



PSC's DISCUSSION DOCUMENT:

BUILDING A CAPABLE, CAREER-ORIENTED AND PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE TO UNDERPIN A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE IN SA

Introduction and Background

- The National Development Plan demonstrates government's commitment to build a Developmental State.
- Central to a developmental state is a capable, efficient and effective Public Service.

“we need to move towards a state that is more capable, more professional and more responsive to the needs of its citizens” NDP.

- The Public Service Commission is mandated, amongst others, to promote the values and principles contained in section 195 of the Constitution, including that public administration must be development oriented.
- The PSC conducted research and produced a discussion document, which was the subject of a conference in November 2014. Comments received at the conference were addressed.
- This presentation contains the PSC's recommendations as contained in the discussion document.

A values driven public service

The central theme and project for the public service is the promotion of the Constitutional values outlined in the Sections 1, 9, the Bill of Rights, and the public administration values in Section 195.

It is recommended that –

- all public servants undergo a module of training on the values-base of public service; and
- the PSC advises the NSG on the curriculum content of such modules.

Public Service Careers

Problem statement

- The career system in the public service is currently fragmented with decision making about it dispersed throughout the public service.
- Determining the inherent requirements of a job was delegated to executive authorities (ministers); therefore, no uniform objective appointment requirements are set and these are inconsistently applied by thousands of selection committees.
- Careers are unstructured with no standardised probation, task proficiency, promotion and continued professional development requirements.
- The career system is an open system with all senior posts advertised outside the public service, with neither internal nor external candidates tested against objective criteria.

Recruitment

It is 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 requirements for different occupations and grades;

It is recommended that an internship be introduced for occupations that serve as feeders for the MMS. The internship should be structured as follows:

- The internship should be given an appropriate name. A possible name could be “Public Administration and Management Intern”.
- 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.
- The entry requirement for the internship should be a three-year degree or diploma.
- 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.
- During the internship period the intern should register and obtain prescribed postgraduate training or a qualification.

Recruitment

- 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.
- The internship should be completed under supervision of a qualified mentor.
- The internship should be managed by the National School of Government or other suitable coordinating body.
- 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.
- 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 needs to be filled from outside the pool.

It is recommended that 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:

- The occupations or grades to which the entry exam or test should apply.
- The qualification that should be set as the admission requirement for the exam.
- The preparatory courses for the exam.
- The body that should oversee and administer the exam.
- The content areas of the exam.
- The level or standard of the exam.
- The method or form of the exam (e.g., multiple choice, case study, essays).

Promotion and Career Path

In order to achieve a capable, career-oriented and professional public service in South Africa, the following recommendations are made:

1. Advertisement of posts

It is recommended that –

- heads of departments should have the discretion to advertise selected posts within the public service only. This means that, besides the entry level, vacancies of selected posts should be filled internally first. In the case of recognised professions/ occupations, this should include advertisement outside the public service aimed at candidates from within the profession/ occupation.
- the regulation that SMS posts should be advertised nationwide be reconsidered in the light of the above.

2. Promotion requirements

- It is recommended that a minimum number of years of service be set for promotion from one rank to the next. While at a specific rank, an employee should be exposed to a variety of tasks/prescribed scope of work suited for each occupation/rank coupled with performance assessment and certification of competence.

Promotion/ entry requirement for the Middle Management Service (MMS) and Senior Management Service (SMS)

With regard to appointment/ promotion to the MMS and SMS, the following options can be considered:

- A promotion exam as a requirement for promotion into the MMS and SMS. **OR**
- A prescribed course (or courses) in relevant fields of study, designed by the National School of Government, as a requirement for promotion into the MMS and SMS.

3. Specification of occupations

It is recommended that all occupations in the Public Service be specified with regard to the following:

- The job content.
- The entry requirements with regard to task, knowledge and skills proficiency.
- Promotion requirements with regard to task, knowledge and skills proficiency.
- Career progression and succession planning.
- Mobility into and out of the occupation.
- Continued professional development requirements.
- Testing or certifying that a member of the occupation can do a specified list of tasks or scope of work. It would also mean giving the member of the occupation the opportunity to gain experience in the range of the tasks of the occupation and to consciously manage the process of building experience.

Occupations that serve as feeder for the MMS and SMS should be prioritised.

- The power to specify posts and occupations currently rests with the relevant executing authority (the power has been decentralised to departments). The Minister for Public Service and Administration can only provide advice on such occupational specification – Public Service Regulations Chapter 1, Part III, Section I.1 to 1.5. In the light of the above recommendation on the specification of occupations, this regulation may have to be reviewed.

The principle should be to recruit and retain the best possible people into key professions/occupations and into public service management without excessively restricting mobility between occupations, and between inside and outside the public service, and remunerate them accordingly.

Performance management

Problem statement

- With regard to performance management the Document asks the question whether the current system makes any difference to work performance and service delivery in the public service.
- Performance management in the public service, on both organisational unit and individual levels, is fundamentally flawed mainly because measurable performance standards are not set and accountability has been eroded.

Performance management

It is recommended that:

- An evaluation of the effectiveness of the system against its own stated objectives be undertaken. Change should be based on a thorough review of the assumptions and effects of the system. A comparative study/ literature review on performance management systems in other countries could be undertaken to draw relevant lessons for South Africa.
- It is recommended that –
 - effective management structures, aligning responsibility, authority and accountability, and
 - effective performance management systems at the unit levelbe designed for a number of prioritised service delivery units, where after the structures/ systems can be reviewed across the public service based on the lessons learnt from the exercise.
- The National School of Government designs supervisory courses for different contexts in the public service.
- Consideration be given to suspend individual staff assessment in contexts where the preconditions for successful implementation of the system are not met.

The following **options** for changes in the individual staff assessment system are suggested:

- Much more use should be made of objective external assessment, e.g. of schools and hospitals.
- Consideration should be given for introducing aspects of 360-degree performance management, especially for the Middle Management System (MMS) and SMS.
- Simple frameworks for specifying performance standards for selected occupations should be pre-determined by departments and not be left to be filled in between supervisors and employees.
- Performance appraisal can be done through regular inspections of units rather than through individual staff assessment.

The nature of incentive and reward in the public service should be fundamentally rethought. Initial reforms could include –

- complementing, and even replacing, the cash bonus system based on individual staff assessment with rewards for specific results or products and for unit performance; and
- complementing, or even replacing, cash bonuses with rewards designed around the intrinsic value of the job, such as professional recognition.

The PMDS is a mutual interest matter and changes will have to be negotiated with labour.

Competencies of public service leadership

Problem statement

- The competency framework contains generic management competencies and does not test candidates against the functional or task requirements of the job.
- The results of the competency assessments have only been validated for development interventions and not for selection purposes.
- The framework is only to a limited degree aligned with the competency requirements for public service leadership in a developmental state.

Review of the South African Public Service SMS Competency Framework

It is recommended that:

- The South African Public Service SMS Competency Framework be reviewed in order to incorporate competencies, indicators and behavioural attributes for the following competency dimensions:
 - economic competencies;
 - political competencies; and
 - technical and/or functional competencies.
- Based on a representative sample of assessments, appropriate training programmes to fill competency gaps identified in the SMS group, be designed and offered by the National School of Government.

Political-administrative interface

Problem statement

- One should not oversimplify a demarcation between accountability for policy issues and accountability for administrative matters.
- Nevertheless, there are concerns that the interface in South Africa is dysfunctional, presenting as role confusion, role conflict, and the over-extension of roles.
- The best performing institutions are characterised by stability of leadership and policy approach, whilst poor performance is associated with high turnover in leadership.

Political-administrative interface

Assignment of powers regarding internal organisation of departments and the recruitment, appointment, performance management, transfer, dismissal and other career incidents of employees

- Since the extent of delegation impacts on the relationship between Ministers and HoDs, it is recommended that Section 3(7) of the PSA be amended to assign all powers with regard to the career incidents of public servants below the level of DDG to the HoD. The power of the HoD as the Accounting Officer, as stipulated in the PFMA, must remain with the HoD.

Administrative head of the public service and hybrid approach to top appointments

- To help stabilise the political-administrative interface, it is recommended that the NDP proposal to create an Administrative Head of the Public Service and a hybrid approach to top appointments be implemented. It is noted that this may have legislative and possibly Constitutional implications.
- The powers of the Administrative Head of the Public Service should be restricted to managing the career incidents of HoDs.

Managing relationships at the political-administrative interface

The following interventions and solutions are recommended for managing relationships at the political-administrative interface:

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of Ministers/politicians and senior administrators through prescripts and guidelines.
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities are discussed and agreed with both parties through orientation and induction and other learning and exchange opportunities for Members of the Executive and HoDs.
- Ensure that both parties agree on goals and interventions in relation to government's strategic objectives and priorities.
- Ensure that both parties agree on planned interventions to build productive and trusting relationships. This should include agreed communication channels, regular briefing and information sharing meetings, a monitoring and evaluation system, and a code of conduct.
- Put in place a system to mediate differences of opinion, conflict and crisis.

These interventions and solutions could be developed by the envisaged head of the public service.

Capacitation/training and its funding in the public service

Problem Statement

- Many public servants have tertiary qualifications. However, university degrees and diplomas do not prepare candidates to be proficient in the tasks required of public service occupations.
- In-service training is not compulsory for career progression in the public service.
- There is no assessment of the impact of such programmes on employee performance and productivity and the overall functionality of the public service

Capacitation/training and its funding in the public service

Informed by the preceding discussion, the proposals outlined below are organised into various categories.

Training programme design, curriculum development and implementation

To ensure that learning and training programmes are appropriately designed and address specific needs, the following should be addressed:

- The NSG, in collaboration with departments, should conduct a thorough needs analysis and skills audit to inform curriculum design for broad public service and sector specific programmes;
- The DPSA should roll out the HR Connect System supported by the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) to all departments;
- The DPSA and all departments should ensure that information on all qualifications and short to medium term training attended is captured on PERSAL;
- The NSG, in collaboration with SETAs, should support departments to develop and implement occupation-specific training (i.e. on-the-job training) for existing employees, youth learners and interns;
- Norms and standards for public service training should be set;

Capacitation/training and its funding in the public service

- Dedicated capacity in the National School of Government (NSG) should be developed to facilitate and coordinate training;
- The NSG should work closely with HETIs and FETIs/TVETs to influence their pre-service training and development programmes;
- Put mechanisms in place to make leadership development mandatory and link training with promotion; and
- The NSG should develop and implement a strategy to utilise suitably qualified/competent existing employees and former public servants such as HODs, Commissioners and Ministers as trainers and mentors.

Induction, reorientation and continuous capacity building

- The implementation of the Compulsory Induction Programme (CIP) for all newly-recruited employees should be fast-tracked, and should target all levels, from junior entry positions to senior management. This should be done by strengthening partnerships with HETIs, FETIs/TVETs, provincial academies and other public institutions to deliver the induction programmes.
- The NSG should implement a re-orientation programme for existing public servants in order to reskill SMS members and all employees at the beginning of every term of a new administration.
- All Public Service departments should, with the support of the NSG, put measures in place to ensure implementation of the Directive on Compulsory Capacity Development, Mandatory Training Days and Minimum Entry Requirements for the Senior Management Service (SMS).

Capacitation/training and its funding in the public service

Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment

- The NSG in collaboration with DPME should implement a training programme on transversal monitoring and evaluation, targeting employees at the supervisory, middle and senior management level.
- The NSG, in collaboration with relevant departments and other stakeholders, should put in place a system to review the purpose, effectiveness and efficiency of training provided through the NSG, provincial academies, and relevant service providers such as accredited public and private TVETs and HETIs.
- The NSG, in collaboration with the DPSA, DHE, and SETAs should assess and clarify the role of the public service in the provision of training to youth and new/unemployed graduates in different fields.

Funding for training

- Review the funding model for the NSG and other public sector training academies to ensure the effective coordination of training in the public service.

The role of the PSC

It is recommended that the NDP proposal of a hybrid approach to top appointments be implemented. It is noted that this may have legislative and possibly Constitutional implications.

Way forward

The Discussion Document will be published on the PSC web site and discussed with stakeholders, especially –

- Minister for Public Service and Administration
- Cabinet
- Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration



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