CHAPTER FOUR

THE CASE STUDY ON THE SUPPORT FOR CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

"We cannot sustain a public service cadre that is only able to restate the vision, but does not have the skills and leadership capabilities to translate this vision into active institutional practice and service delivery. In the spectrum of leadership development, our emphasis has to be on establishing the capacity amongst senior civil servants to translate the vision into active demonstrable practice" Minister for Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, 2005: 12).

4.1 Introduction

The uninterrupted period in power of the African National Congress (ANC) party, from 1994 until the present time after many decades of conventional public administration (typically too descriptive, reductionist, fragmentary and suffering from racial and gender imbalances historically associated with apartheid) has institutionalised a public management programme which generally redefines and repositions the role of government and specifically transforms and challenges the mandate of public institutions in South Africa. This changing governance landscape increasingly necessitates that the senior public servants who function in today's public administration be effectively prepared and developed with a view to embracing change, setting direction and meeting the challenges of strategically managing public service.

However, according to the Minister for Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi (2005: 11), a component of the challenge of ensuring a responsive senior public sector leadership resides in attracting and retaining the people who have the required skills and who are committed to service in a complex and changing environment. The Public Service Commission (PSC) recently made a similar observation that limited capacity continues to impact on government's performance and its ability to realise its developmental objectives (The State of the Public Service Report, 2006: 12).

In particular, Levin (2006: 62-63) and Diphofa (2006: 88) maintain that capacity problems in the public service are often aggravated by a lack of integration of key processes such as strategic planning, budgeting, human resource planning, human resource development, human resource management, organisational structures, monitoring and evaluation. Be that as it may, managerial and leadership capacity of the senior public servants is required to build on the existing, legislative normative and regulatory frameworks (The State of the Public Service Report, 2006: 10), and promote good governance by managing effective public service delivery in the North West Province.

Given the unprecedented treatment of the performance of government in the last decade and the need to improve service delivery, there arose a need to conduct the study in the North West Province where the

researcher lives to evaluate the support for managerial capacity building of the senior public servants. As mentioned in Chapter Three, effective support for capacity building is vital for a degree of order and consistency in the effective and coherent implementation of public policy. Indeed, capacity building improves the ability of the public service to develop its structures, systems, personnel and competencies in order to achieve constitutional and institutional mandates strategically and effectively. However, there is a relative lack of evaluative studies in this regard, and there is a dearth of self-adverting reports published by the provincial government which address the issue of support for managerial capacity building of senior public servants from an evaluative institutional viewpoint.

This chapter presents the issues relating to managerial capacity building support of the senior public servants in the North West Province, with special reference to three cases: the Department of Health, the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education. Based on the information largely gathered through the structured interviews with the senior HRD staff of each department, it presents the prevailing state of institutional support for managerial capacity building of senior public servants in these departments with particular reference to strategies and plans, policies and guidelines, programmes and approaches, processes and systems, communication and feedback, resources, monitoring and evaluation, quality assessment and assurance.

Before venturing into these domains of managerial capacity building support, however, a brief overview of the major strategic features of these departments is given below.

4.2 Summary of the organisational environment and challenges

In its Annual Performance Plan for 2006, the vision of the Department of Health is optimum health for all individuals and communities in the North West Province. Its mission is to ensure access to affordable, equitable, quality, caring health services for all in the North West Province through community involvement and partnerships, Batho Pele Principles, Patients' Rights Charter, innovation driven performance and by valuing people and their diversity.

The Department of Health in its Annual Performance Plan for 2006-2009 has identified the organisation strengths as expertise: people who have grown through the ranks; systems and policies exist; good management principles exist; history of successes; benchmark for others/culture of risk taking; decentralized health system; active community participation; decentralized authority: procurement, finance and human resources; managers are assertive; reduction of vacancy rate at management level; improved financial management; strategic plan in place; ongoing Human Resource Development; introduction of Middle Management Service; improvement in condition of services: i.e. subsidized vehicles etc; partnership with NGOs and mobilized

communities; established structures with District and Hospital management teams; have been able to retain managers and performance review at organizational and individual level as its organizational strengths (See Department of Health's Annual Performance Plan, 2006: 14-30).

Furthermore, the Department of Health has disclosed its weaknesses in its Annual Performance Plan for 2006-2009 as follows: still working in silos, lack of process ownership; lack of sufficient integration of services; integrated management and ability to lead; non-delivery on some critical mandates; training efforts not always leading to improved service delivery; insufficient funding; staff establishment at clinic levels not sufficient; financial management at hospital level; inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems; inadequate management of labour relations; non-integrated information management; PMDS not adequately implemented; lack of technical support to managers; availability and maintenance of medical equipment; failure to implement transport procurement and replacement policy; recruitment and retention of professionals; inequitable distribution of finance and human resources among Districts and lack of targeted training of management (See Department of Health's Annual Performance Plan, 2006: 14-30).

The strengths and weaknesses of the Department of Health clearly reveal the realities of the new South African public service and further confirm the complexity and multiplicity of the nature and scope of government activities and functions. Therefore, it is very imperative that those who are at senior management level must be properly inducted, competent and be supported by reconfiguring their competencies with a view to contributing towards the main objectives and functions of the North West Province.

Moreover, the vision of the Department of Social Development is fostering a caring self-reliant society that upholds human dignity. Its mission is to provide integrated developmental social services in order to realise a better life for all. Its strategic goals and priorities are to ensure social protection services, community development programmes and internal departmental business excellence. In its Strategic Plan for 2006, the Department of Social Development has identified child care programmes, programmes for the aged; strategic positioning, financial management and supply chain management as its strengths. Equally, the Department asserts that there is increasing need for the deepening of the social transformation process and the improvement of service delivery by strengthening institutions for service delivery. More importantly, there is a need for effective and efficient management of resources. Specifically it has identified business management or leadership around issues such as structure, corporate governance, culture, business

performance management, service delivery management and business communication. Internal resource management weaknesses facing the Department include deficiencies in HR management and information management (See Department of Social Development's Strategic Plan, 2005-2010:3-6).

The overview of the strategic environment and challenges facing the Department of Social Development confirms some of the findings of the Provincial Review Report of 1997 with regard to dysfunctional organizational management and practices in the public service in Section 1.3 in Chapter One. Since the birth of democracy in 1994, the current state of affairs challenges the reality of the transformation of the public service and the capability of the North West Province to achieve the vision of the public service of South Africa.

Furthermore, the Department of Education in its Annual Performance Plan 2006/7-2008/9, states its vision as ''an Education Department that is accountable and accessible to all, rendering a sustainable and quality service, promoting lifelong learning opportunities and people's self-reliance while continually contributing towards a democratic society and economic growth''. Its mission is to provide quality education and training through the implementation of policies, strategies, programmes and projects within the principles of equity, redress and affordability.

In its Annual Performance Plan for 2006/7 to 2008/9, the Department of Education has mentioned four organisational challenges which are: recruitment, internal development, information systems and administration. At the corporate centre, critical posts in finance are unfilled and this has resulted in poor financial management across the system. Although the structure created a post for Human Resource Development, internal capacity building has largely remained unconsolidated. The restructuring process absorbed people into posts they had never held before and capacity building to bring them "up to speed" with the new functions has been very weak. Information Systems in the Department has not been able to provide the kind of information required by different sections of the department. Incorrect data is affecting delivery of service because it directly affects planning. There is a general weakness in the business processes of the department e.g. Human Resources Management is also battling with capturing of leave forms. These need to be urgently attended to because they can be costly to the department, if systems are not put in place or corrected soon (See Department of Education's Annual Performance Plan 2006/7-2008/9:9-10).

Generally, these challenges confirm the view expressed in Chapter Three that governmental actions are very complex, enlarged and increasingly affect the performance of these departments in unpredictable ways. For example, the Department of Health claims that the lack of skilled

personnel, difficulty in attracting and retaining required skills, continuous induction of new staff members and the lack of strategic guidance from incorrectly placed personnel affect its vision and mission. In this regard, the question that arises directly from the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (1995: 48-51) is: to what degree are senior public servants in these departments being empowered, challenged and motivated to be leaders, visionaries, initiators and effective communicators and decision-makers capable of responding proactively to the challenges of the change process at all levels, rather than acting as the administrators of fixed rules and procedures? In fact, are these departments and their senior public servants actually committed to and genuinely embracing transformation of the Public Service after twelve years of democratic governance in South Africa?

Thus, it follows that the senior public servants in these departments now need specific competencies to enable them to manage and lead effectively into the future, while maintaining – and even improving – effectiveness and efficiency (Schwella and Rossouw, 2005: 762). Effective preparation and development of the senior public servants is an added way to improving their chances of managing and leading successfully in the North West Province. A conducive atmosphere is vital for the enhancement and application of competencies critically associated with the coherent and successful implementation of public

policy. In this sense, the next section examines the linkage between strategic planning and human resource planning.

4.3 Linkages between strategic planning and human resource planning

Strategic management is concerned with policy decisions affecting the entire public service, with the overall objective of being able to position the public service to deal effectively with its environment, and is seen as a vital ingredient in achieving and maintaining effective performance in a changing environment (Gunnigle and Moore, 1994: 63). For this reason, successful public management inevitably requires a feel for strategy because it is broader, more integrative, and less defined by functional expertise than is public administration (Bozeman and Straussman, 1990:214). Where public management is to a large extent management of the external environment of the public service, public administration is within the context of the public service. Turning to the specific links between strategic planning and HR planning and policies, strategic management is seen to be mainly concerned with mission and strategy – the identification of an organisation's purpose and plan on how this can be achieved; formal structure – for the organisation of people and tasks to achieve mission and strategy and HR systems – recruitment, development, evaluation and reward of employees (Gunnigle and Moore, 1994: 63). With regard to the linkages between strategic management planning and human resource management planning in the case study departments, there are no particular linkages,

as there are no written HR plans in place. Equally, there are no HR plans specifically for senior public servants. However, the Departments of Health and Social Development argued that the HR plans are still in a draft format. Yet, Bohlander et al (2001: 123-124) argue that linking HR planning with the departmental strategic planning process facilitates the ability to successfully pursue a given number of strategic objectives and initiatives and as a result create a competitive advantage.

Likewise, Jackson and Schuler (2003: 177) maintain that the overriding reason for integrating HR planning with strategic planning is to ensure that the HR programmes and policies function in such a manner that they achieve immediate and long-range departmental goals. Indeed, HR programmes work better when they have been shaped by departmental goals. The precepts of the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the public service (1997: 16) are that human resource planning ensures that an organisation obtains the quality and quantity of staff it requires; makes the optimum use of its human resources; is able to anticipate and manage surpluses and shortages of staff; and develops a multi-skilled, representative and flexible workforce, which enables the organisation to adopt rapidly to a changing operational environment.

Similarly, strategic human resource planning helps to ensure that the department is neither over-nor understaffed, that employees with the

appropriate talents, skills and desire, are available to carry out their tasks in the right jobs at the right time (Grobler, 1993: 14). In this respect, three approaches can be used to link strategic business plans and HR plans. The first is the formal approach, which ensures linkage through explicit and institutionalised processes. The second is the informal approach which ensures linkage through interpersonal interactions of top management strategists and those responsible for strategic planning for HR. The third is a combination of formal and informal approaches in which the linkage depends on formal methods and informal leader relations (Nel et al., 2001:64-65). The White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997: 16) has suggested three main steps for human resource planning. These are: an assessment of the human resources required to deliver the operational objectives in the department's strategic plan; an assessment of the department's existing human resource capacity and a plan for how the gap between existing human resources capacity and the future human resource requirement is to be filled, within the financial resources available. In particular, the last step means that each department must live up to the expectation of its vision and drive human resource management activities by drawing up a human resource strategy. Its effectiveness depends on its continuing relevance in the light of experience and it needs to be supported by human resource management information systems which provide accurate and timely information on how the strategy is operating in practice (The White

Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, 1997: 17).
Indeed, the linkages between strategic planning and HR planning create
conducive HR environment for approaching and undertaking proper
induction of senior public servants.

4.4 Induction of senior public servants

As acknowledged in Chapter Three, induction is the process of
integrating the new employees into the organisation and acquainting
them with the details and requirements of the job. It can thus be
regarded as a process by which senior public servants are transformed
from complete outsiders to participating and effective members of the
department. It has also been noted that, before the induction
programme can be developed, an induction policy; budget; and other
considerations such as the time needed to plan and implement the
programme; programme goals, topics to be included, methods of
organising and presenting them, duration of induction sessions;
materials, facilities and personnel to be used; general organisations
topics versus departmental and job topics to be covered, must be
effectively considered. With reference to the case study departments,
however, there are no induction policies and itemised budgets in place
for the effective design and implementation of the induction
programmes for their senior public servants. There is no written plan for
the induction for senior public servants in these departments to guide

the design, implementation and evaluation and generally align the process to their visions and HR strategic purposes and mandates.

In the Department of Social Development, however, the induction programme for senior public servants entails explanation of the vision and mission, foreword by the MEC, HR policies and procedures and public service regulations. The programme can begin any time of the year, as the department appoints staff throughout the year and last for five days only. All line managers including the HR manager, the Chief Directorate Social Work, Finance, Supply Chain and Support Services are involved in the programme. Moreover, the induction programme for its senior public servants covers the departmental and job requirements. In the case of the Department of Health, the programme runs twice a year depending on the number of new employees. It lasts for two days and it is target specific, i.e. senior management or middle management. In the case of the Department of Social Development, the induction programme for senior public servants is conducted once upon appointment. As far as the Department of Education is concerned, the senior public servants are inducted informally on assumption of duties. The induction has no specific time frames and follows a one-on-one approach. The main barrier to effective induction programme identified by the Department of Social Development is that senior management do not attend the programme as scheduled. This difficulty is also expressed by the Department of Health which is further confronted by

low attendance of new appointees. There are no barriers to the effective induction programme of senior public servants that the Department of Education has articulated.

In addition, evaluation of the induction programme is important to ensure that the department is spending its money wisely and achieving positive results and that the methods used to assist new employees to integrate and become effective in the department are the most suitable. However, the departments do not evaluate their induction processes for senior public servants. There is no formal process of receiving feedback about the expectations, roles, responsibilities and employment security from the senior public servants. The final point regarding the induction of the senior public servants in the case study departments is that the induction processes and programmes are not quality assured for effectiveness and impact assessment.

4.5 Training and development of senior public servants

It is very important that the training efforts be linked to the department's objectives, goals and business strategies if they are to add value. Undeniably, employees training and development is seen as a key factor in meeting the employer's strategic, business and operational goals (Lambert, 1997:24; Thorne and Mackey, 2003: 91). As a result, Mathis and Jackson (2003:276) argue that training is strategic when it develops essential worker capabilities; encourages adaptability to

change; promotes ongoing learning in the organisation; creates and disseminates new knowledge throughout the organisation and facilitates communication and focus.

With the above in mind, the case study departments have training policies and plans which generally apply to all employees regardless of employment category. However, they do not have training and development strategies for their senior public servants. Moreover, to obtain training and development needs for senior public servants, the Department of Social Development uses a questionnaire. The Department of Health conducts training needs analysis exercise (i.e. skills audit and perceived needs). The Department of Education obtains training and development needs from the Performance agreements/files and personal growth plans of the senior public servants. The Department of Education employs gap analysis technique and obtains personal growth plans/files of the senior public servants to conduct training and development needs. The Department of Health follows the identified critical training needs, whilst the Department of Social Development obtains information from the questionnaire and job requirements.

In the Department of Education, the Superintendent General, Deputy Director General, Chief Director of Human Resource Management and Development and the HR managers are involved in the identification of

training ad development needs of senior public servants. In the Department of Health, the Chief Training Officer and Training and Departmental Training Committee are involved in the identification of training and development needs of senior public servants, whereas in the Department of Social Development the Human Resource Development Sub–Directorate is involved in the identification of training and development needs of senior public servants. The responsibilities of senior public servants in these departments are equally to identify training/skills gaps and make recommendations.

In the last three years, the categories of training and development needs for the senior public servants in the Department of Social Development are finance for non financial management, project management, diversity management, fraud and ethics management and coaching and mentoring, the Public Financial Management Act and risk management. In the Department of Health, the categories of training and development needs are record financial management, policy formulation, performance management, strategic and change management, project management and computer training. In the Department of Education, the categories of training and development needs involved MPA, PhD, Project management and Persal training for monitoring.

With regard to financial support, the departments do not have a separate budget for the development and training of the senior public servants. However, the programmes or courses in which senior public servants participate are fully funded from tuition, and transportation to accommodation. Time spent out of the offices by senior public servants when participating in the programmes or courses is regarded as official hours.

4.6 Approaches to management training and development

After a needs assessment has identified a performance gap (the difference between the desired and the actual performance) or another specific set of developmental needs, and after particular objectives have been set which a training and development approach should accomplish, the department is ready to seek or design a training and development programme (Grobler and Warnich, 2006: 310). However, as argued in Chapter Three, the approaches to managerial capacity building require that individuals adopt an attitude of acceptance towards the need for continuous professional development throughout their working lives (Harrison, 2002; Marchington and Wilkinson, 2002; Lancaster, 2005:10). Indeed, through continuous training and education, individuals can achieve increased organisational capability.

With regard to the training and development approaches, the case study departments use in-house training, workshops and seminars from external providers. The Department of Health additionally mentioned mentoring and coaching. In the Department of Health, the programmes that have been offered to senior public servants are project management, policy formulation, financial management, performance management, supply chain management and disciplinary skills training. Project management, financial management, MPA and PhD are developmental opportunities available for senior public servants in the Department of Education. The Department of Social Development offered training on PFMA, ethics and anti-corruption management and risk management to its senior public servants.

With reference to other approaches to managerial capacity building, particularly off-the-job support opportunities, there are no formalised mentoring or coaching programmes. There are no secondments or formal network exchanges in the category of senior public servants in these departments. Although the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has an online journal releasing Service Delivery Review (SDR), there are no formalised arrangements for the senior public servants to read and network within and between the departments with a view to keeping abreast of research and best practice. The last point with regard to the approaches to managerial capacity building is that there is no support in terms of facilitating the

membership of the senior public servants to professional associations or bodies.

4.7 Delivery and assessment of training and development

In the provincial departments, the training and development function is the responsibility of Human Resource Development (HRD). Most if not all training and development needs for senior public servants are undertaken and supported by external service providers, locally, nationally and internationally. However, there are no electronic databases naming and maintaining current accredited service providers to promote and support sound institutional public private partnership in the light of the challenges and needs of these departments. Bearing in mind that the purpose of training and development assessment in the training process is to determine whether trainees actually learned new skills and attitudes or a body of knowledge as a result of the training and development programme (Grobler et al., 2006: 322), the system that is used to ensure that the approaches and programmes effectively satisfy the HR and the Department's vision and mission is the Annual Training Report for the Department of Health. For other departments there are no systems in place. By and large, the departments do not ensure that the new skills and knowledge learned or acquired by the senior public servants are well applied, as there are no systems for information sharing, reporting and recording in place. Moreover, there are no systems to transfer the skills and knowledge learned or acquired

by the senior public servants. Interestingly, there are no systems in place to transform individual knowledge into public service results.

4.8 Implementation and assessment of the competency framework

It was argued in Chapter Three, that the development, introduction, implementation and assessment of the competency framework require effective institutional support with a view to validating its relevance, significance and impact. The institutional support for the competency framework is also vital because the core managerial skills and competencies are not readily transferable from the private sector to the public sector. The nature of the tasks undertaken is fundamentally different (Pollitt, 1990; Hood, 1991). Against this backdrop, this section seeks to find out how the SMS competency framework was implemented and assessed in the public service of the North West Province. In the case study departments, the SMS competency framework was only communicated through circulars to senior public servants. Since the implementation of the SMS competency framework, the Department of Health has indicated that managers and some employees do not fully understand what it is all about and the reasons behind it.

Furthermore, there are no follow-ups and proper monitoring of the implementation of the SMS competency framework. The Department of Health further reported that its Human Resources Department is not

responding to these challenges as the challenges still persist. The Department of Social Development has no record of how the SMS competency framework is functioning for its senior public servants; reference was made to the Office of the Premier, which does not respond to the strategic needs, and expectations of the senior public servants attached to the Department of Social Development. Moreover, since the introduction of the SMS competency framework in the public service of North West Province, no department has done an assessment of it. Interestingly, there is no information in place regarding how the SMS competency framework supports the individual and collective performance of the senior public servants in these departments.

4.9 Diagnostic mechanisms to support capacity building

From Chapter Three, it has been found that organisational diagnosis provides information which allows a faster reacting organisation to emerge, one which can deal proactively with changing forces. In fact, diagnostic mechanisms systematically enable organisations to understand and describe the structure, administration, interaction, procedures, interfaces and other essential elements. Taking into account the discussion about the diagnostic models in Chapter Two, the case study departments equally stressed that the Performance and Management Development System is applicable. In the process of organisational diagnosis, however, there are no explicit measures within the HR

Directorates of these departments to support the development and performance of their senior public servants.

The Department of Social Development confirmed that the management development and training initiatives succeed in building the competencies associated with the essential outcomes for the work performed at senior management level. However, the department was unable to indicate how well their senior public servants compare to the output of the public service's best performers or even how well their public servants' performance matches the public service and service delivery requirements essential to the achievement of *Batho Pele White Paper*.

Furthermore, the Department of Social Development confirmed that there are no HR systems in place to support its functions towards a competency-based approach. The same picture was painted by the Department of Health and the Department of Education. Besides, HR units of these departments indicated that they do not benchmark their competency approach relating to senior public servants' training, development and appraisals. Quality assurance is not a remarkable feature of the HR environment in these departments especially regarding the diagnostic measures to support the managerial capacity building of the senior public servants.

Although the analysis and interpretation of this chapter will be given in the next chapter, it is opportune to reiterate the critical question which was asked by the President of South Africa in October 2004: do we have the necessary capacity and appropriate organisation to deliver on the state's social and economic objectives?

4.10   Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to present a case study on the support for capacity building of senior public servants, with special reference to the Department of Health, the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education. The case study departments have commonalities and differences in areas that relate to how they support their senior public servants for effective capacity building. These, however, vary from superior to extremely lax practices in institutional support areas such as policies, strategies, plans, systems, processes, approaches and resources. In this regard, Kotter (1999: 52) reminds that, without good management, complex organisations such as the public service of the North West Province tend to become chaotic in ways that threaten their very existence. In particular, he claimed that people who think of management as being only the implementation part of leadership ignore the fact that leadership has its own implementation processes: aligning people to new directions and then inspiring them to make it happen. Likewise, people who think of leadership as only part of the implementation aspect of management

(the motivational part) ignore the direction-setting aspect of leadership (Kotter, 1990: 5).

As contended in Chapter Three, organisational capacity is strongly influenced by individual capabilities; it is more than the sum of individual capability. The Department's capacity is determined by how well it structures and uses its human resources, and by its strategies, systems, processes and culture. In this regard, it is feasible that the departments which pay attention to building these broader departmental factors will provide a framework within which individual capability can be developed. Similarly, while departmental capacity building will have an effect on inter-organisational capacity and performance, the way in which these external arrangements are structured is likely to affect the development of departmental capacity. In conclusion, the ability of the public service to rise to the current socio-economic challenges depends on human resource capacity and its management (State of the Public Service Report, 2006:15). Chapter Five builds on this chapter by critically analysing and interpreting the state of capacity building support of the senior public servants. The analysis also reports the views expressed by the senior public servants as well as the implications for the North West Province.