction with the other processes associated with recruitment, which include interviewing, and not as a single decider on whom to appoint to the post. The testing against the competency framework is done by pre-selected and centrally appointed service providers. However, unlike developmental states, the competency testing is not done by the national Department of Public Service and Administration (not centralised). Also, in South Africa the results of the competency assessments have only been validated for development interventions and not for selection purposes.

**Problem Statement/ Evaluation**

The recruitment system described above gave rise to the following weaknesses:

The discretion for determining job specifications, the advertised requirements, and the appointment of selection committees rests with Executing Authorities. Job specifications⁴ are not standardised by the DPSA. (PSR 1/III/I) In effect, determining the inherent requirements of a job has been decentralised to departments. Very specific requirements may be set in advertisements but many are not as clear and specific as required.

The criteria and rating scales used by selection committees and the rigour of the process are largely in the hands of selection committees. Selection, after minimum requirements have been met, is not based on rigorously defined objective criteria. Large variation can occur in the scores that members of selection committees may award candidates. Since there is no set of objective criteria against which candidates are scored, it is to be expected that large variations would occur, with the implication that one panellist's best candidate is not the next panellist's best candidate.

Both the above points resulted in a large degree of unevenness with regard to skills in the public service. The decisions on skills requirements and whether candidates meet them are decentralised rather than tightly regulated by the DPSA. This has unavoidably resulted in inappropriate appointments. In 2009 the PSC found that the major implications in this regard were that the public service fails to place people with the right skills and competencies in the right posts.

If interviews by selection committees are not rigorous enough, better outcomes can be achieved if the pool of candidates that are interviewed are restricted to candidates who have undergone a prescribed training programme and are certified to be able to perform a predetermined scope of work.

The decentralisation of job specifications allows the flexibility for departments to create and advertise jobs that meet the requirements of specific functions, to achieve specific objectives or to recruit persons with very specific skills that the department may need. Therefore, a balance between central prescription of job requirements for specified occupations to ensure the application of minimum standards of professionalisation across the public service, and allowing discretion to departments to recruit unique skills, should be maintained.

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⁴ Job specifications include (1) the possible job content; (2) the necessary and desirable competencies for the job; (3) the indicators of those competencies; and (4) desirable characteristics for employment and promotion within the occupational category. PSR 1/III/I/1.4.
Even if all the inherent requirements of a job or occupation are standardised and prescribed the risk that selection committees will apply such requirements unevenly is very high if an interview is the main selection tool. This is because the right answer to an interview question in the minds of the members of the committee can vary dramatically between members and this increases the risk for poor appointments. It should therefore be considered to introduce entrance examinations where everybody writes the same exam and are scored against the same standard.

Generally, no specific continuous professional development requirements are set either as probation or promotion requirements. Thus, not only are there doubts about the rigour of the selection process but there are also no compulsory prescribed training courses or other compulsory development requirements that candidates must meet after appointment to address skills gaps.

While entry into the senior management service requires at least an NQF level 6 qualification, the task requirements for such positions are very demanding and cannot be met by any degree/diploma. It seems clear and accepted that a university degree/diploma does not prepare a candidate to readily serve in the public service without additional on-the-job training.

In South Africa, an entry examination may unfairly discriminate between candidates because of highly unequal educational backgrounds. Similarly, to set higher educational requirements than the current three-year diploma or bachelor’s degree (NQF level 6) may unfairly discriminate between candidates for the same reason. An additional year of study may also exclude many candidates purely for financial reasons. These are issues that are part of the South African context that should be taken into account in making recommendations on the recruitment and selection processes in the public service.

Professionalising the public service implies that appointments are done on the basis of the inherent requirements of the profession. This means that political office bearers should have no role in appointments except if appointments are made on policy considerations, which are allowed by the Constitution (Section 195(4)). The PSC accepts that policy considerations should play a role at the senior levels (Director-General and Deputy Director-General and other HoDs) and appointment of ministerial advisors and other staff in ministerial offices.
Recommendations

It is consequently recommended that –

- the current occupational classification system, as exemplified by the Code of Remuneration, introduction of the Middle Management Service (MMS), Senior Management Service and Occupational Specific Dispensations and the HR Connect project, be reviewed with a view to prescribing specific appointment and career progression (see recommendations under Chapter 6 and 10) requirements for different occupations and grades;

- an internship be introduced for occupations that serve as feeders for the MMS. The internship should be structured as follows:
  o The internship should be given an appropriate name. A possible name could be “Public Administration and Management Intern”.
  o The internship should prepare a candidate for eventual entry into the MMS, after serving a prescribed period in an occupation that serve as feeder for the MMS.
  o The entry requirement for the internship should be a three-year degree or diploma.
  o During the internship period the intern should receive training and experiential learning in a specified scope of work, after which the intern’s proficiency in that scope of work should be certified.
  o During the internship period the intern should register and obtain prescribed postgraduate training or a qualification.
  o During the internship period the intern should serve periods in different departments (rotation between departments) pre-selected on the basis that the departments have world-class processes in a particular function that is part of the scope of work of the internship.
  o The internship should be completed under supervision of a qualified mentor.
  o The internship should be managed by the National School of Government or other suitable coordinating body.
  o After successful introduction of the internship and after the supply of a sufficient number of interns warrants it, entry into the MMS should be restricted to public administration and management interns and occupations that serve as feeders for the MMS and have been subjected to a comparable training programme.
  o Posts in the MMS should only be advertised outside this pool if candidates are not available from the pool or if a head of department provides reasons why a post need to be filled from outside the pool.

- the PSC investigates the introduction of an entry exam or other tests for entry into occupations that serve as feeders for the MMS. The PSC’s investigation should consider the following:
  o The occupations or grades to which the entry exam or test should apply.
  o The qualification that should be set as the admission requirement for the exam.
  o The preparatory courses for the exam.
  o The body that should oversee and administer the exam.
  o The content areas of the exam.
  o The level or standard of the exam.
  o The method or form of the exam (eg, multiple choice, case study, essays).