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**MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEW  
MILLENNIUM IN GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC  
SECTOR DEVELOPMENT**

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## INTRODUCTION: PROFESSOR SIBUSISO VIL-NKOMO

Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo was born in Johannesburg. He received his bachelor's degree at Lincoln University (*magna cum laude*) and his master's and PhD degrees at the University of Delaware in the USA. His PhD dissertation was awarded the Mark Haskell Award.

He is Head of the School of Public Management and Administration and professor in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of Pretoria. He was appointed Commissioner to the Public Service Commission by the President after the first democratic elections in South Africa.

Prior to the appointment, he managed the Civil Service project funded by the International Development Research Centre. He also participated in the multi-party negotiations and the drafting of the Chapters on the Public Service and the Public Service Commission in the Interim Constitution.

He served as Associate Professor of Policy Analysis and Public Administration, and was also Chairperson of the Political Science and Public Affairs Department at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania in the USA. He was the founder and first Director of the Centre for Public Policy and Diplomacy in Pennsylvania, USA.

He co-authored the Project Management Course in Local Government for South Africa funded by the World Bank Economic Development Institute, and developed the master's programme in Public Management at the University of the Witwatersrand.

In the capacity of adviser he has served the World Bank, United Nations (UNETPSA), the Social Science Research Council and the Council on Foreign Relations.

His international activities include being a Round Table presenter and discussant at the Brookings Institution policy think-tank in Washington DC, and lecturing at the Institute for Social Studies at the Hague in the Netherlands and at the British Civil Service College in Sunningdale, England.

Professor Vil-Nkomo has publications in academic and scientific journals and books internationally and locally. He has conducted applied research on the public service, organisational development, technology in the public

service, ethics and the efficient and effective delivery of services. He has presented papers at international and local scientific congresses at research institutions. He has interacted with Heads of States of a number of countries.

Currently, Professor Vil-Nkomo is Chairperson of the Board of the Foundation for Public Management and Administration and a member of the New Zealand Telecom Board. In 1996 he was awarded the Presidential Citation for Outstanding Achievement by the University of Delaware in the USA.

His other awards and honours include serving as an honorary professor at the University of Pretoria, the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People Award for Excellent Teaching, Mark Haskell Political Economy Award, Alpha Chi National Honour, Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Outstanding Young Men of America Award.

He is married to Renosi Mokate and they have a daughter and son.

**Prof J van Zyl**  
**VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL**

**Meeting the Challenges  
of the New Millennium  
in Governance and Public Sector Development**

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Prof. Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo

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Four years after the International Donor Conference on Human Resource Development in the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the challenge to develop and advance the human resources capacity of our society through education and training, is still far from being achieved. Empirical evidence indicates that the South African labour market can be categorised into groups of individuals who require basic education, those who must be provided with on-the-job training and people who require both education and on-the-job training immediately.

The challenge to advance and develop South African human resources must be understood in the context of the country's development needs and its global competitiveness. This point was underscored by President Nelson Mandela in his message to the first donor conference in this country. Referring to the significance of the conference, he said:

This conference is, therefore, especially critical for South Africa's future. In many ways, it is a firm launching pad for reconstruction and development. For none of the intentions to deliver basic needs are capable of attainment without skilled human resources. None of our objectives to ensure economic growth, international competitiveness and equity will be realised if we do not develop the prerequisite skills ...

Equally critical to South Africa's success in the new millennium is the urgent need to educate and develop a core of researchers who will engage in epistemology. South Africa's relevance and competitiveness in the new millennium will be measured by its contributions and innovations.

This lecture seeks to place South Africa and its institutions of higher learning, in the fields of public management and administration, in the context of global competition and national development. As the country is undergoing structural changes in its political economy and also in its system of governing as well as governance, a major responsibility is placed on scholars of public management and administration to advance the public sector and the country through relevant pedagogical approaches and effective research.

Since 1991, many fledgling schools of public management and administration have been introduced. Some are evolving out of the traditional public administration programmes, others are a combination of numerous areas of study, one is newly developed and in another case an institute on governance has been established. It is hoped that the latter will eventually evolve into a school. At the same time, a number of programmes remain as depart-

ments of public administration.

**DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Public administration has its origins in the desire to advance governing through administration and managerial techniques. During this development has also emerged the conflict between politics and administration. This debate continues to rage in both the old and the new world, established democracies, and even nations emerging after the end of the Cold War.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Woodrow Wilson captured the complexities of this debate with respect to constitutional states. He sought to strike a balance for the politician by proposing a critical role for managers in the machinery of power. He observed that "[it] is getting harder to run a constitution than to frame one" and he called for the use of more intellectual resources in the management of the State (Henry, 1991:21).

His emphasis on the need for intellectual resources in public management and administration resulted in some analysts concluding that Wilson had fabricated a separation in politics and administration. In subsequent years, other scholars and analysts would attempt to establish a separation beyond that proposed by Wilson and argue that there was a dichotomy between, for example, administration and management, new public administration and public policy. These so-called paradigm shifts which are depicted in the work of Nicholas Henry, are shown in Box 1.

**Box 1. PARADIGMS**

Paradigm I	Politics/Administration Dichotomy
Paradigm II	The Principles of Administration
Paradigm III	Public Administration as Political Science
Paradigm IV	Public Administration as Management
Paradigm V	Public Administration as Public Administration

Thee impact and the results of the debates and contestations of public administration were largely observed in the context of the United States of America. The Schools and programmes listed in Box 2 are a representation of the debate:

**Box 2. SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMME**

Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs	Princeton University
Robert J Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy	New School for Social Research
Institute of Policy Studies	University of Michigan
Lyndon Johnson School of Public Affairs	University of Texas
John F Kennedy School of Government	Harvard University
School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy	University of Delaware
School of Public Policy and Management	Carnegie Mellon University
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and Policy Studies	Syracuse University
College of Business and Public Administration	Old Dominion University
School of Policy Studies	Georgia State University
Patricia Roberts Harris Public Affairs Program	Howard University
Robert F Wagner Graduate School of Public Service	New York University
Public Policy Institute	Georgetown University
Dept of Public and International Affairs	George Mason University
Woodrow Wilson Dept of Government	University of Virginia
Graduate School of Public and Internal Affairs	University of Pittsburgh

These Schools and programmes place an emphasis on administration, management, economics and policy science. They are multidisciplinary and are quantitatively and analytically inclined. In addition, these programmes offer only postgraduate programmes and their graduates can enter a multiplicity of sectors beyond the traditional public service or civil service.

With this shift emerges the area of Public Administration and Public Affairs which "betokens a field that is maturing, growing more intellectually powerful and making greater contributions to the society that supports it" (Henry, 1991). The inclusion of the concept of public affairs in the field of public administration brings schools of public management squarely in contact with societal needs and problems. This is reflected in the careers pursued by graduates of such programmes. The typical first jobs for graduates of one such school, the Woodrow Wilson School, are shown in Box 3 below.

**Box 3: TYPICAL FIRST JOBS**

<b>International Affairs</b>	<b>Domestic Affairs</b>
Analyst <i>Congressional Budget Office</i>	Presidential Management Intern, <i>Budget Examiner</i>
Assistant Program Officer <i>Latin America and the Caribbean Preservation and Development</i>	Assistant to the Director <i>New York City Department of Housing</i>
Young Professionals Program <i>The World Bank</i>	Executive Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner <i>Special Services for Children</i>
Economist <i>International Finance Department Federal Reserve Bank</i>	Legislative Analyst, <i>Office of Senator John Danforth</i>
Senior Consultant <i>Office of Government Services Price Waterhouse</i>	Federal/State Coordinator <i>Massachusetts Department</i>
Financial Analyst <i>Exxon Corporation</i>	Policy Analyst <i>Office of Policy Analysis</i>
	Business Writer <i>The New York Times</i>

These programmes have had an influence on South African institutions, particularly during the period of transition to a democratic dispensation. However, it needs to be noted that South African institutions have not been able to develop in scope as the above institutions have. For example, most South African schools still produce graduates largely for the public service. In some universities the new Schools coexist and compete with traditional public administration programmes at the same university, and the newly emerging Schools seem to lack recognised multidisciplinary academics. Some Schools attempt to produce undergraduate and postgraduate students simultaneously. Most of the Schools and programmes lack an international content in their curriculum.

### **SOUTH AFRICA AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW SCHOOLS**

The multiparty negotiations precipitated the need to advance a new form of public administration and management in South Africa. This led to the creation of alternative schools and the reform of the existing programmes. Most of these schools considered themselves as having the objective to train a corps of individuals who would enable the new government to meet the challenges of governing effectively and efficiently, through excellent management and administration techniques. Central to this mission was to train public servants who would, as indicated in the Interim Constitution, loyally execute the policies of the government of the day. Hence, they also sought to accelerate the training and retraining of public servants already in the service.

The emergence of the South African schools can largely be defined as representing the logic of discovery rather than of invention. The logic of discovery is characterised by a process whereby society discovers how other societies have previously faced a given developmental challenge and what the results have been. In the logic of invention, society works out for itself how to respond to the uniqueness of its development challenges.

Nonetheless, with the emergence of these schools, there has been somewhat of a paradigm shift, the results of which will still have to be assessed.

Studies in numerous OECD countries, the Asian Tigers and the developing countries raise a number of questions regarding this new paradigm shift. These questions are succinctly captured in Professor Sandford Borins' analysis, wherein he states:

With the entry and growing popularity of this new paradigm, the field

of public management is now relatively rich in theory and poor in data. That is, public sector managers have a new set of norms. What they lack, is a body of reports about results of following the paradigm, and evaluations as to whether these results can be considered to be a success. Therefore, the first order of business for students of public management should be to study experience implementing this new paradigm so as to see what works, what does not work and why. The question of what works, should also be asked with reference to the different developmental contexts of the OECD, NIC, and developing nations (Borins, 1995:22).

This has implications for the generating of usable knowledge and the development of the public sector. It raises a critical pedagogical and paradigmatic question identified by VV Nalimov in his book, *Faces of Science*, regarding whether intellectuals should blindly follow the new paradigm.

This is further complicated by the fact that while the notion of a paradigm shift to public management remains a focal point of departure for the South African Schools, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 enshrines public administration. It states that "*Public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution ... (Section 195 (1))*". Similarly too, the new ministry responsible for overseeing the public service has been named the Department of Public Service and Administration. The emphasis on administration once more raises questions about the nature of the paradigm shift and the rigour with which the whole approach to public management has been pursued.

Beyond the debate around paradigm shifts, there is no agreement on the relative weight which should be accorded to education versus training in public management and administration. The literature in the field is dominated largely by a focus on training. Most of the schools of public management seem to concentrate more on fulfilling the need for training.

The emphasis on training has led to a reductionist approach whereby individuals do not develop highly specialised knowledge and skills, as well as an in-depth and multidisciplinary understanding of the field of public management and administration. As one analyses the development needs of the country and the international trends in this field, it is clear that it has become imperative to correct this situation.

At least, both education and training need to be emphasised in order to advance South Africa's public sector or public affairs officials. Abdul Hamid

(1995: 269), Head of the Civil Service and Secretary to the Cabinet of Malaysia, observes that the development of their civil service has been driven by the upgrading of the professional and managerial capabilities of civil servants by emphasising management education and training. This was accomplished through a carefully conceived strategy of postgraduate level education at overseas universities in countries such as Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Lessons abound that a nation like South Africa, which is confronted with major public affairs and policy challenges, needs to confront its development quagmire through an approach which goes beyond training. In the Australian case, it has been observed that:

Demand for higher levels of skill has led to careful consideration being given to the importance of training and development in meeting corporate objectives. The government's commitment to a programme of reform of vocational training at a national level has provided an opportunity to develop a consistent service wide approach to training and development tailored to specifically meet the skills and needs of the Australian public service, as well as enhancing the career opportunities for the individual (Ives, 1995:330).

Ives elaborates on the concept of training by suggesting that training was mainly used as a mechanism for achieving continuous improvement in performance and providing public servants with the skills they needed to carry out their responsibilities and improve their work performance.

It is obvious that training in itself is not a panacea unless strengthened with education/development. South Africa's public affairs and policy challenges require both knowledge and skills. Therefore, public management and administration programmes must be positioned to prepare individuals who can systematically and strategically confront these challenges in their depth and scope.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

South Africa is endowed with institutions of higher learning and research centres, largely in the major metropolitan areas. Yet the country is still faced with major development challenges. Even more complex is the ability to provide a clear understanding of the role of academic institutions in the system of governance as democracy evolves in this country.

The concept of governance tends to be illusive in many respects, particularly when societies are undergoing structural changes, as South Africa is. It would suffice for this discourse to consider the definition of governance espoused by the United Nations Development Programme in its policy document on *Governance for sustainable human development*. It defines governance as:

... the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. Governance comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations.

This indicates that schools of public management and administration are thrust to the centre of issues of governance since they provide education and training on matters of administration, management, policy and operational citizenship. Furthermore, they are expected to contribute to the establishment of a coherent political, economic and social system through their educational, research and training programmes.

It is through their participation in the arena of governance that schools of public management and administration can demonstrate their ability to independently develop new and innovative systems and processes. Their role is to generate usable knowledge that can result in the development and advancement of South African society. Various researchers including Lester Thurow have observed that:

Today knowledge and skills now stand alone as the only source of comparative advantage. They have become the key ingredient in the late twentieth century's location of economic activity ... (p 68). In this era ahead countries have to make the investments in knowledge and skills that will create a set of man-made brainpower (p 71).

Thurow further indicates that achieving this comparative advantage is not a process which is easily achieved or a birthright. Rather, it requires a country to make a concerted effort and the necessary investments to accomplish it.

His observations are relevant to the challenges that confront South African schools of public management and administration. It is being increasingly

acknowledged, in the field of human development, that having an efficient and effective government and system of governance, is of equal if not greater importance than having sound economic and social policies. Therefore the imperative for South Africa to evolve innovative ways of developing its public sector cannot be underestimated. One can project that South Africa's relevance in the new millennium will be based on the quality of its human resources and their contribution to global innovations. The success of schools of public management and administration will depend on the commitment to such investments by the state and its citizenry.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Beyond education and training, research emerges as a critical challenge for schools of public management and administration. A focus is required on research which independently addresses public affairs and policy issues and problems. The research must be rigorous, unimpeachable and must command the attention of national and international policy makers as well as those entrusted with the responsibility for implementing well-articulated policies.

Within schools of public management and administration, "think tanks" are a prerequisite. Such entities are centres that promote the culture of research, are engaged in the logic of invention, allow academics and students to explore critical issues as well as ideas, advance knowledge by soliciting a wide range of external expertise (both national and international) and are a link between academics and the public at large.

Globally, empirical evidence demonstrates that no country can achieve significant progress without independent and transparent "think tanks". Schools of public management and administration are well placed to address this critical need. The objectives of such think tanks can be summarised as follows:

- To promote independent, but relevant research on public affairs and policy issues and problems
- To advance technical and strategic research
- To identify and analyse critical domestic and international public affairs issues and problems
- To extrapolate from current public affairs issues future trends and challenges
- To place targeted policy issues in longer term perspectives
- To develop public affairs models and scenarios that enhance a multidisciplinary understanding of our rapidly changing environment

and the world

- To undertake research which is experiential and innovative and which leads to effective problem solving
- To promote research on operational citizenship
- To advance research which consolidates the understanding of society within the context of public affairs and policy analysis
- To pursue scholarly research that breaks with the tradition of focusing narrowly on public administration and the civil service.

## PUBLIC SERVICE AND APPLIED RESEARCH

In 1994, the White Paper on the Reconstruction and Development Programme was gazetted. The objective of this policy document was to provide a framework within which South Africa's national development challenges could be addressed. Four years into this new dispensation the development challenges remain significant. Schools of public management and administration are still faced with the urgent need to understand what public affairs and policy are in the context of the White Paper.

In this lecture, one would like to contextualise the concept of public service within an academic setting. For schools of public management and administration, public service must imply having students and academics serve the citizenry through applied research and technical assistance. To undertake this responsibility effectively, they must be in constant contact with the daily public policy issues facing society at large. In addition, the curriculum and research agendas pursued by these schools need to be shaped by the knowledge and experience acquired in the process of addressing problems at the coal face of societal development.

One area in which schools of public management and administration can play a critical role in the public service is in the shaping, implementation, management and monitoring of policies as they impact on different communities. This is essential not only for ensuring that public policies are appropriately targeted to meet South Africa's development needs, but also for increasing public accountability. The participation of academics and students in public service work as defined here, has a broader impact on their development by exposing them to knowledge and information that will enable them to operationalise their own citizenship.

## MEETING THE ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

The public sector and its related fields are confronted with challenges that



compel students of today to acquire advanced knowledge, skills and techniques relevant to a rapidly changing and developing public sector. Solutions to address these challenges have emanated largely from international research. Furthermore, models and frameworks that purport to advance the analysis of these issues and problems in the nations of the South also tend to originate from the North. Therefore, the challenge confronting schools of public management and administration is that of exploring similar frameworks or those that are appropriate and which can be utilised to address local issues and problems scientifically and systematically.

Students of public administration must develop excellent conceptual and analytical skills applying qualitative and quantitative approaches. These techniques must be combined with the use of modern technology to promote advanced analysis and interpretation of these relevant and modern frameworks. There is also a need to use these techniques to enhance analyses and the development of appropriate scenarios that can contribute to public affairs and related fields.

Increasingly, public affairs and policy implementation are undertaken through a range of institutions in the public and private sectors in partnership with one another. This has led to the evolution of new approaches to policy implementation which need to be built into the public management and administration curricula. These approaches include new ways of looking at the role of the market and the state in public service delivery, the role of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in policy implementation and monitoring, and how to make optimal choices among institutions to achieve development goals efficiently. This further emphasises the need for multidisciplinary approaches in public management and administration programmes.

The new millennium will require a broadly based education in public affairs. This kind of education will empower scholars, educators and analysts with the appropriate knowledge. Fields of specialisation, acquired through in-depth study and a combination of course work and research at the post-graduate level, are imperative. An example of such an approach is being developed in the School of Public Management and Administration as depicted in the chart:

#### **POLICY ANALYSIS SPECIALISATION**

- Income Distribution and Maintenance Policy
- Programme and Project Analysis
- Comparative Financial Analysis
- Public Finance
- Policy Analysis and Development
- Non-profit and Private Sector Relations

#### **PUBLIC SECTOR ECONOMICS SPECIALISATION**

- Public Finance
- Intergovernmental Fiscal Analysis
- Programme and Project Analysis
- Regional Economic Development
- Local Government Finance
- Environmental Economics

#### **INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT SPECIALISATION**

- Comparative Policy Analysis
- International Political Economy
- International Management
- Comparative Public Administration and Management
- International Finance
- International Trade

#### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS SPECIALISATION**

- Provincial, Metropolitan and Local Government Administration
- Intergovernmental Fiscal Analysis
- Policy Analysis and Development
- Local Government Finance
- Non-profit and Private Sector Relations

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION SPECIALISATION**

- Municipal Financial Resource Management
- Organised Local Government (*Special Readings\**)
- Compatibility between Needs and Resources (*Special Readings\**)
- Performance Monitoring and Accountability
- Non-profit and Private Sector Relations

#### **PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION SPECIALISATION**

- History of Management and Policy
- Management of Development
- Project Management
- Administrative Theories
- Administrative Law
- Comparative Public Administration and Management

## TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN MANAGEMENT

- Applied Computer Technology in Management
- Telecommunication and Information Management
- Freedom of Information (*Special Readings* \*)
- Role of the Media in Decision Making (*Special Readings* \*)
- Political Communication

This approach is an attempt to address the public affairs and policy issues and problems that can be analysed through rigorous course work and a curriculum which also incorporates experiential learning. Such a curriculum provides an opportunity for the School of Public Management and Administration to be internationally competitive.

Finally, what is also required for effective delivery in the public sector is sustained investment in human resources. We are reminded by Theodore Schultz (1971:24) that the "[r]ecognition of investment in human beings as generating a form of human capital raises important theoretical and public policy issues for developed and developing nations". Lessons from advanced countries like Japan offer us an opportunity to understand how we can make a contribution through public management and administration education. According to a report by the National Personnel Authority of the Japanese government, in the 1992 fiscal year, 48 fellows were dispatched to graduate schools in Great Britain, France, the United States and Canada to study subjects that focus on international administration and fields related to advancing the public sector (NPA Annual Report, 1992: 31). During the same period, domestically, personnel were dispatched to graduate schools for periods of two years to pursue scholarly research and gain special knowledge and skills that could help the nation advance its complicated administration demands.

This lecture has examined international experience and has attempted to identify domestic public affairs and policy needs. It is clear that South Africa should not only rely on international wisdom and frameworks, but also take the lead in understanding and analysing its public affairs and policy challenges while learning from international experience. Schools of public management and administration must reflect in their curriculum and research this development need. Global participation by South Africa and its schools of public management and administration will be based on the innovations arising from a proper analysis of public affairs in this country and

synergising it with international experience.

One critical challenge is to move South Africa as a whole from a state of perpetual fact finding and information gathering to one which consolidates and implements acquired knowledge and experiences. Students and scholars must translate and synthesise the seemingly disparate elements of information which have so far been learned from other nations and locally, into usable knowledge.

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