

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICE CADRE IN SOUTH AFRICA: A PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Performance Management and Development System (PDMS) for the South African Public Service was introduced in 2001, and driven by the transformative agenda to achieve both acceptable levels of service delivery and measurable results. Accordingly, there has been a shift from bureaucratic rules-driven approaches in public service management to a results-oriented approach to government performance.

Although the main concern that should underpin the implementation of the PMDS is service delivery; the level of service delivery to date falls grossly short of being delivered at an acceptable level or quality. In this regard, the role of the Senior Management Service (SMS) cadre is critical as it is accountable for service provision and to demonstrate to the public that its needs are being addressed.

Keywords: Performance Management, Public Service, South Africa

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Introduction

One of the priorities of democratic South Africa was to create a Public Service that is responsive and committed to an efficient and effective service delivery, as pledged to the citizenry. Also, the premise of government initiatives was to demonstrate that performance in all categories of service delivery is managed, measured and improved. This resonates with the adage “what gets measured, gets done”. Although it may be a cliché, it is a truism that the image and success of the Public Service to a large extent depends on the quality of service delivery; responsibility and accountability for which invariably lie in the domain of the Senior Management Service cadre.

The introduction of the Performance Management and Development System (PDMS) for the South African Public Service was driven by the transformative agenda to achieve both acceptable levels of service delivery and measurable results. The PMDS for the Senior Management Service (SMS) introduced an infrastructure of systems and processes, viz. performance agreements, the designing of work plans and appraising performance. Also, quarterly performance reviews are undertaken and capacity deficits are addressed through training and development to enhance skills and knowledge.

Notwithstanding that the PMDS is a well-articulated policy with definitive systems and structures, it would appear that its implementation is indeed posing a challenge for the Senior Management Service (SMS) cadre.

The paper shall explore the above assertion by focusing on, inter alia, the background to PMDS in the Public Service; the justification for introducing PMDS to the Senior Management Service cadre; core competencies and expectations for SMS in comparison to selected international trends; a review of SMS and service delivery. The paper suggests that sourcing the right people for SMS would improve the quality of service delivery in the Public Service.

CONCEPTUALISING PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The concepts “Performance” and “Performance Management” are conceptualized variously, depending on the author’s perspective. The verb “perform” means to carry out (an action) whilst the noun “performance” refers to the act, process, or art of performing (Collins Dictionary, 1986, 840-841). According to Mayne and Zapico-Goni (2007, 5) “performance” can be loosely described as a service that is providing, in the most cost-effective manner, intended results and benefits that continue to be relevant, without causing undue unintended effects.

Patel (1994) in Van der Waldt (2004, 39) asserts that performance management is an approach to management that harnesses the contribution of managers and employees towards achieving an organization's strategic goals. In other words, it is an integrated, systematic approach to improve organizational performance to achieve its corporate goals.

In a similar perspective, Nel, et al (2007, 493), view performance management as a holistic approach and process towards the effective management of individuals and groups to ensure that their shared goals as well as the organizational strategic objectives are achieved.

A comprehensive conceptualization of performance management is offered by CIPD (2007) as "a process which contributes to the effective management of individuals and teams in order to achieve high levels of organizational performance. As such, it establishes shared understanding about what is to be achieved and an approach to leading and developing people which will ensure that it is achieved".

The above definitions clearly imply that performance management is about setting performance objectives and standards for individuals and groups. The focus is on continuous measurement of the achievement of these objectives to meet the strategic goals of the organization. This would require performance indicators, performance measurements and the utilization of knowledge to improve and manage performance. It would suggest that there should be a clear understanding of the organization's mission and values, and how individuals' and groups' performance would contribute in the achievement thereof.

BACKGROUND TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

The Public Service performs essential functions and this requires effective governance of the various activities at the different levels of management. Public service reform initiatives highlight the importance of performance management, as a consequence of which, since 1994, there has been considerable focus on measuring the performance of the Public Service. In its quest to improve service delivery at both National and Provincial spheres, the Government introduced the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) as part of an integrated framework of systems and processes. The system was implemented by all government departments with effect from 1 April 2001 (Republic of South Africa, 2001).

The introduction of PMDS is aimed at, *inter alia*, providing a uniform performance management system in the South African Public Service, and by also providing an enabling environment for public

functionaries to equip them with appropriate knowledge, skills and competencies to execute their roles. It also aims at transforming the Public Service by improving performance at all levels, that is, the different departments, components of departments, teams, and individual employees. In addition, according to the Public Service Handbook (2000), performance management and development can assist bureaucrats to link all decisions to the goals and objectives of their respective departments. Moreover, it can ensure that available resources are directed at achieving the strategic goals of the department which is of paramount importance in the effective implementation of the system. In this regard, departments are required to align the framework and the new system according to their strategic intentions, decisions and activities that link day-to-day activities and strategic goals (Republic of South Africa, 2000).

The government has a constitutional mandate to deliver quality services to the citizenry in an economic, efficient and effective manner. Consequently, performance measurement and management is imperative as a reform strategy and to improve the levels of quality service delivery. As a corollary, in his first State of the Nation Address (2009), the President emphasized the need for the establishment of a Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation Department within the Presidency in order to ensure proper management of performance within the Public Service to improve service delivery. In the Address, it was emphasized that performance contracts and agreements had to be entered into and signed between the supervisor and the supervisee at all levels of government (State of the Nation Address, 2009). The signing of contracts and agreements must be cascaded from the level of President and Ministers down to operational level.

On 1 January 2010, the Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation was established in the Presidency, showing the new Administration's commitment to improving service delivery to positively impact on the lives of the public. The Department's identified mission is to work with partners to improve government performance in achieving desired outcomes and to improve service delivery through changing how government works (The Presidency, 2010). Accordingly, the following "non-negotiable" principles are captured in the Policy Document titled "Improving Government Performance: Our Approach" (The Presidency, undated).

- Provide principled leadership and making the tough decisions that may be required to deliver on the mandate;
- Strengthen ability to co-operate across the three levels of government and work as a single delivery machine;

- Build a partnership between government and civil society to work together to achieve the goal of a better life;
- Be completely transparent with each other. Claim no easy victories – tell the truth and build on what has been achieved;
- Recognize that there will always be limited funding and resources and yet be willing to commit to doing more with less and doing it on time; and
- Develop a skilled and well-motivated public service that is proud of what it does and receives full recognition for delivering better quality services.

The practice of regularly monitoring the performance of the public service, according to Mayne and Zapico-Goni (2007, 237) is widespread in developed countries, and generally recognized as being essential to good government. Indeed, it is encouraging that the new Administration is serious about monitoring and performance in the Public Service. With the impressive guidelines the Zuma Administration no doubt appears to be committed to good governance, the results of which are anticipated by all South Africans and perhaps, the wider society.

The Performance and Management Development System covers the different categories of staff within the Public Service, including the Senior Management Service (SMS). According to the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) (<http://www.palama.gov.za>), the SMS in the South African Public Service comprises all 10 000 Directors, Chief Directors, Deputy Directors-General and Directors-General (i.e. salary levels 13 and above).

A discussion of, *inter alia*, the genesis of the SMS; what it encompasses; and what is expected of it; together with that of selected international countries shall follow.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICE WITHIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND SELECTED INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

In 2000 the Department of Public Service and Administration commissioned a study on the establishment of a senior cadre of public servants. The Report recommended the establishment of a Senior Management Service (SMS) incorporating managers between the ranks of Director and Director-General (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2007, 23). The establishment of the SMS was aimed at recruiting and retaining a high caliber of senior managers, in line with international trends. The methods used included a flexible remuneration system based on a total cost to employer package and a

competency framework to assess and develop management competencies.

The Senior Management Service which is regarded as the premium group in any Public Service is expected to be the catalyst of change. Some governments appoint a very small group of civil servants as a “senior” public service, from among whom high-level government appointments are usually made. Given that the group is variously referred to as Senior Executive Service or Senior Civil Service or Administrative Service in different countries, the generic term Senior Public Service (SPS) or Senior Management Service has been used to describe all of them (Senior Public Service Report, undated).

The information that is cited hereunder is largely sourced from a document, titled “Senior Public Service: High Performing Managers of Government” and is undated.

Models of Senior Management Service

Two models of Senior Management Service (SMS) are identified and the degree of openness/closedness draws the distinction between the two.

In countries, namely, France, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Spain, the *career-based* SMS, are staffed essentially through recruitment at the entry level through competitive examinations, with a very small proportion entering the corps by promotion from provincial/feeder/junior public services (Senior Public Service Report, undated).

In Australia, Belgium, Netherlands, and in the United States of America, the system is considered more open because appointments to identified senior positions are made from a wider pool comprising all public servants who are qualified to apply as well as those private sector applicants with relevant experience. This is known as *position-based* Senior Public Service (SPS) (Senior Public Service Report, undated).

The *career-based* Senior Public Service resembles a closed net where candidates are selected very early in their careers and trained and nurtured to become an elite administrative cadre and tracked on an accelerated career path (Senior Public Service Report, undated). The advantage of a closed system is that it helps foster a common SPS culture and value system, which in turn encourages good communication across government agencies staffed by the SPS. However, assurance of a secure career path turns out to be the *career-based* system’s disadvantage because it discourages initiative by reducing competition: appointments to top positions are made only from among members of this select group. It is very difficult not only for highly qualified persons outside government, but also for high performers from other cadres/services to get selected for top positions (Senior Public Service Report, undated).

In a *position-based* system, professional cadres within government and even those outside government can compete for selected positions. This openness indeed is the strength of the system where it opens up the choice of top managers from a much wider pool. It is well known that new entrants bring in fresh perspectives which promote renewal and adaptability in public organizations, for example, in new democracies, such as South Africa. However, in the light that this system has multiple entry and exit points, the element of patronage can creep in. According to the Senior Public Service Report (undated), a further downside of this system is that SPS members do not stay together long enough to develop an *esprit de corps* similar to the closed system. Notwithstanding, that this system is more open than the *career-based* system, a majority of appointments even in the *position-based* systems, emanate among senior careerists. In the American Senior Executive Services (SES), only 10% of positions reserved for Senior Executive Services can be filled with non-careerists (Senior Public Service Report, undated).

Despite the fact that SPSs are seen as two distinct models, their differences are not dissimilar. Countries that have one or other system – *career based* or *position-based* – have adopted elements of the alternate system in order to improve their own SPSs effectiveness. For example, some *career-based* systems have opened up to encourage competition among senior officials (Senior Public Service Report, undated). Twenty percent of positions previously reserved for Korea's *career-based* SPS are now recruited from outside the career civil service. On the other hand, America's Senior Executive Service (SES), a *position-based* system has adopted an attribute of the *career-based* service. It has introduced incentives to improve SESs *esprit de corps* through members' greater mobility between federal organizations: rank-in-person is granted to SES members, which they can carry to whatever part of the federal service they move (Senior Public Service Report, undated).

Evidently, in South Africa the SMS cadre is also regarded as an elite group with responsibility and accountability for implementing public policy. Appointments to the SMS cadre are through a combination of systems, largely through *position-based* where professional cadres within and outside government can compete for the positions. However, given the disparities of the past, the Public Service as the largest employer in the country also has to set the tone to correct the imbalances. For this reason, Affirmative Action plays an important role in SMS appointments. What would be important is that all appointments should be open and transparent and should enhance the quality of service delivery and not impede or compromise it in any way because of patronage or cadre appointments.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (PMDS) FOR SENIOR MANAGERS (SMS) AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Performance management is an approach to how work is done and organized and focuses on continuous improvement of performance and outcomes. The PMDS is thus integrated with other planning and organizational processes and systems, and it is driven from the highest level in the organization. The overall aim of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) for members of the Senior Management Service is to promote accountability for service delivery. The PMDS introduced the following (Republic of South Africa, 2002, 2):

- Mandatory assessment of demonstrated managerial competence by means of Core Management Competencies (CMCs)
- A standardized rating scale to which performance-related rewards must be directly related;
- A two-tier reward system consisting of pay progression and performance bonuses; and
- Personal development plans as new elements to the SMS performance appraisals.

Using the findings of a study by Bhatta (2001) on competency requirements for senior managers, Schwella and Rossouw (2005, 773) compared the CMCs of SMS with three countries, namely, United States of America (USA), United Kingdom and the Netherlands. It was found that in the USA, the equivalent of CMCs is referred to as Executive Core Functions (ECQs). A comparison between CMCs and ECQs are not that dissimilar. Only the CMCs, "Knowledge Management and Service Delivery Innovation" are not directly aligned to the ECQs. It is suggested that the reason for that could be traced back to the specific developmental needs dictated by the South African situation and the primary focus of service delivery (Schwella and Rossouw 2005, 774-775).

The competencies required of the Senior Public Service (SPS) in the Netherlands are more focused on the individual (that is, Interpersonal behavior; Impact; Resilience; and Governance sensitivity – whereas the CMCs are more out-based (Schwella and Rossouw, 2005, 775). The authors conclude that the differences in the level of development (Netherlands and South Africa) could possibly provide the reasons for the difference in focus – the emphasis in South Africa being on service delivery in light of its developmental needs (Schwella and Rossouw, 2005, 775).

Further, Schwella and Rossouw (2005, 776) state that the Senior Civil Service (SCS) in the United Kingdom, similar to the SMS in South Africa is subject to a common performance-appraisal system,

based on a set of core competencies, viz. Giving purpose and direction; Making a personal impact; Getting the best from people; Learning and improving; Thinking strategically; and Focusing on delivery/outcomes.

Schwella's and Rossouw's analysis established that the competency "Thinking strategically" and "Being able to articulate a vision" – and more importantly "Getting people to share that vision" is evident in the competency frameworks of all four countries. The competencies of Team work and Diversity (possibly also Conflict management) do not feature in the PMDS, whereas they do in all the quoted international cases. Another aspect that is absent in the PMDS are competencies dealing with the Manager's Personal drive, Commitment and Resilience, whereas this is evident in the international examples (2005, 777). The aforementioned findings in respect of core competencies of SMSs are indeed significant. Core competencies by themselves are not enough without the necessary drive, commitment and resilience to achieve the vision of quality service delivery.

Clearly, the Performance Management and Development System is intended to achieve acceptable levels of service delivery and measurable results in the Public Service. From sporadic incidents of community protests and regular media reports on it, it would appear that some SMS cadre although perhaps well qualified, and possibly even with the necessary core competencies are still floundering with conceptualization and implementation issues surrounding the PMDS. Overall, it would appear that challenges have been experienced as far as translating and implementing new policies into action, including the PMDS. In this regard, the former Minister of Public Service and Administration, Ms Fraser-Moleketi (2007, 3) asserted that the rich knowledge base has not translated into results-driven action, thus impacting on service delivery to members of the public. Given this assessment, the question would be – what was done to address the concerns articulated by the then Minister as far back as 2007? Today, nearly eighteen years into democracy, South Africa is still confronted with the challenge of improving basic service delivery to advance the quality of life of its citizenry.

In "A Performance Agreement to fast track service delivery, 2010-2014" between the President of the Republic of South Africa and the Minister of Public Service and Administration, the following is captured in the last paragraph under Vision (Republic of South Africa, 2010).

"All the work we do as Government relies on having a cadre of dedicated, skilled and hardworking public servants who are responsive, innovative and willing to go beyond the call of duty to help realize Governments objectives. The current perception of the public

service is that it is not as skilled as we need it to be; we do not have the level of management capacity we require to deliver on our mandate; we have an absence of a performance culture as there is little or no reward or sanction for good or bad performance; we have a severe problem of corruption; low levels of efficiency; and we simply do not get value for the money we pay in salaries. If we consider that the single biggest expenditure we have is salaries, then a significant improvement in productivity will increase the overall return on our investment. It is with this in mind that we ask for a very deliberate focus on the challenge of improving our public service".

It is indeed laudable that the Government has its ear to the ground, as undoubtedly it is a perception shared by many across the political spectrum. To what extent the perceptions have validity are issues that need to be debated with the intention and goal of improving the lives of citizens. The Editorial (Daily News, November 25, 2010), titled "Measure public servants" read as follows:

"Four months ago, it was reported that taxpayers paid R45 million in one year to pay 369 suspended public servants whose disciplinary cases dragged on for months, and even years. This is why we were heartened to hear Public Service Minister, Richard Baloyi announcing that he would review disciplinary procedures and centralize the process to ensure uniformity.

President Zuma doesn't think highly of our public service. He believes it is inefficient and that civil servants have no sense of urgency. During his election campaign last year, he made it clear that he needed to overhaul the lethargic bureaucracy. He also said the internal disciplinary policies were non-responsive, citing the suspensions with pay of senior officials as paralyzing the civil service".

"Performance assessment of directors-general and heads of departments were hampered by ministers' inability to convene – revealed by former Minister of the DPSA, Ms Fraser-Moleketi. Senior managers have failed to assess performance of their subordinates, spiraling down to junior clerical staff. Some managers, according to the PSC, have admitted that they did not understand the system. This means no-one is held accountable for their performance until there is a crisis or breakdown of services. That's when someone gets suspended with pay because there were no proper systems to monitor the situation and ensure corrective measures before it is too late – hence suspensions with pay."

In a recent study (late October/early November 2011) on “Corruption in Government” -about 2000 adults in SA’s seven major metropolitan areas were surveyed. An article titled “Corruption a way of life” (Daily News, January 11, 2012) cited the survey by research company, TNS Research. The findings were that the majority of urban South Africans feel that corruption has become a way of life – where 83% of metro adults feel that corruption has become a way of life in South Africa. Further, 85% feel that there is corruption in senior levels of government – whilst only 11% and 8% respectively, disagreed with these perceptions. A notable factor is that these figures are largely unchanged since 2005 – similar results were found in 2005 and 2008. The latest survey found little difference among demographic groups. TNS Research raised concerns that there had been no major shift in the perception of corruption in six years. It suggests that, “where there had been success in rooting out corruption in either the public or private sectors – these successes should be more widely publicized”. It also suggests that “efforts to attack this scourge need to be re-doubled and that, where officials are suspended on corruption allegations, these investigations need to be speeded up so that people can see the consequences of engaging in corruption”.

The findings of the research is rather disconcerting as perceptions of a sample of the population reflect what South Africans at grassroots feel, and perhaps even experience. The Government should seriously address the issues of trust and public confidence on where the country is going in terms of its core business.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICE REVIEW, 2005 AND BEYOND

A study in 2005 titled, SMS Review (2005) by the Department of Public Service and Administration examined, *inter alia*, the extent to which the SMS initiative has had on the quality of management and service delivery (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2005).

It found that the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) was conceptually sound, but was not considered to have led to any improvement in accountability. Although the training opportunities for managers were sufficient, it appeared that they lacked the required time to attend.

*Based on the annual reports submitted to Parliament by departments, the average level of achievement of service delivery targets is less than 50%, with a few exceptions. Senior Managers cited many **ad hoc** and scheduled meetings and unscheduled travel second only to staff and other resource shortages as the key impediments to the achievement of performance targets. The capacity of departments was under*

ever-increasing strain as the workload increases every year, without commensurate increase in resources especially personnel.

The study recommended that a centralized database of all SMS members on competency assessments and performance results must be established and managed by the DPSA as a mechanism to regulate strategic mobility, deployment, appropriate appointments, headhunting and capacity development.

*It was also recommended that all SMS members must undergo a compulsory and targeted capacity development programme in the areas of, **inter alia**, Financial Management; People Management and Empowerment; Client Orientation and Customer Focus; and Project Management. The Report proposed that a compulsory Orientation and Induction course on ethics and professional conduct be provided by the government.*

In addition, a perception survey revealed attitudes among public service managers that were cause for concern. Only 39% were committed to their jobs and their employer, while a further 37% were committed to their jobs, but not their employer, the Public Service. The study suggested that steps must be taken to instill professionalism, discipline and commitment and that uniform entrance requirements for senior management should be considered.

Factors that influenced SMS members to remain in their posts included the drive for improving service delivery and job security.

It is evident that even today, six years after the Review, numerous challenges still confront the Public Service at Senior Management level. They vary from capacity and accountability problems to attitudes and commitment towards the Public Service. This is indeed rather serious as it impacts on service delivery at grassroots level. It is rather apt to quote Ranson and Stewart (1994, 234) that “in a democracy it is only by the consent of the people that authority to govern can be delegated. And that consent is given on one condition, that all those who then act on the people’s behalf will hold themselves accountable for their stewardship”. Ranson and Stewart 1994, 244 add that this holds true whether they are elected members or officials and that accountability is thus the solid plank on which a political system rests.

In addition, the values of democracy, justice and citizenship should inform the organizational culture of the public domain. If the challenge facing the public domain is to be met, public organizations need to create a capacity for cultural change: the central code of the culture is *think public* (Ranson and Stewart, 1994, 244-245).

The Mail and Guardian (December 23, 2011 – January 5, 2012) in a 7-page “Report Card” titled

“Cabinet report cards: An unbalanced seesaw” assigned grades to the President and National Ministers. Based on service delivery performance in 2011, the President and National Ministers were rated, with ratings ranging from A - “Take a bow: You are doing an excellent job” to F-“You are fired”. One Minister, according to the M & G’s analysis, scored an “A”, whilst another, a “B”, namely, the Ministers of Health and Home Affairs, respectively – for their “striking progress” – the ultimate yardstick, relative to expectations in terms of achieving goals. Although the Ministers play a pivotal role in driving a Ministry, the important role that Senior Managers play in implementing public policy should not be overlooked and needs also to be given due credit.

Further, the M & G adds that “everything comes down to leadership, or its absence. ... there are things we all know; the serious limitations in bureaucratic expertise across departments that we politely euphemize as “capacity issues” (December 23, 2011 – 5 January, 2012).

In “A Performance Agreement to fast track service delivery” alluded to earlier, a number of Outcomes for the SMS cadre is categorized. For the Outcome “An efficient and development oriented public service”, four Outputs are identified. For the purpose of this paper, the focus shall be on **Output 2: Human Resource management and development**, namely (Republic of South Africa, 2010):

Performance development, performance agreements and assessment

In the Agreement, the President emphasizes that “the percentage of senior managers who sign performance agreements should be measured with a target of increasing this to 100% as soon as possible, and there should be a qualitative measure to assess the quality of the performance agreements. He further adds that a strategy should be developed for improving the management of poor performance of Director General, Deputy Director General and Municipal Manager level management. Suitable indicators must be developed, and targets set and reported on.

Discipline

In accordance with the Agreement, the President requires the Minister (Minister of Public Service and Administration) to measure (sic) the number of SMS managers who are disciplined and/or discharged, with the aim of ensuring consistent application of discipline and appropriate sanctions for misdemeanors. The period for completing disciplinary processes must be reduced, especially where personnel are suspended on full pay. In this regard, benchmarks must be established and targets not exceeding 3 months must be set (A Performance Agreement to fast track service delivery).

It is indeed encouraging that the President has emphasized the need for all senior managers to sign performance agreements. It is a rather curious situation that senior public managers in South Africa are offered an option whether to sign performance agreements – given that they are paid out of the public purse to deliver on the constitutional mandate of the country. On the issue of *discipline*, it is refreshing and instills public confidence that the President highlighted that there should be “..... consistent application of discipline and appropriate sanctions for misdemeanors” as the perception in many circles, to use a colloquialism, there are “different strokes for different folk”.

A question that requires to be posed – are the “right” people being employed in these key positions? It is indeed commendable to have sophisticated policies in place to appoint the SMS cadre – but to what extent are they being implemented? Are there other factors and dynamics that impede quality service from the SMS cadre? Should the “right” people for the “right” jobs not be sourced to drive service delivery for the betterment of the general public?

SOURCING THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICE FOR QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY

As alluded to earlier the SMS is considered an elite group in the Public Service. Given this distinction, what would be the special attributes apart from the Core Management Competences (CMCs), namely, Strategic Capability and Leadership; Programme and Project Management; Financial Management; Change Management; Knowledge Management; Service Delivery Innovation; Problem Solving and Analysis; People Management and Empowerment; Client Orientation and Customer Focus; Communication; and Honesty and Integrity that would qualify one to be part of this cadre? The thrust of the aforementioned core competencies for the SMS cadre would suggest that it is imperative for the SMS to have the ability to drive service delivery in a focused, proactive manner to meet demands in a changing environment. Moreover, although the identified core competencies are integral to the position of the SMS; Commitment, Dedication, Professionalism, and Discipline are equally important to serve the interests of the public. As pointed out earlier, in their analysis of the PMDS for SMS, Schwella and Rossouw (2005, 776) identified that a key aspect that was absent from the PMDS for SMS are competencies (sic) dealing with the Manager’s personal drive, Commitment and Resilience – values or qualities that are significant for leadership.

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (Republic of South Africa, 1995, 48-51) states that institution building and management are part of the creation of a strategic framework. It

affirms that it is necessary to empower, challenge, and motivate managers at all levels to be Visionaries; Initiators; Effective Communicators; and Decision-makers, capable of responding pro-actively to the challenges of the change process, rather than acting as administrators of fixed rules and procedures. Further, the "Foreword" in the Public Service Handbook (2003), highlights that service delivery cannot be achieved without capable, committed, strong leadership and management. It adds that the modern public service requires leaders with an array of skills, both hard and soft, in order to manage competing policy priorities and mandates (Republic of South Africa, 2003). It is evident that in both the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service and the Public Service Handbook, that the Government is committed to eradicating past injustices by providing a world-class service to improve and/or better the lives of the people. In light of the above, the priority of the SMS cadre should therefore be more performance-oriented and less process-compliant than any other employee in the Public Service.

Although competencies and values are critical for leadership, Penceliah (2010:191) asserts that the structures and organizational climate in which they have to function also need to be conducive, to reflection and engagement. In addition, necessary resources should be made available to facilitate creativity and innovation. In this regard, the "Foreword" to the Public Service Handbook (2003) highlights that "Improved service delivery remains a fundamental priority of government. To achieve this we need a modern, people-centred public service – a public service that accepts both the challenges and opportunities of being a primary agent of the developmental state. To fulfill this role requires a flexible and creative public service, prepared for innovation and collaboration, working in partnership with all stakeholders, be they the community, other government departments and organs of state, the private sector, civil society organizations or international partners".

To support creativity and innovation in service delivery, the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) was established in 2008/2009, as a government component operating within the Department of Public Service and Administration. The CPSI identifies, supports and nurtures innovation in the public sector with a view to improving overall service delivery. At the Public Sector Innovation Awards 2011, the new Minister of the Department of Public Service and Administration commended the Centre for recognizing, rewarding and celebrating innovation within the public sector (<http://www.dpsa.gov.za/article.php?id=79>). He also commended the work that the CPSI was doing in promoting public sector innovation – to find ways of conducting government business smarter, faster and effectively improving service delivery. The entries for

the award in 2011 demonstrated that there were "pockets of creativity throughout the spheres of government". Also at that award ceremony, Minister Padayachee singled out the Department of Home Affairs – for its turnaround strategy and for putting systems in place that is positively impacting on service delivery (<http://www.dpsa.gov.za/article.php?id=79>).

Clearly, there are public officials across the categories of employees and provinces who are demonstrating that they are committed to contribute and transform the lives of the general public. Indeed, they are the leading lights in creating a better South Africa.

Kirton (1994) in Flint (2004,4) in Penceliah (2010,191) posits another angle to innovation in a public sector environment by suggesting that the bureaucratic structure of most organizations exerts pressure on employees to be methodical, prudent and disciplined, therefore reinforcing adaptive behavior rather than innovative behavior. Notwithstanding, this assertion, it should be an expectation that if one is appointed to the SMS cadre, and given the imperatives of policy guidelines, she or he should have the ability to be innovative by creating new adaptive as well as generative knowledge. Consequently, selection to the SMS should be done on merit through criteria by competitive examination from a potential pool of candidates. As the South African Public Service needs to correct past disparities, it would be essential to implement Affirmative Action - which should also be done through merit - and it should be done judiciously and responsibly where the best candidates from among the pool within the designated groups are appointed.

A Performance Management system is not the solution for improved performance for any category within the Public Service, including the SMS. There should be a consequence, for non-performance - not only on paper but in action. This is patently clear from protests and media reports where dismal performance is recorded, without concomitant consequences. Oftentimes, the best "solution" is to transfer the incumbent, thus perpetuating the problem. Accordingly, performance and non-performance must be clearly defined, specified and understood by the SMS cadre before any action can be taken for non-performance. It is important that individuals are appraised as to what is expected of them and the criteria against which they will be measured. Also, it should be reinforced to the SMS cadre on how their performance links to the goals and vision of their respective Departments, and what the rewards or penalties for poor service delivery would be. Regular feedback on performance is paramount for individuals to identify strengths and shortcomings. In the absence of these, there could be scant commitment and dedication to their jobs and to the objectives of the organization.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding that the PMDS is a well-articulated policy with definitive systems and structures, it would appear that implementation of the PMDS is indeed a challenge for the SMS cadre in the Public Service. A significant challenge that can be observed is commitment and dedication on the part of the leadership to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to implement the system successfully. Effective leadership is vital to provide the vision and direction in implementing the system. The priority that should underpin the implementation of the Performance Management system is service delivery. Targets and indicators should align individual performance with organizational performance at every level of service delivery which should be results-oriented. Organizational renewal focusing on a culture of performance and performance management should be the driving force that pervades the organization.

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