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Department:
Public Service and Administration
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Key Note Address to the Association of Southern African
Schools and Departments of Public Administration and
Management (ASSADPAM) Conference, 2022

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Director General

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We belong



We care



We serve

1. SALUTATIONS

- Programme Director
- Professor Mogie Subban Chairperson of the Association of Southern African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management
- Professor Brian McArthur, Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor & Head of College, College of Law and Management Studies
- Professor Stephen Mutula, Dean and Head of School: Management, IT and Governance
- Senior Government officials present
- Esteemed Guests
- Good evening

2. INTRODUCTION

The Luo people of Kenya have this saying and I quote: “Alone a youth runs fast, with an elder slow, but together they go far!” Most people know the Anglicised and popular version which says “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

I was excited when I received the invitation to address this prestigious gathering from Professor Mogie Subban, the Chairperson of the Association of Southern African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management. I was also intimidated to come to address so many professors and learned colleagues on a subject matter that you have read and written so much on. More intimidated because I have ambitions that when I have gained enough experiential on the job experience... a fancy way of saying when I retire from the Public Service, I intend joining academia where I hope I will be able to share experiences and research areas of governance, leadership development and ethical leadership. This address today, is a start of a slow, grinding and arduous journey of rebuilding and creating partnerships that are critical to building an ethical, capable and developmental state.

This excitement and fear is borne out of the awareness that many of you, here today, are knowledgeable about the challenges and opportunities that face the country in general and the Public Service in particular. The topic of ethics and Professionalisation of the public service is something that I hold dear having studying these fields at a postgraduate level. In this address, I will therefore be highlighting the efforts that are currently underway to deliver on this mandate as well as detailing the plans to improve the effectiveness of the DPSA and the public service.

At the beginning of this month, we hosted a Conference at the Howard College Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal to review progress towards rebuilding state capacity and ensuring that the objectives of the 6th Administration are achieved. Where we experience challenges and failures, we hope to collect those experiences as lessons to make us better and stronger as we move forward.

We cannot afford to hide anymore, but we must confront challenges head on and remain resolute in changing the country for the betterment of our people.

3. MANDATE OF THE DPSA

The Department of Public Service and Administration was established as a direct response to Chapter 10 (Section 195 [1]) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. In this Section, the Constitution states; public administration must be governed by democratic values and principles that include the a number of principles with the first one being the promotion and maintenance of “A high standard of professional ethics”

The DPSA therefore has a Constitutional mandate to lead the coordination of the entire public service through the setting of policy, norms and standards and other prescripts to achieve the ultimate purpose of attaining a Capable, Ethical and Development oriented public service.

This is a long journey that requires partnerships. Since 2019 when this mandate was made the foremost priority for the 6th Administration, we have had exhilarating and exciting journey with multiple achievements, but the implementation has been slower than we would have liked it to be. We are therefore fast tracking the implementation of the National Development Plan. The National Development Plan has succinctly mirrored the Constitution of the Republic, which calls for an effective and efficient Public Administration that works for the people.

Chapter 13 of the National Development Plan (NDP) charts out the challenges and ideals that must be pursued by the state as we contribute towards the resolving the triple challenge of eradication of poverty, increase employment and reduce inequality by 2030.

The transformation of the economy and society is still elusive and remains at the heart of our national development agenda.

For the 2019-2024 Medium Term Strategic Framework the DPSA, as a one of the centre of government department is leading efforts towards the realization of the following Strategic Outcomes:

- Strategic Outcome 1: Improved Implementation of Public Administration Policies
- Strategic Outcome 2: A Stabilised Public Service
- Strategic Outcome 3: Fight against Corruption intensified
- Strategic Outcome 4: Full Implementation of the Public Administration Management Act (PAMA, 2014)
- Strategic Outcome 5: Improved Implementation of Batho Pele Programme

4. Single Public Administration

The Constitution states that in the Republic, there is a Single Public Administration. In pursuit of this ideal, our work requires the full implementation of the Public Administration and Management Act. This legislation is transformative in its essence as it is aimed at improvement of governance by creating a platform where all three spheres of government cohesively operate as one government. Local government remains a key sphere of government, and in the context of the District Development Model, government continue to strengthen its administrative capacity to meet its obligations to communities, to deliver basic services, to ensure popular participation in decision-making and to drive local development.

One of the challenges we have is the continued disjointed manner in which government operates. We have therefore established systematic relationships with government Departments such as the departments of Cooperative Governance and Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) as well as relevant professional associations and academia such as yourselves. of. The mandate of DCOG is to lay out policy, norms and standards for local government and while the mandate of DPSA is to, lay out policy, norms and standards for both national and provincial governments.

5. LEGITICIMACY OF THE STATE

Yesterday, the Auditor-General, Ms Tsakani Maluleke submitted her audit findings for 2021/22 to Parliament. The findings reveals that 30% of state departments have managed to obtain a clean audit but these account only for 6% of state expenditure. Overall, 114 auditees now have a better audit outcome than they did in 2019, which is an improvement of 17%.

Whilst this improvement trend must be welcomed we are yet to see a positive correlation into how the public views service delivery. This is because the big expenditure departments such as Health, Education, Transport, Human Settlements etc remain with challenges. It is the collective responsibility of all of us to ensure that clean audits and accountability translates to improved services for the state to retain its legitimacy.

These are the challenges that the DPSA is supposed to address. The need to ensure that good governance and accountability results in tangible benefit that accrues to the people of South Africa. This is at the core of state legitimacy because it provides the basis for rule by consent rather than by coercion. Lack of legitimacy is a major contributor to state fragility, because it undermines the processes of state-society bargaining that are central to building state capacity.

The Minister of Police, released the Quarterly Crime Statistics yesterday and reported that over the past three months, 10 thousand rape cases and 7 thousand murders were reported to the police. The conviction rate is only 6 percent, what does this mean for the legitimacy of the state and how as the public service we must respond? The Municipal IQ reports that we have over 40 thousand community protests in South Africa annually. Is this a sign of a healthy democracy or a sign of an increase in the trust deficiency that the public has in government?

In 2010 the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development' publication titled the "State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations" which highlighted some very practical steps that partnerships between donors, academia and the state can foster constructive relations between the state and society in fragile situations. The approval of the Professionalisation Framework shows that the Public Service in South Africa is under reconstruction, especially following the challenges that were detailed in the Judicial Commission on State Capture.

The Professionalisation framework highlights the problems that arise when different concepts of legitimacy coexist and compete, and provide measures that might make it possible to reduce the people's sense of alienation from the state. Both the OECD publication and the Professionalisation Framework, calls on all of us to pay more attention to aspects of legitimacy that derive from people's shared beliefs and traditions, and how these play out in a specific political and social context. This is challenging, because legitimacy is extremely complex and changes over time. Moreover, by its very nature, public service will face difficult trade-offs and choices when local perceptions of legitimacy conflict with international norms.

Max Weber in "The Theory of Social and Economic Organisations" identifies legitimacy as an important explanatory category for social science, because faith in a particular social order produces social regularities that are more stable than those that result from the pursuit of self-interest or from habitual rule-following.

6. Experience of Citizens

The experiences of citizens, the intended beneficiaries of government services are a critical component of measuring the performance of government and for the delivery of appropriate

and quality services. Clean audits and good governance must be supported by a notable increase in citizen satisfaction.

For that to happen, there is need to empower citizens enough to know about their rights, obligations and expectations from government. This can only be done in partnership with citizens, civil society and academia. In order to create value for the country, there is need for a capable state that works effectively and efficiently. The Directive on the Organisational Functionality Assessment (OFA) Tool was issued to national and provincial departments in March 2021 and seeks to monitor, and assess progress, and enhance the necessary service delivery enablers in place to support delivery processes in an optimum and accountable manner.

The amendments to the Public Management and Administration Act (PAMA) aims to standardise conditions of service across the public administration with a view to facilitating the creation of a single public service that will heighten efficiencies and effectiveness of the public service.

Additionally, the Batho Pele Revitalisation Strategy seeks to re-affirm the significance of Batho Pele (People First) in transforming public service delivery whilst securing maximum benefits for citizens in line with their Constitutional rights to be treated with dignity, courtesy, and to receive quality and sustainable public services.

7. PROFESSIONALISATION AND PRODUCTIVITY OF THE STATE

Accountability should go hand in hand with the productivity of the state in that, rules are supposed not to be an end in themselves but in pursuit of a higher objective. In this instance improved service delivery and social cohesion. This is the reason why the Professionalisation Framework takes a Public Sector wide approach as we work towards a Single Public Administration that applies to the National, Provincial, Local Government and SOEs. It has as its main objective the need to ensure that only qualified and competent individuals are appointed into positions of authority in pursuit of a transformed, professional, ethical, capable and developmental public administration. Public officials should have the right qualifications, technical skills, and be inducted into Batho Pele principles. The Framework aims to achieve the following:

- The tightening of pre-entry requirements as well as effective recruitment and selection processes that inform meritocratic appointments at middle and senior management levels.
- Undertaking workplace orientation and induction programmes that are linked to on-boarding and mainstreamed as an intervention for organisational socialization.
- Effective planning, performance management and appraisal systems, including performance standards and assessment instruments for different categories of employees. Performance management can also be aligned with professional body/association registration.
- Public servants returning to the simulator by undertaking continuous learning and professional development. This will include, as well, the professionalisation of certain categories of occupations in the public sector.
- Managing the career progression and career incidents of public servants and heads of department respectively.

The full implementation of these interventions are at the core of the questions that you asked us to respond to today. It is therefore important that the Association of Southern African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management (ASSADPAM) be at the forefront of deconstructing the so-called misnomer of South Africa having good but unimplementable policies. I call it a misnomer as I believe that if a policy is good, it should be implementable.

In Volume 17, Issue Number 3 of 1994 of the journal “Public Productivity & Management Review” David Ammons details the role of professional associations in promoting performance standards. These include ensuring professional ethics, developing industry-wide standards, enforcing their and monitoring their implementations and sanctioning infringements. The reason where you would have un-implementable policies is only when there has been no research and there has been unethical behaviour such as plagiarism. Cut and paste of policies from a different environment and transplanting them into South Africa is likely to result in unintended consequences including failures that cannot be mitigated. The performance of public servants has to be beyond compliance to review impact and sustainability. This is why partnerships with professional associations are an important aspect of Professionalisation and professionalism.

We therefore have to ensure that performance is measured against pre-determined indicators and is guided by a few non-negotiable principles. We therefore invite this association to partner with us as we embark on the following:

- Developing measures to provide principled leadership and making the tough decisions that may be required to deliver on our mandate especially towards 2030;
- Strengthening our ability to co-operate across the three levels of government and work as a single delivery machine in pursuit of the Single Public Administration;
- Building partnerships between government, academia and civil society so that we work together to achieve our goal of an ethical, capable and developmental state to deliver a better life for all;
- Develop a skilled and well-motivated public service that is proud of what it does and receives full recognition for delivering better quality services;
- Initiate and sustain partnerships across Africa for a better continent; and
- Recognize that there will always be limited funding and resources and yet be willing to commit to doing more with less and doing it on time.

From the Public Service side, we pledge to be completely transparent, and to paraphrase Amical Cabral, we will claim no easy victories, we will tell the truth no matter how unpalatable and build on what we have achieved.

The path of development we have chosen for South Africa is a long term project that will require that we journey together.

8. RESPONSIBILITY OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The job of academia and associations like this one, is not only to criticise government, but to point sharply the challenges whilst providing options to address them. As government we have opened up access to government to ensure that we are accessible for both criticism, advise and guidance. A lot of work has been done and we have achieved a lot in the short term and a solid foundation for the future has been laid. We see this address today as the start of a challenging and exciting journey. I am encouraging all of you present today to take full advantage of this invitation to ensure that your views as policy experts find expression in our work.

In the book titled “In the name of the people” the former Minister of Finance in Zimbabwe, Mr Tendai Biti highlights the dangers to democracy and the legitimacy that emerge from the lack of performance by the bureaucracy. The South African public service continue to function in an isolated manner that results in performance indicators that are delinked to relevant standards. Professional associations are thought to be a logical source of such standards.

However, this study reveals that few associations offer quantitative standards for the Public Service.

The Association of Southern African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management (ASSADPAM) occupies a unique place in society in that the network of higher education schools and departments that are your members are the producers of public servants and therefore, as your alumni, you can assist in addressing this.

We remain resolute and determined to the creation of a capable, ethical developmental state.

9. PROGRAMME TO INSTITUTIONALISE PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BY 2023.

Fraud and corruption in the Public Service is counter-productive, and devastating, especially in young democracies and developing countries. Although government introduced and continues to add various forms of controls, the persistence of criminality continuously challenge these controls for self-enrichment.

To prevent and detect fraud and corruption in the Public Service, lifestyle audits are a critical and legitimate in entrenching ethical state. The department developed a Guide to Implement Lifestyle Audits in the Public Service. The purpose of the Guide is to guide departments in implementing lifestyle audits in their respective departments. Linked to this is the Guide on Managing Discipline in the Public Service which is essential for consequence management as how discipline in the workplace is managed has a bearing on Government efforts' in developing a professional and ethical Public Service.

A high level of discipline influences organisational performance and ultimately results in positive service delivery outcomes. Conversely, lack of discipline (or its mismanagement) is usually a telltale sign of an unethical culture and organisational dysfunctionality. Lifestyle audits are a critical and legitimate management tool and form part of government's system of risk management. We are improving efforts to prevent, detect fraud and corruption in the Public Service.

As efforts to fight corruption and promote ethical behavior in the public service the following has been achieved thus far:

- Professional ethics have been incorporated in the Compulsory Induction Programme provided by the National School of Government. Professional ethics provide rules on how a person should act towards other people and institutions in a workplace environment;
- The Guidelines on Conducting Lifestyle Audits was issued, and implementation support was provided, monitoring and assessments are continuing; and
- To improve coordination a Lifestyle Audit Indaba which was attended by participants from the Justice Sector as well as ethics officers from national and provincial departments was hosted to further capacitate the implementation of Life Style Audits for Public Servants.

Through the State Capacity and Institutional Development Cluster the DPSA ensured that the issues of ethics are mainstreamed throughout the public service.

The Code of Ethics is adequately mainstreamed in the compulsory induction courses that are offered by the National School of Government, however, however attendance of employees even though the induction is compulsory remains a challenge as only about 10% of about 1, 300 000 public servants have undergone the induction training.

We will continue therefore should double our efforts to inculcate a culture of consequences management in government, particularly as it relates to the issue of public servants that are conducting business with the state as departments are starting to conduct investigations and refer such cases to authorities.

The number of public servants conducting business with the state has decreased from 484 in national departments and 126 in provincial departments in 2020/21 to 303 in national departments and 82 in provincial departments in 2021/22. There were, however, areas where recurring non-compliance have been observed, such as in ICT where the issues of inadequate ICT security, infrastructure and human capital, continue to be a challenge. Based on the above mentioned report findings, the DPSA will continue to implement a number of interventions to support the national and provincial departments in improving their levels of compliance.

10.A CARING PUBLIC SERVICE FOR EMPLOYEES

The Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact in the work of government. The effects of long-Covid continues to extend massive emotional, physical and financial burdens on public

servants leading to high anxiety and stress levels which affect productivity. Statistics South Africa in its latest Quarterly Employment Survey states that whilst Public Servants have retained their jobs and earning capacity, their salaries now have to support more persons, on average eight persons, as relatives have lost jobs in the private sector. This has placed massive mental and financial stress on public servants.

11. EGOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS PROCESSES MODERNISATION PROGRAMME IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

The Government's Business Modernisation Programme seeks to modernise manual or semi-automated processes. The Department is responsible to monitor the implementation of the National e-Government Strategy and Roadmap implemented towards digitalisation of government services. The National e- Government Strategy; the Corporate Governance of ICT Policy Framework and the determination and directive on Cloud Computing in the Public Service were issued as Legislative Frameworks to institutionalize the National e- Government Strategy. Professor Mutula, as the Dean and Head of School for Management, IT and Governance, we invite you and your colleagues to partner with government to ensure that we deliver on this mandate.

The government currently spends over R20 billion on ICT related expenditure annually, with majority of it on software licenses that are also not being used. Out of the 1,3 million public servants only about 9000 are in ICT related fields. As efforts to stabilize the high cost of ICT in the public service, the Department has proposed measures for the optimization of ICT spend in the Public Service and those proposals were submitted to National Treasury. We remain hopeful that improved coordination of ICT investments by the Public Service will result in better use of state resources. The Digital Government Policy Framework seeks to improve coordination between the various role-players within the space of e-government (Digital government) in the public service.

ICT remains a strategic tool in public service and for it to be effective we need to improve Confidentiality, Integrity and Availability of public service data and information particularly during this digital where the increased prevalence of cyber security incidents.

We continue to monitor the implementation of the Digital Transformation Change Management Programme which seeks to provide a general framework within which the public service can

develop and implement processes, tools, and techniques to manage the people side of change arising from introducing Information Technology (IT) in a business environment.

12. Future of Work

Programme Director, the Future of Work in the Public Service requires partnerships that are collaborative in nature and can assist the government to not only know and prepare for the future but to define it. The most important way to do this, is to ensure that the public service is staffed by employees that have the right education, the right skills, the right competencies and they are in the right jobs. Academic associations such as this one should be rooted in efforts to respond to questions that will define Future of Work in the Public Service:

- What skills will be required by the public service in the next 20-30 years?
- What technology will be used in government in future?
- What jobs will be required and who will perform them?
- What services will be required and in what format?
- In what configuration will the Public Sector need to be in the future?
- What will constitute professionalization in the future? and
- How does the public service attract and retain the skills required in order to deliver on the future?

Academia should provide the theoretical bedding and responses to these questions. However for the partnership to be successful, it should not to be fixated on how accurately we collectively respond to these questions, the most important matter is to ensure that these questions guide how we approach our work and undertake decisions.

13. CONCLUSION

In conclusion Programme Director, in this address, we are inviting partnerships that are robust as they are necessary to rebuild the capacity of government to perform optimally and deliver on its mandate in a manner that is effective and efficient. We need innovations that have less red tape, agile institutions that are able to respond timely, and departments that promote entrepreneurship than bureaucratic responses.

Chapter 13 of the NDP highlights that in order for South Africa to effectively deal with the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality, it and I quote: “requires a well-run and effectively coordinated state institutions with skilled public servants who are committed to the public good and capable of delivering consistently high-quality services while prioritising the nation’s developmental objectives”.

It is for this reason that this partnership must succeed!

Ndiyabulela