PUBLIC LECTURE BY THE MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION ADVOCATE NGOAKO RAMATLHODI AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

23 MARCH 2016

CITY OF TSHWANE
GAUTENG PROVINCE

Principal and Vice-Chancellor of UNISA, Prof Makhanya

Chairperson of the Public Service Commission, Advocate RK Sizani

Judge Mthiyane, Chairperson of the Presidential Remuneration Review Commission

Public Service Commissioners

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Members of the Council of UNISA

Directors-General in the Public Service

Director of the School of Governance, Prof Nengwekhulu

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen
1. I am honoured by the invitation to engage you today on the topic: **Building a Capable, Career-Oriented and Professional Public Service for a Developmental State as stated in the National Development Plan Vision 2030.**

**Developmental states**

2. A developmental state can be defined as one whose ideological underpinnings are developmental and one that seriously attempts to construct and deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development.

3. Developmental states are distinguished by the fact that they establish **capable institutions** which give them the capacity for effective, selective and sustained interventions to positively alter their countries’ development trajectories\(^1\).

4. In the literature, developmental states have been identified on the basis that they have achieved developmental success. In South Africa we have declared ourselves to be a developmental state and we are now building the institutions that will enable us to implement our developmental programme.

5. A key institution for the purposes of today’s lecture is the Public Service. The public services of developmental states are characterised by the fact that they are meritocratic, career-oriented and professional.

**Founding provisions in the Constitution**

6. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa creates a Public Service that must loyally execute the lawful policies of the government of the day [section 197 (1)]\(^2\). Further, employees of the Public Service may not be favoured or prejudiced because they support a particular political party [Section 197(3)]. However, the Constitution does not preclude the appointment in the public administration of a number of persons on policy considerations [Section 195(4)].

---


7. More importantly, Section 195 (1) of the Constitution spells out the values and principles that must govern public administration. These include a high standard of professional ethics, effectiveness and efficiency, a responsive public service, accountability, and a development-oriented public service. So, the Constitution already foresaw that South Africa must become a developmental state. These values also emphasise that our development programmes must be effective, that is, they must achieve developmental impacts, in addition to being operational efficient. I will return to the issue of values.

8. World-wide, an effective Public Service is a key to the delivery of public services. In South Africa the public service is the largest employer and many people are dependent on the opportunities created in the Public Service. The Public Service in South Africa consists of national and provincial departments, and government components but excludes the local government sphere and public enterprises.

9. The total number of employees in the public service at national and provincial level, as at February 2016 was 1,2 million. Of these 352 000 (28%) are employed at national level and 887 000 (72%) are employed at provincial level. It is therefore important that those appointed in the Public Service are skilled and competent to deliver the much needed services that would improve the lives and living conditions of all our people, especially the poor.

Achievements on the South African Public Service transformation journey

10. A lot have already been achieved in the effort to put a meritocratic, professional and career-oriented Public Service in place.

11. The first priority of the new government in 1994 was the rationalisation of the separate public services of the homelands and separate administrations for Whites, Coloureds and Indians into one public service and administration for South Africa. This was no mean feat.

12. The transformed Public Service had to make a radical shift in relation to providing services to all citizens of the country - not only provision of services, but also ensuring that the beneficiaries of these services were afforded the human dignity enshrined in section 1 of the Constitution.

---

3 Vulindlela HR Oversight Report February 2016
In this regard, there were noticeable improvements in addressing socio-economic challenges. Access to sanitation has improved from 50% of households to 83%; access to water from 60% of households to 95%; and access to electricity from 50% to 86% of households\textsuperscript{4}. Government has provided approximately 2.8 million subsidised houses, 56% of which went to women-headed households. Primary school enrolment stood at 98% in 2012 and over 8 million learners are now benefitting from the no-fee schooling policy and this has increased secondary school enrolment from 51% in 1994 to an estimated 80% currently.

The Public Service needed to become “broadly representative of the South African people” while at the same time ensuring that employment practices were based on “ability, objectivity and fairness” – Section 195(1)(i) of the Constitution. However, a strict career system with entry only at the entry grades and promotion through the ranks would not have achieved this. Consequently, the system had to become open, but still competitive. All posts would be advertised inside and outside the Public Service.

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service\textsuperscript{5} laid the basis for the transformation of the Public Service, and in particular, the introduction of restitutinary or empowering programmes for the previously disadvantaged. It emphasised the importance of developing a detailed affirmative action plan with clear goals, objectives and timelines. The White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service\textsuperscript{6}, set out to fast-track the achievement of broad representation within the Public Service. The target groups were black people, women and people with disabilities.

As at January 2016, 80.4% of employees were African, 8.8% Coloured, 2.6% Indian and 8.2% White\textsuperscript{7}. The overall national statistics shows that the state of representativeness is closely on par with the economically active population of the country\textsuperscript{8}. The targets for the representation of women in the Senior Management Service (50%) and people with disabilities (2%) have not yet been achieved. The representativeness of women in the Senior Management Service currently stands at 39% and people with disabilities at 1\%\textsuperscript{9}.

\textsuperscript{4} Republic of South Africa. The Presidency. 20 Year Review South Africa 1994 - 2014.
\textsuperscript{7} Vulindlela HR Oversight Report February 2016
\textsuperscript{8} Stats SA. Labour Force Survey. Quarter 3, 2015
\textsuperscript{9} Vulindlela HR Oversight Report February 2016
17. The senior management echelon was restructured to form the Senior Management Service (SMS). This introduced a specific salary dispensation, specific performance management arrangements and competency-based management for senior managers.

18. The Batho Pele policy\textsuperscript{10} introduced consultation with citizens on levels of service, the setting of service standards and mechanisms to channel customer complaints. Predetermined standards will allow citizens to evaluate performance and hold public servants accountable.

19. The Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy, was created to guide the competency development of public servants. Training programmes were linked to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Partnerships with private and public institutions of higher learning were entered into to offer training to public servants. Institutionalised orientation and induction was introduced across public service.

\textit{Problem statement}

20. Despite these achievements the uneven performance of the public service proves that a lot still remains to be done. A diagnoses by the Public Service Commission of the issues confronting the public service revealed the following problems\textsuperscript{11}:

22.1 Regarding selection for entry into the public service, the criteria and rating scales used by selection committees and the rigour of the process are largely in the hands of these committees. This has resulted in unevenness in the quality of candidates who may lack the ability to work in the Public Service. The decisions on skills requirements and whether candidates and staff meet them are decentralised rather than tightly regulated from the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

\textsuperscript{11} Public Service Commission. Building a Capable, Career-Oriented and Professional Public Service to Underpin a Capable and Developmental State in South Africa. Discussion Document. 2014
22.2 In South Africa since 1994, HR planning, recruitment, training, continued professional development and promotion in many staff categories tended not to be based on well specified occupational career paths. The task, knowledge and skills requirements of many occupations are not specified. There is, therefore, in many cases, no sound basis for building careers or for succession planning, and consequently no sustainable pools of skills are created.

22.3 No specific continuous professional development requirements are set, either as probation or promotion requirements. Continuous professional development is not institutionalised and purposeful. Thus, not only are there doubts about the rigour of the selection process, but there are also no compulsory prescribed training courses or other compulsory development requirements that candidates must meet to address skills gaps or progress within the public service.

22.4 It is increasingly recognised that the legitimacy of government is determined by the quality of staff at the coal-face and the management of coal face institutions like hospitals and schools. The quality of managers at this level, but also their agency (whether they are empowered to make a difference), has a great impact on the quality of service delivery and the legitimacy of government.

21. Twenty-one years into our democracy, we should be able to reflect on this transformation journey and consider what adjustments need to be made at this point to build a public service that truly reflects the values in Section 195 of the Constitution.

The National Development Plan

22. The National Planning Commission has arrived at similar conclusions than the Public Service Commission and, inter alia, recommended the following:\[\text{12}\]:

25.1 Stabilise the political administrative interface. There need to be a clearer separation between the roles of the political principal and the administrative head. Employment in the public service needs to focus on building a professional public service that serves government but is sufficiently autonomous to be insulated from political patronage.

25.2 Make the public service a career of choice and to place skills and professionalism at the heart of improving the Public Service.

25.3 Develop technical and specialist professional skills.

What still needs to be done

23. I will now turn to what we are doing and what still needs to be done to address these problems.

Promoting the Constitutional Values and Principles Governing Public Administration

24. Public servants should be driven by the constitutional values and principles and has a duty to serve their fellow citizens.

25. Public administration derives its legitimacy and objectiveness from law, regulations and formal procedures. However, formal administrative rules and bureaucratic practices should never replace the heart of public service, namely to serve the people of this country.

26. The importance of the values is two-fold: they underline what the public service represents and set out what the public should expect from public administration.

27. The public service needs to respect the people it serves, and must reinforce their human dignity. This is important for nation building and creating social cohesion. Citizens should have confidence in government and its ability to address their needs. South African citizens are empowered and they know their rights and what they deserve and therefore they expect competent services from government. That is what the Batho Pele Principles are all about.
28. The Public Administration Management Act (PAMA), assented to by the President in 2014, now provides for the prescription of norms and standards regarding the promotion of the values and principles referred to in section 195 of the Constitution and for an Office of Standards and Compliance that will promote and monitor compliance with such minimum norms and standards.

29. The African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration binds Member States of the African Union to a similar set of values and principles.

**Stabilising the political administrative interface**

30. Although the Constitution provides for the appointment of a number of persons “on policy considerations” [section 195(4)], such appointments are restricted to the two top levels of the public service of Deputy Director-General and Director-General and to Ministerial Advisors.

31. The Ministerial Directive on Public Administration and Management Delegations [DPSA. 2014] also tries to ensure that appointments to posts of chief-director and below are left to heads of department and that interference in the day-to-day administration of departments is contained to the minimum that is required for ministerial accountability.

**Public Service Career System**

32. In South Africa, the career system is open – all posts are advertised and anybody can apply. The advantage of this is that it gives a measure of flexibility in appointment requirements, new blood could be brought into the public service, it allows for the transformation of the racial and gender composition of public service and created opportunity for many people to enter the public service. However, the disadvantage is that the quality of appointments depends on the rigour of the selection process and this has been delegated to selection committees, which seem not to apply consistent standards.

---

13 African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration adopted by the Sixteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 31st January 2011
33. Career development in the Public Service seems to be not structured well enough to enable the transfer of skills from one department to another. Departments should ensure that career public servants are exposed and trained in the full scope of that occupation so that when an employee progresses in their career, the next employer can be confident that the person can perform effectively such area of work. Employees move from one job to the other in the public service, many a times on promotion, before becoming proficient in a job. Promotion is not restricted to a pool of people with specific experience and qualifications and whose proficiency in specific tasks has been proven.

34. Entry into the public service should be conditional on the expectation that the candidate will prepare him or herself for a specific career and undergo a structured training and development programme. Such a programme will stretch over a number of years as the candidate moves from simple to more complex tasks.

35. The career system must be redesigned to systematically create pools of skills and to promote candidates preferentially from a pool of people who possess proven technical as well as generic management competencies.

The public service should be a career of choice

36. The National Development Plan recommended that the Public Service should become a career of choice. The NDP places skills and professionalism at the heart of the plan for improving the Public Service. This will require a shift from isolated training initiatives to a long-term approach that focuses on recruiting people with relevant aptitude and developing their skills over the course of their careers. This requires a clear vision of public service career paths, some of the aspects which I have already alluded to.
In conclusion

37. Public administration is a developing discipline and we can’t argue that the models we have put in place are ideally suited to our context and the needs of South Africa. Many have simply been adopted from especially the Anglophone countries. So, all the structures, processes and systems of public administration need constant innovation, renewal and transformation.

38. In South Africa, we have a unique opportunity to build a new public administration that can contribute to the development of the field internationally. Transformation is therefore the very difficult process of building something better and to this end, academic departments of public administration and schools of governance should play a prominent role. This will however require academia to be fully immersed in the daily practice of public administration.

39. Ladies and gentlemen:

   The evolution of the Public Service in a democratic South Africa will continue and will be one of the pillars of a developmental state. As we always state in our Batho Pele Value Statement, as a Public Service, We Belong, We Care, We Serve.

   I thank you.