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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS**

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#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This investigation reveals that departments and provincial administrations are lagging behind in addressing this very important facet of affirmative action. This status quo is unacceptable and an indictment of the stated intent of government policies. The targets set in the White Paper were used as a yardstick to track progress and represent the intention of government. Furthermore, the Employment Equity Act addresses this issue to ensure that there is equitable representation of people with disabilities in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce. This should go beyond mere compliance and be an authentic attempt to integrate people with disabilities in the various occupations and salary levels in the Public Service.

This report is a proactive attempt to assist in the attainment of targets around disability. This chapter seeks to provide specific recommendations to assist departments in meeting the targets.

#### **4.2 ATTAINMENT OF TARGETS**

It was found that people with disabilities comprise approximately 0,25% of the public service personnel, which is far from the stated target of 2%. At this rate it is doubtful whether this target will be met by 2005.

There appears to be a genuine concern by management about their ability to reach the targets set in the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, especially when considering the limited skills base as a point of departure. There are views held around the feasibility of the attainment of these targets. In spite of these debates continuing, it is nonetheless incumbent on departments to meet the 2% target.

It is hoped that the recommendations contained herein will assist the acceleration of disability equity in a practical manner.

#### **4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **4.3.1 WORK ENVIRONMENT**

The environment in the work place within departments and provincial administrations is far from significantly supportive of employees with disabilities. This can be ascribed to the fact that very little or no provision is made in the budgets to contribute to a disability friendly environment. A work environment that is not enabling can contribute to frustrations in the work place and result in poor work performance. This creates an unequal base against which the quality of work of people with disabilities is judged in comparison to their able-bodied colleagues.

While policies and procedures are important to manage and monitor adherence and implementation of disability equity, special focus should also be given to attitudinal barriers presently encountered in the work place. Having regard to South Africa's recent past, it is important that a culture wherein differences are valued is inculcated. The country's greatest strength has often surfaced as a result of its diversity, and this requires individuals employed within the public service to appreciate the opportunities presented by this diversity. In many respects this needs to be driven from the highest echelons of public service management as such leadership helps to create an enabling environment necessary for promoting disability equity.

### **Recommendations**

- a) Departmental buildings should have basic accommodation and assistive devices particularly ramps, toilets, Braille and voice prompt lifts. These should be stated in a minimum standards guideline.
- b) Funds should be allocated for the assessment of the environmental and collegial support needs of employees with disabilities. The option of having people with disabilities working independently from home needs to be investigated.
- c) Disability Equity and diversity programmes should be taken up and driven by the leadership in the higher echelons of the Senior Management Service.
- d) As with gender and race, a higher profile needs to be created around awareness of disability.
- e) Processes to demystify disability should become standard features of staff development programmes. Closer links with Civil Society organizations and other advocacy agencies could facilitate this process.

### **4.3.2 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

The strategy used by departments in their recruitment and selection practices is critical to their success in attracting people with disabilities. It was found that the current strategies employed by most departments are generic in nature, lack innovation and creativity, and require serious attention.

### **Recommendations**

- a) The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), should examine the possibilities of using more innovative and creative recruiting mechanisms, so as to ensure that all prospective employees with disabilities are able to respond to vacancies within the Public Service.
- b) Engagements between the DPSA and Civil Society organizations should take place to set up a data base of people with disabilities from which departments and provincial administrations can draw information.

- c) Advertising needs to be approached from a multi-faceted point of view. There is a need to move beyond conventional advertising and be more explicit in requesting people with disabilities to apply.
- d) Where possible, at least one person with a disability should become involved in selection panels until targets are reached or are closer to being reached.

### **4.3.3 SKILLS BASE**

It is clear from the study that the majority of people with disabilities are employed in the lower levels of employment. This is largely related to the skills base and the level of education, which in turn has historical links with a system of education that excluded the majority of people with disabilities. Since education had a racial and gender bias, it is not surprising that African, disabled, females are the most adversely affected. Unless this is recognized and addressed, people with disabilities, particularly those who are African and female will continue to be employed in the lower ranks of an organization.

#### **Recommendations**

- a) The training and development of people with disabilities should be accelerated in order to enable them to add greater value to organizations. This should be done in close collaboration with them.
- b) Departments such as SAMDI, Labour and DPSA should collaborate to ensure that departments and provincial administrations link the needs of people with disabilities to career pathing and skills development and take into consideration the existing racial and gender imbalances.
- c) Skills development of people with disabilities, particularly women, needs to be seriously addressed together with the possibility of fast tracking their development within the workplace.

### **4.3.4 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLANS**

It is apparent from the results of the research that most of the national departments and provincial administrations seem to pay lip service to the Affirmative Action targets for disability. The fact that many claim that disability is mainstreamed and integrated into their general employment plans and conditions can be a disguise for not addressing the issue. Very few of the national departments and provincial administrations that have responded, fully addressed the employment of people with disabilities from an Affirmative Action principle, and using this principle could be a good starting point. Although many national departments and provincial administrations have ambitious future projections in terms of employing people with disabilities, in many cases this is currently not supported by specific plans or strategies, nor by any creative and proactive approaches to the recruitment of people with disabilities. Perceptions are that generic methods of recruitment suffice.

### **Recommendations**

- a) Affirmative Action Plans must be included in annual Departmental Human Resource Planning with specific reference to plans on redressing numeric targets for people with disabilities and supporting their advancement.
- b) These plans must be linked to clear indicators against which departmental progress can be measured and reported on.

#### **4.3.5 STATISTICS ON DISABILITY**

It is quite clear that statistics on disability are sketchy and poorly documented and this is further complicated by the fact that there is no standard definition on disability. While this research was undertaken to fulfill the monitoring function of the PSC, it also intends to heighten awareness of the situation and at the least to develop a preliminary database. The information is an important indicator of where the public service is and what still needs to be done to accelerate the achievement of the targets.

### **Recommendations**

- a) The statistical information obtained from this investigation needs to complement the comprehensive audit into affirmative action in the Public Service to be undertaken by the PSC shortly. Likewise, the findings and recommendations in this report could serve as an important feeder into this audit with a view to providing a more holistic picture of the affirmative action programmes within the public service.
- b) There needs to be a consensus on the definition on disability to improve the accuracy of statistics. The OSDP could play a pivotal role in facilitating these debates to arrive at an acceptable definition on disability.
- c) The PSC needs to monitor the situation on an annual basis through feed back from the departments or via the PERSAL system and at the end of 2005 undertake a comprehensive audit on disability equity in the public service.
- d) Indicators on disability equity should form a critical part of the PSC's monitoring and evaluation system.

#### **4.3.6 THE ROLE OF THE OSDP AND PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE**

The role of the OSDP should not be undermined, especially since it was instituted to advance the equality of people with disabilities in the country. The findings of this research could also be seen as an important springboard from which to initiate debate at a higher level and to provide a management tool around policy review.

- a) The OSDP should play an active role in enabling department's to reach the set targets and this role should be more clearly stipulated.

- b) The Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration and the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of Quality of Life, and Status of Children, Youth and Disabled Persons as oversight bodies of Parliament on this issue should call on departments to account with a view to assisting in the achievement of targets.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This investigation achieved what it set out to do. It is also noteworthy to mention that the various discussions and debates that have been initiated through the course of the investigation are in themselves useful in improving the employment of people with disabilities in the South African Public Service. The research process was comprehensive and participatory, and not only ensured that pertinent information was received by the researchers for analysis, but also stimulated debate. What is now important is that this momentum be maintained, and that the marginalisation of this very important segment of potential employees does not continue.