

TWENTY YEAR REVIEW

SOUTH AFRICA

1994 - 2014



**BACKGROUND PAPER:
CHANGING PUBLIC SERVICE**



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The background papers are written by officials in the Presidency and other government departments using inputs from literature reviews, commissioned research, government reviews and reports and roundtable discussions with a range of stakeholders. The views reflected in the background papers do not represent those of the Presidency, but rather reflect authors' views on sector developments.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
DPME	Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
HOD	Head of department
HR	Human resources
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
MinMEC	Forum for Ministers and Members of the Executive Council
MTEF	Medium-term Expenditure Framework
MTSF	Medium-term Strategic Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
OBE	Outcomes-based education
PALAMA	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PSA	Public Servants' Association
PSC	Public Service Commission
PSTI	Public Service Training Institute
SAMDI	South African Management Development Institute
SIU	Special Investigating Unit
TBVC	Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei
WTPS	White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service
WTPSD	White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery

Executive Summary

The South African public service has been undergoing fundamental transformation. Following the dismantling of the apartheid public service in 1994, the new government had to build a democratic, inclusive and responsive public service. The last two decades therefore witnessed the most dramatic shifts in public service reform. Not only did the architects of the new South Africa manage to forge a relatively stable transition from a ruthless apartheid system to an inclusive, democratic state, but this miracle of political transition was also accompanied by a systematic transformation of all institutions, agencies and organs of state. Forming the bedrock of this transformation was the public service.

After 1994, the public service had to change. Firstly, it had to be representative of the nation's racial composition. Secondly, in line with the spirit of democracy and nation-building, it had to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of all citizens, irrespective of their racial, ethnic, gender and sexual persuasion and/or orientation. Put succinctly, the public service had to hit the proverbial ground running if it was to deliver on the state's agenda of being developmental.

The transformation of the public service became increasingly linked to the broader project of nation-building. The new government's agenda of reconstructing and developing a democratic state therefore depended on the willingness, capability and patriotism of the public service. In creating such a public service, the state had to embark on a cautious rationalisation process. According to the Sunset Clause – the provision to gradually phase out white rule rather than one dramatic handover of power – the rights of those public servants who had served the apartheid regime had to be protected. At the same time, public servants from former “homelands” and “self-governing territories” had to be incorporated into the public service. The formation of the post-apartheid public service therefore had to take place in a manner that would not destabilise the institutions of government. Institutional stability was essential, not only for political leverage and diplomacy, but also for continuity and social harmony.

This review provides a brief history of the South African public service, with its colonial and apartheid roots. It dates back to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. As Miller (2005: 52) observes, the South African government of 1924 “focused on using the public service as a sector to provide employment for the whites”. The years leading to the ascendance of the National Party into power and the subsequent institutionalisation of the apartheid system from 1948 onwards, witnessed a growing trend in the use of the public service as a vehicle for uplifting the socio-economic condition of the white minority, in particular, poor, white Afrikaners – the electoral support base of the National Party. There was a deliberate strategy to use public-sector employment as a tool for white employment. The agenda of “separate development”, as propounded by the apartheid regime, also

resulted in the creation of fragmented public administrations for the so-called homelands and self-governing territories. This “balkanisation” of South Africa during the apartheid era led to the formation of 11 public administrations. It is this legacy that has complicated the transformation of the public service since 1994.

The apartheid public service was geared towards serving the needs of the white minority group, and in the process, all black people were marginalised. The apartheid government’s racist and sexist policies were enforced through a brutal and authoritarian form of governance. In all apartheid public administrations, corruption and maladministration were rampant. This was compounded by the prevalence of an organisational culture and ethos based on non-transparency and non-participation. During the apartheid era, public servants were “held accountable for adherence to rules and procedures, rather than for service delivery outcomes” (Naidoo, 2004: 7). Operating within a governance framework that was highly centralised and functioned top-down meant that public servants were aloof and distanced from the communities they were supposed to serve. Moreover, the existence of fragmented public administrations prior to 1994 resulted in poor coordination within and between departments. The situation was compounded by the public servants’ lack of the skills necessary for effective service delivery.

As the apartheid public administrations were not developmental in nature, the most pressing task for the post-apartheid state was to create a unified public service with a developmental orientation. Given the history of uneven development characterised by a lack of basic services, such as water, electricity, proper sanitation and housing for the majority of the population, the post-apartheid public service had to be more efficient and adequately equipped with technical and specialised capacity to address these developmental challenges. As this review traces the changes in the public service after two decades since the advent of democracy, it highlights some of the successes related to the expansion of the provision of basic services. The state’s success in providing most South Africans with basic services is understood to be the result of a number of factors. These include the existence of a body of extensive development-oriented legislation and policy frameworks. Flowing from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), for instance, are the principles of transparency, accountability and a citizen-oriented service. The public servant is therefore mandated by the Constitution to provide basic services that are critical for the realisation of the nation’s socio-economic rights.

Apart from the expansion of basic services, South Africa can also celebrate the way in which the post-apartheid state was able to create a unitary state with a unified public service. The public service is constitutionally defined as a collection of organs of the state at national and provincial level. The transformation of the local sphere is covered in other reviews that focus on the local government transition. At the core of public sector reform was the transformation of its racial and gender composition. Since the apartheid government was racist and sexist, there was a need for the post-

apartheid government to ensure that the racial composition of the public service was representative of the country's demographic profile. This was done through a well-thought-out rationalisation process, informed by the spirit of reconciliation, combined with ambitious, but clearly stated targets to correct the situation. Employment equity policies that deliberately empowered the previously marginalised black population groups, as well as women and people with disabilities, provided the basis for these corrective processes.

This review highlights some of the challenges faced by the state in transforming the public service. One of these challenges is the lack of core skills needed for effective administration in the public service. The skills development crisis in the public service posed a dilemma for the post-apartheid state, as the state's agenda of racial transformation and women empowerment in the public sector depended on a pool of qualified people. Owing to the existence of various mechanisms and policies implemented by the apartheid government to disempower black people, such as the low-quality Bantu education system, the pool of well-trained, experienced black people to fill vacant positions in the new public service was not sufficient. This resulted in the premature promotion of less-qualified or inexperienced people in influential public service positions. In most instances, people employed without the necessary and/or adequate skills were set up for failure, as they could not effectively implement the new government's growing body of development-oriented legislation, policies and strategies.

As a response to the skills crisis, government was at times compelled to enrol large numbers of public servants for short-term courses. With the advantage of hindsight, it is now apparent that such quick fixes to human resource development are not effective. Instead, long-term human resource development strategies should be used. In 2009, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) formulated a human resource development strategic framework that attempted to move towards a more sustained approach to skills development and training.

An aspect of the challenges identified is the unevenness of public service performance. This issue is linked to the point made above on the shortage of core skills in some departments. The unevenness of public service performance also stems from the fragmented service delivery model of apartheid. Under apartheid, the homelands and self-governing territories were deliberately marginalised from an economic and socio-spatial perspective. After 1994, the newly established provinces, which incorporated the former homelands, had to deal with a myriad of service delivery-related challenges. In the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, for instance, one finds high levels of poverty and unemployment, a lack of adequate housing and other challenges that define lagging regions.

Uneven service delivery is not only a rural phenomenon. In urban areas, such as Johannesburg and Cape Town, rapid urbanisation and high unemployment continues to strain the public service's capacity to deliver quality services. This is

evidenced by the prevalence of what has been dubbed “service delivery protests”. These protests are not only sparked by the non-existence of basic services in communities. The provision of poor-quality services also frustrates communities, who are then compelled to express their discontentment in violent ways at times.

This review identifies the perceptions and realities of corruption in the public service as having contributed to the erosion of trust between the state and its citizens. Where it exists, corruption robs communities of quality services and also corrodes the public service’s reputational capital. The review concludes by highlighting some of the interventions undertaken by the state in ensuring that the public service becomes more accountable and service delivery-oriented. This is necessary, as the capability of the public service to provide quality services to all citizens forms an integral part of realising the state’s aspirations of fulfilling a developmental role.

Review

“The democratic political dispensation of post-apartheid South Africa inherited a public service which was beset with problems. Aside from the usual criticism of bureaucracy such as red-tape and over-regulation, the South African public service was racist in structure, staff, organisation and procedures. It was a public service reflective of South Africa’s history of apartheid and ideological interference. The South African public service was also compounded by problems of corruption, the interference from security personnel, poor service delivery to the broader population and the integration of former homelands and self-governing administrations. South Africa’s democratic dispensation therefore inherited not only a public service with the characteristic problems of red-tape and poor performance, but a public service that was accustomed to apartheid and institutional culture supportive of Afrikaner and racist ideology. The impact of apartheid created a public service that lacked legitimacy, professionalism, representation, a democratic and development culture, and the capacity to deliver quality services to all South Africans. The challenge for the democratic dispensation was to change the culture of the public service so that it entrenched the democratic principles of the South African Constitution (1996) and instilled in public servants the culture of professionalism and prudence in serving all South Africans.”

(Miller, 2005: 65)

“South Africa today is still a nation composed of too many black people in possession of almost nothing — no meaningful foundation for social and economic autonomy. For too many, the possibility of purchasing much of anything in freedom is still foreclosed. In this context, “transformation” is a justified claim that requires urgent treatment. It will be a justified claim so long as South Africa can establish that it is not pursuing the good by violating the basic requirements of justice itself. Because it is the most likely device to shield the nation from calls for retribution or vengeance, “transformation” is also one of the various mechanisms to achieve true racial equality and, ultimately, real freedom.”

(Mbembe, 2008: 17-18 – emphasis added)

1. Introduction and background

South Africa is undergoing “multiple and systemic transitions, at different paces and rhythms” (Mbembe, 2008: 5). This 20-year review of the public service is thus an attempt to capture some of the salient transformations that have continued to shape the national and provincial spheres of government, i.e. the public service, in South Africa. Like any project of this nature, this review does not purport to encompass all the changes that have taken place in the public service since 1994. Instead, its primary focus is to capture those transformational currents that continue to have a bearing on the crafting of a democratic public service. These transformational currents can be witnessed in the legislation, development strategies and initiatives geared towards public service reform.

This review of the public service is anchored in an appreciation of the achievements of, and the challenges faced by the national and provincial spheres of government in the last two decades in realising their developmental mandates. As is well articulated in the 10-year and 15-year reviews of the state, the transformation of the public service and the state as a whole is not an event (The Presidency, 2003; The Presidency, 2008). Rather, it is a continuous process requiring a systematic and well-sequenced approach. With two decades since the advent of political democracy, there is an acknowledgement of the critical twin processes of the dismantling of the apartheid public service and related institutions, as well as the establishment and subsequent stabilisation of a development-oriented public service and democratic state. A glimpse of the current public service suggests a considerable level of institutional maturity and a greater degree of stability in the formulation and implementation of development-oriented policies, initiatives and strategies. Indeed, some challenges identified in the 10-year and 15-year reviews, such as uneven delivery of services, corruption, skills shortages and a lack of professionalism in some sections of the public service, still remain. This 20-year review therefore attempts to reflect on the transformation of the public service, as well as its contribution to the development of a democratic, capable developmental state.

Conceptual framework and purpose of report

This 20-year review of the public service comes at a time when the role of the state at both the global and the local level has become more salient. The recent global financial crisis and the related uncertainties within the social, economic, environmental and political realm have compelled the state to be more innovative in its approach to development. At a national level, the state’s role in providing social security, basic services and a stable legislative environment for economic investment has bolstered its relevance in the 21st century. In other words, the state’s recent role within the development milieu has reaffirmed its legitimacy as an important player in

development. At the heart of the state's capacity to remain a relevant role-player and to equitably deliver services to its citizens is the public service¹.

The public service therefore remains at the fulcrum of fostering development, and promoting democracy and redistributive justice in post-apartheid South Africa. It is no surprise that in the last two decades, financial, social and intellectual resources have been channelled towards improving the capacity of the public service. Demands for crafting a capable state staffed by a professional public service and the uprooting of corruption in all its forms therefore stems from the need to reinforce the role of a developmental and capable state. These demands are not new. Their recurrence in most of government's policies, strategic documents and plans attests to the significance of the public service in addressing pressing developmental issues.

Given the important role that the public service plays in championing the state's developmental mandate, various government departments and affiliated institutions have garnered financial and intellectual resources in an endeavour to accelerate public service transformation. While public service transformation has been a national effort, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), National Treasury, the Public Service Commission (PSC) and The Presidency have been at the forefront of this endeavour. These departments and the PSC continue to spearhead public service transformation initiatives and strategic planning.

This review of the public service draws on a range of strategic documents, such as The Presidency's 10-year and 15-year reviews, the Diagnostic Report of the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the recently formulated National Development Plan (NDP), among others. The following section will provide a brief history of the South African public service, tracing its genesis from the apartheid times to the present. The focus then shifts to some of the achievements and challenges resulting from changes in the public service. This review is premised on an appreciation of "transformation" as a process resulting from deliberate policy shifts and initiatives.

2 The journey since 1994

2.1 A brief history of the South African public service

The history of the South African public service dates back to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. As Miller (2005: 52) observes, the South African government of 1924 "focused on using the public service as a sector to provide employment for the whites". The years leading to the ascendance of the National Party into power and the subsequent institutionalisation of the apartheid system

¹ As this review is specifically focused on the public service (i.e. the national and provincial spheres of government), less emphasis is given to an equally important sphere, local government. A separate review that is dedicated to local government transformation will fill this gap.

witnessed a growing trend in the use of the public service as a vehicle for uplifting the socio-economic condition of the white minority. There was therefore a deliberate strategy to use public-sector employment as a tool for white employment. The triumph of Afrikaner nationalism in 1948 also saw a gradual marginalisation of English-speaking white South Africans in the public service. Miller (2005: 53) points out the following:

“The South African government since 1948 to the 1980s purposefully appointed Afrikaners to the public sector and in particular to senior positions...the transformation of the public service was almost complete by the 1980s with over 80% of the public service being Afrikaners to such an extent that it was surprising to hear English being spoken in the halls of government. By 1980, over 40% of Afrikaners in South Africa were employed in the public service and parastatals. Thus, the Afrikaner dominated public service had a direct interest in preserving the apartheid status quo”.

This dominance of male Afrikaners in the public service and the absence of representation of other population groups or females had a direct bearing on future attempts to democratise the public service especially after 1994. The apartheid public service became the nerve-centre for implementing and enforcing apartheid laws and ideology. The Afrikaners' belief in the capacity of the apartheid bureaucracy to maintain the status quo is strongly expressed in the words of Professor Marinus Wiechers who commented that “however, optimistic or pessimistic you are about the willingness of politicians to change in South Africa, it is virtually impossible to break through the bureaucratic barrier...in the long run this administration, which should be the servant of society, has become its master” (cited in Miller, 2005: 53).

As such, the project of dismantling and subsequently reforming this highly racialised apartheid public service has proved to be arduous and complex. In reviewing changes in the public service, it must be noted that the government that came to power in 1994 inherited a public service whose organisational culture, identity and ethos were deeply entrenched in strong Afrikaner nationalism and racial segregation. Apart from issues of organisational culture and ethos, a plethora of policies and legislation also existed that was geared towards the maintenance of the apartheid system. It thus became imperative for the post-apartheid government to embark on a decisive democratisation project, the objective of which was to change not only the racial composition of the public service, but also its legislative framework and organisational culture.

The project of reforming the public service therefore had to be multipronged, systematic and cautious, yet decisive. What has taken place in the last 20 years is therefore the radical transformation of the public service into one that is representative of the population through the employment of a suite of policies geared towards affirmative action. Affirmative action was necessitated by a pressing need

for a new public service with an equitable racial and gender composition. Without delving into a discussion on the influence of various paradigms (such as the New Public Management, for instance) and their influence on the changes in the post-apartheid public service, it is clear that the radical process of using the public service from 1948 to the 1980s to empower the minority white Afrikaner population was to be matched by an equally rigorous transformation agenda from 1994 onwards to arrive at a South African public service that was representative of the country's demographic profile.

In reviewing the changes in the public service, the issue of homelands and self-governing territories is worth mentioning. The homelands and self-governing territories, which, according to apartheid thinking, were supposed to run their affairs independently of white South Africa, had their own public administrations that were in need of transformation. It is obvious that the organisational culture, identity, remuneration frameworks and legislation governing the 10 homelands were different (Public Service Commission, 2005). In the year preceding the democratic elections, approximately 1 187 600 public servants were employed in the public service of South Africa and the ten Bantustans (Public Service Commission, 2005: 5; Miller, 2005: 55). The amalgamation of these separate "states" into one nation, as well as the rationalisation of these disparate public administrations into one national public service proved to be an onerous task for the post-apartheid dispensation.

2.2 The dynamics of transition and the evolution of the post-apartheid public service

The salience of public sector reform was apparent to all involved in the negotiation of a democratic South African state. The Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa for instance made provisions for the following (RSA, 1994):

"An efficient, non-partisan, career-oriented public service broadly representative of the South African community, functioning on a basis to serve all members of the public in an unbiased and impartial manner, and shall, in the exercise of its power and in compliance with its duties, loyally execute the lawful policies of the government of the day in the performance of its administrative functions."

Such a bold endorsement of a democratic and accountable public service was an attempted break away from the apartheid public service. Chapter 10 of the Constitution (1996) also set out the key principles of a democratic, transparent and accountable public service. These principles included the following:

- The maintenance of a high standard of professional ethics
- The promotion of efficient, economic and effective use of resources
- The promotion of a development-oriented public administration
- The provision of services to the citizens in an impartial, fair and equitable manner

- The responsiveness of the public service to all citizens
- The establishment and promotion of a public administration representative of the broader South African population.

These values and principles which were to guide the post-apartheid public service, were geared towards creating a break from the elitist, racialised and aloof apartheid public service. All efforts made by government to promote equity, professionalism and good governance, emanate from the Constitution.

The post-apartheid state was faced with the dual task of firstly transforming the public service into a democratic structure, and secondly improving the public service's capacity to play a developmental and transformative role. These twin processes of transformation and democratisation of the public service took place at a time when the future of the new South African state was yet to be fully charted. In other words, new state institutions and related democratic structures were being crafted in a politically charged environment where the previous perpetrators of apartheid and those who had been victimised all had to form part of a unified democratic state. While the early 1990s marked the dawn of a new era for South Africa, it was also a time of political tension, compromise and, in some instances, violence.

2.3 The legislative framework informing public service transformation

Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) outlines the principles guiding public sector reform and transparency. The emphasis is on accountability, good governance, representivity and professionalism. As will be seen later, these key attributes enshrined in the Constitution vis-à-vis the public service continued to inform the work of various institutions and departments responsible for the public service.

As the agenda of public service transformation is not an event, but a process, there are some issues related to policy implementation that cannot be achieved instantly. The objective of the transformation agenda is to change the structure, organisational culture and demographic composition of the public service; the existing legal framework ought to be aligned with the capacity of state institutions to effect meaningful change. Cognisant of this fact, the post-apartheid state has endeavoured to align its objective of public sector reform with that of strengthening state institutions. As such, the PSC's watchdog role in the public service is premised on an attempt to ensure that the transformation agenda is not derailed.

In addition to the Constitution, the Public Service Act of 1994, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WTPS) of 1995, the White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery (WTPSD) of 1997 (the Batho Pele principles), the Public Service Regulations of 1999, the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) of 1999 and the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act of 2000 guide

the activities of the public service. This body of policy, legislation and regulations was geared towards changing the structure, racial and gender composition, as well as the organisational culture of the public service. In all the aforementioned documents and legislation, the emphasis was on the rationalisation of the public service with the aim of creating a professional, transparent and accountable public service that would best serve the interests and needs of all citizens. The adoption of the Batho Pele (People First) principles in the public service, for instance, was aimed at the transformation of the organisational culture and the attitudes of public servants towards citizens. Given the legacy of apartheid, there was a need for the transformation agenda to change the public's perception of the state, and vice versa.

Underpinning the Batho Pele approach to public management and governance is the centrality of the twin processes of public consultation and accountability. In 2006, the former Minister of Public Service and Administration, Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, highlighted the significance of a range of public consultation platforms in shaping the discourse on, and the practice of public service reform. Staying true to the democratic principles of building consensus through deliberative action, the post-apartheid government has embarked on a number of izimbizo/lekgotlas, with the aim of promoting public participation in policy-making.

The PFMA and other policies geared towards sound financial management and accountability continue to shape the work ethic and organisational culture of the public service. One of the underlying objectives of the PFMA is to ensure the maintenance of an effective, efficient, fair and transparent financial management and auditing system. In many ways, the PFMA has been at the centre of public finance transformation. The emphasis on sound financial management has proved to have played a transformative role in the public service. For one, financial transparency and accountability have enabled citizens to hold public servants and the state accountable. The PFMA has played an important role in promoting fiscal discipline within the public service, thus identifying and curbing corruption and financial mismanagement.

Another change in public service financial management and budgetary processes was brought forth by the Medium-term Strategic Framework (MTSF). The MTSF is a "focused set of medium-term strategic priorities that are shared by all spheres of government and inform planning, budgeting and implementation. It links policy priorities, planning and budgeting for government as a whole (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003: 45). As a planning tool, the MTSF seeks to link key policies and priorities across the public service. It also enhances strategic medium-term prioritisation. This planning tool is important, as it ensures that planning decisions made by Cabinet are implemented nationally. The MTSF also informs the preparation of the Medium-term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The latter is target-oriented, as it details government's three-year rolling expenditure and

revenue plans at national and provincial level. When properly implemented, these two planning tools lead to a holistic budgetary planning approach.

The legislative framework outlined above continues to form the bedrock of public service accountability, transparency and good governance. The existence of such a sound legislative framework also attests to the efficiency and autonomy of state institutions and structures geared towards promoting democratic values, notably the judiciary and other executive structures responsible for policy formulation. Sound policies and legislation create a predictable and enabling environment, not only for business, but also for all stakeholders in development to invest varied forms of capital. Strategic policy formulation therefore forms part of the public sector's innovation systems. As highlighted by President Zuma in his Freedom Day Statement on 27 April 2013, during the first ten years of democracy, the democratic Parliament approved 789 laws or amendments to eliminate racism from the country's statute books. The transformation of the public service was thus consciously premised on a sound legislative framework that sought to foster democratic values. The section below focuses on some achievements worth celebrating, two decades after the advent of democracy in 1994. Such achievements flow from a sound institutional structure and legislative framework that exists in South Africa.

3. Reflection on achievements

Twenty years after the collapse of the apartheid regime and the subsequent crafting of a democratic state in 1994, it is opportune for South Africans to acknowledge some of the achievements attained. While there are so many developmental goals and objectives that are yet to be achieved, there is a need for this nascent democracy to refresh its enthusiasm and optimism about the future. Such an attitude of appreciation becomes important in realising all the developmental goals set out in a range of government plans, legislation and initiatives.

Whereas it is not feasible to provide a comprehensive outline of all the state's achievements in this review, there are at least three that are worth emphasising. The first is related to the demise of the repressive apartheid regime and the consolidation of a democratic society. It is this miraculous political transition and the adoption of a democratic constitution that gave South Africa its uniqueness. This is linked to the amalgamation of disjointed apartheid public administrations into a single public service.

Flowing from the abovementioned success, the second achievement worth noting is the creation of a truly representative public service – a public service reflective of the nation's racial, ethnic and generational diversity. The third achievement is progress made with regard to the expansion of basic services to all South Africans. For centuries, black people were not recognised as citizens. As such, they were marginalised from a political, economic and socio-spatial perspective. The adoption

of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa therefore marked a new dawn for the previously disenfranchised. In the last two decades, development-oriented legislation, institutions and strategies have been formulated to dismantle the apartheid spatial economy and promote inclusive and equitable service delivery. Granted, challenges still remain on the service delivery front, but the advent of democracy created new opportunities for self-realisation and self-actualisation.

3.1 The consolidation of the public service

One of the most evident successes of the post-apartheid government, particularly in the first five years, was the systematic integration of disjointed public services. The integration of 11 former administrations and the self-governing Bantustans into a unified public service operating in the national and provincial spheres was a daunting task (Presidential Review Commission, 1998; Fraser-Moleketi, 2006). As is well articulated in the NPC's Diagnostic Report, immediately after 1994, racially segregated administrations in provinces, "homelands" and "self-governing territories" were merged into a more streamlined and racially integrated system of national and provincial government. Moreover, a comprehensive network of municipalities covered the entire country. The legal and political framework that supports this intergovernmental system is imperfect, but it is far more democratic and responsive than it was in the past.

Amalgamating previously disjointed territories was not without its challenges. Apart from the double process of dismantling the apartheid institutional structure and the subsequent redrawing of internal boundaries, there were issues of organisational culture and ethos that needed to be reformed. As part of the amalgamation process, nine provinces were created with the sole purpose of providing quality services to all South Africans. Indeed, the formation of a unified public service from fragmented public administrations defined by sectoral interests was a daunting task. Even to this day, the legacy of South Africa's "balkanised" past can be witnessed in those areas where development was neglected. The provinces of Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, for instance, continue to bear the brunt of the legacy of administrative and spatial fragmentation. Notwithstanding, the post-apartheid government managed to negotiate the complexities related to the formation of a unified public service. While there are disparities with regard to the provinces' economic and infrastructural development (particularly in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape), efforts are being made to bring these lagging provinces on par with relatively well-performing ones.

3.2 The creation of a democratic and representative Public Service

Stemming from the apartheid state's fragmented governance model, with a white South Africa on the one hand and all the self-governing territories and Bantustans on the other, was the existence of highly fragmented public administrations. There was a pressing need for the post-apartheid government to create a single public service that was to be representative of the state's racial, ethnic and generational diversity.

This transformation meant that South Africans from all racial groupings were to be represented in the public service. As part of its transformation agenda, the post-1994 government had to introduce a suite of policies geared towards promoting affirmative action and employment equity. Through this legislation and other related employment equity practices, the South African public service has witnessed a fundamental transformation, particularly in terms of racial and gender representivity.

In 1994, the profile of the public service senior management echelon (i.e. the levels from director to director-general) was 94 percent white and 95 percent male. However, by September 2011, there was a dramatic shift in the racial composition – with 87 percent of senior-level management being black and 13 percent being white (Public Service Commission, 2011). The DPSA recently compiled an extensive report that reflects on the status of employment equity in the public service in the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2013). After distilling some employment data from PERSAL – the state’s employee database – it became apparent that some remarkable achievements have been made in the public service with regard to representation according to race, gender, age and disability. The statistics on representivity in the public service based on race and gender shows remarkable achievements (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2013: 32):

*“The workforce at the end of the 2011/12 financial year was **1 327 548** which showed an increase by 29 911 from 2010/11. Of this figure, 760 501 (57.29%) were female while 567 047 (42.71%) were males. Africans were **1 050 692 (79.15%)**, Asians were 43 187 (3.25%), Coloureds were 110 929 (8.35%) and Whites were 122 740 (9.25%). Although females make up 57.29% of the workforce and males 42.71%, the high concentration of women is highest between levels 1 to 10, while males increase from levels 11 to 16”*

DPSA, 2013: 32.

The figures outlined above attest to the tremendous shift in the demographic makeup of the public service. This is a remarkable shift from a skewed demographic composition that characterised the apartheid public service (see Figure 1). According to the Affirmative Action and Employment Equity Report (2011-2012) (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2013), the transformation of the racial composition of the public service remains one of government’s priority areas.

While racial transformation in the public service is evident, some challenges still remain related to the representation of women, the youth and people with disabilities. Whereas the equity target for race was achieved, the targets of 50 percent representation of women at senior management levels and 2 percent representation of people with disabilities were not achieved. The provincial and national departments only managed to achieve a representation of 38.1 percent for women

and 0.36 percent for people with disabilities (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2013).

The issue of youth representation in the public service is important, as it provides some indication of the future composition of the public service. At the same time, having young people within the rungs of the public service could result in continuity, leading to the entrenchment of institutional memory. From the Department of Public Service and Administration's (2013) research findings, youth representivity in the public service remains a priority for all departments. Between 2011 and 2012, the youth represented 26.9 percent of the public service workforce. Out of the 358 493 young people in the public service, 156 954 were male and 201 539 female. The data shows that 7 554 were white males, 5 409 Asian males, 12 468 coloured males and 131 523 African males. White females were 14 904, Asian females 7 495, coloured females 15 855 and African females 163 285 (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2013: 28).

The figures cited above suggest a considerable transformation in the public sector's racial composition. Although there are some challenges related to gender equity and the representation of people with disabilities in the public service, there is no doubt that policies and legislation geared towards the transformation and democratisation of the public service have yielded positive results. Though well intentioned, the affirmative action approach adopted by the post-apartheid government to redress racial imbalances in the public service has received criticism from some quarters. In some instances, where affirmative action has not been properly implemented, cases of corruption, maladministration and bureaucratic ineptitude have been apparent. In other words, the employment and/or deployment of black candidates without the necessary skills and qualifications for specific jobs might have had a detrimental effect on the functioning of the public service. In realising some of the blind spots and/or inconsistencies in the implementation of the affirmative action policies, the NDP (National Planning Commission, 2012) highlighted the significance of creating a professional public service. A professional public service would thus result from the implementation of recruitment, training and management processes that are transparent and based on meritocracy.

3.3 The expansion of access to basic services for all South Africans

South Africa's Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa remain the fulcrum of democracy. The Constitution embodies the spirit of non-racialism, non-sexism and unity that binds all South Africans together, irrespective of their racial, ethnic and generational differences or sexual orientation. The Constitution also prioritises human rights, as well as the rights to basic services such as adequate shelter and education. In a nutshell, more emphasis is given to human dignity in South Africa. According to the NDP (National Planning Commission, 2012) and the Diagnostic Report of the NPC, after 1994, South Africa saw an acceleration in the provision of basic services, particularly to those population groups who had

previously been socially, spatially, economically and politically marginalised. There has been a rapid expansion in access to primary and secondary education, primary health care, as well as water and electricity. It is cited that over 10 million South Africans have gained access to formal housing since the advent of democracy.

In his Freedom Day Statement, delivered on 27 April 2013, President Jacob Zuma stated as follows:

“South Africa is a better place today than it was in 1994. Our society has been transformed in every sphere with increased education levels, greater access to water, electricity, sanitation and housing. Moving from an extremely low base, the senior certificate rate is at its highest at 73.9% in an inclusive education system. The number of graduates has doubled since 1994, more than 3.1 million houses have been built and more than 15.1 million people have benefited as a result of our comprehensive anti-poverty initiatives which have sought to expand the social security network through amongst others grants and labour-intensive public works programmes. We have turned the corner in the fight against HIV and AIDS.”

In the same statement, President Zuma also highlighted how the expansion of the social grants system from 2.7 million people in 1994 to 16 million in 2012 has contributed to a significant reduction in the proportion of households living in poverty. The percentage of households with access to potable water had also increased from 60 percent to over 90 percent. Access to electricity had increased from 50 percent of households to approximately 80 percent. The celebration of these achievements is, however, continually dampened by the prevalence of socio-spatial and economic inequalities in the country. Although the economy has expanded by 83 percent over the past 19 years, and national income per capita has increased from R27 500 in 1993 to R38 500 in 2012 (an increase of 40 percent), unemployment and income inequalities also increased (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2013).

The figures cited above suggest considerable progress in the expansion of basic services to South Africans in the last two decades. While such progress is commendable, there are still challenges related to the uneven delivery of basic services, notably water, electricity and housing. Whereas the roots of uneven service delivery can be traced to apartheid planning, the post-apartheid public service has not been without its flaws. In some provinces, the prevalence of corruption and other forms of maladministration has resulted not only in unevenness in service delivery, but also in the quality of services provided being compromised. The interface between poor service delivery and corruption has been witnessed in the provision of low-cost (RDP) housing in provinces such as Limpopo and the Eastern Cape.

4. Towards improvement

In tracing the evolution of the public service from 1994 to 2013, it is always useful to focus on the transformational currents shaping specific departments. A critical overview of the performance of national and provincial departments suggests that progress has been made in some departments, especially with regard to meeting specified development goals and mandates. While, there are still some inconsistencies and/or unevenness in service delivery, it would be imprudent to measure all departments with one yardstick, as they have different mandates. As this review focuses on the changing public service, it is worth tracing the remarkable transformation journey of one of the departments – the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). It is conceded that there are many departments that have performed considerably well in the past two decades. However, given its cross-cutting mandate, the case of the DHA could assist in illuminating some challenges, as well as innovations stemming from the public service.

4.1 The evolution of the Department of Home Affairs 1994-2013²

In the apartheid state, 11 separate structures performed functions equivalent to those performed by the post-1994 DHA. In the context of this review, these structures and functions can be described collectively as the “old” or pre-1994 Home Affairs. The functions might have appeared similar, such as the issuing of identity documents or travel documents, but the reality was that the state and society were organised under apartheid to protect and preserve the power and privileges of the white minority. This reality manifested across government and society at the levels of ideology, policy and legislation, as well as the everyday behaviour and experiences of officials and the people they had to deal with.

The identity and movement control systems administered and enforced under apartheid were experienced by black South Africans as an arbitrary and oppressive form of colonialism, mitigated to varying degrees for those classified as “Coloured” or “Asian”. In contrast, white South Africans were served by a national department called Home Affairs that was characterised by modern, relatively efficient services similar to those in countries with advanced economies. The term and concept of “immigration” was largely reserved for whites as only those classified as white were regarded as potential citizens and were actively recruited. Before and after the Union of South Africa was established in 1910 immigration policy debates were chiefly about how to exclude Indians and undesirable whites.

² This section relied on strategic engagements as well as information provided by the Department of Home Affairs as part of its contribution to the public service review process.

Box 1: One narrative of transformation – the case of the Department of Home Affairs

- The revolutionary difference between the “old” and “new” DHA is revealed sharply in a story told by a white staff member who joined the “old” DHA in 1973. Working at the birth registration counter, she describes how a baby was typically brought to the office by the mother and was taken by staff to a tea room. They locked the door while they unclothed the child and examined it to determine the race according to the Population Registration Act of 1950. In difficult cases, specialists from Social Services were called in. The process disturbed her at the time and still gives her troubling thoughts. The entire life of the child depended on the racial identity the child was given in that office or through the Bantu Administration System. In the case of Africans, there was a denial of citizenship and of every one of the other 27 rights set out in the Bill of Rights in the Interim Constitution of 1994, such as freedom of movement and political rights. Since 1994, in total contrast, the registration of the birth of a South African child by the DHA guarantees that the child has an inalienable right to the status of being a citizen and to all the equal rights and responsibilities set out in the Constitution. The same white staff member reported that as a woman, she suffered severe discrimination, and had to resign and later reapply as a temporary worker every time she became pregnant, as there was no maternity leave. She was paid less than men for doing the same job, and she was never promoted until the new government came into power in 1994. This story reminds one of the isolated, patriarchal and unjust society in which the “old” DHA was embedded. Since 1994, the state has been committed to playing a leading part in transforming this society for the benefit of all South Africans.
- At the heart of the apartheid state and economic system was the denial of citizenship and self-determination through racial and ethnic classification based on law and administered by state machinery created for that purpose. The Population Registration Act required each person to be classified and registered in accordance with his or her racially defined characteristics. Pass laws and influx control were administered through a vast bureaucracy that controlled every aspect of the life of black South Africans. The main department responsible for the pass system took on different names at different times, such as Bantu Administration and, lastly, Development and Cooperation. It functioned at provincial and local levels. This rule-based bureaucracy was notorious for the complexity of its regulations and for corruption, and arbitrary and callous decisions. The “old” DHA (broadly defined to include Bantu Administration in all its forms) was at the centre of this inhumane system, although it mainly served those classified as “white”.

The scale and consequences of racist social engineering, combined with influx control, the “homeland” system and political oppression led to apartheid being declared a crime against humanity and to the isolation of the South African state. They certainly shaped South African society in ways that continue to manifest today and impact on nation-building, development and identity. The basic mandate of the apartheid state, as described above, remained essentially unchanged until the formal transition to the new state in 1994. However, its form changed in response to growing pressures from the mass democratic movement, international isolation, and global economic and political developments, which included decolonisation and the ending of the “Cold War”.

Of direct relevance to the formation of the “new” DHA in 1994 were three related strategies adopted by the apartheid state over the final 10 to 15 years of its existence. The first strategy was the integration of identity, civil registration, movement control and immigration into the rapidly expanding security apparatus of

the state, along with many other functions of government. Travel documents, ports of entry and border areas, in particular, were tightly controlled.

The second strategy was to gain time and credibility through the formal abolition of some aspects of apartheid, such as the partial repeal of the Immorality Act in 1985 and the removal of aspects of the pass laws and petty apartheid. However, the Act that formed the basis of racial discrimination, the Population Registration Act, was only repealed in June 1991. Influx control for the majority of Africans effectively continued, but the mechanism used was the fiction that those registered as citizens in the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC) states were foreigners.

The third strategy was to strengthen the homelands, so that they could proclaim “independence”; thus creating allies while removing millions of South Africans from any possibility of citizenship.

The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 changed the status of the inhabitants of the “independent” homelands (the Bantustans), so that they were no longer citizens of South Africa. It should be noted that no other country recognised the independence of the homelands and Home Affairs had to issue passports to any South African allowed to travel abroad after the application was vetted by security agencies. The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act was only repealed in 1994 under the Interim Constitution of South Africa.

The narrative above highlights the significance of institutional histories when analysing the changing public service. The history of the DHA tells the story of a department deeply embedded and informed by apartheid ideology prior to 1994. However, due to various transformational forces (institutional, cultural and technological), it was able to redefine its role as a democratic and developmental entity. The department’s turnaround strategy, which commenced between 2003 and 2004, has resulted in remarkable changes of an institutional and cultural nature. The turnaround strategy fundamentally changed the citizens’ experiences, as well as their perceptions of this particular department.

4.2 Some Challenges in the Public Service

Although much has been accomplished, some challenges have hampered the public service’s performance over the last two decades. These include issues related to human resource development, unevenness in the performance and provision of public services, and corruption. While some of these challenges are the result of exclusionary apartheid laws, elements of ineptitude, greed and an unfounded sense of entitlement in the case of some public servants exist. The prevalence of corruption in some departments, for instance, can be traced to moral bankruptcy and a lack of professionalism in the case of some individuals.

4.3 Human resource development

In the last 20 years, the public sector has had to deal with a shortage of skilled professionals capable of executing their tasks optimally. Through affirmative action and other related policies geared towards promoting racial representivity in the public sector, the state embarked on a conscious employment drive that saw the employment of hundreds of thousands of black people into the public service. As outlined in some sections above, affirmative action was necessary, given the historical imbalances induced by apartheid policies. However, some critics are of the opinion that the affirmative action policies have in some instances had unintended consequences. One such prominent result was the employment of inadequately skilled and inexperienced people from the previously marginalised groups and the subsequent departure of skilled white professionals when voluntary severance packages were offered during the amalgamation of the various public service administrations. Having an unskilled public service does not only set those employed up for failure, it also compromises the quality of services offered by the public sector.

Post-apartheid South Africa thus experienced a double crisis of skills shortages amid pressing demands for public service transformation (i.e. racial representivity), and an equally urgent need for a skilled public service capable of implementing numerous development-oriented pieces of legislation, policies and strategies at a scope and rate not experienced before. Khan (1998: 10) aptly captures this crisis of transition:

“Policies are made in a hurry, often under intense external pressure, new legislatures are inexperienced, and inundated with massive amounts of new legislation; the executive bureaucracy are hamstrung by weak staff, poor information and logistical support; and inadequate procedures and lack of clarity concerning clear relations between governmental departments.”

Faced with the dilemma of creating a racially representative and gender-sensitive public service amid a dwindling and/or limited pool of skilled professionals, the state embarked on an extensive human resource development drive. It is unfortunate, however, that most of the skills development programmes aimed at equipping the new public service cadre with the necessary expertise were often inadequate (both in terms of course content and depth) and short (from a time-frame perspective). As most of the skills needed in the public service were, among others, in the areas of infrastructure planning, health, engineering, finance and information technology, there was no way of churning out such professionals within a period of six months or a year. The skills shortage crisis could not be resolved through the quick-fix measure of a six-month course in project management. As aptly stipulated in the NDP (National Planning Commission, 2012: 364), the “temptation of quick fixes has diverted attention from more fundamental priorities, particularly the deficit in skills and professionalism affecting all elements of the public service”.

In the last two decades, the implementation of skills development programmes in the public service has been incoherent, uneven and fragmented. From the late 1990s, entities tasked with human resource development, such as the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) and the Public Service Training Institute (PSTI) before it, lacked coherent strategies for providing quality, sustained public service-oriented training programmes. In short, the PSTI and SAMDI were not well poised to respond to the crisis of the skills deficit in the public sector as a whole. The recent launch of the National School of Government is an attempt to reposition government's approach to education and training for the public service.

Also linked to the unintended consequences of hastily implemented affirmative action programmes, was the rapid employment of young, black, unskilled and/or recently qualified graduates into middle management and senior positions in the public service. This resulted in the swelling of management ranks. Such rapid swelling of the management echelons leaves a void that ought to be filled by technicians and other related implementers of policies. The Graduate Retention and Mentorship Programme, as suggested in the NDP, becomes salient in ensuring that adequate time is given for skills transfer and mentorship prior to newly qualified graduates assuming senior positions without adequate knowledge of the public service. A more sustainable human resource development strategy should thus take into account that academic qualifications do not necessarily equate to expertise.

As highlighted in various policy documents and strategic plans, South Africa has extremely good policies. The challenge, however, is their implementation. This is also the case in the area of human resource development. There is an extensive body of legislation and strategies that has a bearing on public service training and development. This includes the Public Service Act of 1994, the Skills Development Act of 1998, the Public Service Regulations of 2001, the Human Resource Development for the Public Service – Strategic Framework Vision 2015, the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III), the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) Act and the NDP.

As highlighted above, the quick-fix approach to skills development has resulted in financial resources being invested in educational programmes with little or no impact on the public servants' efficiency. Recently, PALAMA, which came into existence in 2008, has also acknowledged the challenges related to piecemeal approaches to skills development within the public service. As such, it recently proposed a four-pronged approach to human resource development that would focus on leadership, management, administration and induction. The NDP (National Planning Commission, 2012) also highlighted the need for the state to provide a coherent skills development strategy that would result in the development of the technical and professional skills that are essential to fulfil the core functions in the public service.

4.4 Uneven public service performance

In the last two decades, the state has witnessed a dramatic expansion in the provision of basic services, such as water, electricity, education, housing, social security and other related services. Despite these achievements, challenges of unevenness in the provision of quality services to all citizens remain. The disparities in service delivery in various provinces are partly linked to the legacy of apartheid, as the areas located in former homelands remain relatively disadvantaged from a service provision perspective. In the same vein, provinces and municipalities that are predominantly rural and/or are spatially fragmented have not received the best services over the last two decades.

Apart from the effects of spatial fragmentation, uneven service delivery has been linked to institutional weaknesses at provincial and municipal levels. Provinces that are lagging behind from an economic development perspective have also been characterised by skills shortages and/or deficits. Examples of these provinces include the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and the North West. As institutional weaknesses are compounded by skills shortages and poverty, the quality of life for communities in the aforementioned areas remain relatively poor. The double crisis of skills shortages and institutional weaknesses also results in the incapacity of lagging provinces to spend the funds available to them. In some instances, weaknesses in administrative capacity result in some of these provinces engaging in quick fixes and/or embarking on “budget dumping” or fruitless expenditure with the aim of keeping up the appearance of being “functional” and developmental.

While cases of uneven performance within the public sector has been glaring in provinces in which former homeland areas had been incorporated, the relatively urbanised provinces, such as Gauteng and the Western Cape, have not been spared such institutional weaknesses. The rapid urbanisation trends from relatively lagging regions to Gauteng and the Western Cape have resulted in the straining of the state’s capacity to deliver quality services to the growing population. This is particularly true for the provision of adequate and quality low-cost housing, water, electricity, education and other related infrastructural services.

In most of South Africa’s urban areas, citizens’ frustration with poor and/or slow service delivery has resulted in a surge of service delivery protests. Some of these service delivery protests have been violent in nature, resulting in the damage of public and private property. The rise in insurgent citizenship stems from a particular social consciousness that views the state as failing to provide services to its citizens in an equitable and transparent manner. This is compounded by the presence of other social and economic inequalities, such as rising unemployment amid a growing economy and other related social injustices.

The public service therefore finds itself in the midst of these developmental paradoxes. As the poor are subjected to all forms of everyday marginalisation, their

frustrations are often channelled towards the state, which is viewed as the guarantor of civil liberties, of which the right to dignity forms an integral part. The right to dignity is intrinsically linked to having access to quality basic services, such as adequate housing, water, electricity, health and job opportunities.

4.5 Corruption and maladministration in the Public Service

The uneven service delivery and poor public service performance in most provinces has often been linked to the prevalence of corruption and financial mismanagement in some sections of the public service. In the last two decades, corrupt practices in the public service have been related to the selection and appointment of contractors, the allocation of contracts, the rewarding of tenders, nepotism, cronyism, clientelism and other related cases of misuse of public resources. This deliberate use of public resources, as well as political and/or public service influence for personal gain, has resulted in the erosion of trust between the state and the electorate. Although corruption in the public service has its legacy in colonialism and apartheid, its prevalence in a democratic state is a cause for concern.

Being the most unequal society in the world, South Africa cannot afford the cost of corruption. As highlighted in the NPC's Diagnostic Report, South Africa is ranked 54th out of 178 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. This index measures the perceived levels of corruption, with the first being least corrupt and the 178th being the most corrupt. In the same report, the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) is cited as having reported an increase in corruption from a range of public entities, including the police, the public broadcaster, state departments and municipalities. The placement of some government departments in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and Gauteng under administration in 2011 is an example of how corruption and financial mismanagement can cripple the state's capacity to deliver quality basic services to citizens in an equitable and transparent manner.

While the media has played a role in exposing corruption in the public service and other institutions, government has also vehemently condemned corrupt practices. The existence of numerous anti-corruption agencies and forums, such as the Public Protector, the Auditor-General, and the PSC, for instance, attests to the state's commitment to rooting out the scourge of corruption in South Africa. Civil society also continues to fight corruption through various democratic platforms that exist in the country. Thus, the realities and perceptions of corruption erode the integrity of the public service. This results in citizens' loss of trust in the state at large and in the democratic spaces created by the state to harness social cohesion.

This uneven service delivery as well as poor public service performance in most provinces has often been linked to the prevalence of corruption and financial mismanagement in some sections of the public service. In the last two decades corrupt practices in the public service have been related to the selection and enforcement of contractors, the enforcement of contracts, the rewarding of tenders, nepotism, cronyism, clientelism and other related cases misuse of public resources.

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4.6 Propensity towards quick fixes and policy fads

In an endeavour to resolve complex development challenges, some government departments have leaned towards quick-fix approaches. The adoption of such approaches has been seen in government's attempt to address skills shortages in various departments. As indicated in the section above, the pressing demand for skilled professionals after 1994 led government to introduce short courses that were not adequate for imparting core skills and expertise to public servants. Another example is the Department of Basic Education's high turnover in education-related policies and initiatives that, in some instances, have not yielded the expected results. Outcomes-based education (OBE), for instance, has been criticised for not having taken into account the complexities related to the country's divergent education environments. This is noted as follows in the NPC's Diagnostic Report on institutions and governance:

“Outcomes based education was perceived a failure – it placed new burdens on teachers without enhancing student learning. This was a result of the failure to tailor the approach to existing capacities or, more ambitiously, develop a workable plan for building the capacity of teachers and schools. This experience demonstrates the dangers of adopting approaches used elsewhere without carefully considering their suitability for South Africa. “

This tendency towards adopting policies that seem fashionable and programmes and promise to provide quick fixes and/or to act as “catalysts” have proved to have short-term benefits and long-term disadvantages. This also results in organisational instability, as more financial and intellectual resources are needed to remedy the detrimental effects induced by quick fixes. It thus becomes imperative for the public sector to acknowledge the salience of broad-based and/or multi-stakeholder participation in policy formulation and implementation. A credulous transfer of policies and programmes from other parts of the world to South Africa could result in unintended outcomes that could have detrimental effects on local communities. This is highlighted by Friedman (1998), cited in Camay and Gordon (2004: 314):

[Policies and development strategies] seek ‘transformation’, - a radical break with the past. They are ambitious: they aim to accomplish a wide range of goals and they stress that success relies on ‘holistic’, ‘coordinated’ and ‘comprehensive’ approaches...but the ‘reach’ of government in society – its ability to translate intention into reality – is often low ... While this may have much to do with lack of managerial capacity, a policy which asks its implementers to do the impossible may prevent them from tackling the possible.”

Instead of focusing on short-term solutions to complex development challenges the state should focus on capacitating the public service as well as municipalities, with the core technical skills needed for the implementation of long-term strategies. The adoption of the NDP as a medium or/long-term strategic plan for instance, provides the public service with a unique opportunity for getting the basics of good governance right.

5. Summary and recommendations

This review has attempted to provide a balanced overview of the public service. With the advantage of hindsight, it is now possible to identify the public service’s achievements and areas in need of immediate attention. Flowing from a range of recent government policies, initiatives and plans, is the salience of strengthening the public service through fostering professionalism and creating public-sector institutions with a development-oriented organisational ethos and culture. There is also a need to strengthen departments and commissions responsible for public service transformation.

5.1 Building a professional public service

The NDP's call for the creation of a professional public service stems from the uneven performance of some departments within the public service, particularly in historically disadvantaged areas. This promotion of a professional cadre of public officials is intrinsically linked to government's outcomes approach to governance, particularly Outcome 12, which seeks to promote "an efficient, effective and development-oriented public service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship".

In building a professional public service, Chapter 13 of the NDP (National Planning Commission, 2012: 337) recommends the adoption of a long-term approach to training and management. This is a fundamental shift from a quick-fix approach to skills development. This long-term approach stems from the realisation that new entrants in the public service require more time to develop the skills and expertise needed for optimal service delivery. As most learning takes place in the workplace, a focused mentorship programme linked to a clear-cut career path must be put in place for new entrants in the public service. The approach of the National School of Government will have to incorporate strategies to ensure more workplace learning opportunities.

The efficiency of the public service does not only rest on the ability of the state to attract skilled graduates. It is also about ensuring that those who are employed in government serve the state with honesty and distinction. As outlined in the NDP, prospective public-sector employees already serving in the public service must view the state as an employer of choice – i.e. the public service should be seen as a place where people can develop their skills and expertise on a long-term basis.

One of the challenges faced by most government departments at national and provincial levels is the high rate of staff turnover (National Planning Commission, 2012; Chipkin, 2011; Miller, 2005). The constant "job-hopping" and/or resignation of civil servants to move from one department to the next not only has a negative impact on individuals' career paths. The efficiency of state institutions is also thwarted by what some have referred to as the loss of institutional memory.

In attempting to find explanations for the high rate of staff turnover in government, Chipkin (2011: 58) points to the "ill-defined" leadership or managerial positions in the public service that often "require a combination of skills that are difficult to find in any single individual". Put another way, there are instances where public service jobs are not well specified. Such a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities or job descriptions tends to frustrate young graduates who are compelled to resign or move to other departments, only to face the same challenges. There are also instances where young, inexperienced graduates are overwhelmed by complex legislation and government programmes, resulting in under-performance and frustration. The NDP has therefore prioritised the issue of the development of talented public servants

through career paths tied to meritocratic appointments, as well as graduate mentorship and training. According to the NDP (National Planning Commission, 2012: 377), good training and mentorship serves multiple objectives:

- It fosters a sense of professional common purpose and a shared understanding of basic principles;
- It provides a way to communicate specific information;
- It gives people a chance to develop specific skills or knowledge;
- It provides a space for reflection and information-sharing amongst colleagues.

A long-term skills development strategy in the public service should strive to produce both specialist and technical skills. Such an approach would enable the state not only to extend the provision of basic services to all citizens, but will also result in the emergence of a professional cadre geared towards providing quality services in an equitable and democratic manner. A well-trained, professional public service should also be patriotic. Put succinctly, its work ethos and organisational culture must be informed by the principles of *Batho Pele* as well as *uBuntu*.

5.2 Getting coordination right

The NPC's Diagnostic Report and the NDP acknowledge the salience of getting coordination right in the public service. This recommendation stems from the realisation that some departments at both national and provincial levels have been operating as "silos" – i.e. disjointed and vertically insulated. From the mid-2000s onwards, more emphasis has been put on intergovernmental relations, as well as the harmonisation and alignment of government's development planning programmes and initiatives. Intergovernmental relations remain the primary focus of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) (previously the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG)). Moreover, the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act of 2005 promotes the public service's efforts to establish a synchronised and harmonious approach to development planning. Other government departments and agencies are also involved in the promotion of coordination in the public service. These include the DPSA, the PSC and the Cabinet clusters.

An attempt to address coordination is evident in the outcomes approach adopted by government in 2010. This approach identified 12 cross-cutting government priorities that were translated into the Government Programme of Action. Lead departments were appointed to coordinate each outcome, and performance agreements were signed between the President and all the ministers. These agreements spelt out high-level outcome indicators for each department and their contribution to the relevant outcome. Institutional structures, based on government's cluster and the MinMEC (Forum for Ministers and Members of the Executive Council) structures, were tasked to finalise more detailed delivery agreements. The targets and indicators in the delivery agreements required intensive interdepartmental and inter-

sphere collaboration. The clusters and MinMEC structures also monitored the implementation progress on a quarterly basis and provided quarterly progress reports to Cabinet. The effectiveness of this initiative has still to be fully evaluated, but in many outcome areas, significant progress was made in achieving sometimes ambitious targets. With the adoption of the NDP as the long-term vision for the country, the process of agreeing on five-year targets and articulating these targets in the five-year MTSF and subsequent MTEF will impact positively on overall planning and coordination processes.

Recently, the NDP has reiterated the significance of inter-/intradepartmental and sectoral coordination. However, the NDP emphasises that coordination within the public service must be premised on a strong skills base and professionalism. At the same time, emphasis is placed on strengthening the institutional capacity of existing institutions of governance, including provinces and municipalities. Provinces, metros and municipalities remain the key pillars of a developmental state. As such, more focus must be given to enhancing their role in coordination and development planning processes.

5.3 Promoting institutional stability

Focusing on building institutional capacity, as well as skills development, in the public sector will contribute to institutional stability. As has been established above, the transformation of the South African public service is not an event, but a process. As such, this transformation process has, in the main, been characterised by a range of achievements. In addition to institutional stability, South Africa has managed to formulate a sound legislative framework geared towards promoting a development-oriented public service and state.

Furthermore, a sound public finance and management framework continues to guide good governance and transparency. However, assessments of the state of management performance at an institutional level conducted by the DPME in 2011/12 point to low levels of compliance across many areas of management practices related to regulations emanating from the Public Servants' Association (PSA) and the PFMA. A key reason for this low compliance is that senior management and the Executive have not paid sufficient attention to fixing basic administration and management issues. The baseline established on the state of management and administrative compliance will, however, be an important yardstick to judge future improvements in management practices as a result of the renewed focus on it by the Executive and senior management in departments.

While the success of the public service after 1994 forms the basis of the "political miracle", there are still a number of challenges in need of immediate attention. Such challenges include corruption in some government departments, a lack of accountability resulting in the tarnishing of the image of the public service, some inefficiencies in the delivery of basic services, the uneven redistribution of state

resources and opportunities, and fragmented service delivery models due to a shortage of qualified and experienced public service personnel, especially in historically disadvantaged areas. If not addressed immediately, these challenges can reverse the achievements accomplished by the post-apartheid state in the last two decades. Corruption, in particular, has the propensity to tarnish and undermine the state's institutional integrity, leading to citizens' apathy towards the state.

The formulation and subsequent adoption of the NDP has marked a turning point for South Africa's approach to development planning. The NDP not only provides a shared vision for nation-building and development, but also an honest reflection on the challenges faced by the state in realising its development goals. This reflection is also hinged on the realisation that the state cannot be "developmental" alone. Instead, the private sector, civil society and all sections of society should contribute to the success of South Africa.

Thus, being a nascent democracy, South Africa remains riddled with paradoxes: wealth amid a sea of poverty; jobless economic growth and other contradictions characterising unequal societies. However, instead of cataloguing the challenges faced by the post-apartheid public service, there must also be a space for celebrating what the state and the public service, in particular, are doing right. As one of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nations, for instance, South Africa continues to act as the continent's gateway. Being one of the most highly industrialised countries in Africa, the country contributes to technological innovations that have a positive effect on the growth of its economy and that of the rest of the continent. All these achievements are underpinned by the existence of stable state institutions. Although it is still undergoing transformation, the South African public service remains at the cutting edge of the state's programmes geared towards institutional innovation.

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