

## 3. FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

As already alluded to, the investigation was designed to focus on the planning in respect of the probationary process, the capacity-building of probationers and the monitoring of both the process and the outcome of the probationary period. However, the investigation revealed that the administration of probationary information on PERSAL and the current regulatory framework in respect of probation also warranted attention.

### 3.2 DUAL PROVISIONS ON THE DURATION OF PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENTS

On analysis of the current regulatory framework pertaining to human resource management in the Public Service, it will be observed that there is an anomaly between the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, and the PSR, in terms of the laid down period(s) of the probationary period. Whereas in paragraph 5.4 of the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service a minimum of three and a maximum of six months of probation is stipulated, the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, provides for a probationary period that shall not be less than 12 calendar months. The PSR on their part are silent on the duration of the probationary period. The Commission will take this up with the Department of Public Service and Administration.

### 3.3 THE ADMINISTRATION OF INFORMATION ON PERSAL RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 1996 TO 31 MARCH 1998

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

#### **PERSAL provides documented proof in respect of the management of probation**

PERSAL allows for the capturing of the following important information on the management of probation:

- The personal particulars of an appointee

- The organisational unit in which an appointee is placed
- The date of an appointee's appointment
- Assessment periods and dates
- Quarterly reports submitted and outstanding
- Information on the movement(s) of an appointee, e.g. transfer, resignation, termination of service, etc.

Apart from the above, PERSAL also -

- allows for the scheduling of quarterly assessments,
- enables departments to monitor and manage the process and monitor its effectiveness,
- provides the computerised framework within which Human Resources Management Information (HRMI) has to be encoded,
- requires departments to capture and update the information on the system, and
- provides ongoing training in the utilisation of PERSAL.

#### **Extension of probationary periods**

The extension of a probationary period is usually an indication that all is not well with the performance of a probationer or the manner in which the process is managed, or both. Extensions could therefore be as a result of poor performance or performance related problems. However, it could also be due to poor utilisation of probationers or poor managerial support of probationers or simply poor administration. High incidences of extensions of the probationary period should therefore always require closer scrutiny.

The investigation revealed that extensions on average did not exceed 10% of the number of probationers at the time of the investigation. However, there are quite a number of departments where this



figure was as high as 40% and even higher. See table 1:

Table 1:

| EXTENSION OF PROBATIONARY PERIOD |                        |                         |                          |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|                                  | Salary Levels<br>1 - 8 | Salary Levels<br>9 - 11 | Salary Levels<br>12 - 16 |
| Lowest Incidence                 | 0%                     | 0%                      | 0%                       |
| Highest Incidence                | 38%                    | 45%                     | 46%                      |
| Average                          | 8%                     | 5%                      | 6%                       |

Although the average percentage of extensions were in the region of "only" 10%, there are unfortunately too many incidences of probationers whose probationary periods have not been managed on PERSAL procedurally. In practice quarterly reports are not captured on PERSAL and the confirmation of many probationers' appointments are recorded on PERSAL long after the duration of the probationary periods. There is also no indication that the probationary period has been extended.

### Resignations and transfers

A high incidence of resignations and transfers during the probationary period may point to poor recruitment, selection and placement of appointees, or that probationers find it difficult, for whatever reason, to adjust to and perform optimally in their new work environment.

The number of resignations of probationers was on average below 10% for all three salary levels as grouped together (levels 1-8, 9-11 and 12-16). However, in some departments as many as 30 to 40% were recorded. This may be indicative of the fact that probation is managed with varying degrees of success by various departments. See table 2:

Table 2:

| RESIGNATIONS      |                        |                         |                          |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|                   | Salary Levels<br>1 - 8 | Salary Levels<br>9 - 11 | Salary Levels<br>12 - 16 |
| Lowest Incidence  | 1%                     | 1%                      | 0%                       |
| Highest Incidence | 24%                    | 40%                     | 33%                      |
| Average           | 8%                     | 7%                      | 10%                      |

As is evident from table 3, the investigation showed

that the average number of transfers for all three salary levels grouped together, are exceptionally high (40 to 50%). However, the current poor recording of reasons for transfers does not allow for distinction between transfers as a result of rotation, poor performance, wrongful placement, restructuring, etc. This complicates the further analysis of the statistics and should be treated with circumspection.

Table 3:

| TRANSFER OF PROBATIONERS |                        |                         |                          |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|                          | Salary Levels<br>1 - 8 | Salary Levels<br>9 - 11 | Salary Levels<br>12 - 16 |
| Lowest Incidence         | 0%                     | 0%                      | 0%                       |
| Highest Incidence        | 94%                    | 88%                     | 96%                      |
| Average                  | 51%                    | 44%                     | 45%                      |

### Termination of service

A high incidence of service terminations during the probationary period is usually indicative of performance- or behaviour-related problems to the extent that the employer no longer wishes to continue with the employment contract. It could, however, also point to poor recruitment and selection decisions and/or even poor management practices.

The termination of probationers' services were on average relatively low (4 to 8%). However, on the higher levels (levels 12-16) it went as high as 50% in some departments. In general, this implies that 84% of probationers appointed have met all appointment and performance criteria. See table 4 for a detailed statistical breakdown:

Table 4:

| TERMINATION OF SERVICE |                        |                         |                          |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|                        | Salary Levels<br>1 - 8 | Salary Levels<br>9 - 11 | Salary Levels<br>12 - 16 |
| Lowest Incidence       | 1%                     | 1%                      | 0%                       |
| Highest Incidence      | 13%                    | 32%                     | 50%                      |
| Average                | 4%                     | 8%                      | 4%                       |

### Non-compliance with procedural steps

If the necessary steps applicable to the probationary period are not followed in sequence, a probationers' appointment cannot be confirmed, or alternatively

cannot be confirmed on the basis of documented authority. If the appointment status of a probationer is amended on PERSAL without confirmation of probation, it is usually an indication that the correct procedure was not followed. It could furthermore also imply that a probationer was not assessed properly for purposes of permanent appointment. This may not only result in the appointment of a person in a permanent capacity who is not necessarily suitable for appointment, but could, when audited, also be found to be an *ultra vires* administrative action.

As table 5 indicates, the number of cases where the appointment status is amended without confirmation of probation is on average relatively high (15%). There are, however, a number of departments where such incidences were as high as 66%, especially on the higher salary levels (levels 12 to 16).

Table 5:

| APPOINTMENT STATUS AMENDED WITHOUT CONFIRMATION OF PROBATION |                     |                      |                       |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Salary Levels 1 - 8 | Salary Levels 9 - 11 | Salary Levels 12 - 16 |
| Lowest Incidence   | 0%                  | 0%                   | 0%                    |
| Highest Incidence  | 41%                 | 50%                  | 66%                   |
| Average  | 15%                 | 15%                  | 16%                   |

### Population group and gender composition

Against the backdrop of the Public Service's transformation, it is always important to establish who, in terms of population group and gender, is affected the most by negative administrative outcomes such as resignations, transfers, termination of services and the extension of probationary periods. High incidences of such outcomes again may be indicative of poor recruitment, selection and placement, poor managerial conduct and insufficient training and mentoring.

It is clearly evident from table 6 that Black males on all salary levels are worst affected by the extension of their probationary periods, transfers, resignations and terminations of service. For those still in the Public Service's employ, this impacts negatively on their development and integration into their new work spheres. The transformation and affirmative action initiatives introduced in the Public Service are somewhat hampered by this situation. The statistics can also point to a combination of poor recruitment, selection

and placement practices, as well as poor development practices. Departments will be well-advised to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices.

Table 6:

| HIGH INCIDENCES OF PERSONNEL MOVEMENTS (EXTENSIONS OF PROBATIONARY PERIOD, TRANSFERS, RESIGNATIONS AND TERMINATIONS OF SERVICE) EXPRESSED IN TERMS OF POPULATION GROUP, GENDER AND SALARY LEVELS |                     |                      |                       |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Salary Levels 1 - 8 | Salary Levels 9 - 11 | Salary Levels 12 - 16 |
| Population Group Most Affected   | B                   | B                    | B                     |
| Gender Most Affected   | M                   | M                    | M                     |

### 3.3.2 Administration of information

#### Irregular assessment of newly appointed personnel

Although PERSAL adequately provides for the administration of probationary appointments in the Public Service, it is clear from the information obtained from the system that the majority of departments do not administer probationary appointments through PERSAL effectively. At the time of the investigation departments had to ensure that progress reports were completed quarterly on Form Z187 by supervisors. In as many as 9 departments, 35% to 60 % of reports were still outstanding. It is therefore clear that this requirement is in many instances ignored.

#### Mismanagement of information on PERSAL

Where the confirmation of a probationary appointment is long overdue, certain departments merely change probationers' employment status to permanent without following the prescripts and adhering to the applicable pre-programmed PERSAL sequence of data-capturing steps, e.g. by basing this on good quarterly reports and a formal recommendation to this effect. Consequently personnel are appointed in a permanent capacity regardless of competency and performance. This practice, which is done on HRM fields other than those specifically created for purposes of probation on PERSAL, inevitably distorts information on the system.

### 3.3.3 Implications of poor administration

#### Poor administration has serious HRM implications

Administrative neglect and the mismanagement of

information on PERSAL have an extremely negative affect on the management of probation. Not only is vital information sometimes not fed into the system, but in other instances it is fed into fields on PERSAL other than that created for probation in order to cover up incidences of neglect as pointed out above. As a result of this, information on the system cannot be utilised to assist managers in the management of probation, nor can oversight bodies such as the Commission utilise the information for monitoring purposes.

Furthermore, employees whose permanent appointment have not been effected, even though they have completed their probationary periods, could argue on procedural unfairness. Such employees' probationary periods cannot be prolonged indefinitely and departments cannot at this juncture commence with their quarterly assessments. In the absence of quarterly assessment reports, departments will most probably have to confirm appointments irrespective of the competency and level of performance of individuals.

If the administration of probation information on PERSAL itself is not dealt with timeously and correctly, it will be difficult for departmental Personnel Offices to -

- schedule quarterly assessments,
- monitor adherence to prescribed processes and procedures,
- identify problems in respect of the management process and address them effectively,
- identify and address malpractices and incidences of fraud and corruption, and
- effect the permanent appointment of probationers.

### **3.4 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND POLICY FORMULATION**

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

**Sound departmental policy on probation is essential for effective service delivery**

During the probationary period new appointees are introduced to their new employer and orientated on

their new job content with the overriding objective of rendering an effective and efficient service as soon as possible. From a Public Service point of view, probation needs to be managed with transformation objectives in mind. To ensure this, there should be consensus about the objectives and the strategies to be followed. The current legislative framework governing human resource management in the Public Service - as contextualised in the White Papers on the Transformation of the Public Service, Public Service Training and Education, Affirmative Action and Human Resource Management - provides many guiding principles to this effect which sets the table for optimal service delivery through good human resource management. However, to ensure that day to day human resource management practices are sound, empowering, fair, equitable and consistent, departments ought to provide policy guidelines and procedures devised in accordance with their own circumstances and conventions.

#### **3.4.2 Developing policy on the management of probation**

**No policy on probation in the majority of departments**

As is evident from **Figure 1**, only a very small proportion (8%) of departments have developed departmental policy on the management of probation. These policies have been scrutinised and do not in all instances give effect to important statutory principles and objectives such as empowerment, consistency and substantive and procedural fairness. In the absence of such guiding principles, managers and supervisors are left to their own devices which cannot be conducive to the effective and efficient management of probation.

As will be elaborated on in paragraph 3.5 on page 12, almost 50% of departments have no formal in-service training programmes in place for probationers. This, together with the fact that there are no proper policy guidelines in place, leaves the management of probation unstructured with no real plan or set of objectives. Linked to the fact that many departments are uncertain about the objectives with the probationary period - see **Figure 2** on page 11 - it stands to reason that the monitoring of probationers' progress is not done purposefully. If progress is not monitored, it is almost impossible to determine training needs and other objectives regarding probation. These are all issues that should be addressed by departmental policy.

### Probationary period is not viewed as a period of learning

A number of departments (65%) are of the opinion that the primary aim with the management of probation should be to evaluate performance and to identify and address training needs. However, as is evident from **Figure 2** on page 11, which addresses the objectives of a probationary period as perceived by departments, there is concern that the probationary period is in too many cases not viewed as a period of learning. Furthermore, where learning is acknowledged as important, no purpose-designed courses are in place. Under these circumstances probationers can all too easily be denied training opportunities, especially where high workloads are prevalent. See **Annexure A** for more information on the profile of departments that do not have policies on probation and the subsequent negative impact this has on capacity-building.

#### 3.4.3 Departmental policy and the PSR

##### Limited initiatives have been taken in aligning departmental policy and practices with the PSR

Less than a third of departments indicated that their policies and practices are aligned with the prescripts on probation as contained in the PSR. More than half of departments are furthermore of the opinion that the probationary period in its present form does not serve a useful purpose whilst two thirds view the existing prescripts (those prior to the Public Service Regulations, 1999) as insufficient for the effective management of probation. The main reasons advanced are strategic planning in respect of the management of probation is lacking, that the current process is rules-bound where managers and proba-

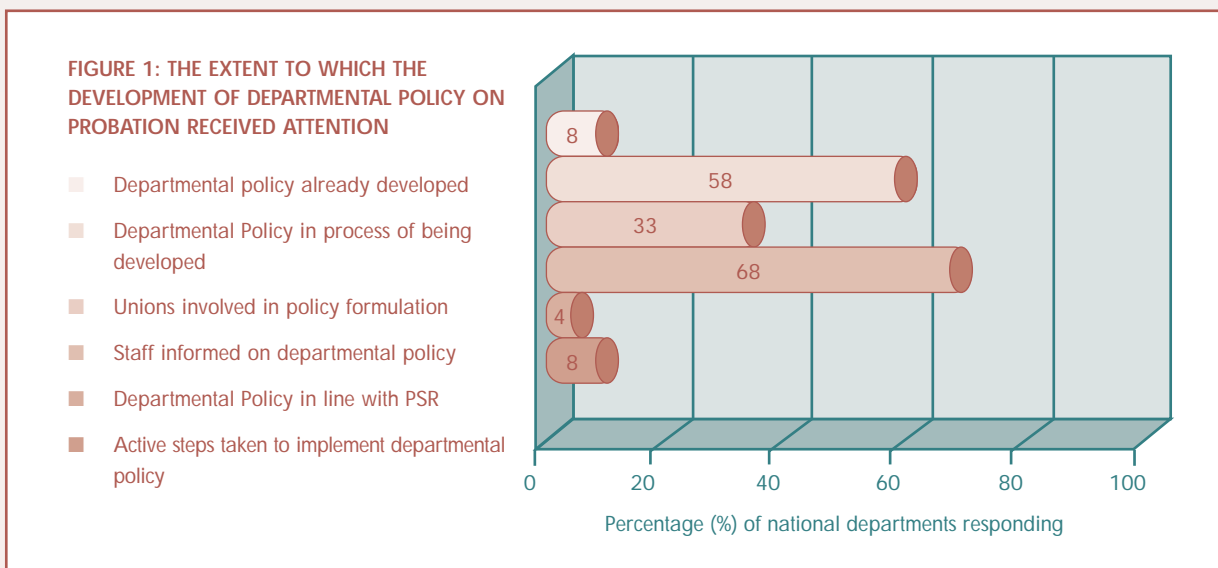
tioners go through the motions merely to comply with the prescripts. The impression is created that it is up to individual managers to decide what should be done and how to address the developmental needs and capacity-building of probationers. Further to this, it is equally apparent that supervisors' actions and the progress of probationers are not monitored.

The PSR address these objectives in a concise manner, which must be read in conjunction with the White Papers on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, Affirmative Action and Public Service Training and Education in order to form a thorough understanding of current thinking in this regard. It has emerged that more than 75% of departments indicated that the provision of a guide or a code of practice on the management of probation will be beneficial to them.

Against this backdrop, the development of departmental policy on probation, in collaboration with organised labour, is very important and necessary to ensure that probation is managed strategically and correctly.

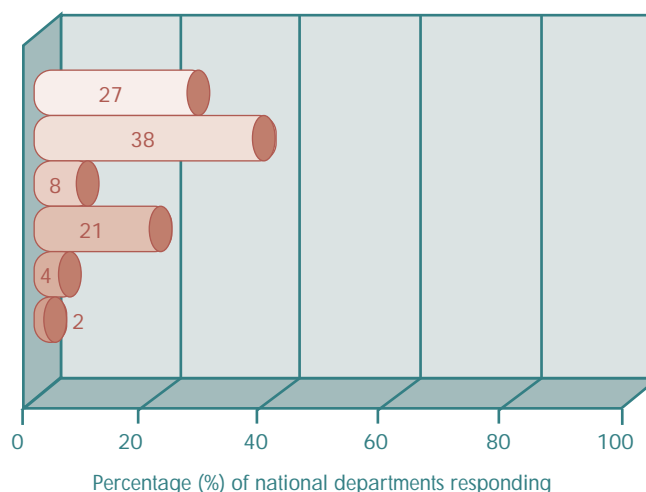
##### Organised labour is only involved in policy formulation to a limited extent

Organised labour is only involved in the development of policy and procedures in respect of probation to a very limited extent - see **Figure 3** on page 12. It is important that organised labour is involved from the early stages of policy formulation as it needs to be negotiated in the respective departmental bargaining chambers before it can be implemented.



**FIGURE 2: OBJECTIVES OF PROBATIONARY PERIOD AS PERCEIVED BY DEPARTMENTS**

- To ensure that the performance of probationers are evaluated
- To ensure that probationers are trained and orientated
- To ensure that all aspects of probation are monitored
- To ensure adherence to principles of fairness and equity
- To ensure timeous processing of assessments of probationers
- Percentage of departments not responding



### 3.4.4 Adherence to procedures and accepting responsibility

#### Managers and supervisors are not following procedures

The investigation revealed that supervisors do not follow the prescribed procedures by regularly assessing probationers and in dealing with performance problems during probation. This corresponds with the finding in paragraph 3.4.3 that managers and supervisors do not view the probationary period as a period of learning.

A recurring limitation raised by many departments which also impacts negatively on the management of probation, is staff capacity and heavy workloads.

#### Current perceptions on responsibility for training leads to the neglect thereof

A high correlation was found between vague role/responsibility demarcation and the neglect of orientation and in-service training programmes. An important feature of any programme is clear role demarcation. This not only ensures role-player involvement, but also facilitates the monitoring of practice, policy and procedures, which is an essential component of policy maintenance and development. The perception of departments on responsibility allocation as far as the management of probation is concerned was tested and revealed the following - see **Figure 4** on page 13:

- It is evident that supervisors are, to a large extent, held responsible for the overall management of probationers during the probationary period

- Only a third of departments perceive that the responsibility of the supervisor is to -

- oversee the provision of orientation training and training in respect of labour relations and ethics, and
- ensure that training programmes are followed.

This raises some concern, since the supervisor is first and foremost responsible for the effective utilisation and development of subordinates. This responsibility cannot be left to staff functionaries such as personnel and training officers.

- In contrast to the foregoing, departments do however see it to be the sole responsibility of supervisors to provide job information, to monitor work performance and to provide guidance and assistance to probationers.

See **Annexure B** for more detailed information on current departmental perceptions on specific responsibility allocations.

### 3.4.5 Length of the probationary period

#### Departments are in favour of a longer probationary period

As a result of the anomaly between the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, which envisages a probationary period of between 3 to 6 months, as opposed to the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, which directs a period of not less than 12 months, it was decided to

obtain the viewpoints of departments on what is considered to be a workable arrangement in this regard. It was found that more than two thirds of departments are in favour of a longer probationary period. Departments as a rule argued that they need sufficient time for the proper assessment, training and mentoring of probationers.

### 3.5 CAPACITY-BUILDING OF PROBATIONERS

#### 3.5.1 Introduction

On taking up their new positions, appointees are confronted with new work environments, rules, knowledge, skills applications and insights. Being exposed to all these in a supportive and constructive manner will not only enhance the learning experience, but will produce competent and confident public servants within a relatively short period of time.

Probation, however, is also about preventing individuals who, despite orientation and training, do not exhibit the necessary interest, dedication, aptitude and potential, from becoming public servants on whom the public has to rely.

Thus, the development and training of probationers should, for the above reasons, be aligned to departmental strategic service delivery and human resource development objectives. Probationers need to acquire insight, knowledge, skills and self-confidence, as well as sound work ethic values. Training remains the primary vehicle to attain these.

#### 3.5.2 Structuring capacity-building

##### The training of probationers is not at an acceptable level

From **Figure 5** on page **14** the following findings in

respect of the capacity-building of probationers are evident:

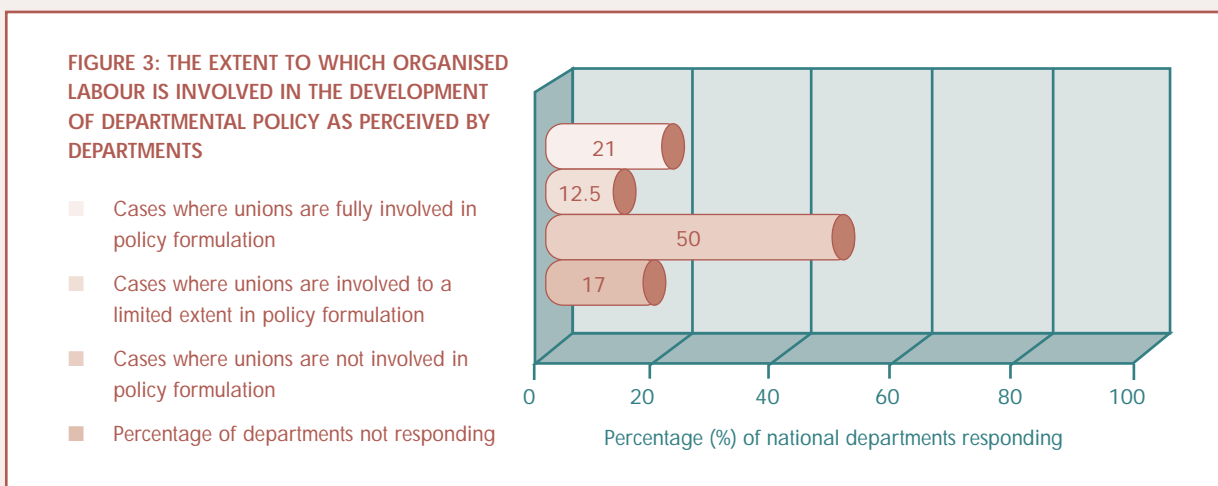
- Although formally structured orientation programmes are followed in basically all departments, an alarmingly low percentage of departments (25%) provide formally structured in-service training programmes for probationers
- More than a third of the departments devote four weeks or less of the entire probationary period to orientation and in-service training
- The majority of departments do however provide orientation and in-service training within the first three months of employment.

See **Annexure A** for more detail on the negative spin-offs of a lack of purpose-designed policy.

#### 3.5.3 Adequacy of capacity-building practices

There are a number of personnel practices that impact either directly or indirectly on the capacity-building of probationers. Departments were subsequently requested to do a self-assessment as far as the adequate deployment of these practices are concerned. The following results are synoptically captured in **Figure 6** on page **14**:

- More than 50% of all departments acknowledged that probationers are provided with job descriptions/duty sheets that are inadequate. These instruments normally provide a newcomer with information on what tasks need to be performed, how and when. They also give an indication of specific standards and requirements that need to be met, as well as other relevant job information



- The same percentage of departments (50%) also acknowledged that inadequate assistance is provided to probationers who display poor work performance. This correlates with the earlier finding made in paragraph 3.4.5 that there is generally an over-reliance on probationers developing themselves.
- The practice of introducing formal mentors or so-called "buddies" is non-existent in more than 70% of departments. What is even more alarming is that the concept of mentoring or buddying is considered to be ineffective in 21% of the six departments that do utilise mentoring or "buddying".

See **Annexure C** for more detailed information on current departmental perceptions on capacity-building practices.

### 3.5.4 Availability of orientation and in-service training programmes

#### In-service training programmes exist in only a limited number of departments

Formal orientation training programmes exist in basi-

cally all departments. More than three quarters of the departments, however, manage **in-service training** in an informal and *ad hoc* manner (see **Annexure D** for topics addressed by such training). This means that the majority of in-service training is not purpose-designed, standardised and documented in training modules.

The quality of such training will be dependent on the knowledge, training skills and dedication of individual managers. Undoubtedly this is not a sound way of approaching the development of an employer's work force. In fact, 30% of departments were prepared to acknowledge this by admitting that their in-service training is inadequate. It is also important to note that 50% of departments rate their assistance provided to new appointees who display poor work performance to be inadequate.

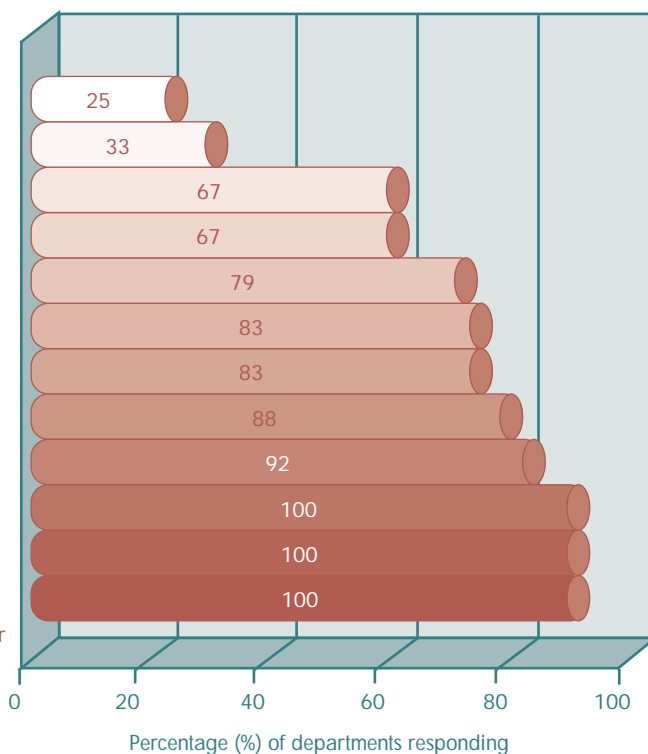
### 3.5.5 Time expended on orientation and in-service training

#### The majority of departments acknowledge the importance of training

As is evident from **Figure 7** on page 15, more than 80% of departments provide probationers with orientation and in-service training within the first three

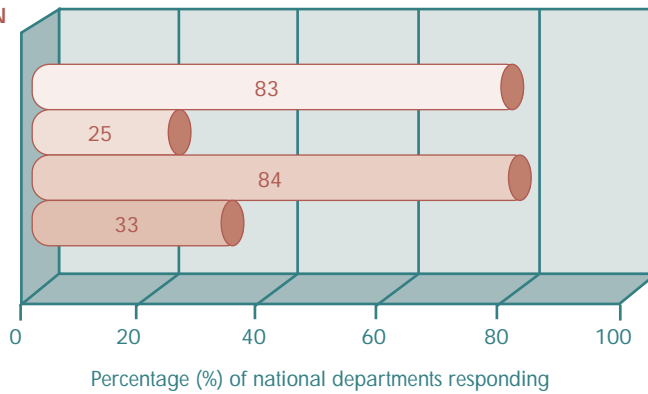
**FIGURE 4: DEPARTMENTAL VIEWS ON SUPERVISORS' RESPONSIBILITY AS FAR AS THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION IS CONCERNED**

- Informing a probationer on basic labour rights
- Providing a probationer with orientation training
- Ensuring that a probationer completes a training programme
- Informing a probationer on ethical conduct
- Introducing a probationer to other role-players in the work-place
- Acting as a formal mentor/"buddy" to a probationer
- Providing a probationer with functional in-service training
- Giving a probationer exposure to other functional fields
- Determining the training needs of a probationer
- Evaluating the work performance of a probationer
- Providing assistance to a probationer performing badly
- Providing a probationer with an updated job description/duty sheet



**FIGURE 5: THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CAPACITY-BUILDING OF PROBATIONERS RECEIVED ATTENTION**

- A formal programme for orientation training does exist
- A formal programme for in-service training does exist
- Both orientation and in-service training of probationers start within first three months of appointment
- 4 weeks and less of probationary period are expended on both orientation and in-service training



months of appointment.

Orientation and in-service training should ideally commence immediately. Within the first couple of months of employment, probationers should have received substantial in-service training. It should, however, be noted that if the probationary period is indeed shortened, this would not be achieved. Although training and especially in-service training is inadequate in a number of departments, the majority of departments acknowledge the importance of training and endeavour to attend to it as a

matter of priority.

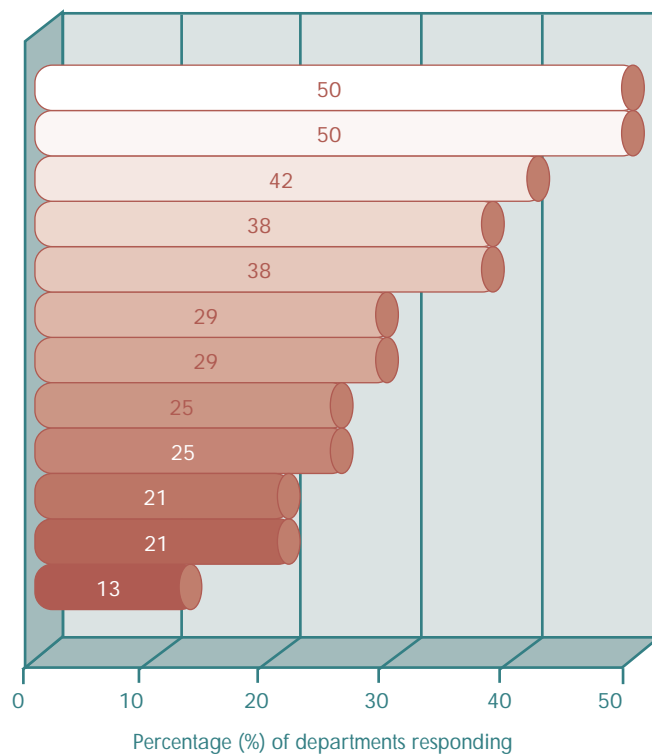
**Some departments do not devote enough time to training**

A number of departments (30%) devote approximately four weeks to the orientation and in-service training of probationers. A further 17% of departments provide up to twelve weeks of training. See **Figure 8** on page 16 for more detail.

Considering that these figures include both orienta-

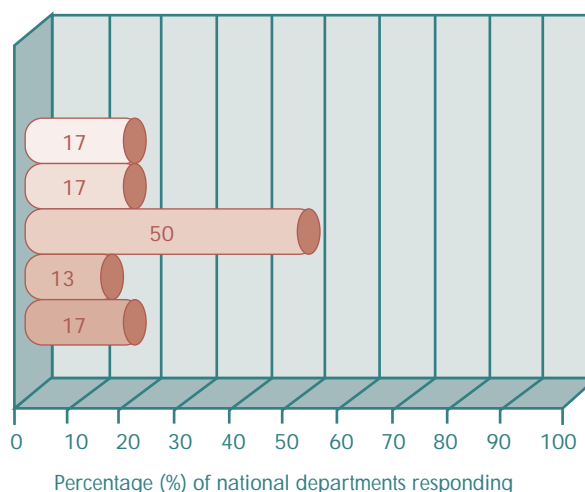
**FIGURE 6: THE EXTENT TO WHICH CAPACITY-BUILDING PRACTICES ARE CONSIDERED TO BE INADEQUATE BY DEPARTMENTS**

- Job description/duty sheets
- Assisting poor work performance
- Exposure to other functional terrains
- Training on labour relations
- Determining the training needs of probationers
- In-service functional training
- Assessing work performance of probationers
- Training on ethical conduct
- Consulting probationers and giving them feedback
- Orientation training for probationers
- Introducing a mentor/"buddy" system
- Introducing probationers to other role-players



**FIGURE 7: HOW SOON AFTER APPOINTMENT ARE PROBATIONERS PROVIDED WITH BOTH ORIENTATION AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING?**

- Provided with training within the first week
- Provided with training within the first month
- Provided with training within 3 months
- Provided with training within 6 months
- Percentage of departments not responding



tion and in-service training, the findings clearly indicate an indifference amongst some departments to the development of their staff, especially new appointees, who are in many cases in need of far more training than that reflected in **Figure 8**. Departments are generally in favour of a longer probationary period for this very reason. It also follows that more formal training should be provided in order to justify a longer period. This will ensure that knowledge and skills are acquired timeously, which in turn will ensure the building of competence, confidence and self-esteem, provided that the training is of good quality and effectively empowers the new appointee.

### 3.5.6 Effectiveness of orientation and in-service training

**The effectiveness of training is in most cases not evaluated**

For training to be meaningful, it must be based on specific objectives. It follows that the attainment of such objectives should be monitored to ensure that the energy and money expended on training is well-spent and that the training content succeeds in establishing gains in learning.

The investigation revealed that the effectiveness of orientation and in-service training is not monitored by departments (see **Figure 9** on page 16 for more detailed information on the monitoring of probation), which certainly poses a problem. Providing quality training that really adds value to probationers' level of functioning is what is really required. To ensure that quality training is provided, its effectiveness should be monitored and the training content continually refined.

### 3.5.7 Departments' ability to provide orientation and in-service training

**Line functionaries do not have the necessary skills to provide effective training**

Effective in-service training is dependent not only on a first-hand knowledge of the subject matter but also on a basic understanding of training methodology. The majority of departments, however, expressed concern that managers and supervisors may not be properly equipped to offer the required training.

### 3.5.8 Implications of unstructured orientation and in-service training

**Probationers are denied training opportunities**

In an era where expanded optimal service delivery is a focus of attention, probationers are considered an asset to the Public Service.

Orientation and in-service training ought therefore to be designed to equip the probationer for his or her job and to instill self-confidence. In a situation where orientation and in-service training are neglected or approached in an *ad hoc* manner, employees, especially new appointees, are left with knowledge, competence and proficiency gaps posing as stumbling blocks in their optimal functioning.

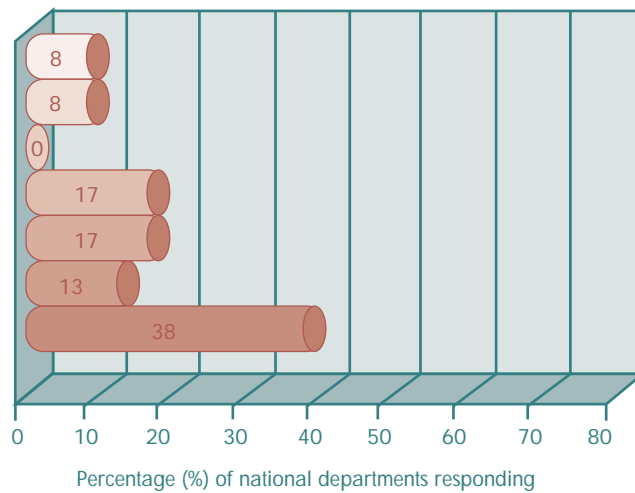
## 3.6 MONITORING WORK PERFORMANCE AND THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION AS A PRACTICE

### 3.6.1 Introduction

The management of probation, as well as the processes involved should be monitored on a continuous

**FIGURE 8: THE TIME EXPENDED ON TRAINING OF PROBATIONERS DURING THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

- 1 week + (2%) of probationary period
- 4 weeks + (8%) of probationary period
- 8 weeks + (15%) of probationary period
- 12 weeks + (25%) of probationary period
- 21 weeks + (50%) of probationary period
- 40 weeks + (75%) of probationary period
- Percentage of departments not responding



basis. This is necessary not only to ensure compliance with the regulatory framework governing human resource management in the Public Service but also the effectiveness of policy and procedures.

### 3.6.2 Monitoring probation

#### Poor monitoring is a consequence of *ad hoc* management of probation

From the responses received, it is apparent that the monitoring of probation as a process suffers especially in those departments where probation is managed in an unstructured manner, i.e. limited time is spent on training, insufficient support is given in respect of poor performers and the information in respect of probation is inadequately managed on PERSAL.

As is evident from **Figure 9** below, departments do,

to varying degrees, monitor certain crucial aspects of the probationary process.

As many as 67% of departments do not have a formal scheduled time-frame for assessing the work performance of probationers, despite the fact that PERSAL has a facility to generate reminders. Given this situation, timeous remedial interventions in respect of poor work performance may be neglected.

More than 30% of departments do not invite union representatives to sit in on discussions between managers/supervisors and probationers with a view to looking after the interests of their members. In addition to this, over 40% of probationers are not informed regarding their right to representation. Apart from the fact that the principle of fairness may be compromised, this is not conducive to sound labour relations and staff morale.

**FIGURE 9: THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION APPOINTMENTS IS MONITORED**

- A formal programming for assessing work performance does exist
- Personnel Office monitors quarterly assessments
- Personnel Office responds to inadequate management of assessments
- Personnel Office responds to assessments with a negative outcome
- Staff are informed about the right to representation

