THE IMPACT OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PRACTICES ON THE FUNCTIONALITY OF SELECTED NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS

MARCH 2015
The Constitution of South Africa provides that Public Administration must be development oriented, broadly representative of the South African people and accountable. This provision further states that employment and personnel management practices must be based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation. To achieve this and also ensure that the country can address the twin challenges of poverty and inequality, the National Development Plan 2030 calls for a State that is capable of playing a transformative and developmental role. This will require well run and effectively coordinated State institutions staffed by skilled public servants who are committed to the public good and capable of delivering consistently high quality services for all South Africans.

Government’s ability to address the developmental challenges depends on its ability to recruit, select and retain highly competent staff across all levels. This therefore makes recruitment and selection an essential part of government’s long-term efforts to build a capable and skilled Public Service. To achieve this, Public Service managers and human resource practitioners must ensure that recruitment and selection processes in their departments are well documented, planned and organised to attract the most competent people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Institutionalising effective recruitment and selection practices in the Public Service will also serve to enhance the performance of and ensure that government departments achieve their stated organisational objectives. The opposite will also be true, poor recruitment and selection policies and practices will in all likelihood impact negatively on the functionality of departments.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) recognises the work done by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) in developing policy frameworks to strengthen human resource management in the Public Sector. The PSC has also developed a Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection (2007) to contribute towards building a capable and development orientated Public Service. In spite of the existence of the legislative and regularly framework, and guidelines, the PSC has observed an increase in the number of grievances related to recruitment and selection. Against this background, the PSC decided to conduct a study to assess the impact of recruitment and selection practices on the functionality of selected national and provincial departments.

The PSC is pleased to present the findings of the study and hopes that the report will be a useful resource that will encourage debate and inform further research in order to improve human resource management practices relating to the recruitment, selection and retention of competent and committed employees.
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<td>DPSA</td>
<td>Department of Public Service and Administration</td>
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<td>EA</td>
<td>Executing Authority</td>
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<td>ER</td>
<td>Employee Referrals</td>
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<td>FS</td>
<td>Free State province</td>
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<td>GP</td>
<td>Gauteng province</td>
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<td>GC</td>
<td>Government Circular</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resource</td>
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<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPMA-HR</td>
<td>International Public Management Association for Human Resources</td>
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<td>KZN</td>
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<td>LRA</td>
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<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Development Plan</td>
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<td>OL</td>
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<td>OPSC</td>
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<td>Senior Management Service</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the Public Service began in 1994 with the amalgamation of the various racial and tribal/Bantustan services that were fragmented under apartheid. This was an enormous challenge that needed to be addressed through comprehensive and progressive legislation, policies and intervention programmes. The intention under the new democratic dispensation was to create a Public Service that was representative and committed to the democratic government and capable of serving citizens of South Africa.

Various legislative and policy interventions were introduced to transform the Public Service. These included the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (1995), White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery (1997) and the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997) amongst others. These policies advocated for the devolution and decentralisation of managerial responsibilities on various human resource management issues, including recruitment and selection as well as a shift from personnel administration to human resource management. They promoted the development of department and province specific policies within the parameters defined by national policies, in line with the principles of managerial autonomy and devolution of power.

In 2007 the PSC, together with the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR), convened a conference with the theme, “Building Public Sector Human Resource Capacity in a Developmental State” which reiterated the need to shift from personnel administration to human resource management.

All these interventions were intended to lead towards efficiency, transparency, representativeness and accountability in the Public Service, in line with the values and principles governing public administration as outlined in Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South African (1996). This process has unfortunately not been without challenges. Various reports by the Public Service Commission (PSC) highlighted difficulties in the application of recruitment and selection processes and procedures in the Public Service. The reports identified numerous challenges ranging from non-compliance with prescripts, alleged nepotism during recruitment and selection processes, and inconsistency in the implementation of legislative frameworks and policies. Recruitment and selection challenges have also been observed through the nature and number of complaints and grievances lodged by employees in the Public Service.

As can be expected, these challenges led to difficulties in the performance of the Public Service. In its Diagnostic Report (2011), the National Planning Commission points to the unevenness of performance in the Public Service due inappropriate staffing, skills deficit in critical areas and low staff morale. The Diagnostic Report acknowledged that despite the country’s commendable legislative and policy frameworks, the Public Service has not succeeded in acquiring and nurturing the skills required to enhance Public Service delivery to the citizens of this country.

Whilst all aspects of human resource management (HRM) are important, it is noted that the point of entry into the Public Service is through a recruitment and selection process. This
therefore makes recruitment and selection one of the most critical aspects of HRM. In addition, the link between this aspect of HRM with employee productivity, organisational performance and people’s socio-economic positions makes recruitment and selection susceptible to manipulation and contestations. To address these challenges and to reduce irregular and inconsistent practices, the PSC developed A Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection (2007). The purpose of the Toolkit is to simplify processes for national and provincial departments in order to facilitate the recruitment and selection of individuals who satisfy job requirements in terms of appropriate educational background, skills, competencies and experience within the parameters of applicable legislative prescripts and human resource policy frameworks.

Cognisant of the importance of recruitment and selection, the challenges alluded to above and the number of reported grievances, the PSC decided to undertake a study on the impact of recruitment and selection practices on the functionality of selected national and provincial departments.

2. MANDATE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In terms of section 196(4)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, read in conjunction with sections 9 and 10 of the Public Service Commission Act, 1997, the Commission is mandated to investigate, monitor and evaluate the organization and administration, and personnel practices of the Public Service.

In addition, section (196)(f)(iv) of the Constitution, 1996, mandates the PSC to, out of own accord or on receipt of a complaint, advise national and provincial organs of state regarding personnel practices in the Public Service, including those relating to recruitment, appointment, transfer, discharge and other aspects of the careers of employees in the Public Service.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are to:

- Determine the level of awareness of recruitment and selection policies in departments and the perceived levels of compliance with the policies;
- Establish and understand recruitment and selection practices that contribute to various human resource management challenges and how they impact on the functionality of selected departments; and
- Explore possible solutions that will assist departments in addressing the identified challenges.

4. METHODOLOGY

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in conducting this study. These included an analysis of prescripts that are relevant to recruitment and selection, various PSC reports and other secondary sources. To collect primary data a survey was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire and a focus group discussion was organised to discuss the draft findings. The methodology adopted in data collection and analysis is elaborated below.
A total of 35 national and provincial departments were identified to participate in the study. In selecting the departments a combination of factors were taken into consideration. A set of three self-administered questionnaires were designed and circulated to be completed by employees, human resources unit officials and representatives of organised labour from each participating department. The three questionnaires contained structured statements, which respondents had to agree or disagree with, and in some instances, the respondents were requested to elaborate on the extent to which they incomplete.

Data from the 999 questionnaires received was captured on a database and the results were analysed to determine the recruitment and selection practices in departments and the impact of such practices on the functionality of departments. A draft report was prepared and the findings and recommendations were presented to the focus group session.

5. LIMITATIONS

The following limitations affected this study:

- The response rate from some of the selected departments was very poor despite numerous extensions granted. The low and uneven response between departments and provinces made it impossible to segment the analysis according to departments and/or provinces.
- There were inconsistencies in the distribution of the questionnaires within some departments and provinces. For example, in some provinces the distribution and collection of questionnaires was centrally managed which was not the intention of the study. This approach may have compromised employees’ honesty in responding to certain questions due to fear of victimisation.

Despite the mentioned limitations, there was enthusiasm displayed by the majority of the respondents and the PSC is of the view that the information collected is reasonably sufficient for the findings and recommendations provided below.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main conclusion from the study is that recruitment and selection practices in some national and provincial departments is not compliant with prescripts and this affects employee morale and ultimately the effectiveness of departments. There is therefore a need to put mechanisms in place to address the identified challenges and to engage with some departments to ensure a thorough understanding of the underlying causes and to develop context specific improvement strategies.

However, given the limitations of the study, it is not possible to generalise the findings to the entire Public Service. The PSC proposes to implement the following in the medium term:

- An in-depth investigation using the case study methodology to establish the extent of the challenges and impact in specific departments;
- Engagements with specific national and provincial departments through structured focus group discussions to discuss the findings; and
- A longitudinal study to establish the impact of recruitment and selection practices on the functionality and effectiveness of departments in the Public Service.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The post 1994 the South African Public Service faced enormous challenges that needed to be addressed through comprehensive and progressive legislation, policies and intervention programmes. In particular, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (1995) was adopted as “a policy framework to guide the introduction and implementation of new policies and legislation aimed at transforming the South African public service” into a “coherent, representative, competent and democratic instrument for implementing government policies and meeting the needs of all South Africans.” To make the public service more representative, section 10.2 of the White Paper advocated for, amongst others, “the introduction of reforms in the procedures for the recruitment, selection and promotion of staff to promote greater equal opportunity”. In Chapter 9, the White Paper also advocated for the devolution and decentralisation of managerial responsibilities on various human resource management issues, including recruitment and selection.

According to the White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery (1997), “a guiding principle of the public service in South Africa will be that of service to the people” because “a transformed South African public service will be judged by one criterion above all: its effectiveness in delivering services which meet the basic needs of all South African citizens.” The introduction of the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997) pronounced a shift from personnel administration to human resource management and promoted the development of department and province specific policies within the parameters defined by national policies, in line with the principles of managerial autonomy and devolution of power. The Human Resource Management White Paper positioned human resource management as a core competency for all Public Service managers and not the sole responsibility of personnel practitioners. However, in the new dispensation, human resource practitioners will have “a vital role to play in providing line managers with professional advice and guidance, and for ensuring that human resource systems and procedures are focused on the organisation’s strategic objectives.”

The shift proposed through the White Paper on Human Resource Management is consistent with views held by various experts in the area of human resource management (HRM). According to Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall (2002), “unless HRM is able to reinvent itself to embrace the challenges of the knowledge economy, it will become a constraining factor that undermines a firm’s competitiveness rather than a crucial source of competitive advantage”. Furthermore, in April 2007 the PSC, together with the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR), co-hosted a conference with the theme, “Building Public Sector Human Resource Capacity in a Developmental State”. The conference reiterated the need to shift from personnel administration to human resource management because “managing human resources effectively and strategically is the cornerstone of the broader transformation of the public service” (Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, then Minister for Public Service and Administration).
The outlined policy developments and initiatives illustrate that the democratically elected government has since its inception in 1994 advocated for improved public sector efficiency, transparency, representativeness and accountability in South Africa. Informed by the overarching transformation agenda and the values and principles governing public administration, which are outlined in Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South African (RSA, 1996), the overall human resource management framework, which includes recruitment and selection, was revised - as detailed in the Public Service Act, 1994 (as amended) and the Public Service Regulations, 2001 (as amended). The implementation of the revised human resource management framework has not been without challenges, as demonstrated through various reports by the Public Service Commission (PSC) of South Africa.

The PSC report on the Assessment of the State of Human Resource Management in the Public Service (2010), found that the application of recruitment and selection processes and procedures in the Public Service was problematic with numerous challenges ranging from non-compliance to policy, allegations of nepotism during recruitment and selection processes and inconsistency in the implementation of legislative frameworks and policies. Recruitment and selection challenges have also been observed through the nature and number of complaints and grievances lodged by employees in the Public Service. According to the PSC’s Factsheet on Grievance Resolution for the 2013/14 Financial Year (2014), as at 31 March 2014 there were 1388 grievances related to recruitment and selection reported by national and provincial departments, which is a slight drop from the 1456 grievances reported at the end of March 2013.

The Diagnostic Report (2011) produced by the National Planning Commission lamented the unevenness of performance in the Public Service due to multiple factors, including inappropriate staffing, skills deficit in critical areas and low staff morale. The Diagnostic Report acknowledged that despite the country’s commendable legislative and policy frameworks, the Public Service has not succeeded in acquiring and nurturing the skills required to enhance Public Service delivery to the citizens of this country. The diagnostic report formed the basis for the National Development Plan - 2030 (2011), which was adopted by the South African government as a strategic framework to guide all stakeholders on the key choices and actions that must be taken to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. The Public Service is expected to play a critical role in the implementation of the National Development (NDP), because the success of the NDP is largely dependent on a state that is capable in playing a developmental and transformative role.

As a contribution towards implementation of the NDP, the PSC hosted a conference on “Building a Capable, Career-oriented and Professional Public Service to underpin a developmental state in South Africa” (11-13 November 2014) to deliberate on a range of issues that are essential towards the achievement of a capable and developmental state. Conference participants reflected on the comparative experiences of South Africa and other developmental states in the areas of recruitment, promotion and career pathing, performance management and training. The importance of the conference cannot be overstated given that the Public Service is a labour-intensive employer and the biggest employer in South Africa – with approximately 1.4 million employees. It is indeed a critical player in the implementation of the NDP.

The size of the workforce suggests that the ability of the Public Service to deliver is dependent on the competence and commitment of its workforce. This makes human resource management practices, including the management of recruitment and selection processes, critical. Integrally
linked to government’s transformation agenda is a need for the Public Service to promote good employee relations in line with the Labour Relations Act (1995). It is only when employees are engaged, treated fairly and motivated that performance will improve and overall productivity levels will be increased. According to the 2015 State of the Nation Address, moderating workplace conflict is the 6th of the nine point plan to ignite economic growth and create jobs in South Africa. These observations confirm an assertion that human resources or human capital is the most important asset in organisations, although it not classified as such in the balance sheet.

There is no argument that all aspects of human resource management (HRM) are essential and critical. However, it is important to note that the point of entry into the Public Service and all public institutions is through some form of structured or unstructured recruitment and selection process. This therefore makes recruitment and selection one of the most critical aspects of HRM. In addition, the link between this aspect of HRM with employee productivity, organisational performance and people’s socio-economic positions makes recruitment and selection susceptible to manipulation and contestations. To address these challenges and to minimise irregular and inconsistent practices, the PSC developed A Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection (2007). The purpose of the Toolkit is to simplify processes for national and provincial departments in order to facilitate the recruitment and selection of individuals who satisfy job requirements in terms of appropriate educational background, skills, competencies and experience within the parameters of applicable legislative prescripts and human resource policy frameworks. In the foreword to the Toolkit, Professor Stan Sangweni, then Chairperson of the PSC, noted that “it is only when we select the most competent persons available, within the parameters of legislation on Affirmative Action and Employment Equity that we will be able to provide the leadership and skills required to advance our democracy” (PSC, 2007:1). On several occasions, specific departments at national and provincial level requested the PSC to conduct training for their officials on the Toolkit.

Cognisant of the importance of recruitment and selection, challenges alluded to above and the number of reported grievances, the PSC decided to undertake a study on the impact of recruitment and selection practices on the functionality of selected national and provincial departments.

1.2 MANDATE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In terms of section 196(4)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, read in conjunction with sections 9 and 10 of the Public Service Commission Act, 1997, the PSC is mandated to investigate, monitor and evaluate the organization and administration, and personnel practices of the Public Service.

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The main objectives of the study are to:

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- Establish and understand recruitment and selection practices that contribute to various human resource management challenges and how they impact on the functionality of selected departments; and
- Explore possible solutions that will assist departments in addressing the identified challenges.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in conducting this study. These included an analysis of prescripts that are relevant to recruitment and selection, various PSC reports and other secondary sources. To reach a large pool of employees, including officials from human resource management units and representatives of organised labour from the selected departments, the survey method was adopted for purposes of collecting primary data. The instrument used for data collection was a self-administered questionnaire and a focus group discussion was organised to discuss the draft findings. The methodology adopted in data collection and analysis is elaborated below.

1.4.1 Sampling of Departments

A total of 35 national and provincial departments were identified to participate in the study. In selecting the departments a combination of factors were taken into consideration. The selection of some departments was influenced by actual or perceived recruitment and selection challenges as illustrated by the number of reported complaints and grievances relating to recruitment and selection practices. Other departments were selected because of their strategic role in policy development and implementation and/or size and complexity.

1.4.2 Data Collection

In the collation of information, a set of three (3) self-administered questionnaires were designed to source information on recruitment and selection practices from employees, human resources unit officials and representatives of organised labour from each participating department. The reason for choosing this approach was to reach a large group of the target population and to enable respondents to complete the questionnaires without taking them from their workplaces. The three questionnaires contained structured statements, which respondents had to agree or disagree with, and in some instances, the respondents were requested to elaborate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements.

1.4.3 Data Analysis

A total of 1197 questionnaires were completed and returned to the PSC. Of this total, 198 were incomplete and these were excluded from the analysis, and the remaining 999 formed the basis
for the analysis and findings. Data from the 999 questionnaires was captured on a database and the results were analysed to determine the recruitment and selection practices in departments and the impact of such practices on the functionality of departments. A draft report was prepared in preparation for the focus group session.

1.4.4 Focus group session

In order to validate the findings and proposed recommendations and to solicit additional inputs, the draft report was presented to a focus group session, which was attended by officials from human resources units from the departments of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, Public Service and Administration, Public Works, International Relations and Cooperation, Office of the Premier (EC), Provincial Treasury (EC), Economic Development and Environmental Affairs (EC), Finance (GP), Roads and Transport (GP), Social Development (GP), Department of Education (KZN), Department of Health (KZN), Department of Transport (KZN), Social Development (WC) and Public Works (WC). The Free State and Northern Cape provinces were not.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

In the course of information gathering, problems were encountered. The first major problem relates to the unresponsiveness of some departments, which despite numerous extensions granted, did not result in the submission of completed questionnaires. The second problem relates to incomplete or spoiled questionnaires (198) which could not be included in the analysis.

There were inconsistencies in the distribution of the questionnaires within departments. In the Free State and Western Cape provinces the distribution and collection of questionnaires were centrally managed. This was not the intention of the study because the covering letter to the questionnaire explicitly stated that all respondents should send the completed questionnaires directly to the PSC. The PSC became aware of this when the completed questionnaires were forwarded all at once by the provincial departments instead of being received from the respondents themselves. In some instances, some employees requested that they be sent questionnaires directly as their departments did not inform them about the study. This might have compromised employees’ honesty in responding to certain questions due to fear of victimisation.

Based on the assumption that many employees from each department will complete the questionnaire, there was no provision for respondents to indicate their positional level, as such, it is not possible to indicate if the employees who responded to the questionnaires are at the administration, professional or middle/senior management level. Furthermore, the low and uneven response between departments and provinces made it impossible to segment the analysis according to departments and/or provinces.

Concerns were also raised during the focus group session that the process of distributing questionnaires was not managed well in some departments and there were also differences in the distribution of questionnaires among departments.
Despite the mentioned limitations, there was enthusiasm displayed by the majority of the respondents and the PSC is of the view that the information collected is reasonably sufficient to provide for the findings and recommendations.

1.6 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The remainder of this report is divided into four chapters organised as follows:

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework;
Chapter 3: Framework underpinning recruitment and selection;
Chapter 4: Presentation of findings;
Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations.
2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to contextualise the importance of recruitment and selection in the performance of an organisation. It is also noted that recruitment and selection represent different but complementary processes and procedures that underpin the acquisition of human capacity on a fulltime, part time or contractual basis.

2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION IN ORGANISATIONS

The evolution of human civilization theory emphasizes the knowledge worker in the knowledge economy as one of the primary factors of production (Decenzo & Robins, 2002) and modern economic theory highlights human capital and the acquisition of people with exceptional skills, knowledge, experience and attitude as a high priority in organizations today (Brindusoiu, 2013). This makes human capital even more important for organisations than having the best technology and physical resources because the effectiveness and contribution of the latter resources is dependent on the capabilities of human capital (Ballantyne, 2009).

According to Cummins (2015) and Rees & French (2010), recruitment and selection are the most expensive part of human resource management and an essential component of any organisation because when organisations appoint the right people for the job, train them properly and treat them appropriately, the people not only produce good results but also tend to stay with the organization longer.

It is noted by Richardson (not dated) and Chukwu & Igwe (2012) that for both public and private sector organisations, the provision of quality goods and services begins with the recruitment process because poor recruitment decisions can have long-term negative effects such as high training and development costs to minimise the incidence of poor performance; disciplinary problems; disputes; absenteeism; low productivity; poor service delivery to customers; and high turnover which in turn impacts on staff morale. At worst, the organisation can fail to achieve its objectives thereby losing its competitive edge and market share. The importance of recruitment and selection in the acquisition of people with multi-dimensional skills and knowledge and infusing organisational capacity and competitiveness with new skills is emphasised by different authors such as Swanepoel, Erasmus & Schenk (2008) and Dessler (2011). The calibre of the work force of an organization determines its capabilities and

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sustainability. Therefore, the employment manager must have a good understanding of the labour market and how it functions.

The analysis above illustrate that recruitment and selection is not a mere administrative function and an end in itself, but a strategic process that is aimed at contributing towards the achievement of organisational objectives. This underlines the importance of a strategic approach to HR planning, including a thoroughly planned, well-documented and effectively coordinated approach to recruitment and selection process in order to ensure consistency, fairness and cost-efficiency (Lavigna & Hays, 2005). The implementation of comprehensive employee recruitment and selection procedures, in addition to incentivised compensation and performance management systems and extensive employee training can improve the current and future knowledge, skills and capabilities of organisations, and simultaneously increase employee motivation, reduce shirking and enhance the retention of quality employees while encouraging nonperformers to leave the organisation (Jones & Wright, 1992, cited in Huselid, 1995: 635). With respect to the public sector, Richardson (not dated) contends that public sector agencies are more open to public scrutiny than most private sector organisations, as such, it is crucial for recruitment and selection practices to be characterised by openness and transparency. Having recruitment and selection policies and plans in place is not adequate, the relevance and effectiveness of such policies and plans should be monitored, evaluated and reviewed (Ballantyne, 2009; Kaplan & Norton, 2004).

2.3 COMMON RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION CHALLENGES

It is true that recruitment and selection is one of the most critical aspects of human resource management in an organisation. However, it is also true that implementation of this function can be tainted with problems and challenges for organisations, employees and many other stakeholders. Through research and investigations of complaints and grievances in this area, the PSC identified common trends and challenges. The following are some of the common trends identified by the PSC (2007: 7-8) over the years:

Departments generally do not:
- have detailed policies and procedures in place to inform the objective, fair, equitable, consistent and responsible application of recruitment and selection practices;
- have standardized methods and procedures in place to ensure compliance with the constitutionally prescribed values and principles as well as national norms and standards regulating HR in the Public Service;
- thoroughly consider what skills, competencies, training and traits they require from candidates that vie for vacant posts before advertising these;
- properly determine valid selection criteria and apply these consistently;

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• structure their selection processes in accordance with these criteria;
• motivate and record their findings and decisions properly; and
• monitor their own conduct with a view to improvement.

According to Lavigna and Hays (2005)\textsuperscript{15}, recruitment and selection is susceptible to manipulation and exploitation in countries where the human resource management (HRM) system have been decentralised. Applicants can also play a critical role in the manipulation of the system by falsifying qualifications, skills and work experience due to various factors, including desperation to secure an appointment or promotion. The cause of many recruitment and selection challenges is the lack of compressive HRM strategies and inability of HR personnel to provide strategic support to line management creates numerous challenges for public sector organisations (Lavigna and Hays, 2005).

As elaborated in Section 2.4 below, a combination of any of these challenges is likely to result in poor hiring practices and negative consequences for the organisation, including employee grievances, low staff morale and overall poor organisational performance.

2.4 THE IMPACT OF POORLY MANAGED RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION ON THE PERFORMANCE AND FUNCTIONALITY OF INSTITUTIONS

Acquiring and retaining high-quality talent is critical to an organisation’s success. As the job market becomes increasingly competitive and the available skills grow more diverse, recruiters need to be more selective in their choices, since poor recruiting decisions can produce long-term negative effects, sometimes with exorbitant financial and/or non-financial implications for the organisation.

A poor or administratively flawed recruitment decision can have a demoralising effect on other staff members as their roles may be affected or their workload is drastically increased while time, money and effort are spent bringing the new recruit up to standard. The impact of low morale and grievances among employees on an organisation include, amongst others, low productivity, high staff turnover, service delivery failure and loss of public/customer confidence in the organisation.

The emotional strain and associated financial costs experienced by subordinates and peers and the organisational cost associated with an employee’s failure to deliver can be long term and indirect (Manzoni & Barsoux, 1998).\textsuperscript{16} Some of the negative outcomes of selection errors that have financial and non-financial implications include: poor performance by the employee which leads to productivity losses; absenteeism; loss of self-esteem by the employee; poor morale amongst peer workers who are compelled to assume more responsibility due to someone else’s non-performance; customers’ expectations not being met; injuries and accidents; possible lawsuits and union activity; and subsequent labour turnover leading to future recruitment costs (Jackson & Schuler, 2003\textsuperscript{17}; Hacker, 1997\textsuperscript{18}; Werther & Davis, 1989\textsuperscript{19}).


\textsuperscript{17}Jackson, S.E. & Schuler, R.S. 2003. Managing human resources through strategic partnerships. Ohio.
Although it is difficult to put an exact value on the cost of poor appointments, Hacker (1997) estimates that a bad hiring can amount to approximately 30 per cent of the employee’s first years earning potential, whereas Jackson and Schuler (2003) are of the view that the cost can be as much as five times the employee’s salary. It is noted that the financial cost of hiring a poor recruit extends beyond the costs involved in appointing the person. It also extends to the on-going salary costs of the person, retraining costs and possible legal costs in instances where a probation period is not managed efficiently, or where the skills required for the position turns out to be quite different to the actual skills set of the incumbent. The more senior or more specialised the position the higher the costs are likely to be. If the position is vacated voluntarily or involuntarily, the organisation has to incur additional recruitments expenses, plus the time and effort required to manage the process to the end. According to Kilibarda and Fonda, 1997, cited in Ntiamoah, Abrokwa, Agyei-Sakyi, Opoku & Siaw, 2014, good recruitment and selection practices can reduce the financial and non-financial risks associated with poor practices.

2.5 MECHANISMS TO STRENGTHEN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

In the Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection (2007), the PSC outlines a number of recommendations to assist departments to strengthen recruitment and selection practices. These include developing departmental HR plans to guide departments on their skills and capacity requirements and developing recruitment and selection policies in line with the prevailing prescripts. Human resource management employees and line managers must be capacitated to implement the policies and plans with rigour, honesty and integrity.

In particular, because of public institutions are open to more scrutiny, they must put in place comprehensive policies and strategies to minimise different forms of malpractice ad manipulation (Lavigna & Hays, 2005). In South Africa, a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework is in place and guidelines such as the PSC’s Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection have been developed to assist departments. The details contained in these documents are summarised in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report.

In the event that departments continue to experience recruitment and selection practices that result in poor and/or irregular appointments, it is important for departments to take swift action to remedy the situation. The remedial actions will vary depending on the nature of the challenge. The following are examples of possible remedial actions outlined in the Public Service Regulations and the Labour Relations Act: counselling, retraining, redeployment, dismissal or termination by mutual agreement. These are consistent with measures proposed by different authors (Bossidy, 2001; Davis, 2005; Hacker, 1997; Dale (2003).

18 Hacker, C. 1997. The costs of poor hiring decisions and how to avoid them, HR Focus, 74:10, S13.
20 Hacker, C. 1997. The costs of poor hiring decisions and how to avoid them, HR Focus, 74:10, S13.
23 Department of Public Service and Administration, Public Service Regulations, 2001, as amended. South Africa.
As part of its role in the investigation of complaints and grievances in the Public Service, the PSC has often found that challenges related to non-compliance with policy result in some appointments being found to be irregular, and therefore null and void. In such circumstances and informed by the provisions of the Public Service Act (1994 as amended) and relevant case law, the PSC recommend to Executive Authorities of departments in which the irregular appointments are found as follows:

“In dealing with the irregular appointments / promotion, the functionary must comply with Section 5(7)(a) of the Public Service Act, 1994 (as amended), by correcting any action or omission purportedly made in terms of this Act by that functionary, if the action or omission was based on an error of fact or law or fraud, and it is in the public interest to correct the action or omission.

The PSC accordingly directs that the relevant functionary must comply with Section 5(7)(a) as indicated in the paragraph above.

The Department’s attention is drawn to Khumalo and Another v Member of the Executive Council for Education: KwaZulu-Natal [2013] ZACC 49, 2014(3) 333 (CC); (2014) 35 ILJ 613 (CC) (18 December 2013), where the Court in relation to Section 5(7)(a) of the Public Service Act viewed functionaries as being not only entitled but duty bound to seek the redress of an irregularity in a court of law.”

As stated in Section 2.4 above, many of these remedial actions have financial and non-financial implications for the organisation. However, the cost and time required to address recruitment and selection challenges and their ultimate impact on the organisation far outweighs the cost and short- long term implications of avoidance and inertia.

2.6 CONCLUSION

As illustrated in the preceding discussions, the key to any organisation’s performance is having the right people, in the right place, at the right time. This makes the recruitment and selection of individuals a critical human resource management function that has a major influence on the capacity and capabilities of an organisation to achieve its strategic objectives. Therefore, in a labour intensive environment such as the Public Service, all aspects of recruitment and selection must be articulated in relevant framework and policies and implemented carefully.

3 FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in Section 2, the key to any organisation’s performance is having the right person, in the right place, at the right time. This makes the recruitment and selection of individuals a critical activity that determines whether the organisation will achieve its strategic objectives or not. In this instance, recruitment and selection will determine whether the state machinery is sufficiently capacitated to function effectively and to deliver quality goods and services to the citizens. Considering the size of the Public Service in terms of human resources and the susceptibility of recruitment and selection to manipulation and maladministration, the need for legislative and regulatory frameworks is of paramount importance in ensuring standardisation, consistency, fairness and quality appointments. Therefore, this chapter provides an overview of the applicable legislative frameworks, policies and guidelines that govern recruitment and selection in the Public Service in South Africa.

3.2 PROVISION THAT GOVERN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

The guiding principles and provisions on recruitment and selection are contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which is the supreme law of the country, the Public Service Act, 1994 (as amended) and all its subordinate legislation including the Public Service Regulations, 2001 (as amended), Employment Equity Act, 1998, (as amended), Labour Relations Act, 1995 (as amended) and the Senior Management Service (SMS) Handbook (DPSA, 2003). It is noted that some Public Service employees in service departments such as South African Police Service (SAPS) as well as the Education Department are employed in terms of legislation applicable in those departments.

Additionally, recruitment and selection processes are informed by several White Papers, Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) Resolutions and Directives issued by the Minister for Public Service and Administration.

3.2.1 Constitution of Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

The Constitution sets out the values and principles that governs the public administration, including recruitment and selection processes in the Public Service. The implementation of the Constitutional values and principles is supported through various legislative frameworks, regulations and guidelines as summarised in the sections below.

Chapter 10, section 195 (1)(h) and (i) of the Constitution requires that good human resource practices be cultivated in dealing with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

3.2.2 Public Service Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994), as amended

The Public Service Act (PSA) takes these principles one step further by requiring, in section 11 that "all persons who qualify for appointment, transfer or promotion shall be considered". Furthermore, the evaluation of persons shall be based on “training, skills, competence, knowledge and the need to redress the imbalances of the past…”

Chapter IV, section 11(2)(b) of the Act states that the evaluation of applicants shall be based on training, skills, competence, knowledge and the need to redress in accordance with the Employment Equity Act of 1998.

3.2.3 Public Service Regulations, 2001, as amended

The Public Service Regulations (PSR) include a number of mandatory elements key principles on which recruitment and selection must be based. Some of the principles have general application whilst others focus particularly on the senior management service (SMS). This also includes the principles of open competition and fair selection processes. According to Part III, section D.1(a) - (b) of the PSR, the Executing Authority (EA) shall:

(a) Assess the HR capacity of his or her department with particular reference to the:
   - number of employees required;
   - competencies which those employees must possess; and
   - capacities (whether permanent or temporary) in which those employees shall be appointed.

(b) Assess existing human resources by race, gender and disability as well as occupational category, organizational component and grade with reference to their:
   - Competencies;
   - Training needs; and
   - Employment capabilities.

In addressing the required HR capacity for their departments, EAs must firstly establish the “real” need for a position before commencing with the recruitment process. Part III, section D.1 of the PSR, 2001, recognises that HR planning should precede any recruitment action in the Public Service. Amongst other things, this includes forecasting the department’s HR needs, job profiling, job analysis, job evaluation and budgeting for the required posts. It is important to note that if the HR function has not been delegated, the departmental heads, HR specialists and line function managers together with the EA should all be involved in the process to verify the need for recruitment. The absorption or deployment of existing employees must be given first preference depending on the circumstances, and only if the vacancy cannot be filled through such means can the EA proceed with the external recruitment process.

According to Chapter I of the PSR, 2001, the filling of posts cannot commence until the steps outlined in Table 1 below have taken place:
Table 1: Steps in the filling of posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Compile a job profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conduct job analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Compile a job description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Apply equate and conduct a job evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Motivate the need to fill the post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Compile an advert and advertise the post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Constitute a selection committee that develops and agree on selection criteria (aligned to JE and advert)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conduct interviews and apply the agreed selection criteria (include competency testing for SMS members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Recommend the most suitable candidate for appointment to delegated authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Complete pre-employment screening: Qualification verification and Security vetting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Inform successful and unsuccessful candidates in writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Successful candidate to accept or decline in writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above reflects crucial or mandatory steps that should be undertaken when recruiting and selecting individuals. These steps are a summarised version of the requirements provided for in the legislative frameworks. At key intervals of this process, approval from the relevant approving authorities should be secured before the process can proceed to the next stage.

3.2.4 Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995), as amended

The Labour Relations Act (LRA) rules out discrimination in the work place and puts in place measures for the protection and promotion of people who were previously disadvantaged. Chapter V, section 86(1)(a)-(d) states that “unless the matters for joint decision-making are regulated by a collective agreement with the representative trade union, an employer must consult and reach consensus with a workplace forum before implementing any proposal concerning disciplinary codes and procedures, measures designed to protect and advance persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination, amongst others.”

3.2.5 White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997

In terms of Section 7.2 (7.2.8) of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, human resource training, supervision and appraisal systems will need to be refocused on service delivery; and senior management must ensure that human and financial resources are

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shifted from inefficient and unnecessary activities and used instead to ensure that service deliver standards can be met.

### 3.2.6 White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, 2007

According to the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, 2007\(^{33}\), the Public Service should put in place effective recruitment strategies to reach and attract candidates from all sections of the population; and to maximise recruitment from previously disadvantaged groups. The White Paper further indicated that promotion positions must be open for competition and further emphasised that “seniority will not be a factor in assessing suitability for promotion”. In section 5.1.1, the need for departments to set employment equity targets when developing recruitment policies and procedures was highlighted. The principles underpinning recruitment and selection are fairness, equity, confidentiality, professionalism, and human dignity.

### 3.2.7 Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act 55 of 1998), as amended

The purpose of the Employment Equity Act\(^{35}\) is to achieve equity in the workplace by, amongst others, promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination. Chapter III, section 20 of the Act stipulates that all designated employers must submit employment equity plans, which must include numerical targets to achieve equitable representation of suitably qualified employees from disadvantaged groups. Chapter V, section 34 states that, any employee or trade union representative may bring an alleged contravention of this Act to the attention of, another employee, an employer, a trade union…the Director-General or the Commission.

### 3.2.8 Senior Management Service (SMS) Handbook, 2003, as amended

The Handbook\(^{36}\) provides clear and concise terms, the conditions of employment and the roles of SMS members. Chapter 2 of the Handbook deals with Recruitment and Selection and provides a step by step guide on the processes that should be followed. The steps outline are similar to those outlined in Table 1 above, and further provides for the use of head-hunting strategies when necessary. This chapter of the Handbook must be read in conjunction with the Public Service Act, Public Service Regulations and “A Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection” issued by the PSC.

### 3.3 CONCLUSION

The legal framework, policies and procedures to ensure the effective management of recruitment and selection in the Public Service is comprehensive and adequate. It would therefore be expected that a common understanding and consistent implementation of the framework would lead to effective and accountable recruitment and selection practices in the Public Service. The findings presented in Section 4 below will illustrate, amongst others, the perceived levels of compliance and consistency with prescripts and shed light on the impact thereof on the functionality of departments.

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\(^{36}\) Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003, Senior Management Service Handbook. South Africa.
4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents findings, based on information gathered through questionnaires. It focuses on the analysis and interpretation of views on recruitment and selection practices as highlighted by employees, organised labour representatives and human resource officials from selected national and provincial departments.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

As indicated in Chapter 1, three sets of questionnaires were distributed to selected national and provincial departments for completion by employees, representatives of organized labour and human resources officials. The overall response rate by employees was high and very low from the latter two groups. Notwithstanding, the majority of the respondents were from five departments, whereas approximately 24 departments had a response rate of between 0 and 10 questionnaires. Table 2 below provides an overview of the completed questionnaires received from the three targeted stakeholder groups.

Table 2: Number of Questionnaires received from Departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Department</th>
<th>Number Of Questionnaires Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relations and Cooperation</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, Children and People with Disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and Recreation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service and Administration</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Premier</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads and Public Works</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Planning and Treasury</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development and Environmental Affairs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police, Roads and Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Settlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roads and Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture and Environmental Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Development and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative Governance, Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport, Arts and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roads and Public Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport, Safety and Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Office of the Premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Safety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Information obtained through the questionnaires was analysed to reflect on the perceptions and views of the three categories of respondents. The analysis is divided into sub-headings, in line with the questions asked. A brief discussion of the issues raised during the focus group discussion is also presented.

4.3.1 Awareness of Recruitment and Selection policy

Employees, representatives of organise labour (OL) and human resource (HR) officials were asked to indicate if they are aware of the recruitment and selection policy in their departments. A sound formulated recruitment and selection policy should outline the purpose and objectives of the policy, the department’s approach to recruitment, affirm commitment to non-discrimination and compliance with policy through cross referencing to relevant prescripts. It should provide procedural guidance on matters such as advertisement platforms, composition and role of shortlisting and selection committees, and recording the outcome of each stage of the process. Research and experience has shown that institutions that have recruitment and selection policies in place, alongside their strategic human resource plans, are more effective and successful in the recruitment and selection of capable employees. Figure 2 below provides an overview of the respondents’ level of awareness.

![Figure 1: Awareness of recruitment and selection policy](image)

Figure 1 shows that at the national level the majority of employees, 97 of the 112, are aware of recruitment and selection policies in their departments and so is 12 out of 13 human resource (HR) officials. Only 15 employees and one human resource official said they are not
aware of the existence of the policy. It is worth noting that all organised labour representatives who responded to the questionnaire responded in the positive to the question.

The study revealed that in Provinces many employees, especially from FS and KZN, are aware of the recruitment and selection policy in their departments. While many officials from the human resources sections said they are aware of existence of the policy, there were few human resource officials who responded in the negative. Although the response rate from organised labour representatives was very low, the responses revealed that many are aware of their departments’ recruitment and selection policies.

### 4.3.2 Consultation with Organised Labour

Through this question the study wanted to establish whether national and provincial departments consult with organised labour in the development of their policies. The findings will also clarify the relationship between the levels of awareness and consultation with organised labour. It is important to determine the ‘perceived’ levels of consultation because the South African Public Service legislative framework allows for organised labour consultation and participation during the development and review of policies on issues that affect employees below the senior management level. Even though there may be differences of opinion on some issues, as exemplified by debates on salary negotiations and other conditions of employment of public servants, this partnership is necessary to allow for a cordial working environment that promotes productivity and effective service delivery.

As illustrated in Figure 2 above, at the national level there was unanimous affirmation by all seven (7) organised labour representatives that their departments consult with organised labour during the development of recruitment and selection policies. The same views were shared by the majority of HR officials (11 of the 13). These responses are consistent with the reported levels of awareness on the existence of policies.

The EC is the only province with unanimous agreement by the three organised labour representatives and human resource officials that consultation with organised labour does take
place during the development of recruitment and selection policies. On the contrary, all representatives of organised labour from the WC Province said there is no consultation, which contradicts the human resources officials who said there is consultation. There were mixed responses from other provinces.

Consultation with organised labour during policy development illustrates compliance with prescripts and contributes towards sound labour relations in departments. Some respondents further stated that organised labour plays a critical role on an observer capacity during interviews, which also ensure that agreed upon processes and procedures are being followed. Noncompliance with legislative requirements contributes to unsound labour relations, which can manifest itself in many ways, including low productivity and employee grievances.

4.3.3 Job Analysis

Figure 3 below presents an overview of responses by employees, organised labour representatives and HR officials to the question on whether their departments provide outlines of job analysis (e.g. duties, responsibilities, skills, etc. required for a particular job) before advertising a vacancy for employment.

![Figure 3: Job Analysis](image)

At the national level, 100 employees stated that their departments make provision for job analysis before posts are advertised, whereas 12 employees disagreed. Similarly, most organised labour representatives together with HR officials also agreed with the sentiment of the majority employees.

According to Figure 3, most employees in the provinces agreed with the assertion that their departments provide job analysis before posts are advertised. The majority of HR officials as well share this view, contrary to the majority of organised labour representatives.
4.3.4 Methods of Recruitment and Selection

Various methods are utilised by departments to attract, screen and select the most qualified candidates to fill vacant positions. Respondents were provided with options to choose from and these were the Government Circular (GC), News Paper (NP), Professional Association(s), Employee Referrals (ER) and Other (O). It is noted the methods used will vary depending on the needs and requirements of a specific position. Figure 5 below presents the results of the analysis of the methods used to fill vacant positions.

![Figure 4: Methods of recruitment used by departments](image)

As illustrated in Figure 4, employees, organised labour representatives and HR officials from national departments confirmed that the government circular and newspapers are the most popular methods utilised to advertise posts, which reflects high levels of compliance with legislative requirements. The second most popular method mentioned is employee referrals, followed by professional associations and lastly, other methods such as intranet and internal advertisements, internship and learnership programmes, and head-hunting were also cited. According to a few respondents, some positions are filled without following the methods outlined in the policy.
Similar to feedback from national departments, the most common methods utilised in provinces are the government circular and newspapers. The use of referrals, professional associations and ‘other’ methods were also highly rated by both employees and human resource officials. The methods mentioned under the ‘other alternative’ methods of recruitment include the use of bulletins, internal advertisement and head-hunting. There were few respondents who said none of the methods mentioned as common in the broader Public Service are utilised in their departments because many posts in their departments are not advertised and some people do not go through interview processes before being appointed.

In particular, head-hunting is often used to attract highly talented and skilled staff from outside the organisation. It is mostly used in highly specialised areas or professional and managerial positions. Chapter 2, paragraph 6.4(d) of the SMS Handbook (2003) stipulates that head-hunting “… can be used to seek and identify suitable candidates for positions where there is difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified candidates as well as candidates from historically disadvantaged groups. This method should be used in conjunction with the normal advertising of vacancies, i.e. an earmarked candidate should be requested to apply for the advertised position, whereby the normal processes of recruitment and selection will apply. In cases where no suitable candidate could be recommended after the final interview, further head-hunting can be undertaken. Such an earmarked candidate must be assessed by the same interview committee and against the same criteria used during the other interviews”.

Human resource officials were specifically asked to indicate whether their departments use external recruitment agencies or not. The majority of the respondents from national departments, (11 of 13) said they do not use this method. However, WC, Gauteng, EC and KZN’s respondents concurred with the statement that they utilise external recruitment agencies to a greater extent while in FS the use of the method seem to be minimal.

**4.3.5 Compliance with prescripts on recruitment and selection**

Only employees and organised labour representatives were requested to indicate if their departments comply with the applicable recruitment and selection prescripts, including departmental policies, in the filling of posts. The results are captured in Figure 6 below.
As indicated in Figure 5 above, most employees in national and provincial departments confirmed that their departments comply with the provisions contained in the recruitment and selection policies in the filling of posts, except for KZN which reflects disagreement by most employee respondents. The majority of the organized labour representatives at the national level were in agreement with the view of most employees, but in provinces the dominating view is the opposite.

Some respondents expressed concerns that nepotism and corruption is common in their departments, particularly in the filling of posts at middle management service (MMS) and senior management service (SMS) levels and indicated that this requires urgent attention. Few employees also mentioned that they get contradictory and inconsistent instructions from some SMS members, which makes it difficult for HR officials to adhere to the recruitment and selection policy.

There were also allegations that in some instances many incompetent and under-qualified people are favoured for senior positions and/or promotion and these practices disadvantages and demoralises qualified and capable employees. There were also allegations that internal candidates with many years of work experience are overlooked for promotion in favour of people with qualifications but less or no experience. Some respondents made reference to a tendency by some senior managers to “parachute” their preferred employees, with no management skills and/or the necessary experience, into SMS positions.

Other concerns raised by few respondents related to delays in the filling of positions due to interruptions by top management in some instances and the inconsistent and conflicting instructions given by certain SMS members. For illustration purposes, the views of some of the respondent are captured below:

| In filling SMS positions, the recruitment and selection policy is clearly not followed because we know before the post can be advertised who is likely to be appointed. The department is increasingly experiencing tall political interference in filling of MMS and SMS positions and [a] lot of unnecessary exceptions to the policy are considered. In addition, the management allows the trade unions to have too much influence on who to hire or not and that result into posts being vacant for a long time. Posts are advertised and withdrawn if their preferred candidates’ applications are not received or shortlisted and this is deceiving. Lastly, the department has unwritten clauses in the policy that state [that] officials cannot jump levels and that an official has to serve 12 months before he/she can be promoted to [a] senior position. But these clauses are applied inconsistently, incorrectly and unfairly. The department do[es] not follow the prescripts contained in the recruitment and selection policy in terms of MMS and SMS positions, for example people are appointed at chief director level without [the] post being advertised. Often they hire friends and comrades or those who do not question a lot in the department in the name of head-hunting process, leaving suitable candidates internally. The employment equity is about ensuring equity at all stages of recruitment and selection levels but it has been disregarded in filling positions in the department. Panels are changed as and when the management feels so, the recruitment policy is only there for the sake of compliance but it is not considered in anyway. |

4.3.6 Structured recruitment and selection plan/process

Employees were asked to indicate whether their departments follow a structured recruitment and selection plan/process to facilitate the identification of the most competent candidates. The
benefit of this is that both individual and organisational performance will be enhanced and thus clarity provided on whether recruitment and selection has a positive impact on the functionality of departments. As illustrated in Figure 6, the overall feedback was predominantly positive.

![Figure 6: Structured recruitment and selection plan/process](image)

The majority of the employees, organized labour representatives and HR officials confirmed that their departments utilise a structured recruitment and selection process/plan to fill posts. Surprisingly, organized labour representatives from KZN held the opposite view. One respondent elaborated on their response as follows:

To a larger extent HR is in a mess - the recruitment and selection process is not structured, fair, consistent and transparent, particularly, for the internal employees (from level 13 and above) but structured for the external people. Also there is lack of planning, with posts remaining vacant for 2 years plus and no adherence to “a median period of 6 months to filling a funded post [as] provided by DPSA.”

Although the responses were mostly positive, there was a view that “the recruitment and selection process is structured at an initial stage and becomes unstructured during and at [the] final stage, with interruptions by certain SMS members giving inconsistent instructions.” Some respondents also mentioned that selection panels convene interviews already knowing which candidates to appoint, and not necessarily considering the needs of the department and this contributes to inconsistency during interviews.

### 4.3.7 Effectiveness of the recruitment and selection practices in departments

In chapter 2 above it was stated that at the core of any organisation is people, as key resources, therefore the departments’ performance is largely dependent on them. It was also indicated that if clear policies and processes are developed, effectively implemented and complied with, then human resources will have a substantial impact on the performance of their departments. To
this end, respondents were requested to rate the effectiveness of the departments’ recruitment and selection practices. They had to choose between ratings of “very effective”, “good”, “not effective”, “indifferent” and “bad”. The respondents’ ratings are presented in Figure 7 below.

![Figure 7: The effectiveness of the recruitment and selection practices in departments](image)

According to Figure 7, the majority view of employees at the national level, together with their organised labour counterparts, rated the effectiveness of recruitment and selection practices in their departments as “good”. The second highest rating by employees was “indifferent”, followed by “bad”. Only 10 of the 112 employees rated their departments’ practices as “very effective”.

The views from provinces were a bit different because the practices were rated “good” and “very effective” by many employees, whereas organised labour representatives were almost split between “very effective”/“good” and “indifferent”/“bad”. Overall, approximately 350 employees said the recruitment and selection practices in their departments are either “not effective”, “indifferent” or “bad”.

4.3.8 Grievances associated with recruitment and selection practices

Employees and organised labour representatives were asked to specify whether in the past three financial years, that is, 2010/2011 to 2012/2013, they have or are aware of any grievances lodged in their departments in relation to recruitment and selection practices. The results are captured in Figure 8 below.
Few employees and most organized labour representatives from National and Pro vincial departments confirmed that during the 2010/11 to 2012/13 financial years they lodged and/or they are aware of grievance(s) lodged pertaining to the recruitment and selection practices in their departments. Some of the organized labour representatives confirmed that they are aware of such grievances. This corroborates the statistics on recruitment and selection related grievances by the PSC.

Some employees from different departments said they do not lodge grievances for fear of victimisation by some senior managers in their departments. In one department some employees said they are also unhappy with the Labour Relations unit because they have proven to be biased and more often in favour of management instead of acting as a mediator. Some respondents said:

“*The majority of employees do not lodge grievances for fear of victimisation and those who lodged grievances are victimised and suffer in silence*”.

“*Grievances regarding delays in the adjustment of salary levels 9 to 10 were lodged, to this date, we have not received feedback from the department. This has led to some employees refrain[ing] from applying for internal posts because a grievance that was lodged in 2009 was unsatisfactorily and unfairly resolved only in March 2011*”.

4.3.9 **Fair opportunities in the department**

Since departments are obliged to comply with all the legal requirements pertaining to equal employment opportunities for all and to also follow the recommended codes of practice, employees and human resource officials were asked to disclose whether there are fair opportunities for all potential employees in their departments.
Figure 9: Fair opportunities in the departments

The findings in Figure 9 reflect a margin of 59 out of 112 employees from national departments who are of the view that there are equal opportunities for all potential employees in their departments. The remaining 53 disagree with the statement. HR officials (12 of 13) were of the view that there are equal opportunities for all. This should be cause for concern especially because in the previous section, it was reported that the majority of the respondents said recruitment and selection practices are not effective and there were also concerns about non-compliance with prescripts. Although just over half of the responses were positive, the following comments made by some of the respondents cannot be ignored:

No consistency in terms of the recruitment and selection practices regarding promotions and appointments. Discrimination, nepotism and favouritism are common and used as a system to promote or appoint cadres, in laws, relatives and families into senior positions. Political meddling and appointments of politicians into management positions block upwards movement for deserving employees. Employment equity and affirmative action practices are unfairly practiced and effectively used to disqualify candidates of certain groups and gender. For example, people with disability are not given a chance.

Vacant positions are kept vacant for a long period of time. Majority of officials on lower levels and junior positions complained that they are overlooked for senior positions or higher levels. Internal officials are disadvantaged or approvals are delayed when requesting for horizontal transfer. There is no balance of employees with public service experience and those with little public service experience and qualifications. In other instances recruitment companies were used to process applications and do the shortlisting. This practice disadvantaged internal officials as those who applied were not shortlisted. Head office has a tendency to finalise appointments for the regions without their consent and prior arrangement and this has resulted in unsuitable appointments at senior positions in the regions.

4.3.10 Fair distribution of work in the department

The respondents were asked to reflect on whether there is equal distribution of work in their departments. Figure 10 below presents a summary of the findings.
Figure 10: Fair distribution of work in departments

While at national, 50 of the 112 employees together with the majority of organised labour representatives said in their departments there is equal distribution of work, 62 employees did not agree with this view. The majority of the HR officials were of the view that the distribution of work in their departments is not fair. In the provinces the majority view of employees is that there is fair distribution of work and so is the view of HR officials. To a greater extent, organised labour representatives share a different view.

Some respondents said some employees get less work than others particularly if there is mistrust by supervisors while others are overworked. There were views that managers do not have the will to manage poor performing officials or appointees, instead they load more work on officials with specific skills and experience. Utilisation of external service providers to protect underperformance of certain individuals also contributes to unfair distribution of work as this ultimately results in some employees doing lesser work than others. There were also claims that some regions are overworked and under-capacitated.

Vacant positions also contribute to unfair workload distribution in some departments. Respondents are of the view that management is not willing to optimally utilise and develop underperforming, incompetent or less skilled employees so that they are on par with other experienced employees. The following reflects the view of some respondents:

“There are directors who serve as messengers and some directors” who cannot perform their functions are moved to different sections “because of the relationship … with the so called godfather”.

4.3.11 The recruitment and selection processes and Return on Investment (ROI)

Figure 11 below presents the participants’ views on whether the strategies applied in recruitment and selection processes are periodically reviewed to meet the needs of their departments and determine their rate of return-on-investment (ROI).
Figure 11: Recruitment and selection process and Return on Investment

The information captured in Figure 11 reveals that 49 of the 112 employees from national departments are of the view that the strategies applied in recruitment and selection processes are periodically reviewed to meet their departments’ needs and determine their rate of return on investment (ROI), whereas 63 disagreed. The majority of organised labour representatives and HR officials were of the view that recruitment and selection practices are periodically reviewed to assess ROI.

Likewise, the majority of HR officials from selected provincial departments were positive that their departments periodically review strategies that are applied in recruitment and selection to determine if they meet the needs of the departments and determine ROI, but many employees did not agree with this view. Employees acknowledged that while there are pockets of success in certain areas of recruitment and selection, non-compliance with prescripts and management’s failure to deal with poor performance outweighs these elements of success. Their view is that certain senior managers in national and provincial departments are not committed to making the system work as intended. For instance, it was mentioned that departments show no specific drive to recruit people with disabilities (PWDs), which is also a serious concern since government has repeatedly failed to meet the 2% employment equity target for PWDs.

4.3.12 Application of recruitment and selection policy

Human resource officials were requested to provide their views on whether the recruitment and selection policy is consistently applied in their departments. Respondents were provided with three options, “yes”, “no” and “not always” to choose from. Figure 12 below provides an overview of their response.
Figure 12: Application of recruitment and selection policy

Figure 12 shows that the majority of human resource officials at national and provincial departments are of the view that recruitment and selection policies are consistently applied in their departments whereas the remaining few are in disagreement.

According to one respondent who is not in agreement with the view of the majority:

Managers influence decisions of the panel in terms of who should be selected and appointed. Various departments are experiencing high political interference in filling some of the posts and human resources act as a rubber stamp. Inexperienced people [are] recruited in the departments.

4.3.13 Set of skills and competencies

Human resource officials were asked if the recruitment and selection practices in their departments enable them to attract employees with the required skills and competencies needed. As illustrated in Figure 13, the majority said yes, while few respondents said no.
As illustrated in Figure 13, the majority of HR officials of departments at National and in Provinces, are in agreement that, the recruitment and selection practices in their departments enable them to attract employees with the required set of skills and competencies needed. The same views were shared the Provinces.

4.3.14 The recruitment of specialised or scarce skills

The human resource employees were asked to indicate whether their departments apply specific strategies to attract qualified candidates with specialised or scarce skills.

![Figure 14: The recruitment of specialised or scarce of skills](image)

In response to the question on whether departments apply specific strategies to attract specialised or scarce skills, Figure 14 reflects that the majority of human resource officials at National level disagreed and responded to the contrary. While Provinces as well share the same view, the majority of responses disagreed and said indicated that it is not the case in their specific departments.

4.3.15 Focus Group Discussion

As stated earlier, the draft findings were presented to officials from various national and provincial departments. Some of the issues raised during the focus group session confirmed the findings from the questionnaire. However, the session raised concerns about the generalizability of the findings, given the limitations of the study.

Focus group participants highlighted the following challenges:

- The reason why there are vacancies and some employees are overworked is because sometimes posts are advertised and the processes are stopped at a later stage when it is realized that the positions are unfunded. Additionally, the incorrect placement of some officials leads to performance challenges for those employees, thus resulting in functions being reassigned to performing officials.
- It was also indicated that non-compliance to prescripts leads to incidents of irregular appointments, which in turn contributes towards staff demoralization.
Some focus group members reiterated the concern that in the education sector there is too much control by unions in determining who should be appointed, and this has ripple effects on staff morale and motivation. It was indicated that in some areas competent and dedicated educators have lost faith in the system because their upward mobility is ‘in the hands of union members who do not have knowledge of staff performance in specific schools.

Participants at the focus group session proposed the following:

- The report should be presented to all stakeholders in each province to create the opportunity for in-depth discussions on province specific challenges and possible solutions.
- There is a need to determine how Human Resource practitioners are appointed given the ‘expected’ nature of their role as strategic partners in departments. It was noted that a lot of the challenges discussed happen as a result of capacity challenges within the HR components.

4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The responses to the questionnaire indicate divergent views at times from employees, organised labour representatives and human resource officials. Whilst there are areas of agreement in some areas, the differences raise questions as to whether the respondents were more partisan than objective when providing their opinions. The following is a summary of the views of many of the respondents.

- There are employees in some departments who are not aware of the recruitment and selection policies of their departments.
- There are departments that do not provide a job analysis outline before a post is advertised and sometimes posts are filled without even being advertised;
- Inexperienced and under qualified individuals are appointed to positions due to noncompliance with recruitment and selection policies;
- There are views that recruitment and selection processes in the Public Service can easily be manipulated – hence discrimination, tribalism, nepotism, interference by politicians and senior managers are some of the practises that were cited as different forms of manipulation;
- The skills and competencies of human resource personnel is a major concern because many challenges are experienced because of, amongst others, the inability of HR officials to assert themselves as strategic partners in departments;
- Recruitment and selection challenges contribute negatively towards employee performance and strained labour relations in departments, however, some employees are reluctant to lodge grievances due to fear for victimisation;
- The management of poor performance is weak in the Public Service and results in the uneven distribution of work among employees and work overload for some employees to cover up for underperforming employees; and;
There is a perception among some of the respondents that there is a general lack of compliance with and inconsistent application of recruitment and selection policies and prescripts in some departments.

In spite of the low and uneven response rate from most departments, the analysis revealed that there are common practises and challenges in some of the national and provincial departments. In KZN for example, the responses highlight serious challenges in recruitment and selection practises particularly in the Department of Education. The impression created is that there is a general disregard for policies and procedures as well as confusion in the specific roles of different stakeholders in the department and schools in particular when it comes to recruitment and selection.

It is however not possible to generalise the findings due to the stated limitations. In particular, the survey methodology adopted for this study had a major contribution to the challenges experienced. The study would have benefitted from a combination of qualitative methodologies such as institution specific case studies, continuous interaction with different stakeholders within the identified case study institutions, documentary analysis of a sample of recruitment and selection files and observations to address the subject of this study adequately.
5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

It is an undisputed fact that the Public Service is a labour intensive employer whose ability to deliver to the public depends on the skills, competencies, productivity, commitment and motivation of its workforce. This makes the management of human resources, including recruitment and selection practices, critical. Informed by the conceptual overview presented in Chapter 2, the legislative and regulatory prescripts outlined in Chapter 3 and the findings presented in Chapter 4, this section provides for the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

5.2 CONCLUSION

People are the most important asset in an organisation because they are the key determinant to whether an organisation will achieve its objectives or not. There is sufficient evidence to show that recruitment and selection practices can contribute either positively or negatively towards the effectiveness and functionality of an organisation. Its application, operationalization and the challenges as identified in the study makes its practices quite difficult if not impossible to implement. As such, the findings from the study revealed that recruitment and selection practices in some national and provincial departments are not compliant with prescripts and this affects employee morale and ultimately the effectiveness of departments. There is therefore a need to put mechanisms in place to address the identified challenges and to engage with some departments to ensure a thorough understanding of the challenges and to develop context specific improvement strategies.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has established that recruitment and selection is a key component of human resource management and thus a building block of an organisation’s performance and success. However, the limitations of the study as discussed in Chapter 1 made it difficult to generalise the findings to the entire Public Service. Despite the limitations, the implications of the identified challenges with respect to recruitment and selection practices and their impact on the effectiveness of selected national and provincial departments cannot be ignored. Therefore, the PSC proposes to implement the following in the medium term:

- An in-depth investigation using the case study methodology to establish the extent of the challenges and impact in specific departments;
- Engage specific national and provincial departments through structured focus group discussions to discuss the findings; and
- Conduct a longitudinal study to establish the impact of recruitment and selection practices on the functionality and effectiveness of departments in the Public Service.