

Launch of the PSETA-TUT – Partnership on the Future of Work in the Public Service Sector

28 October 2022

Keynote Address: TW Nxesi MP

Acting Minister of Public Service and Administration

Protocol:

- Programme Director
- Mr Manyoni, IFOW Advisory Council Chair
- Dr Papu-Zamxaka, TUT Deputy VC
- Ms Bontle Lerumo, PSETA CEO
- Mr Nyiko Mabunda, Acting DDG: Human Resource Management, on behalf of the DPSA Director-General
- Prof Potgieter, Chief Director: Research and Market Intelligence
- Prof Maserumule, TUT Executive Dean
- Mr Tshefuta, PSETA AA Chair

- Mr Mohlomi, IFOW Senior Director
- Let me also recognise the TUT Alumni Choir

Greetings to all and let me first thank the organisers for inviting me to participate in this important event: the Launch of the Public Service Education and Training Authority (PSETA) and the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) Partnership on the Future of Work in the Public Service sector. Let me also assure you have the support of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) – and its various entities – for this initiative.

It is only a few days ago that I was last at TUT to attend the Future of Work 4IR Dialogue convened by the Institute for Future of Work on the theme: ‘Towards a Work-Ready Future’. I addressed the Dialogue as the Minister of Employment and Labour – *that’s my full-time job by the way* - on the theme: “The Future of Work and Social Impact”. On a lighter note - let me also assure you that I don’t get double

pay for also acting as Minister of Public Service and Administration.

But I think it makes the point that the fact that I am here – representing two different government departments – on themes that are very much related – it makes the point that research and work around the profound changes taking place in the workplace, in labour markets and the future of work – this is critical to all of us, if we are to take advantage of the opportunities that new technology brings, whilst mitigating the disruptive effects of the same technology on labour markets and communities.

The previous Dialogue, I have referred to, amongst others, focused on the relationship between skills training and the world of work.

In many ways, as originally conceived, the SETAs (Sector Training Authorities) were an attempt to do just that.

Originally falling under the Department of Labour, one of the

roles of the SETAs was exactly to perform the kind of skills planning required – to research and monitor the labour market in their particular sector and to allocate resources for training accordingly.

As you know, it didn't work out and the SETAs were reassigned to the Department of Higher Education and Training. I should add that in discussion with the Minister of Higher Education, we are agreed that our two departments should cooperate around issues of skills and training – which obviously have a bearing on issues of employment and unemployment. We have said that the critical thing is to achieve alignment between the two departments on these issues – and it shouldn't matter where the SETAs sit – but how they perform.

But I should acknowledge that when I arrived at the Department of Employment and Labour, that Department was facilitating and funding training which was only minimally informed by labour market research and skills planning. In some ways we had a bizarre supply-led training model with

training institutions largely setting the agenda for skills training.

The very real downside of this – was that when unemployed people received training – which was not aligned to the needs of the labour market – they simply remained unemployed. We have put a stop to the willy-nilly funding of training programmes, oblivious to their employment outcomes – in favour of a model which provides training against guaranteed employment at the end of the training.

With the renewed focus on jobs, the Department of Employment and Labour has homed in on training for guaranteed jobs – effectively substituting this for an in-depth labour market analysis. Now this is all very well for boosting job numbers in the short-term – but clearly this does not begin to come to terms with broader future trends in the demand for particular skills, and a further challenge with our approach to training is that certain of the required skills will have longer lead times in the training thereof.

So at one level this is the context in which I see the launch of this partnership today. But we also know that it is more complicated than a response to technological change and the demand for a changing skills set – we are dealing with the public service.

The P-SETA's overarching strategic imperative – mirroring the mission of the Department of Public Service and Administration - is building the skills required for a capable, skilled and developmental state. The scope of coverage includes National and Provincial government departments, identified Public Entities, Parliament and Provincial Legislatures.

The PSETA specifically oversees 'transversal skills and functions', that is, the skills that enable the Public Service sector to perform the 'business of government'. These skills and functions include administration, management, planning, legislation and policy development. These are 'cross-cutting' skills that facilitate the effective and efficient functioning of government.

In leading the development of the skills required for a capable, skilled and developmental state, the PSETA's core functions include the development of a Sector Skills Plan (SSP), quality assurance of provisioning in the sector, the development and dissemination of learning programmes and qualifications, coordinating skills development interventions and facilitating learner placement and absorption into the Public Service sector.

In order to effectively carry out these functions, it is imperative for the PSETA to assess and forecast the nature of skills supply and skills demand in the sector - critical to ensuring that interventions are responsive to the needs of the sector.

PSETA's strategy is premised on the quality and credibility of information about its performance environment. Thus, the PSETA requires knowledge and information on the labour market and future world of work.

Programme 2 of the PSETA Strategic Plan is aimed at ensuring a credible institutional mechanism for skills planning. The purpose of the programme is to conduct and coordinate research to inform strategic skills development priorities for the sector. Skills planning and research plays an integral role in gathering statistical data and other relevant information on the labour market, skills needs and training provision. Such information is essential in planning to meet the sector's skills needs and guiding investment in education and training provision.

The PSETA is partnering with the TUT as a Research Partner to provide research services in the Public Service sector and skills development related studies in response to the sector mandate and support to the SETA in the fulfilment of its research mandate and agenda. This partnership between PSETA and TUT will be managed and coordinated by the Institute for Future of Work (IFoW) as the key access point to the competence and capacity within TUT.

The two streams are:

- Future skills and competencies for the model public servant in the South African public service sector; and
- Analysis of baseline ICT skills of public servants and an investigation of future ICT skills needs.

Skills planning in the Public Service sector provides the strategic direction needed to guide the development of human capital that is required by the state to deliver on its developmental goals and objectives. Given the nuances of the Public Service sector labour market, research into specific areas within human resource development must be prioritised. Equally, investigating and establishing standards for capacity building and associated areas is key.

Research in this focus area will also seek to build an understanding of the drivers and challenges impacting and informing the occupations and skills demand in the Public Service sector in relation to new policy directions and priorities initiated by and/or associated with the sector in

delivering and achieving the goals of the NDP (National Development Plan).

PSETA believes that this Research Partnership on the Future of Work in the Public Service sector will amongst others, contribute to the growing body of empirical evidence on the skills needs for the future, and enable relevant role players in the sector to ensure an adequate response to the needs identified.

Research Stream 1: Future skills and competencies for the model public servant in the South African public service sector

- The Research Leader under this stream of work is Prof Mashupye Hebert Maserumule of Tshwane University of Technology (TUT).
- This stream seeks to establish the skills and competencies of the model future public servant for the public service sector in South Africa within the context of the 4IR and

other related developments that will contribute to the institutionalisation of the capability of the state.

Accelerated by the Covid19 pandemic and demographic and climate change, the rapid technological developments where the intersection of cyber, physical, and biological technologies is said to be spawning an unprecedented intervention in human history.

The implications of all these transformations on the future of work are glaring. Central to all these changes is the public servant. And this is the focus of this collaborative research between TUT, DPSA and PSETA.

TUT has established the Institute for the Future of Work to respond to the global impact of technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, the internet of things, among others, on the skills required for the immediate and future worlds of work. This implies that public servants require digital skills to be able to carry out their work within this environment.

However, the skills required by public servants go beyond just digital literacy to include political-administrative, economic, cultural, and environmental competencies. The importance of an appropriately skilled public service as a critical ingredient for a capable state cannot be overemphasised.

This research project is aimed at investigating the future skills needs of the South African public service to develop a cadre of public servants required for South Africa's public service sector in order to realise the goals of the National Development Plan (NDP), related to building a capable and developmental state.

The project objectives can be summarised as follows:

- To establish the state of literature on the 4IR and its implications on the administration of the state, and to review existing literature on the future skills and

competencies of public servants and its implications for the institutionalisation of the capability of the state.

- To ascertain how governments elsewhere in the world, from a skills perspective, have responded to the 4IR and other developments that have had a significant impact on operations in the public sector and institutionalisation of the capability of the state.
- To generate an understanding of the skills set and competencies required by public servants in South Africa within the context of the 4IR and other related developments.
- To develop a compendium of skills and competencies for the model future public servant in the age of 4IR, from both the international experience and experiences of public servants in South Africa.
- To provide a framework or roadmap that will provide strategic insight into the necessary capacity development and training interventions to develop a cadre of skilled and competent public servants that will institutionalise the capability of the state.

Research Stream 2: Analysis of baseline ICT skills of public servants and an investigation of future ICT skills needs

The Research Leader under this stream of work is Dr Agnieta Pretorius of Tshwane University of Technology. This project is aimed at understanding the ICT Skills in the South African Public Service sector.

It is necessary to explore the appropriate technologies on one hand, and on the other hand to engage leaders to inform interventions that will ensure a relevant and capable public servant in the era of 4IR and other changes to come.

The project seeks to investigate the challenges facing a capable public service by researching the key gaps in information and communications technology (“ICT”) skills of public servants working in ICT in the public sector.

The project objectives can be summarised as follows:

- To investigate the future ICT skills needs of public servants working in ICT in the South African public service sector, and
- To analyse and provide recommendations on the skills development and training interventions on the baseline of ICT skills of public servants working in ICT in the South African public service sector.

In conclusion:

The PSETA recognises the need to partner with a suitable research partner in order to strengthen and improve research and innovation for the Public Service sector.

The sector needs to be supported to be able to identify the nature of their staff competency gaps and what kinds of training are most appropriate for developing capacity in these areas. Therefore, identifying current and future skills demand as accurately as possible is extremely important if the goals

of the National Development Plan (NDP) are to be achieved within the Public Service sector.

The key partner in this project is the DPSA. In line with the undertaking made through the Memorandum of Understanding between PSETA and DPSA, this research project is a result of the commitment made to continually engage on matters of mutual interest and collectively working together on programmes involving skills development.

This work between the PSETA and DPSA further enables the fulfilment of respective legislative mandates by ensuring that there is effective human resource planning and development within the Public service.

The National School of Government has also been engaged as a critical partner to this project.

The involvement of strategic partners lays the foundation for the production of skilled public servants who are committed

to the public good and capable of delivering consistently high-quality services, while prioritizing the nation's developmental objectives.

Critically, this work also contributes towards the achievement of priority 1 of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) of a Capable, Ethical and Developmental State which is at the core of the PSETA's mandate.

The final research project is expected to be concluded by June 2023. This is good. It is always important to set timelines to any project – to end on a lighter note – you need timeframes: especially where bureaucrats are involved.

Thank you.