



Canadian Centre for  
Management Development

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## THE 2002 JOHN L. MANION LECTURE

# CHALLENGES FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW AFRICAN INITIATIVE

*Hon. Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi*



Ottawa, Ontario  
May 2, 2002

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## INTRODUCTION

*Jocelyne Bourgon*

*President*

*Canadian Centre for Management Development*

Honourable Minister Fraser-Moleketi, Mr. High Commissioner,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the Canadian Centre for Management Development, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 11th John L. Manion Lecture.

The Manion Lecture is named in honour of CCMD's first Principal. Until his retirement in 1990, Mr. Manion served the Government of Canada in many capacities and was Associate Secretary to the Cabinet and Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council before being appointed to the Canadian Centre for Management Development in 1988. The John L. Manion lecture has become an important occasion on which a distinguished scholar or practitioner speaks to a mixed audience of leading Canadian academics and practitioners of public administration. This year again, Mr. Manion has agreed to honour us with his presence this evening, I would invite you to recognize him with a round of applause.

The Manion Lecture is held in conjunction with CCMD's annual University Seminar, which brings together some fifty teachers and researchers from universities across the country. For the last fifteen years, the Seminar has offered academics from the disciplines of management, public administration and political science the opportunity to ensure that their teaching and research are up to date with issues, trends and developments within the federal public service.

The Manion Lectures are also meant to be a learning experience. They bring together leaders of the public service and leading members of the academic community concerned with governance and public management. In addition this year, we have some international guests including our South African speaker of course, the High Commissioner of South Africa, Andre Jaquet, and the Director General of IIAS, Michael Duggett to whom I would like to extend my warmest welcome.

This year's Manion Lecture follows a rich tradition of lectures delivered on a range of timely and enduring topics, including the changing role of government and public service, the decline of civil society, the essence of public service, managing change, administrative morality, globalization and the future of politics and the renewal of public management in the Americas.

We have tonight, the pleasure and the privilege of hearing the reflexions of a distinguished practitioner who has an active political career in South Africa. The Honourable Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi is Minister for the Public Service and Administration in the South Africa Government since June 1999 and is a Member of Parliament since 1994. She was previously appointed Deputy Minister for Welfare and Population Development from 1995 to 1996 and then Minister for the same department from July 1996 to June 1999. She attended the University of the Western Cape in the 1980s before leaving South Africa to join the African National Congress in exile. She was awarded a fellowship to Harvard University at the Institute of Politics of the Kennedy School of Government where she studied policy analysis and investigated comparative aspects of national consultations.

Minister Fraser-Moleketi has had an outstanding social and political involvement. She has been instrumental in policy development for the transformation of the welfare system and the establishment of gender equality in South Africa. She is currently Member of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Member of the Management Board and Chairperson of the Innovation Committee of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) and she serves on the United Nations Advisory and Facilitation Group which is reviewing technical assistance to developing countries. She also participated and delivered papers in numerous international events and conferences on social development, gender equality and the transformation of the public service.

Tonight we will hear a brilliant lecture from our speaker. We will obtain her insights on the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* and on the challenges it represents for the Public Service of South Africa. The topic is of great importance to Canada as we move toward greater cooperation with the African continent. As we all know, our Prime Minister has repeatedly reaffirmed that Africa will remain a central focus at the next G8 Summit held in

Canada and also established an important African Fund last December to give concrete expression to that commitment. This lecture will be an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the issues faced by Africa, more particularly by the Public Service of South Africa, and to reflect upon the implications for the developed world.

Our speaker tonight has devoted considerable attention and effort for the past few years to transforming the Public Service of South Africa. She has also advocated that strengthening the public services of Africa is a prerequisite to building the capacity of the continent, preparing it to face the multi-faceted challenges of globalization, and bringing about meaningful development.

We are truly honoured that the Honourable Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi accepted our invitation to deliver this 2002 Manion Lecture. You will have an opportunity to address a few questions to our speaker after the Lecture.

On behalf of the Public Service of Canada, it gives me great pleasure to present the Honourable Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi.

Mesdames et messieurs, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Hon. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi.

## CHALLENGES FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW AFRICAN INITIATIVE<sup>1</sup>

Address by the Hon. Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi  
at the occasion of the 2002 Manion Lecture organized by the  
Canadian Centre for Management Development

May 2, 2002

### **Introduction**

When Madam Bourgon approached me to be the speaker at this year's Manion Lecture I was honoured. I was under the deep impression of the significance of the opportunity to speak to this particular audience close to the time when Canada will be hosting the G8 meeting. The nexus between these two events – the lecture tonight and the G8 meeting - offered an obvious area where I could speak on: Africa, South Africa and the challenges that the continent is facing in the arena of public administration within the context of new initiatives in Africa.

For a woman of Africa to come and share her thoughts with you on this topic, I had to carry a very big basket filled with a great many wares. The question, though, is whether I have the right things in this basket and whether it is carried in the most appropriate way – the weight being spread in order to balance it, keep it stable, thus making it possible to carry it over a long period of time.

In preparation for today's presentation, I found that speaking on what is happening in Africa since the formulation of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) is in sync with the characteristics that in the past have been attributed to Mr Manion. At a previous Manion lecture he has been described as "a man of action", "a man of ideas".

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the New African Initiative has been re-named "New Partnership for African Development" (NEPAD) in October 2001, after agreement on the title.

<sup>2</sup> NEPAD has undergone several changes of name, evolving from what was initially known as the Millennium Africa Plan (MAP) through the New Africa Initiative (NAI) to NEPAD. It was at the first inaugural meeting of the Implementation Committee of Heads of State and Government on NEPAD, held in October 2001 in Abuja, Nigeria, that delegates confirmed NEPAD as the official name of the New Africa Initiative.

NEPAD is also about action. NEPAD is about a vision that Africans have about the future that we would like to create for our children and ourselves. NEPAD is about Africans taking responsibility for their own future and mobilizing resources through establishing partnerships that will allow us to walk the road away from poverty to prosperity – but always on our terms, true to our own African heritage; NEPAD is about walking the road away from marginalization and the periphery, to being a full member of the global society. This is very different from the ordinary vision of Africans as being refugees, walking away from conflict and trying to find a new home.

What is it that leads to the image of the continent being one that is cut out from the picture that many people from the developed world have when they are thinking about global economic growth, sophisticated new technology and civilization? What is the connection between the plight of Africa and the situation that prevails in the Developed World?

The future safety and self-respect of nations that are in relative comfort are intricately tied into the quality of life that we can ensure for those who are excluded from prosperity and those who are living in abject poverty.

The world will be a more dangerous place – no matter where you live – if current trends of privilege and exclusion persist.

We have moved beyond making a moral argument about the plight of Africa, we are now making a survivalist argument, based on safety and security grounds!

## **Millennium Statement**

To mark the new Millennium, the United Nations convened a Special Assembly – an event that enjoys a very high level of credibility due to the fact that more Heads of State were present than what has ever been the case at any previous UN meeting.

Significant leadership was shown at that event, when - in the full realization of the mutual interdependence of all the people of the world - the Millennium Development Goals were set. The



statement captures the commitment of all the signatories – those representing rich as well as poor countries - when it says: "We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want".

The overarching goal adopted in the Declaration was to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. Early indications are that the world is actually on track to achieve the Millennium goal of halving poverty. However, the achievement is not evenly spread amongst the poor of the world. Africa, if current trends prevail - is going to fall far short from the set targets. Predictions are that Africa will actually become steadily poorer during the period. Already qualifying for the dubious honour of being the continent where poverty is the deepest, a confirmation of this negative trend is reason for alarm and necessitates urgent action in order to avoid this doomsday prediction from becoming a reality.

Messages coming simultaneously from the political and the scientific community support the argument that Africa's success or failure regarding the battle against poverty will have an impact on world security. For example the Hon. Minister Clare Short, UK Secretary of State for International Development, speaking on Africa's chances to meet the Millennium targets, states that there will be no safe place in the world, if we do not succeed in changing the pattern of "haves" and "have nots" that punctuate modern global society. In the interest of our mutual safety we can no longer choose to ignore what we do not like to be exposed to. The events in the USA on September 11, 2001 clearly demonstrated this reality.

## Overview of the African Context

Africa remains a largely unknown factor to most. Therefore, let me try to sketch a picture of Africa. The poverty that I will describe to you is not an abstract economic indicator. It is a deeply human experience. However, Africa is not about poverty only. The wealth and variety of Africa's natural resources and the resolve and ingenuity of its people, the sophistication of civilizations long extinct that laid the foundations of some of current day African society and culture give a completely different image of Africa.

- Africa is home to 803 million people<sup>3</sup>, accounting for approximately 13% of the world's estimated 6 billion people<sup>3</sup>. It is predicted that by 2050 Africa will constitute a fifth of the world's population.
- Fifteen African countries count as some of the largest in the world. Sudan, Algeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo each covers in excess of 2 mn sq km.
- Urbanization is increasing rapidly. At present about 38% of Africans live in cities and towns. By 2020, this figure will pass the 50 per cent mark. Greater Cairo, with more than 10 million inhabitants, is one of the world's largest cities. Gauteng Province in South Africa has the largest urban population south of the equator (9m).
- The 28 countries at the bottom of the UNDP's Human Development Index are all from Africa. Libya, who fares best of all African countries, is only in the 59th position on the index.
- Africa is lagging in terms of education for its people. In Africa, South of the Sahara, only 56 per cent of the age group 5 – 14 are in primary education. The comparable figure worldwide stands at 88 per cent. Only four per cent of the African population finds itself progressing to tertiary level education, compared with 16 per cent internationally. This latter figure impacts on the ability of the public sector to build up the necessary capacity to become a knowledge-based organization.

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<sup>3</sup> The statistics cited here have been gleaned from a publication that is still in preparation for publication. It is a compilation of statistics, collected from reputable sources such as the UNDP, World Bank, etc. Compiled by Pieter Esterhuysen and edited by Elizabeth le Roux, it will be published by the Africa Institute of South Africa later this year under the title: **Africa at a Glance: Facts and Figures 2001/2.**

- Fifty-nine per cent of the adult population in Africa is deemed to be literate (compared with 79 per cent worldwide).
- Access to sources of information, such as newspapers, radio, television and PCs are paltry, compared to that for the rest of the world. This poses challenges to operationalize access to information for citizens and support the functioning of democratic governance.
- Only eight of every 1,000 people in Africa have access to a personal computer, compared to 71 as an average for the rest of the world, posing serious challenges to any notion of modernizing government through the use of ICT.
- The average life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is 49 years. This has dropped from 52 years a decade ago, largely as a result of the impact of AIDS and related illnesses.
- Infant mortality rate statistics have been deteriorating over the past 30 years in Africa. One hundred and six infants per 1,000 live births die at birth in Africa (58 worldwide) and a further 172 out of 1,000 live births die before reaching age 5.
- Sub-Saharan countries have the highest incidence of TB in the world while tropical Africa accounts for about 90 per cent of all malaria cases and deaths worldwide.
- Africa's slice of the world GDP in 1999 of US \$30,300 billion was a mere 1,8 per cent. Of the total developing world GDP of US \$6,600 billion, only 8,5 per cent was contributed by African countries.
- The average GNP for Sub-Saharan Africa in 1999 was US \$500 compared with close to the US \$5,000 figure worldwide.
- Half the population of sub-Saharan Africa survives every day on what a dollar would buy – not in Africa – but in the USA.
- The size of the entire African economy is equal to that of Spain. The African population is close to 800 million, while Spain is home to only 40m.
- The external debt ratio of African countries, South of the Sahara, equals 72 per cent of the GDP. Debt servicing costs translate into 15 per cent of export earnings of the region.
- At least 46 per cent of Africa's people do not have access to safe water, and 52 per cent goes without access to sanitation arrangements that are deemed as of appropriate quality to be reckoned with by the UNDP.

However, Africa is more than only these statistics.

Modern science recognizes Africa as the cradle of humankind. Evidence has been found that shatters the myth that people in Africa lagged behind those in Europe in exhibiting behaviour that has been classified as "modern", i.e. produce art, manufacture tools and a capacity for symbolism. In fact, the evidence of this advanced behaviour in Africa pre-dates that of Europe by more than 35,000 years.

Africa is also known for its rich and varied deposits of minerals, oil and gas, its flora and fauna, with a great many unique species present, and its wide, sometimes wild and unspoiled natural habitat. As such Africa has a major role to play in maintaining a strong link between human beings and the natural world.

Africa has a rich and diverse culture, contributing to the variety of cultures of the global community, and makes significant contributions to literature, music, visual arts and other cultural forms – notwithstanding the continent's limited integration into the global economy.

Given the topic of tonight's lecture, the questions are inevitably:

- "Where does NEPAD fit into this picture?"
- "What are the challenges in the domain of public administration?"

## **NEPAD**

NEPAD has its roots in the African Renaissance idea, advanced by South Africa's President, Thabo Mbeki, since the mid-1990s. The underlying message of the African Renaissance and NEPAD is that Africans must take charge of their own destiny. For example it states:

*"Across the continent, Africans declare that we will no longer allow ourselves to be conditioned by circumstances. We will determine our own destiny and call on the rest of the world to complement our efforts".*

African leaders have taken the initiative to set Africa on a different development path. Fifteen African states have been appointed to constitute the Heads of State Implementation Committee<sup>4</sup>. The founding members of NEPAD are Nigeria, Algeria, Senegal, Egypt and South Africa. NEPAD is a merger of the most important regional development initiatives in Africa, i.e. Millennium Action Programme (MAP) and the Omega Plan and a decision has been taken that all African states will be encouraged to subsume all other developmental activities under NEPAD. NEPAD has been endorsed as an initiative of the African Union – (AU)<sup>5</sup>. The Implementation Committee of NEPAD is chaired by President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, with presidents Bouteflika of Algeria and Wade of Senegal as vice-chairs. This governance structure is supported by a secretariat, based in Pretoria, South Africa.

The opening lines of the NEPAD document states the overall objective of poverty reduction very clearly.

*"This New African Initiative is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development".*

NEPAD has been described by some as Africa's equivalent for a "Marshall Plan" and we would choose to describe it as "Africa's flagship development initiative". It seeks to knot issues of trade, direct foreign investment, monetary policy, Overseas Development Assistance, debt relief, economic policies and other national programs together in a single development agenda and paradigm. Its success depends on forging a partnership with the rest of the international community.

NEPAD requires that Africa must plan in detail to ensure that

- a climate for economic growth is established throughout the continent;
- security exists for the people of these countries;

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<sup>4</sup> These are South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Mauritius, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Sao Tome & Principe. These countries account for 44% of the total population of Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Previously known as the Organisation for African Unity – OAU.

- measures for good governance are put in place through which African governments are accountable to their people; and
- best practices are agreed upon and put in place for economic and political governance.

## **Public Administration Challenges that Face Africa and NEPAD**

The administrative capacity of the typical African state is often questioned. The reasons that give rise to this, are complex, and they frequently work cumulatively. The antecedents of weaknesses of the administrative institutions and systems can be found in the colonial system, but also in decisions that African countries have made since. Unfortunately for Africa, the neo-liberal tendencies that have punctuated the public sector reform agenda during the past thirty years, arguing for shrinking the state in order to get a handle on personnel expenditure, came at a time when the developmental needs of the continent were shouting out for a strong state to directly undertake many of the developmental roles. What might have been appropriate in the developed world regarding public sector reform – and the verdict is out on that one – was wholly inappropriate and undesirable for developmental purposes, and these initiatives exacerbated the demise of the administrative capacity of the African state even further.

Although public administration is seldom directly mentioned in the NEPAD context, the public administration implications should be deduced from statements on governance and the implied capacity that will be required from the administration to achieve successful implementation of the ideals of NEPAD. The importance of effective government arrangement is now being reasserted, after a period of "minimalist state madness" during the previous two decades. Competence to carry out the basic functions of government, as well as modes of operation that allow for greater democracy – including accountability, participation by ordinary people and responsiveness to their needs – are assumed as basic ability.

A critical objective of public service restructuring efforts in the region will be the reform and establishment of institutions that fit into a new and changing environment. In this context, there is

recognition that new knowledge and skills are required to respond to the emerging demands that have affected the organization and management of public sector organisations. The road to building, restoring and/or strengthening the necessary infrastructure for effective government will be a long and challenging one. For this reason, a long-term view needs to be taken of the capacity that governments require in order to perform their work – both immediately and on a sustained basis over a duration of time.

Creating an environment that makes provision for predictability and generally accepted macro rules and that allows for a sufficient degree of effective governance to take place and to be systematically strengthened and extended is one of the primary challenges facing Africa. For this reason, heavy emphasis is being placed on bringing an end to violent conflicts that plague Africa and on spreading and strengthening democratic institutions. We are proud to report that on some of these, work has already started. However, democratic institutions in Africa cannot be narrowly interpreted as the holding of regular elections. It includes the realization of democratic principles of governance in practice and ensuring a balance of forces in the social and political community. Without economic and social rights, democracy is meaningless.

Whilst allowing for variation in cultural and historical factors, it is necessary that the broad agreement that exists on what constitutes acceptable conduct in the African perspective, e.g. the African Public Service Charter, find broad application across the continent. This Charter has been formulated on the initiative of African Ministers responsible for Public Service and Administration. It seems as if such a shared code of conduct for an entire continent is a benchmark for public services, yet to be followed by other continents and regions. When the general population knows what to expect from their national governments, and receives regular feedback on actions taken and progress made, there will be significant advances made in terms of restoring the people's trust in government.

A further challenge is to allow room in which African countries can develop a homegrown version of public administration and management, rooted in African reality and cultures. Public administration in Africa was in the first instance shaped through colonial influences. The influence is, however, perpetuated after

the colonial powers have left through the rapid dissemination and absorption of so-called "best practice" models. A number of processes give rise to, and re-enforce this phenomenon.

- Given the desperate need and poverty, anybody with human compassion is grasping at potential solutions, and uncritical transfer of what works elsewhere, is often a seductively easy option.
- Patterns and vehicles of dissemination of knowledge and information follow existing power dynamics in the world. Models followed in developed countries are therefore dominant.
- "Developed country" practices often turned into conditionalities for finance and development assistance.

To countervail this situation, one of the first governance-related initiatives within NEPAD is to create opportunities for African countries to learn about African experiences and success stories. An aggressive case study writing programme and the establishment of a database of African expertise and experience is planned.

The brain drain that the African public sector is subjected to contributes to the shortage of administrative and management capacity in public administration. In turn this has a serious effect on service delivery and other initiatives. The struggle of the public sector in Africa to attract and retain the best of its people for public service requires that any training and skills development programs be very carefully conceived and structured to ensure that the newly required skills will be applied in the context and for the purpose that they were intended for.

Administrations of Africa need to change their government machinery to allow for the most effective mobilization of resources for sustainable development. The new public service organizations need to function in a space shared with a wide range of other players and interested parties. Formal hierarchical power in this space is limited. Entirely new ways of interacting, ensuring the pursuance of common purpose and joint accountability, are called for. The entire operating philosophy of NEPAD partnerships indicates that we will have to engage with this challenge and rapidly come up with solutions.



The last major challenge that I wish to raise is in the area of information. Although information and research on Africa are improving, they are still lagging behind that of most other regions in the world and the quality of little information that is available, leaves much to be desired and makes management and evidence-based decision making virtually impossible. Meeting requirements for an accountable administration are compromised by the non-availability of quality statistics and information. This weakness is further exacerbated by the limited spread and availability of information technology and the supporting infrastructure across the continent.

- **South African Context: A State in Transformation**

The South African transformation is a microcosm of some of the challenges that are facing the international community if it is to successfully tackle the NEPAD and Millennium Development goals. With its reality of stark differences between the wealthy and the very poor, inherited inequality in every aspect of society, South Africa can be a powerful analogue of the situation that pertains between the developed and the developing world.

Apartheid, often described as colonialism of a special kind, wreaked exactly the same havoc with the lives and institutions of the majority of the population, as has colonialism with the rest of Africa. It has systematically eroded indigenous systems of governance, it has artificially replaced true leadership with clientelistic impostors, loyal to the colonial administration, but remote and unaccountable to the population itself. Apartheid has attacked the moral fabric of society, weakening institutions and thus allowing a foothold for unacceptable behaviour. Apartheid has redrawn the territorial boundaries, artificially determining the settlement patterns of the indigenous people. In order to create a situation in which "divide and rule" was the organizing principle, a plethora of little bantustan administrations were created - each of which was under-resourced and without any economic or other sound rationale for its existence. Relationships of patronage became entrenched as an important means to access and distribute resources and power. It has created a situation where the

majority of the population has been systematically excluded from the economic benefits that society has to offer, as well as deprived of the public services that the state under normal circumstances makes available to its people. It has denied a proper and appropriate education to children of the Black community – resulting in generations of disadvantaged individuals and communities.

These are some of the dimensions of our historical situation that have to be addressed if we want to make progress with transforming South African society. But at the international level, they mirror the issues that Africa as a whole has inherited after the ravages of a period of aggressive colonization that has swept through the continent. They also mirror the reality that political change does not necessarily undo the history. It will take hard work and commitment **from all** to allow a supportive environment to develop within which Africa will be given the opportunity to restore its own strength.

The year 1994 marked a political end to undemocratic rule in South Africa. Eight years later, the overarching challenge for us remains to realize the aims and objectives for our society that are very eloquently captured in the Preamble to our Constitution:

- ❑ Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
- ❑ Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;
- ❑ Improve the quality of the life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and
- ❑ Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

Given its importance as an instrument in the hands of the state, the public service became a key institution to transform after 1994. It had to become a vehicle through which the new democratically elected government could give effect to its political aims and objectives. In the South African context, this meant that we had to get the public service to change from

being the mechanism that created and sustained the Apartheid reality, to one committed to working towards creating a better life for all the people – white AND black. Remember that in terms of our political settlement we did not have the luxury to establish a new public service and get rid of Apartheid bureaucrats. We could not deploy a new team of public servants onto the field, playing on the side of the democratic government. We had to do with what we inherited and make the most of it.

The key focus during the period 1994 – 1998 (roughly coinciding with the first term of democratic government) was to get the new policy frameworks and legislation in place that would firmly set the normative direction in which South Africa would like its public service to transform. This period also set the broad guidelines and put in place the most important pillars for transformation. It constituted a policy frenzy! Although the extent of policy change was most probably necessary in order to give meaningful expression to the political transformation, some flaws and weaknesses accompanied it. Scant attention was being paid, for example, to an issue such as administrative feasibility to ensure easy implementation.

The second term of democratic government is marked by a focus on implementation and policy evaluation. Implementation requires institution building on a very large scale, and ensuring that systems, tools and techniques are developed and made available across the public service. Part of the effort in this regard is to balance the requirements of the developmental, people-centred state with the characteristics of the so-called New Public Management paradigm and its accompanying toolbox.

### **How Does the African Challenge Transpose in the South African Context?**

In South Africa, as in the case of Africa, the biggest challenge is addressing the fundamental reasons for poverty, inequity and marginalization, and setting societies on a path of development and prosperity. The formidable task facing us in South Africa is to

create an institutional and administrative framework that will contribute to this challenge being met. This is part of what we are facing through our program of public service reform. Similarly, under the NEPAD initiative, creating and strengthening institutional and appropriate administrative frameworks will also have to be addressed if the aims of that program are to be fulfilled.

In order to state the requirements and implications of this task more clearly it is best to consider several complicating aspects in addressing poverty and achieving meaningful development:

1. In the first instance, the challenge of poverty alleviation does not only entail improving on every person's situation in equal proportions, but also **closing the chasm between rich and poor**. In other words, the cake has to be divided differently, which opens the entire gamut of distributive and redistributive policies – notoriously difficult to implement successfully and often accompanied by high political cost. We have not had enough success with this yet. The same can be said for Africa as a continent vis-à-vis the developed world.
2. In the second instance, we have to close the gap between rich and poor, **in the face of a very limited resource pool**. This resource pool includes financial and human resources, technology, infrastructure, etc. The demands made on the South African system far outstrip the available resources. If we want to get anywhere in terms of providing a better life for all, the challenge is to learn how to achieve more with less. The South African State has resisted to being pressurized into a situation of radically whittling down the capacity of the administration. We could largely do this, since we were free from public sector reform conditionalities that were dictated by the IMF. Since 1994, the South African State has assumed the mantle of a **developmental state**, arguing for the need of a strong state to cater to the needs of its citizens that cannot be provided for through market mechanisms only. Instead of limiting the capacity of the state, we are looking at strengthening the capacity of the state, including its capacity to extract resources from its environment and to distribute these to provide public services and goods to its citizens.
3. In the third instance, the developmental challenge is conducted within a democratic dispensation – albeit one

where all the institutions have not necessarily yet come to full maturity. This fact makes the development route to walk so much more difficult, since weaknesses and failures are easily exploited by boisterous opposition groups. Transparency and accountability requirements mean that these weaknesses are widely exposed, and the challenge for the government is to instill a sense of realism in its citizenry. In a country such as South Africa, where patterns of inequality are very visible, this is not always easy! Democratic systems are designed to respond to societal needs and there is a peril for ignoring such needs. This factor means that there is immense pressure on the public service to speed-up service delivery and ensure that the services delivered are targeted at the appropriate segment of the population, and made as accessible as possible.

4. In the fourth instance, we were faced with a situation where the fourth instance, we were faced with a situation where the **public service itself had to be subjected to a transformation process**. As one analyst puts it:

*The public service inherited by the new South African government in 1994 was designed to promote and defend the social and economic system of Apartheid and was geared to serving the material needs and interests of the minority. Structured along mechanical, closed models of public and development administration, the principle features of the apartheid bureaucracy included rigid racial and ethnic segregation, a serious lack of representativity, fragmentation and duplication, corruption and mismanagement of resources, poor and outdated management practices, a regulatory bureaucratic culture, lack of accountability and transparency, poorly paid and demotivated staff and conflictual labour relations.*<sup>6</sup>

## Key Thrusts of Public Service Reforms Since 1994

Even before coming to power the African National Congress drafted a document entitled the "Reconstruction and Development Programme". This document abounds with directions as to how the

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<sup>6</sup> Bardill, 2000, "Towards a Culture of Good Governance: The Presidential Review Commission and Public Service Reform in South Africa", *Public Administration and Development*, 20, pp. 103–118.

public service/sector should be transformed. The following constitute some of the key aspects:

- Making the public service more **representative**. Special attention is to be given to issues of gender equity.
- Developing a coherent policy framework and legal base, as well as institutional frameworks that will facilitate the **delivery of services to all our people on an equal basis**. All Apartheid components of the public service were to be re-incorporated and amalgamated into a single South African public service.
- Creating a **responsive public service**.
- Democratizing the operations of the public service by providing opportunity to **involve our people in decision making** regarding public service programs and projects. Empowerment, participation, inclusion, availability of information and activism are proposed as hallmarks of working in South Africa under a democratic dispensation.
- Recognizing the importance of civil society and its structures, an argument is put forward by the RDP document for the public service to **mobilize social capital** through these avenues, co-operate and, through partnership arrangements, integrate the development work of the public and community sectors.
- **Modernizing the structures and functioning of the public service** (government) in pursuit of objectives of efficient, effective, responsive, transparent and accountable government.
- Building a capacity in the Public Service to develop and expand on services and strategic interventions.
- Establishing a **co-operative** dispensation between the three spheres of government.
- Financing the work of government in a manner that ends the wasteful, misdirected and mismanaged spending patterns that marked the work of the Apartheid regime.
- Bringing an end to **corruption**.
- As the largest employer in the country, the public service is pivotal in demonstrating the commitment of the RDP document to **entrenching workers' rights** and extending democratic principles of equal participation and access into the workplace.

- An **oversight function** for the public service by establishing a Public Service Commission that reports directly to Parliament, the representatives of the people.
- The RDP sets high store to the **development of human capital** in South Africa.

The main tenets of the public service transformation program were therefore established through a political process of the majority party, and effect to this has been given by the various transformation policies that were developed.

In 1994, the process was kicked off with the promulgation of a new Public Service Act. This first set of legislative changes was focussed on the amalgamation and rationalization of the various organizational units inside and outside into a single public service. The successful completion of the integration and rationalization process was a critical factor in ensuring the smooth transition and continuity of administration of public services during a period of rapid change.

The most important step towards transformation is, however, widely deemed to be the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS] in 1995. The White Paper identified eight priority areas for public service transformation. These were:

- i) transforming service delivery to meet basic needs and redress past imbalances;
- ii) rationalizing and restructuring (including right-sizing and outsourcing where appropriate) to ensure a unified, integrated and leaner public service;
- iii) institution building and management reforms to promote greater accountability and organizational and managerial effectiveness;
- iv) increasing representativeness through affirmative action;
- v) improving internal democracy and external accountability;
- vi) human resource development and capacity building;
- vii) improving employment conditions and labour relations; and
- viii) promoting a professional service ethos.

The WPTPS was followed and further developed by amongst others the following:

- The Constitution, 1996<sup>7</sup>
- The White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery (Batho Pele policy) 1997
- The White Paper on Public Service Training and Education (1997)
- The White Paper on Human Resources Management in the Public Service (1997)
- The Public Service Code of Conduct, 1997
- The Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997
- The White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (1998)

Initiatives from other quarters that had an effect on Public Service transformation were the Macro-Economic Strategy for Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), the Public Finance Management Act, as well as national labour legislation.

Notwithstanding all these transformation policies the Public Service Review Commission (PRC) issued a mixed report card regarding transformation achievements in 1998. The Commission found, for example, that the progress in implementing the transformation agenda was varied between different departments and provinces and that the overall progress with reform has in many ways been seriously disappointing.

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<sup>7</sup> Section 195 describes the values and principles that must govern administration in every sphere of government, organ of state and public enterprise. These values and principles are the following:

- A high standard of professional ethics.
- Efficient, economic and effective use of resources.
- A development orientation to public administration.
- Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.
- Public participation in policy making, and responding to people's needs.
- Accountable public administration.
- Transparency to be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.
- Good human resource management practices to maximise human potential.
- Public management must be broadly representative, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.



The PRC made very specific recommendations, under the four key themes, i.e.

1. Transforming the structures and functions of government;
2. Human resources management and development;
3. Budgeting and financial management;
4. Information management systems and technology.

Notwithstanding the fact that Cabinet has never adopted the PRC report formally, many of the recommendations have been implemented and are still influencing the reform program. These include specifically

- strengthening the centre of government;
- using technology to modernize government operations; as well as
- strengthening overall capacity and skills levels specifically at management level.

Let me briefly deal with some of these more recent reform initiatives – all of which are in the early stages and are in themselves still facing implementation challenges.

- **The Senior Management Service and Focus on Management Training**

The Senior Management Service system was developed in 2000 and implemented in 2001 to overcome the often cited problem of shortage of management capacity in the public service. The system applies to the four highest levels in the public service skills hierarchy. The key objective is to improve the ability of the Public Service to recruit and retain quality managers.

As part of the SMS program, a number of initiatives have been introduced. These include the introduction of:

- A flexible remuneration package for all members of the SMS;
- A generic competency framework to guide recruitment and selection;
- A financial disclosure framework;

- An annual SMS conference as part of ongoing learning and networking;
- A performance management system;
- More focussed training and development programs for managers (Under the aegis of the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) a very successful Presidential Strategic Leadership Development Programme is running nationally concentrating on strengthening the senior management core.)

The Public Service Commission has also completed a verification process on the qualifications of all SMS members. Furthermore, a database on senior managers is currently being implemented to facilitate the more active management of the SMS across the Public Service. New employment equity targets and empowerment programs are under consideration, with particular emphasis being placed on the advancement of black women.

- **Strengthening the Centre of Government**

In the past year, significant progress has been made in preparing an integrated planning framework for government that will permit the alignment of planning and budgetary processes. To support planning and decision making, an integrated monitoring and evaluation system for tracking service delivery outputs and governments' impact on society is being developed. In addition, both financial and human resource management information systems are continually being developed and improved upon – advances which for the first time are actually allowing evidence-based decision making to take place – both at a policy as well as at a managerial level.

The capacity has been created, and is currently being piloted to support the overall decision-making process at the executive level through electronic means.

Achieving greater integration of government work remains one of the current day challenges. In an effort to deal with this, the work of the South African Cabinet has been reorganized into six clusters of departments that offer possible logical linkages.

The cabinet cluster system is supported by an approximate mirror structure amongst the Directors General. These structures are intended to strengthen the political – administrative interface in the policy-making activities.

- **E-Government Initiatives**

South Africa is in the fortunate situation of already having a relatively well-developed ICT infrastructure. Much of the preparatory work has been done, and we are beginning to see some e-government projects coming to fruition. This includes the establishment of Multi-Purpose Community Centres, e-directories of government services as a starting point for G2C initiatives, G2G communications ability, of which the electronic document system in support of Cabinet is only the beginning.

- **Improved HRM&D Mechanisms**

Successes are progressively registered in terms of improvements in the Human Resource Management and Development areas. To mention but a few aspects of improved mechanisms:

- ❑ The extension of performance management contracting to all levels of personnel is strongly encouraged.
- ❑ A human resource development strategy for the public service has been finalized and the dedicated government Department responsible for skills development in the public service, SAMDI, is energetically rolling out its training program.
- ❑ A Public Service Education and Training Authority (PSETA) has been established and is beginning to play its role in the development of the human capital in the public service.
- ❑ In anticipation of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the South African public service - both directly and indirectly – a program has been developed as to how to deal with this difficult issue.

- **Anti-corruption Initiatives**

A strategy to curb corruption in the public service has been developed, and a number of institutional players have been created and are co-ordinating their efforts to deal with this problem. The public service efforts have also been tied to a national strategy and international attempts thus giving a holistic approach to this issue. A

Code of Conduct for public servants in South Africa (as well as in Africa) is in place and provides significant leverage to deal with such matters.

## **Current Profile of the Public Service**

Rightly or wrongly, changing the composition of the South African public service is being seen as one of the key transformation benchmarks. Let me therefore share with you some of the most recent statistics regarding this aspect of transformation.

The overall profile of the public service is very close to achieving perfect representativity status, edging its way to matching the population profile – both in terms of race and gender. Fifty-two percent of the 1,031,594 employees are women, and 48 percent men. Eighty-five per cent of public servants are Black people, compared with the national profile of 90% Black people.

However, on the managerial level, more conservative targets were set, that did not resemble full representativity. Notwithstanding this conservatism, the racial representativity targets that were set in 1997 have been surpassed. By December 2001, the management echelon included 66 per cent Black people. This is a significant improvement on the situation in 1999 when only 41 per cent managers were Black people.

On the gender dimension the achievements are disappointing and well behind target. Only 2.1 out of every 10 managers are women. The already conservative target of 30 per cent female managers that was initially set was missed by almost 10 per cent. This pattern has shown no improvement. New targets will be accompanied with special efforts to achieve female representativity – particularly for African women who are the most under-represented.

The South African public service has a long way to go before it will be able to claim that people living with disability are proportionally represented.

## Conclusion

Transformation is a slow and difficult process, with few easily observed, direct success indicators. It needs to be remembered that the public service is the biggest employer in South Africa. It is a complex and integrated machine that has to be changed while very different and expanded demands are made on it. It is often disheartening when progress is slow, particularly so, knowing that ordinary people continue to suffer on a daily basis while we are trying to get the machinery of government appropriately tuned to its new challenges. One of the challenges is to not give up too quickly, nor to fall into the temptation of changing thrust or strategies too quickly.

Transformation in any situation is a bewildering and highly complex process that demands simultaneous attention over a wide spectrum of issues. Transformation of an entire society, and of an entire public service, is a very tall order and failure to a degree is virtually guaranteed. The challenges would be not to concentrate on the negative, but to use these failures as lessons on which to build future successes.

Transformation requires that people be taken out of their comfort zones and be expected to change. It is to be anticipated, given our Apartheid history, that there would be resistance, impatience and a clash of cultures that pose further obstacles to a speedy transformation. Merging the many different organizational cultures that we have inherited after Apartheid into a union will also require some special attention.

New circumstances in our overall context are dictating certain changes. These are wide-ranging, but include factors such as:

- the emerging emphasis on the public service as a knowledge-based organization;
- the public service as a key player in a web or network of other organizations all relevant to public service and the health of society, but not necessarily all forming part of the same system or adhering to the same rules of the game;
- the public service as development agent;
- the public service as contributing to regional and international goals and challenges, rather than only to the narrow national one.

Some of the difficulties we are facing are to re-shape the government machinery to meet these challenges.

Achieving the appropriate balance between a strong centrally imposed, and standardizing/unifying framework for public service organizations, and the freedom from red tape and flexibility through a program of decentralization and establishment of public entities is a very difficult one. We are currently receiving feedback from multiple sources regarding the very complex structuring of the South African Public Sector and State and have to consider whether we have not been creating obstacles to long-term delivery and performance rather than helping it through a fairly liberal process of decentralization.

Globalization is posing its own challenges for public service transformation. It is introducing fluidity, uncertainty and absence of boundaries that are counter to bureaucratic public service culture. South Africa in particular came directly from a period of isolation and now the public service is expected to operate in a global and regional set-up that is very interconnected. Although not having had the same level of isolation as South Africa, other developing countries also have to adapt very quickly to the demands of globalization. Policy is significantly influenced by international organizations and other non-state actors, while local voices have to struggle to be heard. In addition, globalization is resulting in the "brain drain" of skilled people required to play crucial roles in getting Africa and other developing countries out of poverty and on the road to prosperity. However, the natural migration of skilled people to high-tech, high-wage frontiers that developed countries are offering in the global market is extremely strong and hard to curb.

These points allow me to come full-circle and link the discussion back to the challenges for the African public service in view of the challenges posed by NEPAD.

The difficulties experienced in transforming the South African public service can be multiplied manifold before we will be able to deal with the challenges confronting us in the development of an administrative context capable of supporting NEPAD. We will need in abundance:

- Political leadership;
- Sustained commitment from all to make this work;
- Basic systems, structures and infrastructures;
- Dedication and application of skill and competence.

We will have to walk the tightrope between allowing opportunity to experiment, learn, reflect and improve without compromising on the need to work towards poverty alleviation and eradication. Similarly, we will have to create a process that allows for deliberation, debate and discussion, without allowing NEPAD and its structures to become talk shops.

What is, however, certain, is that we do not have a choice anymore. None of us can attempt to go at it alone, or be expected to make it on our own in a situation that is the consequence of historical dispensations that were thrust upon us. Furthermore, since we have our own agendas to concentrate on, neither can any of us sit back and say that we do not want to get involved. As President Mbeki stated at Moterrey:

*"If the world continues on the current trajectory, the combined threats of under-development, poverty, environmental degradation, ill health and disease, and conflicts over natural resources will undermine the prospects for political stability and prosperity across the globe. It is this which creates the urgency for an agreement on sustainable development".*

*"Of great importance, we must, all of us, commit to a partnership of mutual accountability between North and South to effect the necessary changes, as represented, for instance, by the NEPAD. The premise of this partnership must be an unambiguous commitment to solving problems together, in a spirit of joint responsibility among governments and with the private sector and other organs of civil society."*

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