

# **Administrative reform: guidelines for South Africa**

by

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**SUMMARY**

**Administrative reform:  
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## SUMMARY

The main objective of the research was to propose a definition for administrative reform and to identify essential modalities and practices which could guide South African public sector reform. For this purpose, a survey of public service reform since the early 1980's in some Commonwealth and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries was done. From this study it was possible to conclude which administrative reform practices would be relevant for South Africa.

A new democratic political dispensation was introduced in South Africa after the 1994 general elections. The ANC led government inherited a public service, which they rationalised and transformed. There are however, dysfunctional structures and systems, mainly inherited from the previous political dispensation, which require change. This thesis postulates that the new government, which came to power in 1994, has stated its intentions to reform the public service and introduced specific programs to effect such reform.

To identify administrative reform modalities, which have a universal application but would guide South Africa through a successful public service reform process, required a comprehensive literature study. An administrative reform definition is proposed, which incorporates the following modalities:

1. a *motive* to reform which is perceived by politicians and which emanates from the socio-political environment, which requires a change from the *status quo*, towards a desired state of affairs;
2. a legitimate *institution* to design a strategy and oversee the implementation thereof and compare the outcomes with the desired state of affairs;

3. a *process* dimension which produces interventions to change imperfections and faults in the machinery of government to achieve a desired state of affairs; and
4. a *human resource element*, and in particular the attitudes of officials and politicians which direct the delivery of public goods and services.

The modalities of the reform definition is described and explained, with reference to situations of administrative reform in Commonwealth and OECD countries. Conclusions are made how the modalities could be applied in the South African situation. It was concluded that the definition, which was deduced from countries which initiated voluntary reforms, could not be applied in Sub-Saharan countries, because their reforms are induced by external funding agencies, such as the World Bank. The definition is however, applicable to South Africa, because it is an emerging economy and has more in common with most Commonwealth countries, which are voluntarily reforming their public services.

The study found that most reforms since the 1980's in the Commonwealth and OECD countries have similar characteristics, and that the reform which were introduced are known as "new public management" (NPM). The dominance of the NPM style public management and administration marks a departure from the traditional approach to the public administration paradigm, which is still prevalent in South Africa.

The research found that the government of South Africa, which came to power in 1994, has identified the need for public service reform. The initial steps to start an administrative reform lacked international best practices to ensure a successful reform. What is lacking in particular is the absence of the head of state's involvement to direct the reform. This study contributes to knowledge about administrative reform and is relevant for South Africa.

**OPSOMMING**

**Administratiewe hervorming:  
riglyne vir Suid-Afrika**

**DEUR**

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## OPSOMMING

Die hoofmerk van die navorsing was om 'n definisie vir hervorming te formuleer en om belangrike modaliteite te identifiseer wat Suid-Afrika kan lei in toekomstige staatsdiens hervorming. Vir hierdie doel is 'n studie oor administratiewe hervorming sedert die vroeë 1980's in sommige Gemenebes en Organisasie vir Ekonomiese Samewerking en Ontwikkeling (OESO) lande gedoen. Die studie het dit moontlik gemaak om tot gevolgtrekkings te kom oor watter administratiewe hervormingsmodaliteite relevant vir Suid-Afrika sal wees.

Na die algemene verkiesings van 1994 het 'n nuwe demokratiese bestel in Suid-Afrika die lig gesien. Die regering, wat deur die ANC gelei is, het 'n staatsdiens geërf wat gerasionaliseer en getransformeer moes word. Daar bestaan egter nog disfunksionele stukture en stelsels wat hoofsaaklik van die vorige politieke bedeling geërf is en verander moet word. Hierdie proefskrif postuleer dat die nuwe regering wat in 1994 aan bewind gekom het, sy bedoelings om die staatsdiens te hervorm amptelik aangekondig het, en daadweklike stappe gedoen het om sy doelwitte te bereik.

Die identifisering van administratiewe hervorming modaliteite met 'n universele toepassing, maar wat Suid-Afrika deur 'n suksesvolle hervormingsproses kan lei, het 'n omvattende literatuurstudie vereis. 'n Administratiewe hervormings-definisie word voorgestel wat die volgende modaliteite insluit:

1. 'n *motief* om te hervorm wat deur politici waargeneem word en wat spruit uit die sosio-politieke omgewing wat vereis dat die *status quo* verander word na 'n nastrewenswaardige toestand;

2. 'n *legitime instelling* wat 'n strategie moet opstel en na die implementering daarvan moet omsien om dit wat bereik is te vergelyk met die nastrewenswaardige situasie;
3. 'n *proses* dimensie wat intervensies tot gevolg het om gebreke en foute in die owerheidsmasjinerie te verander en 'n nastrewenswaardige situasie tot stand te bring; en
4. 'n menslike hulpbron element, en in besonder die houdings van amptenare en politici wat bestuur en lewering van openbare goedere en dienste verseker.

Die modaliteite van die definisie van hervorming word beskryf en verduidelik, met verwysing na situasies van administratiewe hervorming in die Gemenebes en OESO lande. Gevolgtrekkings word gemaak oor die wyse waarop die modaliteite in die Suid-Afrikaanse situasie van toepassing gemaak kan word. Die gevolgtrekking word gemaak dat die definisie, wat afgelei is van lande wat vrywilliglik hervorming ingestel het, nie toegepas kan word op die Sub-Sahara Afrika lande waar hervorming ingestel is deur eksterne befondsing- instellings soos die Wêreldbank nie. Die definisie is egter van toepassing op Suid-Afrika, omdat dit 'n land met 'n opkomende ekonomie is wat meer in gemeen het met die meeste Britse Gemenebes lande waar hervorming vrywillig ingestel word.

Die studie het bevind dat die meeste hervorming in die Gemenebes en OESO lande sedert die 1980's dieselfde eienskappe openbaar en dat die hervorming wat ingestel is, bekend staan het as "nuwe openbare bestuur" (NOB). Die oorheersing van die NOB styl word gekenmerk deur 'n afwyking van die tradisionele benadering tot publieke administrasie, wat nog heersend in Suid Afrika is.

Die navorsing het bevind dat die regering van Suid-Afrika wat in 1994 aan bewind gekom het, die behoefte aan administratiewe hervorming geïdentifiseer

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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het. Die aanvanklike stappe om 'n proses te begin het, ontbreek aan bewese internasionale praktyke. Die afwesigheid van die staatshoof se leiding en betrokkenheid is 'n besondere benadelende faktor in administratiewe hervorming. Hierdie studie voeg kennis toe tot administratiewe hervorming en is relevant vir Suid-Afrika.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lord God created all of mankind as spiritual beings – in his image. What we make of our human experience is a matter of personal choice. Some acquire knowledge and wisdom as they progress along the path of life, others choose to pursue it more deliberately, being aware of the fact that life has an eternal dimension.

The journey of discovering knowledge and wisdom is a lonely path. It takes one through dark valleys of uncertainty and to exhilarating heights of celebration and joy. There are opportunities for rest along the way – stops to question and silently reason, but they are in reality intersections of uncertainty and exit roads to end the journey. It is the solitary moments of questioning and reasoning where I discovered that choices are decided by value judgements of the jury in my soul.

I met many people along the way, and made some friends. A special word of “thank you”, Professor Chris Thornhill, we have come a long way. I’ve observed you, steady on your course, for years. You have grown well, I am honoured to travel with you. Thank you Sibusiso, Johan, Pat, Lucky, Ari and Morakeng who have shared some of my thoughts over the past three years, and in particular Chris and Cas for emotional encouragement. I have learned to appreciate all my brothers.

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By the time my sons, Martin-Peter and Elmer, have read this thesis in full or in part, South Africa’s public management would have developed and the only value the thesis might have for them is to use it as a doorstep! May they, however, be challenged by this work to use their God-given talents to take issue with man’s effort to make this world a just place and a pleasant experience for mankind. My pursuit is through efficient and effective governance, where compassion and righteousness are public values.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5: 6).

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

CAPAM	: Commonwealth Association for Public Administration
FMI	: Financial Management Initiative
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
OMCS	: Office of the Minister for the Public Service
OPM	: Office of Public Management
PRC	: Presidential Review Commission
PSC	: Public service Commission
WPTPS	: White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service

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