



CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

“While much has been done to improve the functioning of the Public Service, significant challenges still lie ahead. Major concerns still constitute various facets of capacity which need to be addressed. Most significantly these include the capacity for optimal utilization of human resources, the capacity for more consistent policy implementation, the capacity for fully achieving a citizen-centered Public Service and improving the management of performance” (The State of Public Service Report, 2006:15).

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an orientation of the study on the capacity building support in the senior public service of the North West Province of South Africa. Bearing in mind the above statement, it provides a background to the study, followed by the problem statement, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the definition of concepts and the organisation of the study.

1.2 Background to the study

Until 27th April 1994, South Africa was divided administratively into four provinces, six self-governing territories (homelands) and four independent states. The provinces were the Cape Province, Natal Province, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, whereas the self-governing territories were Gazankulu, KaNgwane, Kwa Ndebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa and QwaQwa. The independent states consisted of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC States). However, the advent of a new political order, particularly the introduction of a



new Interim Constitution, and later a permanent one, ushered in a completely new order underpinned by the principles of democracy and non-racialism. This has resulted in the amalgamation and reordering of government departments and the creation of new provinces. These changes, taken together, necessitate a new strategic direction and sustainable service delivery impact in the public service of South Africa and, in particular, the North West Province. Within this perspective, therefore, strategic leadership capability, among others, at senior public service level must be cultivated. In particular, the senior public servants must be effectively and systematically supported during their preparation and development with a view to achieving shared superior performance and public service capability.

At present, however, the government is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government, which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated (the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 Act 108 of 1996). According to the Constitution, provinces may have legislative and executive powers concurrently with the national sphere over, among other things: agriculture; casinos, racing, gambling and wagering; cultural affairs; education at all levels, excluding higher education; environment, health services; housing; language policy; nature conservation; police services; provincial public media; public transport; regional planning and development; road traffic and development; road – traffic regulation; tourism; trade and



industrial promotion; traditional authorities; urban and rural development; vehicle licensing; and welfare services.

Furthermore, under the new Constitution, provincial governments have relatively few areas of exclusive legislative competence (Pottie, 2000:41). Provinces have executive authority only to the extent that they have the necessary administrative capacity and the national government may, under some circumstances, take over functions that a provincial government cannot properly perform. The national government also bears a responsibility to ensure that the provinces build that capacity. The exclusive areas of provincial legislative competence are set out in Part A of Schedule 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, as follows: abattoirs; ambulance services; archives other than national archives; libraries other than national libraries; liquor licences; museums other than national museums; provincial planning; provincial cultural matters; provincial recreation and sport; provincial roads and traffic; and veterinary services excluding regulation of the profession. Provincial government also has oversight powers with respect to certain areas of local government.



In this respect, the Constitution assigns to provinces the strategic functions noted below (Titus, 2000: 19).

(1) A strategic role

Provinces have to develop a vision and framework for integrated economic, social and community development in the province through the respective provincial growth and development strategies.

(2) A development role

Provincial governments should ensure that municipal planning and budgetary processes give priority to the basic needs of the community and promote social and economic development.

(3) An intergovernmental role

Provincial governments should establish forums and processes for the purpose of including local government and traditional leaders in decision-making.

(4) A regulatory role

Section 155 (7) of the Constitution gives national and provincial governments the legislative and executive authority to see to the effective performance by municipalities of their own functions through legislative and other means.



(5) An institutional development and capacity building role

Provincial governments establish municipalities, and are enjoined by section 155 (6) of the Constitution to promote the development of local government capacity to enable municipalities to perform their functions and manage their own affairs. These responsibilities give provincial government an important role in the institutional development of municipalities.

(6) A fiscal role

Provincial governments play a role in monitoring the financial status of municipalities through the implementation of project viability by the provincial task teams.

(7) A monitoring role

Provincial governments have a key role in monitoring local government in order to ensure that high standards of public service and good government are maintained.

(8) An intervention role

Provincial governments are given powers to intervene in the affairs of local government to protect and promote minimum standards of local government service delivery and ensure that local government fulfils its constitutional mandate.



For the provinces (presently Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, Limpopo, North West, and Western Cape) to exercise their legislative and executive powers and specifically to perform their concurrent and exclusive functions, the Constitution requires that each them should have its own legislature consisting of between 30 and 80 members. The legislative authority is empowered to make laws for the province in accordance with the Constitution. Laws made by the North West Provincial legislature are applicable only within the territory of the North West Province. Administratively, the Executive Council of a province consists of a Premier and a number of members (MECs).

Furthermore, the Premier is elected by the Provincial Legislature. In terms of Section 132, the Premier is responsible for the observance of the provisions of the Constitution and all other laws by the Executive Committee of the province. He or she must be competent to exercise and perform the following powers and functions, namely: to assent to, sign and promulgate bills duly passed by the provincial legislature; in the event of a procedural shortcoming in the legislative process, to refer back to the provincial legislature for further consideration, a bill passed by such legislature; to convene meetings of the Executive Council; to appoint commissions of inquiry; to make such appointments as may be necessary under powers conferred upon him or her by the 1996



Constitution or any other law and to proclaim referenda and plebiscites in terms of the Constitution or a provincial law.

Equally, subsection 7 (2) of the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation 103 of 1994), provides that every one of the nine provinces will have its own provincial administration headed by a director-general. For every province an appropriate provincial administrative system will have to be devised. Subsection 196 of Act 108 of 1996 provides that there is a single Public Service Commission for the Republic of South Africa.

The establishment of provincial government poses a number of administrative and financial challenges for South Africa. According to Pottie (2000: 38), nine new provinces had to be demarcated for electoral and administrative purposes. In some cases former homeland administrations had to be integrated with the previous regional structures of the apartheid era and the new provincial legislatures had to be established from scratch. Notwithstanding these challenges, the government is faced with the monumental task of addressing the problems that are related to service delivery to all citizens of the Republic of South Africa, in particular to capacitate those who are in government and promote accountability. Specifically, provinces are restricted in the main by their lack of flexibility to respond effectively to local conditions. They are also hampered by their inability to restructure departments around the needs of service delivery and the constraints



placed upon them by budget formats (The Provincial Review Report, 1997:6).

In the new South Africa, the public service is an instrument through which the government can ensure the delivery of services to all citizens. Its capacity to deliver and expand basic services will be the difference between a stable political economy driving development in South Africa, or a volatile country beset with massive inadequacies in service delivery (Kroukamp, 1996:1). In this respect, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which is government's policy framework for integrated and coherent socio-economic progress, constitutes the foundation upon which senior public servants in the provincial government find their new managerial and leadership mandates and roles to serve the public. In terms of the RDP, the public service must be capacitated so that it is accessible, transparent, accountable, efficient, free from corruption and it provides an excellent quality of service (White Paper on the Reconstruction and Development Programme, 1997). The White Paper on Service Delivery (*Batho Pele White Paper*) is equally significant in this regard.

Therefore, the issue for government is not about whether or not the provinces are important, but it is more about ensuring that provinces are properly capacitated so that they can give full effect to their constitutional mandates (Titus, 2000:17). This, in essence, does not



exclude the importance of committed political leadership and competent senior public servants at provincial levels of government with a view to ensuring that the national government values the continued existence of provincial government and realises its objective in the Republic of South Africa. However, it supposes that the operating environment of the public service must promote good leadership and effective management by allowing leaders and managers to discharge their functions and responsibilities and promote the development of leadership and management capacity.

Thus, the need to enhance good governance and effective management makes it essential for the South African government to recognise strong leadership and managerial capacity of the senior public servants as indispensable requirements. In this regard, the World Bank Report (1997: 81) called for three essential building blocks: firstly, strong central capacity for formulating and co-ordinating policy, including vision, goals and strategic priorities on the place of politicians and the public service alike; secondly, an efficient and effective delivery system, setting the balance between flexibility and accountability, including contracts for contestable services, better performance and client feedback; and thirdly, motivated and capable staff with incentive structures to motivate them to perform well, including merit-based recruitment and promotion, adequate pay and a strong *esprit de corps*.



Despite the enormous management responsibilities vested in the Provincial Administration, not much empirical assessment of institutional support for capacity building of the senior public servants has been undertaken. This study, therefore, focuses on the support for managerial capacity building of senior public servants in one of the provincial governments of South Africa: North West Province (As per a reference map in **Annexure A**). This province is the product of an amalgamation, and possibly integration, of three former geographical entities, namely, Bophuthatswana, a portion of the former Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) and a small part of the former Cape Provincial Administration (CPA).

1.3 Statement of the problem

According to the Provincial Review Report (1997: 73-74), the transformation of the public service from one directed to controlling the people of the country to one that serves them is difficult. Many of the problems of service delivery in South Africa have either been inherited from the apartheid era or are a product of it. As such, there is an over-centralisation of management control in provinces and there are few performance targets set and little monitoring of performance with a view to improving service delivery. Essentially, staff do not have sufficient skills or understanding of the importance of financial management to oversee the funds of provincial departments appropriately. Moreover, some provinces still need to create



departmental structures in line with their functions and activities (Provincial Review Report, 1997: 6-7). The findings of the report are significant and show that the senior public servants must be prepared and developed in order to function effectively in the new democratic dispensation.

Currently, the need to make managerial and leadership skills a key priority has been identified throughout government because of the poor performance of the public service, as reported in the State of the Public Service Reports (2005, 2006), and in the 2006 official speeches delivered by the President of the Republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki and the Minister for the Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi. Specifically, the Minister for Public Service and Administration pointed out "... we continue to confront many instances where the commitment and the provision of resources does not translate into adequate action on the part of the public service", detailing that "a component of the challenge of ensuring a responsive senior public sector leadership resides in attracting and retaining the right people. That is, people who have the required skills and who are committed to service in a complex and changing environment" (Fraser-Moleketi, 2005:11). However, this challenge is not new or unique to South Africa; for instance, Karrigan and Luke (1989:904) maintained that there is a widespread recognition that developing countries suffer from a lack of management capacities and that this scarcity of



indigenous talent is a major, if not the major, constraint in stimulating national development.

Thus, the public service requires systematic and holistic capacity building support with a view to ensuring that the management and leadership competencies are nurtured and cultured. This is sufficient to enable those who handle the generic administrative functions strategically to serve the public in line with the constitutional principles of public administration as set out in Section 195. In particular, effective capacity building and execution are fundamental transformational innovations which must be implemented to enable provinces to gain their meaningful legislative and executive autonomy and also to satisfy the most critical and immediate needs of the people in their jurisdictions (Mabeta, 2000: 87).

Effective public management nowadays requires systematic and holistic institutional capacity support with a view to building the capacity of senior public servants to perform the generic administrative functions (policy, personnel, financing, organising, work procedures and control) with technical and professional competencies. Given the context of the South African government in the era of transformation, the new vision of the public service and the unprecedented public services performance after ten years of democratic governance, it is hypothesised that effective public management in the North West Province can be



achieved if senior public servants are prepared and developed by the public service in a systematic and holistic manner. This requires appreciation of how the North West provincial government has transformed its philosophies, systems, structures, processes and policies with a view to supporting and guiding the actions and conduct of the senior public servants systematically and holistically to achieve strategic goals and objectives which, in the main, are aligned to the vision of the public service in South Africa.

To this end, the research question that drives the study is:

To what degree have governance and leadership impacted on the capacity building of the senior public servants in the North West provincial government of South Africa?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to assess the institutional support for capacity building of the senior public servants in the North West provincial government. More specifically, the objectives of the study are:

- (1) to determine how the North West province prepares its senior public servants;
- (2) to determine how the North West province develops its senior public servants;



- (3) to determine and evaluate the diagnostic mechanisms required to support the capacity of senior public servants.

Based on the main research question, the objectives of the study pursued the subsidiary questions which are noted below.

- (1) What is the state of public service in the present public management, compared to the traditional public administration period?
- (2) What principles of governance have been central to the changes in the public service?
- (3) What objectives and functions must the senior public servants perform in order to manage the public service effectively?
- (4) What are the management and leadership competencies which profile senior public servants?
- (5) How are the senior public servants prepared in the North West Province?
- (6) How are the senior public servants developed in the North West Province?
- (7) What diagnostic mechanisms have been institutionalised to support and evaluate the managerial capacity building of the senior public servants?
- (8) How effective are these diagnostic mechanisms in supporting the managerial capacity of the senior public servants in the public service?



1.5 Significance of the study

The government is faced with a daunting task of establishing itself as an effective and trusted vehicle for translating its objectives contained in the Reconstruction and Development Programme into reality. This task cannot be fulfilled without preparing and developing those already appointed in government to meet the challenges inherent in the governance and management processes. The study will therefore be a major contribution to the discipline of Public Administration in the developing world, in the sense that its focus is contemporary and has not been given special attention so far since the birth of democracy in South Africa after eleven years of democratic governance and leadership. The study will generate the theoretical knowledge concerning Public Administration in the area of effective human resource management practice, thereby contributing towards good governance and effective public management in the public service of North West Province.

Furthermore, addressing the capacity challenge in the Public Service requires dedicated leadership from the executive and senior management levels (State of the Public Service Report, 2006: 10). Without doubt, leadership must be felt at all the management and operational levels. Therefore, the evaluation of the institutional support for capacity building of the senior public servants will be an effort to generate capacity and knowledge to drive government policy in the



North West Province. Finally, the public service in the North West Province has both a history and a future. The future is for the current public servants and those who wish to work for government. The study undertakes to close the gap between them by providing best ways for institutional succession planning and enhancing public service confidence, leadership and skills to proceed with improvements about what works and how.

1.6 Definition of concepts

It is helpful to consider some definitions which have been developed to appreciate this study. These are listed below.

1.6.1 Governance

Neumayer (2002: 916) states that governance is a very broad term, and defines it as “the way in which policy makers are empowered to make decisions, the way in which decisions are formulated and implemented (or not implemented) and the extent to which governmental discretion is allowed to encroach onto the rights of citizens”. Governance can thus be seen as the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. Simply put, governance is the process of decision-making and how such decisions are implemented, monitored and reviewed. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their



obligations and mitigate their differences. It encompasses not only the government or the state (the political and public institutions), but also transcends the state by including the private sector, and civil society. The civil society that lies between the individual and the government comprises an individual and groups of individuals, both formal and informal.

1.6.2 Good Governance

There is no single definition of good governance. However, according to the World Bank (1989:60), good governance is the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs. It significantly has to do with the institutional environment in which citizens interact among themselves, and with government bodies and/or officials.

1.6.3 Leadership

For the purpose of this study, leadership is defined as 'a directive process of shaping and influencing the personnel, systems and structures of the public service with a view to achieving the constitutional objectives and institutional mandates. Robbins (2003:314) defines leadership as the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals. However, Cole (2000) defines it as a process in which one individual, or sometimes a small group of individuals can influence the efforts of others towards the achievement of goals in a given set of circumstances. Thus, the key variables in any leadership situation are the



leader, the group members, the external environment and the group's goals and tasks.

It should be accepted that leadership is about coping with change. Leaders establish direction by developing a vision of the future; then they align people by communicating this vision and inspiring them to overcome hurdles. In organisational development, leadership development refers to the strategic investment in, and utilisation of the human capital within the organization. It can also be accepted that leadership has some common features across all sectors, but must also be adapted to the distinctive context of public services. Undeniably, the public sector itself is highly diverse in character, governance and size. Moreover, its boundaries have changed in recent years, and will change again, and the concept of public service extends beyond the public sector. Nevertheless, some features of the public sector clearly distinguish it from the private sector: the political context, funding arrangements and accountabilities; the lack of market competition; the pressure to collaborate horizontally; and the distinctive ethos of public service.

1.6.4 Capacity and capacity building

The etymology of capacity includes the Latin words *capere* ('hold') and *capacitas* – hence *capacious* ('able to hold much') (Broussine, 2000: 501). Its dictionary definition (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2001) is the



'power of containing, receiving, experiencing, or producing. Capacity is the wherewithal to use and improve capabilities to achieve an individual or organisational goal (Tyler, 2004: 154). For the senior public servants in the North West provincial government, the definition suggests that they must have the capability to learn from experience and to reflect critically on their practice (Broussine, 2000: 501). However, apart from this understanding, senior public servants work with political office bearers and member of the public at differing levels. This suggests that there must be evidence to the public that they are competent – simply they have a fixed body of professional knowledge needed to carry their administrative and managerial work effectively. Therefore, capacity building is the institutionalised process coherently pursued to generate the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the development of structures, processes, technical and management systems, values and norms with a view to achieving superior public sector performance. This definition is adopted for this thesis.

1.6.5 Senior public servants

For this research, the term senior public servants refers to executive management of the North West provincial government specifically comprising Directors, Chief Directors, Deputy Director Generals and the Superintendent Generals.



From these definitions, it is quite clear that good governance prevails when government leads and manages public institutions in an accountable, effective, efficient, transparent, and responsive manner, and when an informed citizenry participates in, and is engaged with, government in the pursuit of their mutually beneficial social, political, economic and cultural objectives. In order for this to happen, government as the key player in good governance must build managerial capacity and create an institutional environment that encourages the participation of citizens in programmes that are designed to increase public participation in the decision-making process and more efficient and effective service delivery systems.

1.7 Organisation of the study

The study is organised into six chapters. Chapter One provides an orientation of the study. Chapter Two presents the methodology employed by the study, including site description, unit of analysis, justification for the case study approach, the methods of data collection and the techniques of data analysis. The third chapter reviews the literature on the need for capacity building support and provides a framework for capacity building support. The study is informed by this theoretical framework. The case study on the support for the institutional capacity building of the senior public servants is presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five provides a discussion, critical analysis and



interpretation of the case study. Chapter Six presents a summary, reports the findings and offers conclusions and policy recommendations.

1.8 Summary

In this introductory chapter, a brief orientation of the study has been provided, delineating the problem that is investigated, the formulation of the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the definition of concepts and the organisation of the study. The major focus of the study is to evaluate the support for managerial capacity building in the senior public service of the North West Province of South Africa. Chapter Two presents a description of the research methodology adopted for this study.