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# EDITORIAL

## BUILDING A HUMANITARIAN PUBLIC SERVICE IMBUED WITH STRONG ETHICS AND VALUES: IN HONOUR OF GREAT LEADERS OF OUR TIME

Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo

Guest Editor

University of Pretoria

Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)

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This September edition of the *Journal of Public Administration* is a collection of articles that reflect and close an era of the great public servants of our time. It challenges future generations to take the baton of humanitarianism and make it a reality for service delivery, human development, responsible leadership and ethical behaviour in the conduct of public affairs. For reasons of context, the edition starts with an article that asks an important question, which has always been a firmament of the disciplinary discourse: Is public administration a science? This question is important in theorising humanitarian public service. A reflection on it is followed by an argument for African public administration theory. Yet another article that contextualises the thematic thrust of this edition determines the meaning and significance of "conscience" and "consciousness" in public leadership. Following this are articles on state transformation, one focusing on class dynamics, while the

other asks the question of whether South Africa is a developmental state. In situating South Africa in world affairs, a question is asked in the article that follows those on state transformation: are country rankings neo-liberal tools or perceptions? Against the context set by all these articles, a humanitarian public service is theorised in the analyses of the leadership traits of Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela and Mohandas Gandhi. The theorisation continues with a discourse on "public service by, of and for the public". This is followed by an article on the critical analysis of the post-1994 administrative culture. Induction training is emphasised as important to achieve a humanitarian public service.

This edition is dedicated to the late Nelson Mandela, Albert Luthuli, Martin Luther King Jr, John Frederick Kennedy, Ralph Bunche, Mohandas Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Dag Hammarskjöld. All these personalities are

Nobel Peace Prize Recipients, because they served humanity with humility and dignity. The edition was put together in memory of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, of South Africa, who died on 5 December 2013. In paying tribute to Mandela, the Executive Director of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), Joel Netshitenhze, wrote: "contained in the attributes he embedded in the South African psyche were the Gandhian quality for simple humaneness, the Leninist tact in managing a revolutionary moment of political authority changing hands, and a Kennedian touch in making it look so eminently reasonable".

South Africa, in evolving into a democratic developmental state, is fortunate to have had Mandela. This nation is deliberately defining itself as such. Developmental states in Asia were not self-defined, but were given the title by multi-lateral organisations. South Africa's quest, as a democratic developmental state, allowed all South Africans to participate in the development of a viable democracy. Such an achievement would not only create opportunities for the nation, but would also make all South Africans own and protect the political economy that belongs to all of them. This would be consistent with the democratic political dispensation that was established on 27 April 1994, with Mandela as the first democratic president. The world at large has cherished this achievement and encouraged South Africans to continue with this important journey of humanitarianism.

Prior to the democratic dispensation, South Africa was a beleaguered and pariah state,

because of the apartheid system. The international sanctions movement contributed significantly to the demise of apartheid. Nowhere in the world were sanctions as effective in bringing about the end of human inequality. The 1994 settlement ushered in democracy, which had not been experienced in this country for almost three centuries. As this was achieved, numerous inherited structural features remain intact within the South African economy. The South African economy remains a raw commodity dependent exporting economy. The existence of abundant exploited cheap labour continues. The monopolisation of the South African economy by a few companies remains a reality (even oligopolies struggle to exist). The establishment of small viable businesses remains a dream, because of the unrelenting monopolies (government policy has been very successful in breaking the major monopolies). The inherited educational system continues to bedevil human capital development and investment (unfortunately, the focus has been largely on wanting to solve the school level of education and far less on university education). The role of the public service, in contributing to the development of the South African political economy as an emerging market economy, is not clearly articulated. In recent times, we have witnessed how public services, such as in Greece, have to a certain extent contributed to the demise of a nation's economy.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, sparked debates in the early stages of democracy in South Africa on the potential pitfalls of not respecting the public



or prudently utilising government revenue accumulated through taxation. The context of his observation was the increases in the salaries of public officials. He was vilified for cautioning against the dangers of the potential existence of what he referred to as the "gravy train". It can be deduced that the caution was overall about the frugal use of public financial resources. This has bedevilled the South African public sector to the present period with the challenges of bad governance, which could culminate in inefficient and ineffective service delivery if not addressed. The world abounds with such challenges. The elements behind excellent service delivery are the ethos and values that public servants must uphold at all times. South Africa is confronted with these issues, as most countries in the world are. Successful political economies are the result of good governance and visible participation or operational citizenship. Against this background, the big question is: how do we establish humanitarian public services that contribute to the existence of good governance, growth and development? This question has become more pertinent as nations are experiencing largely negative economic growth rates and their public services are struggling to effectively and efficiently deliver services. What is obviously apparent is that the role of the public sector remains paramount. Strong nation formation is related to the public sector significantly contributing to the existence of strong political economies.

The lack of understanding of how the public and private sectors collude at the expense of the general public, requires interrogation,

because both have had an impact on the publics of different nations. Can certain ethics and values be infused in both to focus on the actual implementation of the notion of *Batho Pele* or *Ubuntu*? Nobel Peace Recipient and President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, eloquently engaged the notion of *Ubuntu* in his eulogy to the late Nelson Mandela.

All these issues raised in this editorial are intended to encourage further thinking to advance the South African public service and those of the world, to understand government versus markets, and analyse the changing economic role of the state. As the global political economy is reshaping itself, so must public services search for appropriate approaches to humanitarian public services. As the Mapungubwe civilisation has aptly demonstrated, as leaders become alienated from their citizens, the decay of societies ensues, resulting in instability, hopelessness and despair. These further encourage, in some situations, the rise of dictatorships and the emergence of bogus leaders who are unaccountable to the citizenry.

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# EXEMPLAR PROFILE

## IN CONVERSATION WITH PROFESSOR SIBUSISO VIL-NKOMO: RECIPIENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT'S HIGHEST HONOUR

Mashupye H Maserumule  
Chief Editor

FM Lucky Mathebula  
Policy Editor

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### INTRODUCTION

The *Journal of Public Administration* belongs to the South African Association of Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM) – the custodian of the fraternity. Its pride lies in its thought leadership, as demonstrated in the scholarship of its high-impact publication, as the bibliometric indicators show, and in its well-themed conferences hosted annually where, coupled with the rigour of the discourses, excellence is recognised. In the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of SAAPAM, themed *The path traversed – 20 years of democracy in South Africa*, a Life-Time Achievement Award was presented to Professor Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo for his outstanding contribution and exemplary leadership in the field of public administration. This is the highest honour the fraternity bestows on an individual whose contribution

shapes the evolution of the discipline, both as a science and as praxis. The fraternity finds Vil-Nkomo's scholarship authoritative, while his contribution to the transformation of the public service remains an indelible imprint on the history of the post-apartheid state. At the time of the award, Vil-Nkomo was part of the advisory board constituted by Minister Lindiwe Sisulu – who at the time was leading the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) – to assist her in establishing the National School of Government (NSG), a strategic initiative to build the capacity of the state.

This award could not have been given at a more appropriate time than when South Africa was turning 20 years. Vil-Nkomo is one of the architects of our democracy, which is coming of age. Because of how democracy fared in post-colonial Africa,

some thought that South Africa, being the last country on the continent to achieve freedom from apartheid colonialism, would not be able to sustain the pursuit of a new country. Afro-pessimists argued that South Africa would go the same route as the rest of the continent – a narrative that characterises post-colonial African countries as failed states. Their false premonition is that the future of Africa is bleak as the crisis of governance is becoming increasingly intractable. The democratisation path traversed, and the extent to which subsequent democracy was consolidated, exposed Afro-pessimist narratives on Africa as, in the words of Donaldo Macedo, a "pedagogy of big lies" peddled through the modernisation theories that still largely undergird the ontology of the epistemology of public administration.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of SAAPAM, hosted in conjunction with the University of Limpopo, was a moment for reflection on the democratic path traversed, especially as it relates to the question of governance. To contextualise the discussions this question was asked at the outset: how did South Africa come this far? The discussion on this question necessarily historicised the post-1994 South African state. Yet another important question at the thematic thrust of the Conference was concerned with the implication on public administration of the 20 years of democracy in South Africa. From the perspective of governance as a science, further questions were: what are the theoretical paradigms that disciplined the epistemological evolution of the discipline? What is the extent of their appropriateness

in sustaining its relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Africa? What are the alternative paradigms of knowledge for the discipline? In other words, as a science, what does Public Administration seek to achieve? Can it spawn "solutions to the myriads of problems confronting African states and peoples?"<sup>1</sup> The chief editor and policy editor of the *Journal* followed-up on these questions in a conversation with Vil-Nkomo, showing the profundity of his insight on the science and praxis of governance, which is reproduced in its entirety below for the benefit of the fraternity. Perhaps before this, the question that must be addressed is: who is Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo?

## **ALCHEMY OF EXCELLENCE**

An analysis of his resumé leads one to the conclusion that Vil-Nkomo is an alchemy of excellence. SAAPAM takes pride in its association with him. By the way, Vil-Nkomo is a very important factor in the history of SAAPAM. In other words, a history of this Association, which is yet to be written, would not be complete without him. An international scholar par excellence, Vil-Nkomo studied in the United States of America (USA), Lincoln University, Pennsylvania (where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts Magna Cum Laude, majoring in Economics/Public Affairs) and University of Delaware (where he obtained a Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Public Affairs).

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<sup>1</sup> Uche, N. 2015. Coloniality and governance in Africa in the twenty-first century: The challenge of public administration. *Journal of Public Administration*, 50(2): p. 191.

His dissertation received the Mark Haskell Political Economy Award. Vil-Nkomo taught, and was associated with various universities and organisations in the USA. He has been a researcher at the Brookings Institution Library, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund Libraries and the Library of Congress. Upon his return to South Africa, Vil-Nkomo was appointed by President Nelson Mandela as a Public Service Commissioner and played a very important part in the transformation of the South African public service. He later joined the University of Pretoria as Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, and was a member of the executive management of the same University. In 2011-2012, Vil-Nkomo was a Fulbright Scholar at Fordham University and Fellow of the Fordham Business School Consortium in New York. He is currently Research Professor at the University of Pretoria's Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship and the Chairperson of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA). Vil-Nkomo was one of those who conceptualised and founded MISTRA, which, according to the Global Go-To Think Tank's Report of 2013, is one of the Best New Think Tanks globally. This is one of his many achievements that defines his traits as a trailblazer.

## **VIL-NKOMO'S CONVERSATION WITH THE EDITORS OF THE JOURNAL**

We started by probing his formative years, the intention being to try and understand the context that spawned and shaped who he

has become. The focus moved thereafter to his political and scholarship consciousness. We were curious to find out what attracted him to anti-apartheid politics, to the extent that he left the country in protest against the system. Coming to the issue of scholarship, we were more interested in his insight into the science and praxis of governance, including his view on the state of the discipline. We solicited his guidance on how the discipline could be elevated to the status of being respected and recognised as one of the strategic fields of study. He also shared his views on how the future of the discipline should be imagined and enhanced.

### **Formative Years: The Context of Who You Became, and Your Political and Intellectual Consciousness**

**Editors:** *Your history reflects a boarding school environment; to what extent would you attribute what you turned out to be to your early upbringing?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** How would you contrast that with opportunities available for the current generation of young people? I did attend boarding school, St Francis College, which is commonly known as Mariannhill. We were taught by Germans who took us beyond the confines of what was then known as Bantu Education. They challenged our young minds and built on the abilities or signalling effects we were reflecting. We learned to be deep thinkers, wanted to know more and we were made not to be comfortable with the status quo of apartheid and life

in general. At Mariannhill, we were also exposed to political thinkers such as Steve Biko, Terror Lekota and others who were our seniors or had been at Mariannhill before us. We would, on some weekends, go to Wentworth, the Medical School, where we interacted with some brilliant minds and they would in return come to Mariannhill and hold intellectual dialogue with us.

The Mariannhill environment was about academic excellence, competitiveness, achievement, exposure, knowledgeability, leadership, integrity and high performance. If there is a facility I would develop into a private not-for-profit university it would be Mariannhill. You can tell that Mariannhill had a deep impact on me and hence I think in those terms of excellence. When I was exposed to institutions like Tuskegee, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, Howard University, Wilberforce University, Morehouse University, Spelman University, etc., I concluded that we needed many of our own such institutions in South Africa that would reflect our own values and pedagogy of education, and Mariannhill was an obvious candidate. I know that my name is on a plaque at Mariannhill. The combination of my family upbringing, the neighbourhoods (Newclare and Orlando West) where I grew up and the Mariannhill rigour shaped my future. By the way, Mariannhill taught me to be independent and to survive in tough conditions and hence I was able to handle life in exile where I did not have a mother, father, uncle or proper support systems to protect me. Dependency is a recipe for underdevelopment.

Young people of today have more opportunities than we did. They are intelligent but also misunderstood by some seniors. If we could excel with limited opportunities they can achieve even more. They must never allow themselves to be misled by those who do not give priority to education. The fact of the matter is that education is a liberator of major significance. Earlier on I talked about knowledge being power and through a proper education you will have that power. There are more opportunities for young people of South Africa to be inventors, designers, scientists, leading intellectuals and so on. Remember young people, today you are not only competing with your peers in South Africa, but competing with others in the world. The world is your playing field. Questions for you: (1) Is South Africa going to sustain its place in BRICS? (2) Is South Africa going to be a significant player in the G20? (3) Is our development sustainable enough from a knowledge point of view or will South Africa become a basket case nation? (4) Have we learned why nations fail? (5) Can we develop Public Affairs programmes that can become models for the world? These are a few questions that young people will have to deal with because this country is no longer the new kid on the block or the flavour of the month.

**Editors:** *Why did you become a knowledge worker and why did you choose to make this your lifelong career in the midst of post-apartheid opportunities?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** I come from a family that has always valued education. This family is made

of W.F. Nkomo, A.S. Vil-Nkomo, J.R. Rathbe and Mahabanes Mokoena, the mathematician in the days of Fort Hare, Congress Mbatha at Cornell University, etc. I was exposed and had the opportunity to learn and work with people such as Professors Ann Seidman, the late Robert Seidman, the late Mark A. Haskell (part of whose library I inherited), Andre Gunder Frank, Emmanuel Wallerstein, and many others. As young exiles, under people like Ms Barbara Masekela, the late Johnny Makatini, Prof. Bernard Magubane, Prof. Fred Dube and others, we mobilised the world by saying Bantu education is inferior and pronounced the words of the Freedom Charter about an equal education for all. Were we espousing these words just to occupy positions of power in government buildings? Were we lying about the inequalities of education in South Africa? Were we interested in education and research for freedom for all?

All of the above made me pursue the path of being a knowledge worker. I knew and continue to pursue Public Affairs scholarship as one of the key pillars or commanding heights of our society's development. Look, the old saying that "knowledge is power" still holds today. I even go on to say to students: "Knowledge is the ultimate liberator and never believe the saying that the sky is the limit". The limit is when you are a victim of "isomorphic mimicry." What other opportunities are there in post-apartheid South Africa? Is the answer to be rich? Is it to chase tenders? Is it to talk from all sides of your mouth? In my book, the real answer is to be involved in knowledge generation and

inquiry that will develop South Africa and give it global credibility.

## **Anti-Apartheid Politics and Intellectualism**

**Editors:** *There is emerging evidence of early African intellectualism in South Africa. Which early intellectuals have inspired your generation of thinkers and intellectuals and why would you say this?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** This is a very important question because a lot of South Africans think that African intellectuals never existed in the past, as you also commonly hear that black South Africans are not entrepreneurial. The latter requires further discussion because the negative is punted by people who are ignorant about the history of black South Africans as entrepreneurs. There is plenty of evidence that African intellectualism flourished. Obviously, my first experience on this subject and exposure was with my family and I have previously mentioned some of their names. Before I mention some names let me identify the places of intellectualism such as the Bantu Men's Social Centre where intellectual discourse took place with South Africans such as Ray Phillips.

Sophiatown was the centre of the South African renaissance. Sophiatown incorporated academic, political, business and cultural awakening. This would not have taken place without intellectual brainpower. The University of Fort Hare was another location of intellectual discourse. Schools such as Mariannhill, Ohlange, Healdtown, Lemane and

St Peters, were places of young intellectual growth. A.S. Vil-Nkomo wrote the following in *Umthetheli Wabantu* in February 1946 about John L. Dube: "No one else in his generation has accomplished so much with such meagre economic means. He was a scholar, gentleman, leader, farmer, teacher, patriot and philanthropist." This observation was about the brainpower of Dube who asked *Isitha Somuntu Nguye*. In simple translation, "Have we given up on ourselves", because if we do not exercise our intellectual brainpower, we are our own worst enemy. There were also other intellectuals such as Dr A.B. Xuma, Chief Shadrack F. Zibi, Mr R.V. Seloqe Thema, Professor James Thaele, Mr Allen K. Soga, Mr T.D. Mwelu Skota, Dr P. Ka I. Seme, Dr Walter B. Rubusana, Mr A.M. Qunta, Ms G. Ntlabati, Mr Lionel T.E. Mtimkulu, Mr S.E. Rune Mqayi, Mr Geo D. Montsioa, Mrs Elizabeth Buthiwe Mbatha (nee Ncwana), Mr Ignatius Monare, Dr D.S. Moleme, Mr Davison Don Tengo Jabavu, and Mr R.R.R.R. Dhlomo. This list of African intellectuals of the past era is not exhaustive but the tip of the iceberg. It must be stated that because of the colour bar and apartheid a large number of African intellectuals left the country to go and conquer new global intellectual frontiers and these included people like Mazisi Kunene, Alfred Molea, Congress Mbata, Bernard Magubane and others whose names read like the who's who in many countries.

The history that is not known about some of the African intellectuals is that they were inducted into fraternities like Phi Beta Sigma and Alpha Phi Alpha whose members were people such as Kwame Nkrumah, Namdi

Azikiwe, and Martin Luther King Jr. They also interacted and were exposed to diaspora thinkers such as Ralph Bunche (the first black Nobel Peace Prize recipient who visited South Africa), Booker T. Washington (the founder of Tuskegee Institute that later became Tuskegee University), George Padmore (a Pan-Africanist who became advisor to Kwame Nkrumah), and many more.

**Editors:** *What does it mean to be an intellectual in post-apartheid South Africa as well as post-colonial Africa?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** Search for new knowledge, understand the development trajectories of this fledgling democracy, teach so that others can learn, aspire for a globally competitive South Africa, ask the right questions, inquire about why we are in BRICS, challenge the curriculum and research in public affairs. Furthermore, strive to interrogate why civilisations come and go, why nations fail or succeed. In the field of Public Affairs, why are our schools of Public Affairs in South Africa and the African continent not globally ranked, and can we even rank each other objectively? A true intellectual in post-apartheid South Africa, as well as post-colonial Africa, searches for knowledge and is honest to their role. An intellectual in this continent is a soldier who must venture into the unknown territory of knowledge.

**Editors:** *Minister Nene has just been appointed and the media referred to him as the first black African, a classification that attracted the ire of many commentators. Do you think there is still space for black*

*intellectuals to operate in the context of being black? If yes, what then is the role of black or rather African intellectuals in the changing global geopolitical architecture?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** I am not sure what it means to be a black intellectual. Black merely identifies the colour of your skin. What we really need in South Africa are excellent intellectuals who have a clear understanding of the political economy of an emerging developmental state like South Africa. They must strive to come up with a model that will make South Africa globally competitive. We have been there before when intellectuals were driving a race agenda that crippled the majority of the population and disadvantaged scholarship. What must drive South African intellectuals is excellence.

**Editors:** *Is there a list of South African intellectuals and scholars of your generation whose writing and teaching you think we should pay attention to? What about the African continent and the diaspora?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** There are and I will list the following few: Joel Netshitenzhe, Barry Gilder, Themba Masilela, Graeme Bloch, Olive Shisana, Margaret Mabugu-Chitiga, Abba Omar, Mcebisi Ndletyana, Itumeleng Mosala, Charlotte du Toit, Michael Kahn, Berhanu Mengistu, Tanya Abrahamse, Elaine Salo Phandelani Matoma, and Garth Le Pere.

### **Science and Praxis of Governance**

**Editors:** *You are one of the foreign university trained academics who had the oppor-*

*tunity to meet and interact with J.J.N. Cloete. What is your view of his contribution to Public Administration?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** His work was sufficient for the time when South Africa was what it was.

**Editors:** *In the context of the influence of the Cloetenic approach in the study of Public Administration in South Africa, therefore by extension on the praxis of governance, perhaps a follow-up question could be: do you think our public administration system is sufficiently geared to deliver a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** This is a work in progress. Even more importantly, our public service still has to embrace all nationalities and be gender sensitive in the workplace. Ageism has become a visible problem in our public service. Nannyism is also there. I may be wrong, but my observation is that our public service is viewed as a place for employing "blacks" and the private sector is for "whites". These internal challenges can become the albatross of delivery of services to all. Therefore, our public service will have to be grounded in our political economy and socio-economy for it to be non-racial and non-sexist.

**Editors:** *As the first black dean at the University of Pretoria, what is your experience of transformation at South African universities? The interest of this question is, in the main, on scholarship and intellectualism, but you may respond to any area of interest. Have you ever heard someone talking about*



*unstable transformation? I am introducing this kind of language because "talk is cheap".*

**Vil-Nkomo:** There has not been sufficient financial investment in the field of Public Affairs to make it a model of excellence. Public Affairs in modern times, in general and also in our country, must be transdisciplinary and as a result requires substantial investments. Why is this so? It covers all aspects of societal development. Look at Greece, Spain and Portugal, and how their societies are today challenged in all aspects because their Public Affairs were dysfunctional and as a result their economies collapsed. You invest in excellent scholarship, you laterally buy excellent intellectuals while creating the appropriate environment for them to flourish, and you take a long-term view of your investment. Nobel Prize winners are individuals who have been backed by good financial resources and environment. Look, never assume that you can build excellent scholarship and intellectualism in Public Affairs with limited financial resources and soft money. You must institutionalise resources for long-term success. Better still, in academic institutions and research institutes you build your academic capacity.

**Editors:** *You are on record as having attempted to establish a training institute to the level and magnitude of the British civil service college. With your appointment as chairperson of the National School of Government, what would you say is or should be the central thrust of such a school?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** Education, training, professionalisation and the ability to determine the

future and problem solve through effective research.

**Editors:** *In the discourse of the various public administration orientations, what would be your decisive pronouncement on the direction South African Public Administration should take?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** Public Administration in South Africa must enrich the public service through education, training, development, professionalisation and rigorous research. The last effort to advance public administration was led by the Former Minister of the Public Service and Administration, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, in 2013. The intention was to establish a competitive National School of Government (NSG). The question is: why was it imperative to establish such a school? To set the norms and standards for public service education, training, development, professionalisation and research; to create a nationally and globally competitive public service that must be appreciated locally, as well as admired by other nations; to reclaim and bring back the credibility of the public service and public administration as was experienced in the early stages of our democracy; and to fulfil the aspirations articulated in the National Development Plan (NDP). It is essential that all public servants and Public Administration scholars and teachers familiarise themselves with the NDP, in particular Chapter 13. We know about the debates on the NDP, FOR and AGAINST.

Yes, we also know that the NDP is a living document with good intentions for our nation. Let us all engage in at least Chapter 13,

which is paraphrased as follows: It is an imperative to establish a "capable and focused developmental state in order to improve the lives of our citizens"; the public service must be well vested in the development agenda of governance and must be "insulated from undue political interference"; public servants at all levels must be in control of their work, grounded in institutional and relevant knowledge developed and acquired over a period of time; there must be interlocking relations among the three spheres of government that will culminate in a unified approach on service delivery issues; and state-owned enterprises are an important part of service delivery and hence their "governance structures require simplification". To achieve all of this, the NSG is a key player as articulated in the previous points that have been underscored. The NSG is compelled to set the norms and standards that will demand excellence throughout the sector that purports to educate, train, develop and professionalise public servants. The Council that was given the task to develop the NSG clearly understood that this is not an easy undertaking, was cognisant that this is a gradual development that must be properly thought through. As it is often said: Rome was not built in a day and in our context "apartheid was not demolished in a day". The admission that public service education, training and development are medium to long-term projects mandates that the NSG must collaborate with dependable partners that emphasize excellence. The partners must also, with confidence, articulate the values and ethics of a developmental state.

I have, over many years of our democracy, reflected on the thinking processes that can make our public service a model of excellence far and above any other field. I have also been concerned about how we can encourage future generations to respect public service and public administration. As we embark on new approaches to strengthen our public service and what we offer in our lecture rooms, the challenges of thinking, analysis and professionalisation loom very high. Our successes depend on an integrated approach to our endeavours because our country is certainly a democratic developmental state that is deeply involved in the projects of nation formation, political economic development, excellent governance, unbundling the economics of poverty and discrimination, income maintenance and distribution, policy development, understanding new knowledge associated with the use of sophisticated technologies and in search of the role of government versus markets. These are a few challenges that confront our fledgling democratic state and the public service sector as a whole. We all know why this is central and the full participation of the public service is a *sine qua non*. In light of this, I also urge you to participate in professional associations like the South African Association for Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM).

There is room to establish a think tank on public administration because it is obvious that there is an opportunity to undertake in-depth research to advance public administration to create a well-developed public service. This is a niche area of focus for the

SAAPAM, the newly established NSG and MISTRA (ranked in the top 10 global newly established think tanks by the University of Pennsylvania). The purpose is to have academics and professionals establish a symbiotic relationship grounded in research and practical application. As an example, before you go to the moon, you must develop a model that approximates reality and this must be grounded in proper analysis and research. In short, do not short-change yourselves by culminating your development by only receiving a certificate. The old saying that knowledge is power holds even today. What you have acquired is knowledge that will help us perfect our practical work and will contribute to our ability to project the future. MISTRA succinctly underscores the importance of think-tanking: "South Africa has not had a think tank that devotes its attention to strategic approaches to the country's challenges, from a long-term perspective." This observation is very apparent in public sector thinking and analyses and MISTRA is currently leading in this effort and hence the global recognition of this five-year-old knowledge reservoir.

The stagnation of the field of public management has tremendous ramifications for not only service delivery but also lateral across-the-board problem solving, policy implementation, alternative policy recommendation and results-driven evaluation. Even more worrisome is dovetailing policy, as developed by the legislative arm, with policy implementation (that is, the responsibility of public servants). In recent times, the world has become littered with

governing, public service (civil service) and policy failures that have resulted in the collapse of service delivery, economic crises and human suffering. The cases of Greece, Spain, Italy and the Middle East countries immediately come to mind. In these crises, the civil services feature prominently in a negative manner. It is for this reason that broad-based education, training and development approaches are recommended not only in teaching methodologies but also in the content that is taught. We must have a transdisciplinary approach to the education, training and development of public servants and even for those in the public sector. Why? We are a democratic developmental state and we have self-defined ourselves in this way because we understand our developmental challenges; we have a sense of the history as well as current state of our political economy; we want a public service that is deeply steeped in humanitarianism.

With the latter, our history dictates that Public Administration must be taught in a way that is value and ethics laden. This is what distinguishes Public Administration from Business Administration/Management. We want this field not only to respond to the needs of service delivery, but to also have dignity, and be a reputable area of study that has a multiplier effect of having the public sector viewed as a career of choice by those who are making career choices at an early age. They must embrace the idea that the public service is about human and societal development. As the economy, business and science advance, so must Public Administration as part of the social sciences. The

latter in our country are not respected at all and thus public administration must take a lead in this applied and theoretical science. Hence, I advocate for a transdisciplinary approach in Public Administration education, training, development, professionalisation and research.

To concretely justify a transdisciplinary education in Public Administration, one uses the example of the global debate on government versus the market. As Vito Tanzi has stated in his seminal work *Government versus markets: The changing economic role of the state*, "Adam Smith acknowledged the centrality of the state". He analyses a number of issues that have serious relevance to administering the state while at the same time understanding the role of a developmental state. These include the following:

- Understanding the role of public finance versus redistribution.
- The role that had to be undertaken by the community rather than the state. This has serious ramifications for those who serve as public servants.
- The prudent utilisation of taxes that are an important contribution made by taxpayers. This emphasis is on the understanding by public servants that taxes are revenue generated from compulsory taxation. In other nations there have been tax revolts because of the lack of accountability and overspending.
- The emphasis that the state must play a careful and constructive role in nation development. As a state, know when

to intervene rather than try and do everything. This thinking prevents the state from overcrowding the economy, which can result in communities and businesses becoming helpless, leading to a lack of innovation, inventions and new designs. It is important not to create a nanny state with public servants viewing themselves as the custodians of everything that has to be achieved.

To summarise, Adam Smith's logic on government versus the market, I underscore the following two as presented in Tanzi's study: Firstly, the need to provide services that are essential for an organized society, especially one based on commerce, but are not likely to be provided, or to be provided in needed quantity, by private markets. Secondly, he identified the need for the state to build large public works and to provide some essential services that, because of their high costs or their nature, would not be provided by private individuals (p. 57).

Furthermore, my emphasis on a transdisciplinary approach in the teaching and studying of public leadership is for the sector as a whole to go beyond the confines of the dry definitions of management and leadership. Our political economy, the development challenges that confront us, and the fact that we exist in a developmental state compel us to use tools of the trade that are experimental and practical. I have emphasized the notion of transdisciplinarity. At the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), the study appropriately concluded and summarised transdisciplinarity as

follows: "Transdisciplinarity is an attempt at formulating an integrative process of knowledge production and dissemination. Transdisciplinarity is, in part, a reaction against the twentieth century occurrence of narrow discipline focus and hyper-specialization. It attempts to directly respond to the multi-layered challenges of diffuse disciplines, interlinked socio-economic problems, impacts of globalization, de-territorialized nation states, technological advancements, environmental concerns, food security and so on." (Hester Du Plessis, Jeffrey Sehume and Leonard Martin: 18.)

Use of institutional memory and emerging young minds is also about future leadership in the three spheres of government. This is also mandatory for continuity, self-preservation and innovation in our sector. To develop a vibrant and effective public service is a long journey. It takes several generations to reach a point of satisfaction, while at the same time accepting that public services continue to evolve. Thus, the generation-to-generation development of proper values and ethics in the public service remain the cornerstone of success. Finally, we must understand and work within the NDP and understand that the public service is a major cog for economic growth and development. In addition, public servants do not develop from nothing, but rely to a great extent on excellent education and training programmes. We must also not be ashamed to underscore the importance of meritocracy as well as career pathing.

**Editors:** *Your lengthy response almost aggregates everything insofar as the discourse*

*in Public Administration is concerned. But let's specifically focus on innovation and discovery, important aspects that feature prominently in your writings on public affairs. Could you elaborate on what you mean?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** Yes I can. Innovation is not classified as being scientific and can result in short-term thinking. Discovery is coming across what you thought did not exist. Since 1994, the field of Public Administration in South Africa has been frozen. In this field under discussion, we need to go beyond innovation and discovery and begin to invent. Hence, I have consistently spoken about the difference between the logic of invention and the logic of discovery. We constantly, as South African "scholars" in this field, discover that we can establish Schools of Government, Schools of Governance and Schools of Public Affairs. We do not invent these Schools on the basis of epistemology and scientific approaches that have long-term implications. The logic of invention makes true scholars come up with something that is new and can be replicated by other nations. If you are stuck in the knowledge of discovery, you certainly do not make a significant contribution to knowledge generation. In fact, with the latter you mimic what others have tried and tested. South Africans are more intelligent than to get involved in mimicking.

As a Fulbright Research Scholar, I became more concerned that our field of Public Affairs, 20 years later, is frozen in isomorphic mimicry as it was with conversion of Public Administration to the so-called New

Public Management. Yet, our public affairs space is a laboratory that requires dynamic thinkers, researchers, terrific students and outstanding think tanking. South Africa has voluntarily defined itself as a democratic developmental state and has, without cohesion, allowed itself to be part of the emerging markets group and the BRICS group of nations. What does our Public Affairs field say about this? Are we aware that Public Affairs can be the cause of the development of underdevelopment? Are we concerned about Public Affairs and the economy? If we as scholars are not aware of these issues, Greece, Spain and Italy will look like a picnic when South Africa tumbles, and there will be no global economic crisis but what Former President Thabo Mbeki talked about and that is the two economies. Sadly enough, our Public Affairs institutions have not engaged this dichotomy that co-exists with the public service right in the middle of it.

**Editors:** *What do you understand theory to be? Is there a theory of the business of government? If yes, what are its key components?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** There is a foundation to constructing a theory of government success. Before we can talk about a theory, let me list a few reasons why states exist: (1) To govern the territory in which its citizens live; (2) To manage the economic resources of the nation through monetary and fiscal policies; (3) To create a conducive environment for economic growth and development (the latter includes education, infrastructure development, health provision, etc.); (4) To

establish an excellent public service, and so on. Our National Development Plan helps us to identify the purpose of government. Defining theory at this juncture will not help us that much unless we have done something more important. That is, first things first, things that have long-term objectives. This something is the paradigm that drives our thinking, how we formulate policies, what our Public Affairs should look like, how we engage with the world, our understanding of having a war against poverty, why we educate our children, etc. Once we agree to the paradigm we can then come up with theories. Thomas Kuhn and V.V. Nalimov help us to think about the importance of having a useful guiding paradigm.

**Editors:** *You were involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. There were objectives set by your generation when you were exiled. Do you think, from the perspective of the discipline, that these objectives were or are being met?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** In the case of those you want to reflect on as unmet, tell us why? Categorically, they have not been met. We have not established a "School of Thought" in this field of study and analysis. We are caught in isomorphic mimicry. We are not bold enough to break new ground. There are too many chance-takers who are teaching so much unscientific "stuff". As you all know, a "school of thought" develops out of observation, research, asking the right questions and attracting the best minds. A "school of thought" also develops when those who are involved with experiential work also take

part in their own professional development. The latter must be members of a professional association, and they must participate in the community of practice and its discussions. When some of us worked with leading thinkers, such as Ann Seidman, the hope was that South Africa would create outstanding ideas on Public Affairs as well as approaches. Their thinking was not for a newly democratised country to mimic what was old hat.

What has happened is what Professor Robert Seidman eloquently articulated by saying: "The status quo tends to co-opt even the new unless you quickly apply the ROCCIPI methodology (Rules, Opportunity, Capacity, Communication, Interest, Process, and Ideology) to ensure that the legal framework, institutional capacity and individual behaviour are aligned to achieve the new objectives and goals." He meant that changing the laws alone will not change the outcomes because of a range of factors that impinge on individual behaviour. In our case, we have not applied problem-solving methodologies such as ROCCIPI. Hence, the field of Public Affairs has remained pretty much the same 20 years after the change, and has failed to provide appropriate solutions. The trajectory of our development remains blurred and hopefully the National Development Plan will intensely guide our future strategies of development, service delivery and human behaviour.

**Editors:** *What consciousness do you think African scholarship should espouse, and why?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** Love for one's country and continent, commitment to excellent Public Affairs and the consciousness to be a role model and not a follower. African countries are challenged to be viewed as making a significant contribution to Public Affairs. Another factual observation is that our Public Affairs academic programmes are not in the global rankings. Failure to achieve the latter will result in more international institutions creating their programmes on this continent. When I was Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, I visited a leading international institution in this field (I will not mention the name) and they told me, right to my face, that they do not enter into collaboration agreements, because we are competing with them with the opening up of South Africa to the rest of the continent. Hence, scholarship looms high on my agenda and this is what has made me remain committed to the search of knowledge relevant to Public Affairs. By the way, I started this journey long before South Africa was free from apartheid, when I contributed to the establishment of a strong Public Affairs programme and a Centre for Public Policy and Diplomacy at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. With the late Mr Oliver R. Tambo's call "Prepare to govern", we used Lincoln as the orientation centre and we also worked with the Seidmans at Clark University in Massachusetts to prepare South Africans intellectually to govern.

**Editors:** *What do you think has been the contribution of your generation in the scholarship realm of being South African?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** We contributed to the end of apartheid through scholarship and this was recognised worldwide. Scholars of my generation also significantly contributed to the transitional arrangements that ushered in a fledgling South African democracy and relative stability in this country's political economy. Through the Bilateral and Multiparty Negotiations, we collectively used our intellectual brainpower to safeguard the stability of this country and hence we became the envy as well as model for the world. Public Affairs was in the forefront of all of this. Let me add that the next generation of scholars, after us, must build on these humble achievements. They must not be afraid or be intimidated by institutional memory. Those with institutional memory must also be willing to engage with the younger minds. That is how knowledge is sustained and passed on from one generation to the other.

**Editors:** *What do you think is the role of contemporary intellectuals in Public Affairs?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** Their role is to break new ground that will address the needs of a democratic developmental state that seeks to be successful and at the same time globally competitive. As I said earlier on, we are playing in BRICS, the G20, the UN Security Council and we dream about being ranked internationally and otherwise. Contemporary intellectuals in this field must also strive to advance the South African journal they publish in, so that it must have global recognition as well as accreditation. As exiles, we were always in search of journals produced in South Africa, because we wanted to understand the thinking process of

South Africans. The international colleagues we collaborated with were curious about what was coming out of South Africa. As a recent Fulbright researcher, I still find that we need South African journals in major libraries in the world. Asia has their journals in the different world libraries. Contemporary intellectuals must take advantage of South Africa as being a frontier nation. The continent as a whole is an exciting laboratory for future research undertakings in the field of Public Affairs. Contemporary African scholars must define for themselves what the notion of "Africa rising" means for Public Affairs. Asian countries, to a great extent, defined their own development agenda using their structural features and advanced their intellectual brainpower.

## CONCLUSION

**Editors:** *In moving towards a conclusion, we are curious about your personal experience in the first post-apartheid and Mandela-appointed Public Service Commission. What was it like serving an iconic president of Mandela's stature, and what is your characterisation of his leadership?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** President Mandela was a strong and humble statesman and had no fear of surrounding himself with knowledgeable persons. Most of the time, I come to the conclusion that never again in South Africa or the world will you have people voluntarily wanting to serve a leader as they did with President Mandela. I have concluded that he was not a politician but more of a statesman. I never experienced him as a person who was desperate for power and would talk from all sides of his mouth.



I remember him holding a 10-minute meeting with the Public Service Commission and his words were "I do not want the public service to collapse because if it does, there will be no government". The Commissioners at once understood what had to be done to safeguard the functioning of the public service. Serving under President Mandela was a major honour.

**Editors:** *If you were to be given an opportunity to relive the moment, what would you have done differently to impact on the present?*

**Vil-Nkomo:** Firstly, I would have insisted on the public service not being driven by hidden agendas. Secondly, I would have encouraged public servants to understand their role in the South African political economy. Thirdly, internships for young people who were studying at universities and wanted to join the public service would have been prioritised. Finally, I would have insisted that high schools must teach about the public service so that young people would view the public service as a career of choice and for good reasons.

# SCIENCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: CRITIQUING THE PAST, RECOGNISING THE PRESENT AND IMAGINING THE FUTURE

Mashupye H Maserumule  
Tshwane University of Technology

Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo  
University of Pretoria

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## ABSTRACT

"If nature abhors a vacuum, historiography loves a void because it can be filled with any number of plausible accounts."<sup>1</sup> These are Nicholas Howe's words, which we find apt to punctuate the article's reconsideration of the question: is Public Administration a science? This is an old question in the historiography of the discipline, which just doesn't go away. It emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to seemingly frame the rejoinders to the contentions that Public Administration is a science. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Cameralism had been preoccupied with what it referred to as the science of government. Did this refer to Public Administration? In other words, is the science of government the same as the science of Public Administration? To some, these questions are pedantic, bordering on trivialities. This cannot be true. On the contrary, they are important for seeking conceptual clarity, especially in the discourse, and as important as the science of a discipline.

The reconsideration of the science of Public Administration in the contemporary discourse inevitably invokes nostalgia. For, it has been hotly contested in the evolution of Public Administration as a field of study. This article is intended to contribute to the discourse on the science of Public Administration, starting with a critique of some of the perspectives that emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship, contesting the idea of Public Administration as a science. This is followed by a recognition of the contemporary scholarly endeavours aimed at the "epistemological introspection"<sup>2</sup> of the discipline. Towards the end, the future of the discipline is imagined. The logic of the article is framed with the intention to critically review the past, recognise the present and imagine the future of the discipline. Based on the critique of the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship and the analysis of the contemporary scholarly endeavours, with insights from the theory of evolution and African scholarship, the article contends that Public Administration is a

science. The purpose of the article is simply to add to the contestations.

## INTRODUCTION

Gregory Daneke makes a very interesting observation in his article, *A Science of Public Administration*: "Many realms of social inquiry, particularly public administration, are in the midst of an era of unprecedented epistemological introspection, driven primarily by frustration with the prevailing positivism of applied research".<sup>3</sup> This is a firmament of the disciplinary discourse on the science of Public Administration. The article revisits the question of the science of Public Administration. It critiques the perspectives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which emerged as rejoinders rejecting the idea that Public Administration is a science. The article starts by reflecting on the meaning of science. This is because, in various instances, what is meant by science is not what science is. Sheldon Gottlieb demonstrated this in his presentation at the Harbinger symposium, themed *Religion & Science – The best of enemies, the worst of friends*.<sup>4</sup> He did this by relating a story of his encounter with a science teacher, in Alaska, who made a statement that revealed his shocking lack of understanding of what science is.

This is what the science teacher is said to have said: "After all, you do have to admit that facts are only as good as the theory on which they are based".<sup>5</sup> It is not only the Alaskan science teacher who, as demonstrated in this statement, does not understand the relationship between *facts* and

*theory*. Gottlieb proved this in the assessment of his students, most of whom demonstrated a lack of understanding of science. Even among scientists, contestations on what science is abound. In various instances humanities/socials sciences, as compared to natural/physical sciences, are not regarded as sciences. Because of this, the meaning of science is at the outset determined to contextualise the answer to the question of the article. Based on the critique of the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship, and the analysis of the contemporary scholarly endeavours, the article contends that Public Administration is a science. It ends by imagining the future of the discipline. Its objective is to critically review the past, recognise the present and imagine the future of Public Administration.

## MEANING OF SCIENCE

Perhaps the best approach to consider the meaning of science is to start with what science is not, at least to the extent of the logic of positivism, the influence of which, in the specification of the conceptualisation of the concept, is enormous. A good example of what science is not is what an Alaskan science teacher said: "Facts are only as good as the theory on which they are based".<sup>6</sup> This is twisted logic. The Alaskan teacher "failed to grasp one of the most fundamental aspects of the working of science: scientific theories are derived from facts".<sup>7</sup> The Alaskan teacher had it the other way round. This is not only his challenge. It represents a broader conceptual muddle in defining science. Gottlieb's response to the Alaskan teacher brings to the fore a question of the

relationship between *facts* and *theory*. These are important variables in trying to understand the meaning of science. However, they are steeped in positivism. Gottlieb used the "erroneous statement" of the Alaskan teacher to formulate an examination question for his students, intended to establish the extent of their understanding of the relationship between *facts* and *theory*. It turned out that, as Gottlieb explained, 48 percent of the students got the answer wrong.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps to the chagrin of scholars such as Gottlieb, the question is: can we really blame them? This is asked because scholarship on the meaning of science, including its theory and philosophy, is not unanimous. As Marie-Joëlle Browaeys explains, this exemplifies the "complexity of epistemology".<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this is necessary. For, a consensus on what constitutes science may mark the end of the theory of knowledge or philosophy of science. In one of his highly-intellectual speeches, Thabo Mbeki made a profound observation, which illustrates the complexity of epistemology and gnoseology. He said: "The fundamental issue immanent in all philosophical discourse, from ancient times to date is – what is knowledge?"<sup>10</sup>

Isn't knowledge the function of science? The answer to this question is, it depends on how that knowledge came about. An emphasis is on the methodology and the validation mechanisms. This is the logic that frames positivist scholarship in defining science. Any form of knowledge that does not go through the validation mechanisms and the methodological rigour of the logic of positivism is false knowledge. But,

doesn't this expose the naivety of positivism? Shouldn't knowledge be judged on the basis of its utilitarian value and contribution to societal advances? If so, there is a lot of knowledge out there, much of it coming into being through the mechanisms inscribed in positivism, which cannot make a science as it lacks utilitarian value. Conversely, there is a lot of knowledge out there, much of it not coming into being through positivist mechanisms, which shapes societal advances, but cannot be characterised as science. What does all this mean? The answer is simple: science is the concept of hegemony. Its meaning is prescribed in the specification of Western conceptualisations. But, before we muddy the waters further, let's finalise the simplistic approach of this article using the case of the Alaskan teacher, which we started with, in determining the meaning of science, to contextualise the complexity of its meaning.

Going back to Gottlieb's correction of the Alaskan teacher's misconception of science, two important aspects come to the fore: *facts* and *theory*. *Facts* construct *theory*; *theory* constitutes *science*. This is an over-simplification. To paraphrase Dave Robinson and Bill Mayblin:<sup>11</sup> Isn't there more to science than simply accumulating facts? By asking this question, simplicity in defining science turns complex. Just imagine how far this would leave the poor Alaskan teacher! Earlier, a question is asked: what does all this mean? The answer is simple: positivism asserts the hegemonic concept of science, as prescribed in the specification of Western conceptualisations. It doesn't end

here. Robinson and Mayblin bring into the discourse a rationalist-empiricist dichotomy. As positivists would explain, a *fact* is established through empirical processes. Its universalisation, for better accounts of the world, shaped the essence of the meaning of science. The theory of empiricism is that "the most obvious and important source of knowledge is perception" – in other words, knowledge "originate[s] from sensory experiences".<sup>12</sup> Empiricist philosophy is a relatively new development, which came about essentially to contest the rationalist philosophy that reason is a source of knowledge.

The rationalist philosophy originated in "pre-Socratic" ancient Greece, where it was said that "true knowledge can only come from thinking, not looking".<sup>13</sup> The empiricist-rationalist binary polarises the discourse on knowledge. As a rationalist, considered the "first truly systematic philosopher," Plato rejected empiricist philosophy. He contended that "empirical or sense knowledge is inferior because it is subjective and always changing".<sup>14</sup> Because of this, again paraphrasing Robinson and Mayblin, a question arises: Has the theory of knowledge or philosophy of science "reached a dead-end of perfection?"<sup>15</sup> This contextualises the question: what is science? Is it a function of empiricism or rationalism? But why would this question even arise? For, it is predicated on the logic of the binary discourse, which does not hold anymore. Various attempts to theorise science follow positivistic templates. To demonstrate the purity of empiricism, science is defined in contradistinction with religion,

ideology and philosophy. That science is not religion is a well-established argument, which came to the fore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century following Charles Darwin's *Origin of species*.<sup>16</sup> In his book, *Civilisation*, Niall Ferguson makes a very interesting observation, which underscores the distinction between science and religion. As Ferguson wrote, in accepting Western knowledge, the Turkish government (Ottoman Empire) report of 1838, emphasised the following: "Religious knowledge serves salvation in the world to come, but science serves the perfection of man in this world".<sup>17</sup> Karl Marx agreed with Darwin's views on the distinction between science and religion. Science is based on facts, religion is based on belief. Along with Frederick Engels, Marx recognised the value of Darwin's theory of evolution "as just such a foundation for their theory of dialectical materialism".<sup>18</sup> Darwin's theory of evolution infuriated those with religious convictions. What about ideology and philosophy? Can they be regarded as sciences? In his book *Philosophy and myth in Karl Marx*, Robert Tucker explains that:

By "science", Marx simply means thinking that has real life as its object. Science is knowledge of the world as it is, or the clearer, direct, unobstructed view of reality. And this is the materialistic view, the one that focuses upon the practical developmental process and the primary datum. Scientific thinking, insofar as man or history is the object, means materialist thinking, i.e. Marxism, and what makes it scientific is nothing at all but the fact that it is true. It is only with the attainment

of genuine materialism, which sees not consciousness of any kind, but "real life" as the prime datum, that human thought ceases for the first time in history to be infected with ideology.<sup>19</sup>

Ehud Sprinzak observed that, in explaining science, Marx used ideology pejoratively.<sup>20</sup> Because of this, can we say Marx detested ideology? Tucker appears to have made an answer to this question obvious. In defining science, on the basis of rejecting ideology, is Marx's theorisation of knowledge not reductionism? In his interpretation of Tucker's work, Sprinzak is unambiguous: "Marx developed a reductionist approach to every system of thought."<sup>21</sup> In deconstructing capitalism, Marx defined ideology as a system of ideas of the ruling class for the domination of the subservients.<sup>22</sup> He rejected this arrangement of power relations and offered an idea of a classless society.<sup>23</sup> But, isn't this a counter-ideological narrative against capitalism? If so, Marx was an ideologist. Some characterise Marx's classless society, an ultimate social organisation, as a theory rather than an ideology. This brings into the equation the question of ideology and theory – important variables for consideration in theorising knowledge. Added to this is a gnoseological question of philosophy. Kwame Nkrumah explains that philosophy is the function of ideology whereas theory explains facts tested against reality.<sup>24</sup>

As Maserumule argued: "A crude distinction often made between philosophy and ideology that suggests that they are diametrically opposite poles far from each

other undermines their epistemological and gnoseological connection, together with theory, in the continuum of knowledge."<sup>25</sup> Is it possible that Marx was all these: ideologist, philosopher and theorist? Do these make a person a scientist? In the search for the meaning of science beyond conventional conceptualisations, these questions are important. In the *International Weekly Journal of Science* of 2013, a very interesting question was asked: "Who is the best scientist of them all?"<sup>26</sup> But even more interesting was the answer to this question: Karl Marx. The online ranking system of h-index metrics was used to make this determination.<sup>27</sup> Marx is described as "the most influential socialist thinker to emerge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>28</sup> This is in recognition of his anti-capitalist work. But, what does this mean, for the purpose of this discussion? The answer is: human science is science. That this is not, as some argue, a real science, and only natural/physical sciences are, begot falsehood. The argument that humanities/social science is not a science is an anachronistic revisionism. The positivist definitions of science no longer hold. French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, made an important contribution to this argument, which enhanced the status of humanities/social sciences.<sup>29</sup> He adequately responded to the positivists definition of "science [strictly] according to its empirical methods of observation, analysis and proof."<sup>30</sup> Merson shared his view: "the purely empirical method is out of date," and no one knows better than Lord Milner that when empiricism is abandoned the sphere of the scientist begins".<sup>31</sup> But, doesn't this reinforce empiricist-rationalist dichotomy,

which we contend trivialises the profundity of the meaning of science?

Derrida argued that reflections in the humanities/social sciences are mature enough to place these disciplines among the so-called "real sciences".<sup>32</sup> However, positivism still persists, insisting that humanities/social sciences are not as "real sciences" as natural/physical sciences. This thinking is institutionalised, albeit largely in occulted form. For instance, in South Africa the rating of scientists by the National Research Foundation (NRF) is more into natural/physical sciences than into the humanities/social sciences<sup>33</sup>. The NRF rating system was never originally intended for the humanities/social sciences. It is only recently, albeit steadily, that changes are being effected. The natural/physical sciences – humanities/social sciences binary – is ironically entrenched in the orientation of those who are supposed to provide thought leadership on the theory of knowledge and philosophy of science. This plays itself out openly in South Africa's decolonisation discourse, with some arguing that decolonisation is only for the humanities/social sciences – meaning not for the so-called "real sciences". Largely, rejoinders to the decolonisation discourses, as brought to centre stage by student activism of 2015 in South Africa by those who prefer the *status quo*, are solipsistic, self-referential, inscriptive nihilism.<sup>34</sup> What is seriously disturbing in these rejoinders are the narratives that seek to assert whiteness rather than engage with the issues. Lurking in those counter-narratives is the idea that humanities/social sciences are for the

blacks. Their attitude is, let their decolonisation be a pet project of their uncouth professors who are misguided. Misguided, because they courageously engage the logic of the Western epistemology? As the nihilists argue, their "real sciences" should be left alone. This is a shockingly ahistorical argument that displays little understanding of the very concept they are claiming to be responding to: decoloniality. It perpetuates the stereotypes that science has never been part of Africans. If this is so, how do they explain the pre-colonial African civilisation? Do they even bother to think about this? In other words, the question is whether civilisation is not a function of science. Of course it is, as Niall Ferguson demonstrated in his book, where he asked a very important question: "How did the Muslim world come to fall behind the West in the realm of science?"<sup>35</sup> This question is asked because, as Ferguson observed, "the West owes a debt to the medieval Muslim world, for both its custodianship of classical wisdom and its generation of new knowledge in cartography, medicine and philosophy, as well as in mathematics and optics".<sup>36</sup> The history of science therefore predates Western civilisation, which is said to be the consequences of a Scientific Revolution. Ferguson's focus on science in his book, however, does not make reference to the pre-colonial African civilisation.

Despite a long history of civilisation, the dominant narrative has it that civilisation, as it is largely understood, is the history of the West. But, in Donaldo Macedo's words, is this not "the pedagogy of big lies"?<sup>37</sup> Or, is what is generally considered a science not an instrument

of Western imperialism? Perhaps this question is pedantic, for, its answer had long been implicated in the body of African scholarship,<sup>38</sup> which remains largely in the margin of the mainstream history of science. As we contend with the challenges of Africa's development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the decolonisation of knowledge is increasingly becoming an exigency. It is important for our universities to become African universities rather than simply universities in Africa. It would be helpful for the counter-decolonisation narratives to familiarise themselves with the rich body of literature on African historiography, such as the work of Afrocentric scholar Cheikh Anta Diop, which reaffirms that "Africa is the cradle of the first major civilisation".<sup>39</sup> The work of internationally acclaimed palaeoanthropologist, Phillip Tobias, supports this thesis. In his study of fossil hominids, Tobias concluded that Africa is the cradle of humanity. These are the discoveries that the decoloniality project should facilitate in their mainstreaming in the university's curricula to correct the myths and falsehoods peddled in the discourse on science. As Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains, decoloniality is a "political-cum-epistemological liberatory project born out of a realisation that ours is an asymmetrical world order that is sustained not only by colonial matrices of power, but also by pedagogies and epistemologies of equilibrium that continue to produce alienated Africans who are socialised into hating the Africa that produced them, and liking the Europe and America that reject them".<sup>40</sup>

The nihilists dislike decoloniality. In their exasperation when this issue arises, one

fundamental point they miss in the discourse on science is: "the true object of scientific study can never be the realities of nature, but only our observations on nature".<sup>41</sup> In this the positivist illusion of objective truth is exposed, as Jacques Derrida too exposed it. If it is only the natural/physical sciences that are capable of being "real sciences", therefore secure "absolute truth", why would the "relativistic Einsteinian universe" have evolved to expose the inadequacy of the "linear Newtonian universe"? Why has the non-linear paradigm emerged to offer yet another world view?<sup>42</sup> The answer is simple: science is not absolute, either as in humanities/social sciences or natural/physical sciences. Even "the eminent physicist [as] Sir James Jeans (1981) has suggested that the positivist definitions for science may not even be wholly satisfactory for the traditional natural sciences".<sup>43</sup> Science is always in question.

Another important point Francis Neumann made, which further exposed the absurdities of treating natural/physical sciences and humanities/social sciences as binaries, is that non-linear systems "appear to have great implications not only for the physical world, but also for the social world". What does this mean? The answer is simple: natural/physical sciences and humanities/social sciences can intersect. They are not binary opposites. That "the seventeenth-century scientists had been interested in discovering how the natural world actually was" while "the eighteenth-century philosophers were more concerned to propose how human society might or ought to be"<sup>44</sup>, and



does not necessarily create a basis for the natural/physical sciences-humanities/social sciences binary. How then can a science be defined? "Science is a continuous process of creation rather than a constructed edifice."<sup>45</sup> Its goal is to "better the accounts of the world".<sup>46</sup> This brings the discussion to the question of this article: is Public Administration a science?

## **SCIENCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

The question of the science of Public Administration is an old question of the discipline, and which this article reconsiders with anecdotes from the theory of evolution and insights from the conceptualisations on the meaning of science. It has always been a subject of contestation. The article adds to this contestation. It is premised on the contention that Public Administration is a social science. As Ferguson observed, social science has been a preoccupation of the Enlightenment thinkers.<sup>47</sup> In other universities, it is classified as part of the humanities. However, being a social science is not as simple as it sounds. For, as Nnadozie Uche asks: "As a field of academic pursuit, has Public Administration been a tool of Western imperialism?"<sup>48</sup> African scholarship has long determined that social science is an instrument of Western imperialism. In considering the science of Public Administration, this historical verity is inevitable. For, as Uche asks: What is the implication of Public Administration as a tool of Western imperialism on its epistemological foundation? He answers this question in his article

titled *Decoloniality and governance in Africa in the twenty-first century*.<sup>49</sup> His answer is relevant to the article's reconsideration of the question: is Public Administration a science?

In the pursuit of this question, we start by defining Public Administration as a function of optimising co-existence. Its evolution into a science of public affairs, and the pursuit to discipline it as a field of study, has always been a subject of contestation. The 20<sup>th</sup> century rejoinders refuted the idea that Public Administration is a science. These rejoinders jettisoned Cameralism – a science of government. Earlier, a question was asked whether a science of government refers to Public Administration. Looking at Cameralism as a study of statecraft, which the historiography of the discipline characterised as intensely scientific and academic with utilitarian implications,<sup>50</sup> we are inclined to answer the question with a yes. Cameralism was a science and praxis of the administration of the state. The origin of the study of Public Administration is traced to Cameralism. As a science of government, the focus of Cameralism was largely on the political economy of the administration of the state,<sup>51</sup> with accent on public leadership.<sup>52</sup> However, the subsequent evolution of Public Administration as a field of study along the politics-administration dichotomy – following Woodrow Wilson's 1887 essay on "The study of administration" – and the New Public Management (NPM) – which emerged in the 1980s as "the most important reform movement of the last quarter of a century"<sup>53</sup> – obscured

the originative essence of the focus of Cameralism as the predecessor of the modern science of Public Administration – a subject which is at the cutting edge of the discourse of the discipline exalted as, in the words of Arthur Brooks, the "principal unanswered question".<sup>54</sup> Some argue that there is nothing like a science of Public Administration. This needs to be understood within the context that humanities/social sciences have always been characterised as not being "real sciences".

The contestations on the science of Public Administration are inherently embedded in the history and evolution of the discipline. They have been raging for some time now. As Immanuel Kant put it: "Whenever a dispute has raged for any length of time, there was, at the bottom of it, never a problem about mere words, but always a genuine problem about things".<sup>55</sup> A genuine problem of the discipline is whether Public Administration is a science. Towards answering this question, Robert Behn's words are instructive: "Any field of science is defined by the big questions it asks."<sup>56</sup> Cameralism asked the political economic questions of the administration of the state. What "big question" does modern Public Administration ask that makes it a science? In a negative sense, the same question could be asked: What "small question" does Public Administration ask that makes it not a science? An answer to these questions is prefaced with a critical historical overview, for context setting, framed with anecdotes from the theory of evolution, coupled with insights from African scholarship.

## **Historical Review and Insights From the Theory of Evolution**

As a praxis, public administration is as old as *homo sapiens*, whereas, as a field of study, it is of recent origin. This article defines public administration as a function of optimising co-existence. In so doing, it implicates the theory of evolution, especially with reference to these bipedal primates – *homo sapiens*. The theory of evolution is not considered in any meaningful way in the historiography of public administration. As evolution theorist, Yuval Harari, puts it: "There were humans long before there was history".<sup>57</sup> Does this mean there was science before history? This question is asked because, if there was co-existence in antiquity, surely there was collective knowledge that spawned and sustained it. Wouldn't that knowledge qualify as human science? If the answer to this question is yes, then the science of co-existence is as old as humans. It precedes history. This brings to mind a rhetorical question: does science precede praxis or praxis precede science? A reincarnation of this, in the context of the discipline is whether "(P)ublic (A)administration is a science or an art". This question Robert Parker dismissed as "meaningless" and "vacuous". He said: "If there was an art of public administration, this would not exclude the possibility of a science of Public Administration".<sup>58</sup> Merson explains that "practice is often in advance of science".<sup>59</sup>

*Homo* means man whereas *sapiens* refers to wise. This exemplifies the cognitive superiority of this species of bipedal primates.

The human species distinction in the hominids is based on the superiority of its intelligence. It has "extraordinarily large brains" and cognitive ability; hence the attribution of the Cognitive Revolution [about 70 000 years ago], Agricultural Revolution [about 12 000 years ago], and Scientific Revolution [500 years ago] to the ingenuity of the *homo sapiens*.<sup>60</sup> The cognitive imaginative capacity of *homo sapiens* spawned social order and constitutive standards to institutionalise co-existence. Wasn't this a function of thought? We are asking this question because if public administration is a function of co-existence, necessarily therefore, it has always been a science. Imagined reality, to model social order, is the function of the interpretation of the experiences, activities, constructs and artifacts, which *homo sapiens* had in antiquity. Using philosopher John Haugeland's words from his book, *Having thought*: social order is a function of "socially instituted normativity" and existential commitment – a dedication or "even a devoted way of living, a determination to maintain and carry on", an "insistence" on constitutive standards, obedience to "governing or normative authority [which] comes from nowhere other than itself, self-discipline and resolute persistence".<sup>61</sup> Why would the cognitive activities of the *sapiens* that spawned socially instituted normativity for social order, not be characterised as science? Isn't this what human sciences are all about? The *sapiens* interpreted their experiences in their interface with the contiguities to order and sustain co-existence.<sup>62</sup> The positivist narratives do not consider this in their definition of science. Because of their predating

of history, these practices are characterised as primitive myths.

The discourse on the science of Public Administration, as approached with anecdotal insights from the theory of evolution, points to the fact that science is a "socially embedded activity".<sup>63</sup> It is as old as *homo sapiens*. These bipedal primates mastered the art and science of co-existence, exemplifying earliest collective knowledge. As Butler-Adam explains, going beyond the history of the disciplines as emerged "in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, by the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, science meant collective knowledge".<sup>64</sup> Science "has consistently carried the meaning of being a socially embedded activity: people seeking, systematising and sharing knowledge".<sup>65</sup> In the context of co-existence this means establishing constitutive standards to optimise social order. Or simply, a modelling of co-existence. Isn't this science? As a function of optimising co-existence, hasn't Public Administration always been a science? In asking this question, it is perhaps appropriate to further exacerbate the contestations by invoking the history of the pre-colonial African civilisation.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the City of Timbuktu was established. Apart from being a commercial hub, the City became the epicentre of intellectual activities. In the book, *The meanings of Timbuktu*, Souleymane Diagne explains that "science and scholarship in Africa have a history" that predates colonialism and "the introduction of European languages".<sup>66</sup> At the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo rivers, Mapungubwe exemplified a

pre-colonial African civilisation that dates back to 1200 to 1300 AD. Mapungubwe was a centre of trade with the economics based on agriculture, ivory and gold deposits. Its conduct of human affairs evinced sophistication. Mapungubwe traded with China, India and Egypt.<sup>67</sup> The City of Timbuktu and the Kingdom of Mapungubwe are examples of well-organised pre-colonial societies, with glaring characteristics of civilisation, whose modelling can only be a function of science – especially as it pertains to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services (economics), including the interplay of these functions with laws and politics (political economy). The optimisation of that interplay is the function of public administration, which is human science. Cameralism, as a science of government, underscored this in the originaive foundation of its institutionalisation – promote and enhance the political economy of the state.

From this, can we also hypothesise that the science of Public Administration originated in Africa? This question is asked on the basis of the conclusions that most scholars arrived at on the origin of humanity and civilisation, with Professors Cheikh Anta Diop and Phillip Tobias's works being authoritative on these subjects. Afrocentric scholar, Diop, argued that Africa is a cradle of human civilisation. An internationally acclaimed palaeoanthropologist, Tobias complemented Diop's thesis in concluding that "Africa has been an astonishing crucible of the earth's history for the last two billion years...nearly everything of note or consequences started

[in Africa]".<sup>68</sup> Rehistoricising Public Administration in order to answer the question about its science is an important consideration for the decoloniality project. In other words, how did the earliest African communities manage their affairs? This question needs a dedicated, scholarly pursuit in a separate study. It is beyond the scope of this article. Let's conclude with the contention that public administration is a human science. In a more erudite fashion, Michel Foucault in *The order of things* makes an illuminative enunciation: "The human sciences are an analysis that extends from what man is in his positivity to what enables this same being to know what life is, in what the essence of labour and its laws consist, and in what way he is able to speak. [In other words], human sciences develop in the exteriority of knowledge".<sup>69</sup> Social order for co-existence, which *homo sapiens* achieved in antiquity by establishing socially instituted normativity, exemplifies human science.

### **Critiquing the Critiques of the Discipline**

The formalisation of the science of co-existence into a field of study or an academic discipline, called Public Administration, is a relatively new development. In modern states, public administration is intended to facilitate the realisation of the imagined realities or compliance with the constitutive standards of society: public interest, rule of law and social justice. This is a pursuit with precedence in antiquity. It is, perhaps, because of this that Woodrow Wilson – an American politician and academic who is regarded by the

mainstream scholarship in public administration as the father of the discipline – asserted: "The idea of the state is the conscience of administration".<sup>70</sup> More important for this article is Wilson's reference to public administration as "practical science" or "science of administration".<sup>71</sup> David Lindenfeld characterised the science of administration as "practical imagination".<sup>72</sup> The Germans had long institutionalised public administration as a science in Cameralism, which is said to be akin to the French mercantilism associated with Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who served as the minister of finance under the kingship of Louis XIV from 1665 to 1683. Among his achievements, Colbert established the Academy of Sciences to foster scientific research. The academy is now part of the *Institut de France*. However, its focus on the administration of the state was only from 1795, following the establishment of a faculty of moral and political sciences. Although the French established the Academy of Sciences much earlier, their recognition of the administration of the state as a science is antedated by that of the Prussians, who institutionalised Cameralism, established a professorate, and mainstreamed it as a field of study in their Universities of Frankfurt, Oder and Halle in 1727. Cameralism was also established in the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands.<sup>73</sup> Keith Tribe characterised Cameralism as the university of the science of government.<sup>74</sup> This is presented here deliberately to contextualise critiquing of the critiques of the discipline.

As explained earlier, Cameralism is said to be a predecessor of the modern science

of Public Administration. Science of Public Administration? This question invoked witty rejoinders critiquing an idea of the science of Public Administration in the United States (US). Especially in the fifties and sixties, an avalanche of contestations emerged to contest essentially Cameralism, the Classical, Medieval and Enlightenment scholarship of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Those critiques were based on the positivist logic of the meaning of science, as inscribed in the specifications of the Western conceptualisations. The dialogicality in the rejoinders was based on the nihilism that Public Administration is not a science because it does not have a theory of its own. Herbert Kaufman<sup>75</sup> specifically underscored this, which, in simple terms, means theory makes science. Frederick Mosher<sup>76</sup> and Robert Parker<sup>77</sup> agreed with Kaufman. Mosher argued that Public Administration is an "area of interest rather than a discipline".<sup>78</sup> From how Parker answered the question of whether Public Administration is a science or an art in the opening lines of his article, one thought that he was to differ with the views that it was not a science. He did not. Apart from a good point he made, that if Public Administration was an art there is nothing that precludes it from being a science, Parker contended that "there is really no such subject as Public Administration [as] no science or art can be identified by this title, least of all any single skill or coherent intellectual discipline".<sup>79</sup> Because of this, Parker talked about the end of Public Administration. McCurdy and Cleary reiterated Kaufman, Mosher and Parker's contentions: "Public Administration is too variable a field to lend itself to systematic exploration".<sup>80</sup>

Half a century since Parker's prediction, Public Administration still exists as a field of study and is recognised as an important discipline in various universities worldwide. Because of this, a question arises: why did the evolution of the discipline not vindicate the critiques of the discipline as a science? For, if indeed Public Administration was not a science, it would have long been dead by now. How is it that a discipline so severely critiqued as not being a science evolved into such a growing field of study? Isn't it because Public Administration has always been a science, but not always in the positivist sense of its critiques? Earlier, an argument was made, with insights from the theory of evolution, that Public Administration as a human science is as old as *homo sapiens*, who in antiquity mastered the art of co-existence. The historiography of Public Administration does not go to this extent. This makes the critique of the science of Public Administration ahistorical. As evolution theory points out, human existence predates history as it is commonly understood. How that existence in antiquity sustained itself is an important question worthy of consideration in the discourse on the origin of science, to consequently determine whether Public Administration is a science or not. This is the dimension that the critiques of the discipline did not venture into. Their preoccupation has largely been on one aspect: Public Administration is not a science because it lacks a theory. Over time, the consistency of this argument waned.

In the eighties, the discourse on the theoretical question of the discipline shifted

from that of the 1950s and 1960s accent on a lack of theory to its "(supposed) weak theoretical foundation". As Rosenbloom observed: "The discipline of public administration is plagued by a weak...theoretical core".<sup>81</sup> What does this mean? A theoretical basis of the discipline existed, but it was weak. The epistemological basis of this argument was still embedded in a positivist understanding of a science. In making reference to science in his ground-breaking essay of 1887, titled *The study of Administration*, was Woodrow Wilson agreeing with Cameralism that Public Administration is a science? A closer analysis of the article indicates that Wilson's contentions were sharply focused on "administration" without the adjective "public". He referred to the "study of administration" as a "practical science", not "Public Administration".<sup>82</sup> It is important to point this out because "public", as prefixed to "administration", presupposes a broader meaning than mere "administration". Because of this, we wonder whether the contentions that Public Administration is not a science were rejoinders to what Wilson did not say? Perhaps. But, what is more important is not the relevance or irrelevance of the rejoinders, but their instructional dialogism on what constitutes a science. In other words, the question is: What makes a science of Public Administration? In their rejoinders, as referred to earlier, Kaufman, Mosher and Parker appear unanimous in their answer: Theory makes science. Their conception of science followed a positivist logic of the theory of knowledge. Isn't this where a fundamental *faux pas* lies – a positivist definition of the science of Public

Administration? This question is inevitable, especially in the context of a discourse that invokes insights from the theory of evolution, exacerbating the contestations.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship appeared to have not adequately deconstructed Cameralism, Medieval and Enlightenment scholarship inframing rejoinders against Public Administration as a science. Their critique of the science of Public Administration is hollow. They failed to adequately lay bare the inadequacies of Cameralism's theory of state craft or science of government. Theirs was more of a shot from the hip, rather than substantively also engaging with the context of a phenomenon they critiqued. That Public Administration is not a science, because it does not have a theory, was a contextless argument. Those critiques were solipsistic self-referential inscriptive nihilism. Donald Kettl nearly struck a right chord, but did not quite get there. He wrote: "As long as humans have been writing, they have been writing about administration as the art of turning big policy ideas into solid results".<sup>83</sup> There is a sense of historicity in this argument. However, it does not go beyond the beginning of history itself. As argued above, public administration is a function of optimising co-existence for the common good. Such was the case in antiquity, which could have only been the consequences of the "socially embedded activity" of "seeking, systematising and sharing knowledge".<sup>84</sup> Is this not science?

*Homo sapiens* had cognitive capacity for systematic thinking. The positivists characterise

their cognitive outputs as primitive myths of prehistory, not science. This is the same way they would reject the rationalist philosophy in favour of empiricism. Just to say theory makes science – in a positivist sense – borders on the illogic that invokes a simple argument to tackle a complex question of epistemology and genealogy. Some of the rejoinders that reject the science of public administration do so by using the natural/physical sciences as a launching pad. This argument is entangled in the absurdities of natural/physical sciences-humanities/social sciences binaries. The problem with it is that it undermines efforts towards interdisciplinarity. The natural/physical sciences are "culturally embedded and without a superior epistemological foundation".<sup>85</sup> Humanities/social sciences are as important as the natural/physical sciences. Instead of competing in the epistemological space, their intersections should complement each other for rounded knowledge. This is what the dictates of the 21<sup>st</sup> century require for societal advances. A graduate of natural/physical sciences is only complete if he/she also knows the social context of the science of his/her disciplinary embeddedness. In the pursuit of knowledge, a distinction between natural/physical sciences and humanities/social sciences is a false one. What does this mean? The critiques of the science of Public Administration were based on a false premise.

A fundamental flaw in the rejoinders against Public Administration as a science lies in the self-referential inscriptive paradigm of their embeddedness and the modernisation

premises of the Western logic of what makes a science.<sup>86</sup> Lurking in this is the German philosopher, G.W.F Hegel's view that, using the Senegalese philosopher, Souleymane Diane's words: "Africans could not produce anything comparable to a thought".<sup>87</sup> In other words, nothing can be learned by the West from Africa. Because of this, an opportunity to draw insights from African contexts to increase an understanding of the world was missed. The Black Consciousness philosopher, Steve Biko, said: "In the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in this field of human relationships. The great powers of the world have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa – giving the world a more human face".<sup>88</sup> This underscored the significance of human science, as based on the African philosophy of humanism. Are the great powers prepared to learn from the African experiences in theorising science? The science of Public Administration has always been an American-European discourse, with the *Public Administration Review* largely a platform for such intellectual exchanges. This is the *Journal of the American Society for Public Administration*.

African scholarship uncritically followed the American-European discourse rather than assume thought leadership in the discourse on the science of Public Administration. African scholars have been thought followers at the tail-end. In spite of a rich history of African philosophy, their participation largely exemplified a regurgitation of Western perspectives. Any deviation from the

specifications of Western conceptualisations incurs the risk of being defined out of existence. As Uche explains, this makes Public Administration, as a field of study, "a tool of Western imperialism".<sup>89</sup> Among others, a science behind "the first major [African] civilisation of antiquity"<sup>90</sup> is yet another important contribution Africa would have made to world knowledge. Earlier we made reference to the City of Timbuktu and the Kingdom of Mapungubwe as examples of well-organised pre-colonial societies with glaring characteristics of civilisation, whose modelling can only be a function of science. The production, distribution and consumption of goods and services (economics), and the optimisation of the interplay of these with laws and politics (political economy) is the function of public administration – a human science. This is where the essence of the science of government in the Cameralism's theory of statecraft lies. The critiques of the science of Public Administration fail to make reference to this. Is this because it would have weakened their rejoinders?

A vexing question of public administration has always been about optimising co-existence for the common good. Twentieth century scholarship that rejected Public Administration as a science appears to have been oblivious to this verity. What makes a science are the big questions the discipline asks. The rejoinders against Public Administration as a science should have premised the essence of their discourse along these questions: What are the questions that Public Administration asks? Are they big enough to make it a science? Francis



Neumann asked these questions, towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a rejoinder to Robert Behn's article, "The big questions of Public Management". Compared to the earlier approach's preoccupation with Public Administration's lack of theory, hence its rejection as a science, Neumann's intervention shaped the discourse and redirected its focus. The questions Public Administration asks, and the extent of their significance, determine whether it is a science. As indicated earlier, a vexing question of Public Administration has always been about optimising co-existence for the common good. This is a big question. Various research endeavours throughout the years, following its introduction as a field of study, have been focused on the various dimensions of this question and made important contributions that resulted in a rich body of knowledge on how to achieve the common good. This makes Public Administration a science.

However, the New Public Management (NPM), which emerged in the eighties, trivialised Public Administration. Its ideological context is neo-liberalism, which called for a minimalist state. Its version of reinventing the state is based on the assumption that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector. Some characterised NPM as a powerful paradigm or "one of the most striking international trends in public administration". Was it really? The NPM is concerned with "the transfer of business and market principles and managerial techniques from the private sector into the public sector, symbiotic with and based on the neo-liberal understanding of the economy".<sup>91</sup> In

the early nineties, David Osborne and Ted Gaebler packaged the ideas that comprise the NPM into a book titled, *Reinventing government*.<sup>92</sup> This publication literally became a prescription for reinventing government, as it resonated with the neo-liberal order, which gained ideological credibility following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in the eighties.

A year before Osborne and Gaebler published their book, Francis Fukuyama had already published his book, titled *The end of history and the last man*. Fukuyama proclaimed that neo-liberalism marks "the end of history as such, the end point of man's ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government".<sup>93</sup> If so, why did the global financial meltdown happen, which is said to have emanated in the US? The Euro crisis in Europe? Euro-American crises exposed the inadequacy of neo-liberalism as the ideological template for the new world order. The whole concept of NPM was based on what Public Administration is not. Its emergence in the eighties was part of the Bretton Woods Institution's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which institutionalised Western science as the finite of ideas on the question of development. As Maja van der Velden observed: "Almost all post-colonial nationalist movements embraced the modernisation premises of Western science", which "has not been able to provide these societies [with] the promised prosperity".<sup>94</sup> Instead, the contrary was spawned: "poverty, ecological destruction and the displacement and

museumization of traditional technologies".<sup>95</sup> What does this mean? The big question of governance, we argue, means the science of Public Administration was never really about African issues.

### **Recognising the Present State of the Discipline**

Various attempts to reassert the science of Public Administration are forthcoming. Janet and Robert Denhardt's book, *The new public service, serving, not steering*, comes to mind as one of the powerful rejoinders to the logic of the NPM. Its thesis is that "government shouldn't be run like a business; it should be run like a democracy".<sup>96</sup> This is a very important contribution to the theory of a state. In South Africa, Professor Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo has introduced the concept of a humanitarian public service, which, as part of the project of the University of Pretoria's Centre for Advancement of Scholarship and SAAPAM, is being theorised. This concept seeks to give epistemological expression to the "great gift [that] still has to come from Africa", which Biko talked about: "giving the world a human face". In this, an alternative way of practising science beyond positivism, based on the African philosophy of humanism, is pursued. The posture that SAAPAM assumed, coupled with the orientation of the scholarship in the discipline in South Africa, including engaging at a global level but grounded in Afrocentricity, is encouraging. All these, among others, demonstrate the epistemological introspection of the discipline and scholarship vitality in enhancing the science of public administration,

a well-established field of study in many universities worldwide. It is a growing discipline. The US is leading in the number of schools of Public Administration, most offering post-graduate programmes: master's and doctoral qualifications. These are the levels of education where knowledge is created. Especially at doctoral level, the questions that are at the cutting edge of the field are emphasised as criteria for admission, whereas the originality of the contributions to the body of knowledge determine a successful undertaking of the programme. These are forthcoming, especially from the best public affairs schools such as the Syracuse University (Maxwell), Indiana University (Bloomington) and Harvard University (Kennedy). Doesn't this make Robert Dahl's conclusion, almost 70 years ago, that "we are a long way from a science of Public Administration"<sup>97</sup> an antediluvian history?

Three decades later, Howard McCurdy and Robert Cleary made an observation that supports Dahl's. They said "Public Administration has not come to grips with the basic questions of research that should be settled in a mature field of study".<sup>98</sup> We have already contested the arguments that Public Administration is not a science. In making reference to Dahl, McCurdy and Cleary, the intention is to contextualise the present state of the discipline, especially along the question of its science. Seventy years after Dahl's conclusion on the science of Public Administration, and three decades after McCurdy and Cleary's article, one of the authors of this article compiled a research project for masters' students at a university in South

**TABLE 1: Framework of assessment for doctoral theses**

Thematic item	Questions of focus
<i>Purpose</i>	Is the purpose of the study clearly articulated, indicating whether it is basic or applied research, empirical or non-empirical research?
<i>Validity</i>	What is the methodological validity of the study, especially as it relates to the research design and techniques? Are they appropriate to generate data required to answer a research question or solve a research problem? Does the design of the study give confidence that the findings are valid? In this, thematic item issues of internal and external validity should be given more attention.
<i>Utilitarian value and impact</i>	What is the usefulness of the study in terms of value addition? In this, it should be determined whether the impact is at the level of praxis, theory or both. In other words, did the study enhance praxis, strengthen or weaken the existing theory?
<i>Causal relationship</i>	Does the study test the causal relationship of the variables of the phenomenon studied? In this, it is important to establish whether "the major conclusion of the study embodies a causal statement of any kind". <sup>99</sup> If it does, is it in a way that suggests synonymy with theory testing?
<i>Topicality</i>	Does the topic suggest that the issue the study considers is a big question of the discipline?
<i>Cutting edge</i>	Closely related to the topicality is the question of whether the study is at the cutting edge of the discipline. In other words, does the study "invent new questions or create new experiences?" <sup>100</sup>

Source: Developed from Howard E. McCurdy & Robert E. Cleary. 1984. Why can't we resolve the research issue in Public Administration? *Public Administration Review*, 44(1):49-55

Africa where he teaches. Their instruction was to determine whether the findings of McCurdy and Cleary, which supported Dahl's earlier conclusion, three decades later, are still relevant. This was a class of 2014, comprised of 25 students. Each student was required to critically review five doctoral theses, focusing on their topics, abstracts, research methodologies and the findings. Each was required to report on his or her findings in a submission of not more than

five pages. McCurdy and Cleary's template, as illustrated in Table 1, was prescribed as an analytical framework.

Each of these thematic items, along with their questions, were extensively explained to the students. The exercise was part of the research methodology module each student was required to complete, where research skills and analytical competence should be demonstrated. This is a prerequisite for

consideration in the doctoral programmes. A total of 125 theses were analysed, with each student compiling a report for presentation before a panel of professors of the department. All students submitted their reports. A week was allocated for the presentations of their findings and discussions. The exercise focused on the doctoral theses completed between 2000 and 2014. All the professors of the department, who assessed the projects, confirmed that the quality of the students' review and analysis was impressive. This was confirmed through external moderation. Of course, there were a few that did not make the cut. This is because they were badly written with a sloppiness that disregarded the instructions. They were therefore not as important for our purpose. This accounts for only 30 percent. Eighty percent of the reports were found to have valuable input to the discourse on the science of Public Administration. Their findings were that there is a large body of knowledge that makes Public Administration a mature field of study and therefore a science. This made the professoriate of the department curious, and it undertook to conduct its own independent study on the same subject using the same template and theses the students had analysed.

Of the 125 theses, 76 percent or 95 theses were found to be compliant with the thematic items as indicated above. This is consistent with the findings of the students, save the five percent margin of variation. In these 95 theses, 89 percent of their utilitarian value is at the level of praxis while 11 percent of the consideration focused on conceptual,

theoretical and philosophical questions. In the 30 percent found wanting, five of them were wholly inadequate in all the thematic items. This represents 1.5 percent. Eight of the 30 did not meet the utilitarian value and impact, causal relationship, topicality and cutting edge criteria. This represents 2.4 percent. Three were found substantially lacking in methodological rigour. This puts the credibility of their findings in doubt. The research design was incongruent with the purpose of the study and the research question. This accounts for 0.9 percent. Fourteen of the 30 theses found wanting, did not meet the topicality and cutting edge criteria – 4.2 percent. They were found not to be at the cutting edge of the discipline, with their topics either dull or irrelevant.

Social sciences indexes indicate that there are at least close to 200 journals in the public administration listings worldwide. Most are in the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK). SCLmago's Journals Ranking classified some as high impact scholarly publications, as determined by the number of articles with *h* citations. For triangulation purposes, the professoriate studied a sample of a 100 articles in the *Journal of Public Administration*, *Administrative Sciences Quarterly* and *Public Administration Review*, published between 2000-2014. The purpose was to determine whether the subjects of their consideration were at the cutting edge of the discipline. It was part of the re-curriculation exercise to understand the state of the discipline. The *Journal of Public Administration* is published in South Africa. It is highly regarded

with most scholars in the fraternity, even from other disciplines, preferring to publish in it. SCImago ranks *Administrative Science Quarterly* as a top journal in the field of public administration worldwide. It is published in the US. So, too, is the *Public Administration Review*, which is in the top 10 of the best public administration journals. The findings of the analyses were that these journals dealt mostly with important questions of governance. In South Africa, insofar as the *Journal of Public Administration* is concerned, not much has changed since the 2008 study of Professor Robert Cameron of the University of Cape Town, as published in the *Administratio Publica* under the title *Public Administration in South Africa: The state of the academic field*. This article was co-authored with L. McLaverty.<sup>101</sup>

The focus of most of the articles in the *Journal* is on the praxis of governance. That said, articles that pursue conceptual, theoretical and philosophical questions of the discipline have started to appear in the pages of the *Journal*, especially since 2011. This trend, too, is starting to show in the doctoral theses. Although still very few, as indicated above, there are some that deal with the conceptual, theoretical and philosophical questions of the discipline. Largely, Professor Jacobus Wessels of the University of South Africa's findings in the study of South African trends in masters' and doctoral research in public administration, between the period 2000-2005, still stand. The study was published in 2008 in the *Administratio Publica* of 2008. The finding was that there is under-representation of research in the field of

public administration in theory development and testing.<sup>102</sup> The *Administrative Science Quarterly* deals with important issues at the cutting edge of the theory and praxis of co-existence in the context of organisational dynamics. Although some articles in the *Journal* address questions on the theory of organisations, most are empirical in their design.

Apart from being a top-ranked scholarly publication in the SCImago subject category of public administration, the *Administrative Science Quarterly* does not deal with the cutting-edge theoretical and philosophical questions of the discipline. Its top ranking in this subject category is therefore surprising. In other words, how can a journal be at the top of a list of the best scholarly publications, while most of the articles published in it are not necessarily and specifically concerned with the cutting-edge issues of the discipline? *Public Administration Review* is a leading international platform for the discourse on the epistemology and gnoseology of public administration. It has always been, since its inception 75 years ago. Some of the contributions in the *Public Administration Review* represent an important intellectual history of public administration. What does all this mean? The answer is simple: there is a substantial growth of knowledge research in public administration, which sustains it as a field of study. Its focus is largely on how to optimise the State for the common good and public interest – an important dimension of optimising co-existence in modern societies. However, much of what is considered the big question of the discipline is answered

from the Western perspective. Yet Africa has so much to offer, especially in theorising the common good.

In Iain McLean's words, the common good refers to "any good that, if supplied to anybody, is necessarily supplied to everybody, and from whose benefits it is impossible or impracticable to exclude anybody".<sup>103</sup> Public interest characterises commitment to satisfy on all aspects of societal life. The state of happiness of the governed is a measure of public interest.<sup>104</sup> This is the essence of the science of Public Administration, which dates back to antiquity. "One man in the short space of his life remarks a fact, another conceives an idea; the former invents a means of execution, the latter reduces a truth to a formula; and mankind gathers the fruits of individual experience on its way and gradually forms the sciences." These are Alexis de Tocqueville's words, in his *Democracy in America*, which we find apt in characterising the tapestry of Public Administration towards answering the question whether it is a science. Largely, the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship did not answer this question in the affirmative. Closer to a century since this question has been bandied about, the 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship argues that Public Administration is a science. There is a large body of knowledge of which the research is focused largely on the big question that the discipline spawned. This makes Public Administration a mature field of study. The postgraduate studies in the field add to a growing body of knowledge, while the scholarship vitality in the journals and books which are raising important issues generally

considered to be at the cutting edge of the discipline, accentuate that Public Administration is a science – a characterisation that is fitting even from a positivist perspective.

## **Imagining the Future**

As the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century abound, which, as Greece, Spain, Italy, Libya and Tunisia have demonstrated, a fundamental question for the scholarship in the field is: how do we enhance the science of Public Administration as a function of co-existence for the common good, from which insights could be drawn to model the future? In science, we are looking for a better account of the world and insights to inform us how to overcome social complexity. But more importantly, the science of Public Administration should not only be preoccupied with the praxis of governance, as the empiricists would prefer. It should question the basic logic of the epistemology and gnoseology of Public Administration. This implicates how we do research and is very important for curricula development or rearticulation. It requires going beyond the empiricist-rationalist binaries, including transcending a positivist definition of science. It is important to extricate the discipline from the Cartesian logic of knowledge typified in the disciplinary autarky, for the pursuit of the science of Public Administration to ask different questions "about government than the ones posed by Newton's science and the neo-Darwinism it sustains".<sup>105</sup> To secure the future of the discipline, we need to rethink the inventions of the Schools of Public Affairs, where emphasis, in the essence of

their existence, should be on the epistemology and gnoseology.

Scientific approaches should go beyond empiricist-rationalist binaries and the methodological approach of science as "a prior ontological commitment",<sup>106</sup> for this may weaken the capacity to challenge the very ontological foundation of the epistemology of Public Administration especially when a need to rewrite "the archeology of knowledge"<sup>107</sup> in the field arises. Lurking in this is an agitation for transdisciplinarity. Basarab Nicolescu is said to have developed the concept of transdisciplinarity in his book *The manifesto of transdisciplinarity*. It is defined as "that which is at once between the disciplines, and beyond all disciplines".<sup>108</sup> The Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) made a very important contribution to the concept and application of transdisciplinarity, which Vil-Nkomo emphasised at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the South African Association of Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM), where he reflected on this learned society in the next ten years.<sup>109</sup>

Drawing from a well-timed MISTRA publication, *The concept and application of transdisciplinarity in intellectual discourse and research* by Hester Du Plessis, Jeffrey Sehume and Leonard Martin, Vil-Nkomo explains that transdisciplinarity represents attempts at formulating an integrative process of knowledge production and dissemination. It is in part a reaction against the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurrence of narrow discipline focus and hyper specialisation coming

to respond directly to the multi-layered challenges of diffuse disciplines, interlinked socio-economic problems, impacts of globalisation, de-territorialised nation states, technological advancements, environmental concerns, food security and so on. Transdisciplinarity recognises the complex character of realities, which calls for more than one discipline for interpretation and application. This approach acknowledges the need for joint-problem solving mechanisms. It seeks to stimulate unification of the knowledge paradigms.<sup>110</sup> As we contend with the vicissitudes of governance, a question arises: where is the future of the science of Public Administration? The answer is: it is in transdisciplinarity. This is because, as Vil-Nkomo contends, governing today is a complex initiative that demands broader and in-depth knowledge and strategies. It is no longer about political rhetoric or just administration.

Public administration is entangled in this complexity. And Vil-Nkomo warns: the field will die if it does not recognise transdisciplinarity as the way to safeguard knowledge generation particularly in the emerging economies. In imagining the future of the science of Public Administration, another point of concern for consideration, which Vil-Nkomo also emphasised, is what he referred to as isomorphic mimicry, with African scholarship's engagement in the disciplinary discourse following Euro-American scholarship rather than assuming thought leadership on the questions of epistemology and gnoseology of the discipline. Africa has much to offer the world in matters of science, yet African scholarship is at the tail end of the

mainstream enterprise called education. African scholars should be part of the discourse, not followers of the Euro-American discourse on the science of Public Administration. This is said in the context that Africa is the cradle of humanity and the "first major civilisation of antiquity".<sup>111</sup> The Timbuktu literature, including the works of professors Cheikh Anta Diop, Phillip Tobias, and some theories on the origin of human species, attests to this. There is an abundance of buried truths about Africa, and which African scholars should unearth to shape the discourse on the science of co-existence – the function of Public Administration. Some in the fraternity, who have started to master the courage to engage the specifications of the Western conceptualisations of the discipline, should be supported and encouraged to develop an alternative way of practising science.

## CONCLUSION

The article reconsidered the question: is Public Administration a science? This is an old question which just doesn't go away. It keeps recurring at any given moment. As the main concept that constitutes the thematic essence of the focus of this article is science, the discourse started with its meaning, which revealed that it is largely located within the logic of the positivist epistemology. Beyond this logic, the article invoked anecdotal

insights from the theory of evolution and succinct African perspectives. It contends that the science of Public Administration is as old as *homo sapiens*. However, as a field of study, it is of recent origin. This was intended to build a contextual basis to critique the perspectives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship, which reject any idea that Public Administration is a science. This was a repudiation of Cameralism, which in the 18<sup>th</sup> century characterised Public Administration as a science. The article critiqued the critiques of the science of Public Administration. Contemporary scholarship endeavours that assert the science of Public Administration were recognised. This laid a basis for imagining the future of the science of Public Administration. Based on the critique of the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship, the analysis of the contemporary scholarship endeavours and the imagination of the future of the discipline, with insights from the theory of evolution, the article contends that Public Administration is a science. It makes recommendations considered critically important to enhance the future of the science of Public Administration, including encouraging and supporting those who mastered the courage to engage the specifications of the Western conceptualisation of the discipline. African scholarship should assume thought leadership and should always be at the forefront of the science of Public Administration.

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**Mashupye H Maserumule** is an Associate Professor and the Chair of the Department of Public Management at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). He has been the President of the South African Association of Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM). His areas of research interest are developmental state, local governance, state reform, politics and theory of knowledge.



He co-edited various books and conference proceedings in the field of governance. He also served as a discussant in various intellectual gatherings of strategic nature, and participated in the review of a single public service bill for the Ministry of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

**Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo** is the Chair of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) Board and a Research Professor at the University of Pretoria's Centre for Advancement of Scholarship. He was the Executive Director and a member of the University of Pretoria's Executive. He is a member of the Board of Advisors for the School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware and a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. Among others, he serves on the Editorial Board of the *Servant Leadership Journal* published at Gonzaga University. He participated in Fordham University Business School Consortium think tanking sessions, where, as a fellow, was specifically invited, in Istanbul, Turkey and New York City, where the future of Business and Governance, Health as a Business, and the Arts as a Business have been discussed.

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# INDIGENOUS AFRICA'S GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE: A NEED FOR AFRICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION THEORY?

Benon C Basheka  
Uganda Technology and Management University

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## ABSTRACT

The African continent has suffered a rather tormented history, following different historical epochs like shadows of colonialism, conquest, neo-colonialism, global capitalism and foisting upon the western organizational management/leadership practices. The indigenous systems of governance are so much neglected that they hardly receive the significant scholarly attention they deserve in most public administration write ups and curricula in African universities. This article sheds light on Africa's indigenous administrative systems, which have been portrayed as rather troubled, chaotic and biased in the literature, especially where western ideas are portrayed as superior to indigenous systems. The article suggests that African scholars are primarily duty bound to portray a better picture of the administrative structures. The tendency, by the architects of the colonial enterprise, to believe that Africa had no administration worthy of the name needs to be rejected, while compelling facts and examples to solidify the robustness of the pre-colonial governance apparatus

are advanced. This article advocates for a deeper understanding of the indigenous governance, administration and management systems, practices that, when well documented, should inform a theory of African public administration. The article examines two opposing views in the existing literature, but relies on the second set of ideas.

## INTRODUCTION

To pause and question whether African societies had administrative systems worthy of the name, before the colonial epoch, attracts two opposing views. First, is the negative view that construes Africa to have been a mere dark continent without any sense of organization. The second confirms how African societies, at the time, had systems to manage public affairs that constituted an administrative system. This article subscribes to the second school of thought. While most attempts at understanding Africa's indigenous administrative systems convey them as potentially troubled, chaotic and biased with western ideas portrayed as superior to "indigenous systems", the article

defends the fact that African scholars are primarily duty bound to portray a better picture. The tendency of the architects of the colonial enterprise is to believe Africa had no administration needs to be countered with compelling facts and examples to solidly illustrate the robustness of the pre-colonial governance apparatus, especially given the time perspective.

Nwagbara<sup>1</sup> reports how the African continent has suffered a tormented history, following different historical epochs with shadows of colonialism, conquest, neo-colonialism, global capitalism and having western organizational management/leadership practices foisted on it. The indigenous systems of governance are so much neglected that they hardly receive scholarly attention in Public Administration curricula in African universities. Some Public Administration scholars may not even imagine the existence of an indigenous governance apparatus worth historicizing during the teaching of public administration. In such circumstances, the warning of Sharma *et al.*,<sup>2</sup> against all efforts at ignoring indigenous knowledge as leading to a failure in people's development, suffices. Indigenous knowledge on governance infrastructure, as it existed before the colonialists arrived, is an important body of knowledge to complement the conventional science/knowledge of public administration. In fact, indigenous knowledge is a bedrock for a full appreciation of our contemporary governance problems. That is why Dia<sup>3</sup> posited that many of Africa's problems, of modern times, emanate from a structural and functional separation between informal, indigenous

institutions as rooted in Africa's history and culture and formal institutions that are mostly transplanted from outside. Ball and Peters<sup>4</sup> also insist on how the classical political theorists are important, especially in regard to the nature of the questions they posed, and how ignorance concerning this isolates any student of politics from some of the communication that passes among political scientists. Indigenous practices of governance, as they existed, are therefore so paramount that some solutions to today's governance challenges have a locus on this historical epoch. Public administration scholars, therefore, should not allow themselves to be isolated from any attempts at exploring the truth and expanding our understanding of indigenous knowledge.

Structurally, governance deals with the specific functions and responsibilities of different machineries of government or institutions within a given society and/or state as Kalu<sup>5</sup> ably demonstrates. Society, through various stages of evolution, has had some form of governance structures although their complexities have also increased along the journey toward civilization. While Africans might have lived a "miserable" life in one form or another before colonialism, it is completely wrong to posit that pre-colonial Africa was devoid of systems of administration or social organization. It is the duty of African scholars to diligently espouse the true story of how pre-colonial African societies were organized socially and politically. Osabu-Kle<sup>6</sup> posits strongly that if democracy is truly the government of the people by the people, the shape and

conditions of African democracy should be determined by Africans and not outsiders. In the same vein, the knowledge and theories of Africa's administrative systems should be determined by African scholars not outside scholars. This is not to suggest that all outsiders have failed us in our understanding of our systems. A Public Administration theory and well documented practices need to be studied by African scholars, not outsiders. Nohlen<sup>7</sup> was possibly correct when he commented that sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been at the receiving end of a myriad of developmental experiments ranging from modernization concepts to self-help and good governance approaches. Some writings on Africa have undoubtedly tended to be biased. Lucy Mair,<sup>8</sup> in her book *Primitive Government*, for instance, states that it is a fact of history that it was the European peoples who discovered the others and, in most cases, established political dominion over them, and not vice versa. The Europeans, in her view, possessed technical superiority in a number of fields and the techniques of the peoples who came under European rule were rudimentary, and so were their systems of government. Ake,<sup>9</sup> however, hits back at such a description of Africa's pre-colonial governance, warning that it is bad enough for the rest of the world to insist on representing Africa as the ultimate victim of original sin, a sad forsaken place where nothing good or noble ever happens. Njoh,<sup>10</sup> in his excellent attempt at historicizing the African governance systems before colonialism, ably demonstrates how the continent indeed had robust and sophisticated administrative systems for managing affairs. He

does this by elaborating on the governance structures as they existed, a debate that this article examines extensively.

Chanie<sup>11</sup> wonders in his *Trajectory of Public Administration in Africa* why, after some fifty years of independence and with the putative efforts of the western world trying to help, theories of African governance structures are still unimpressive. A handle on those reasons is pivotal to any solution to Africa's problems, he suggests. He advises that to put current public sector reform in context, a rear-view mirror is necessary. This rear-view needs to focus on a rather unfamiliar academic territory – indigenous system of governance. While Giovanni,<sup>12</sup> heaps the misery of African countries on the return of political parties that he argues produced a discontinuity not only in the continent's political life, but also in the study of African politics. Ake<sup>13</sup> in *The feasibility of democracy in Africa* was of the view that the history of Africa has been one long emancipatory struggle against all manner of oppression that was orchestrated by slave traders, overzealous missionaries, French ideologues, British colonizers, home grown dictators and foreign imperialists.

This article advocates for a deeper understanding of indigenous governance, administration and management systems, practices that, when well documented, should inform a theory of African Public Administration. The article examines two opposing views in the existing literature, but relies on the second set of ideas. One view, espoused by post-colonial architects suggests that

pre-colonial Africa did not have a governance apparatus worth talking about. The second, however, vehemently refutes that stance by advancing a number of arguments to support their claims. The article advocates for the teaching of Public Administration in African universities as an important ingredient for adopting local content in tackling the numerous African problems caused, partly, by the destructive foundations that the continent went throughout at the onset of colonial domination. The article suggests an urgent need to coin an African Public Administration theory whose terms of engagement include, among others, documenting and historicizing the African administrative and governance systems and political thoughts. It further attempts to allay fears among African scholars about venturing into the muddy waters of penning the theory and practices of African public administration and governance, especially in as far as the pre-colonial epoch is concerned.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This section explains what constitutes indigenous knowledge and what is meant by the indigenous governance apparatus. Indigenous Knowledge (IK) means local knowledge that is rather unique to a given society and denotes deep understanding of that society and the beliefs and customs of that society. It contrasts with the international knowledge system.<sup>14</sup> However, as Chambers<sup>15</sup> rightly states, IK is often marginalized and given low priority in mainstream studies. This is true of public administration as well. The fact that, as Chambers suggests, many professionals

tend to scoff at or criticize such knowledge systems, viewing them as nonsensical, superstitious, irrational and mythical, provides us with an opportunity to resurrect the story of Africa's systems and develop a new theoretical basis for the teaching of our future generation.

If governance involves the evolving processes, relationships, institutions and structures by which a group of people, community or society organizes themselves collectively to achieve things that matter to them,<sup>16</sup> and has both formal and informal structures and processes,<sup>17</sup> pre-colonial Africa had such a governance mechanism. Such governance within communities involved strengthened decision-making and control over their organizations, and building on people's skills, personal and collective contributions, and shared commitment to an organization's chosen governance processes, goals and identity.<sup>18</sup>

Indigenous governance relates to the variety of skills, teachings, wisdom, ideas, perceptions, experiences, capabilities and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve the governance of society. Such indigenous knowledge is seen to exist in a local context anchored to a particular social group in a particular setting and usually at a particular time period.<sup>19</sup> Within this context, the African governance apparatus is essentially about how African societies were organized socially, administratively and politically to manage public affairs before colonialism. Such governance arrangements were dependent on predetermined societal values,



customs and beliefs, which every member of a particular society was expected to comply with. Failure to comply with the agreed governance arrangements attracted harsh punishments. While indigenous knowledge is often portrayed as unscientific by western scientists and considered backward, conservative, inefficient, inferior and based on ignorance or myths, and that it should be replaced by foreign efficient technologies,<sup>20</sup> such knowledge has the potential to build a theory of African Public Administration.

Ghale and Upreti<sup>21</sup> insist that, despite its perceived usefulness, indigenous knowledge is often ignored in favour of modern technical knowledge from the western world. However, it is important to respect and understand people's indigenous knowledge systems and to build on such knowledge as a basis for understanding contemporary challenges.<sup>22</sup> Public administrators tend to the public's business such as building bridges and highways, collecting garbage, putting out fires, ploughing snow, spraying for mosquitoes and providing essential social services for the less fortunate.<sup>23</sup> The African public administrator also has a set of activities that do not necessarily represent the complexity portrayed by the western examples of the activities of a public administrator.

Gladden<sup>24</sup> reminds us how some form of administration has existed ever since there have been governments. Within Africa, some form of organization has existed since man started living in organized societies. Hughes<sup>25</sup> declares that public administration has a long history, long enough to

parallel the very notion of government. It is obviously clear that some form of governance has been inevitable in the long history of mankind. Public administration involves the delivery of mail, collection of trash and licensing of motor vehicles to the dramatic event of getting a man to land on the moon, the dispatching of Peace Corps volunteers to scores of countries and the development and control of energy resources.<sup>26</sup>

First, there have to be people, as administration involves people. A stone lodged in the earth on the side of the hill is not administration, nor does a stone that, through some act of nature rolls down a hill constitute administration. People have to be present before administration can take place. Second, administration is action. Two men watching or admiring or leaning on a stone do not, in their inactivity, constitute administration. They have to be doing something before administration can enter the picture. Third, administration is interaction. One man moving a stone, or two men, each of whom is moving a stone independently in a direction different from the other one, are not examples of administration in action. In order for their actions to be administration, they must in some way be related. There must be some coordination, even if such is in the background, about what the two men are doing. This broad scope of public administration has forced some scholars to question whether there will be a generally agreed definition of public administration. Some have argued that the scope of the subject is so great and debatable that it is easier to explain than to define.

## **INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE**

This section seeks to provide answers to three connected questions. First, did pre-colonial African societies have a governance mechanism worth historicizing and teaching within Public Administration schools in African universities? Second, if the answer to the first question is in the affirmative, what governance apparatus actually existed in pre-colonial Africa that should inform the suggested discourses? Third, were pre-colonial governance and administrative systems perfect in the management of public affairs? The dividends derived from answering these questions are central in advocating for an African Public Administration theory.

Indigenous administrative systems have a wealth of knowledge scattered across many disciplines, and it is a challenge to African Public Administration scholars to document a common administrative theory. How can they assemble all this knowledge into a common body of knowledge that will form an African Public Administration theory? This challenge was posed many years ago during the development of the discipline of Public Administration. There are unique practices within the African context that, when assembled, will generate a rich understanding of African Public Administration.

In 1947, Robert Dahl deflated the science of administration, a year after Simon Herbert, in 1946, had effectively punctured the politics-administration dichotomy. Many European scholars quickly assembled themselves

around a new theoretical paradigm they labeled Comparative Public Administration. Mixed within the development administration argument, comparative administrationists attempted to address a sharp challenge that Dahl had put against Public Administration, insisting that public administration would never qualify to be a science unless it took a comparative perspective. Global research on development administration remained dominated by western thoughts and ideas owing to the western origins of the sub-discipline; an easy development that demonstrated an unhealthy dominance by western ideas that effectively hampered scholarship on development administration among African intellectuals and academics whose works were often dwarfed by their western counterparts, if such works existed. African scholars demonstrated a total lack of rigour and commitment in documenting the unique features of African administrative systems, which were, by modern standards, sophisticated (although they had some weaknesses).

At its core, Africa's problem has remained that of underdevelopment where people are poor, resources are under-utilized, and the institutions established are ineffective in facilitating the very individual and collective action needed to resolve the problems of society.<sup>27</sup> It is such a state of affairs that possibly informed the views of Chanie<sup>28</sup> who wonders why so much is still unimposing in Africa, despite some modest help from western countries. It is possibly not out of context to insist that the failure of these institutions cannot be divorced from the cultures, beliefs

and customs that long provided a nuclear for the social governance infrastructure within the context of African values. An attempt at finding answers to the question as to why Africa remains underdeveloped should have its central unit of analysis focused on the nature of administrative systems that have driven African society over time.

Existing scholarship on Africa's administration systems takes two major orientations. The first group of literature is bent on denying that Africa had any system of governance before colonialism.<sup>29,30,31</sup> Amaeshi and Yavuz<sup>32</sup> insist that it is very difficult, in the context of sub-Saharan African countries, to conceptualize and identify indigenous approaches to management or administration. This obviously is a position often taken by the advocates of colonial governance. The second school of thought on Africa's indigenous systems demonstrates the sophisticated nature of pre-colonial African administrative systems.<sup>33,34,35</sup> Kottak<sup>36</sup> ably demonstrates how it was not uncommon for pre-colonial societies to establish a form of governance through tribes, chiefdoms and polities while Inyang<sup>37</sup> reminds us of the serious erosion of all efforts at developing indigenous management theories and practices in Africa by colonialism. The colonial administration, he states, introduced western management theories and practices, considered as the drivers and the panacea for the continent's socio-political-economic development. Western scholarship and literature generally devalued and deprecated the astonishing management prowess and practices of early African civilizations.

Boone<sup>38</sup> deplores how most political analysis assumes that African states have no organic links to indigenous societies. One consequence of this analysis is that the issues of state formation has not been taken seriously, as many analysts tend to study the aggregate growth of the post-colonial state apparatus, or only describe similarities in the structure and processes of modern African governments, while effectively ignoring the social origins of cross-national differences in administrative practice and in the organizational configuration of state power. Moreover, it is uncontestable, as Vyas-Doorgapersad and Thombe<sup>39</sup> articulately illustrate, that African communities had traditional leaders who were political heads with strong family orientation and imposed customary laws to maintain order among their people. Ignoring these facts creates an uncalled for knowledge deficient among the African academic community, thereby challenging the duty of African Public Administration scholars.

Contrary to what colonial architects advocate, Fashoyin<sup>40</sup> strongly posits that management in Africa existed and was rooted in the cultural beliefs and traditions of its diverse people. The cultures had evolved over thousands of years and represented successful attempts to integrate themselves with their environment. African institutions were marked by interrelatedness, yet they also exhibited a wide range of diversity. Facts on Africa ought to be told by Africans. However, Martin<sup>41</sup> warns that to suggest that the history of African political ideas is a neglected field of study is a major understatement, as Africa is replete with examples of excellent

practices of public administration as they existed before the advent of colonialists. He recommends that an instructor wishing to put together a collection of readings on the subject needs to delve into an extremely broad range of sources and materials widely scattered in many books, articles and primary sources dealing with African history, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, politics, biography and literature.

We learn from the works of Osei-Hwedie<sup>42</sup> that before colonialism, sub-Saharan African societies were organized around friends and relations, with authority exercised through a system of chieftaincy, clan elders and heads of households. As long as such an arrangement created harmony and a sense of unity among the communities where it existed, the governance apparatus brought about social transformation as understood from the periodic lens of time. Several other practices existed as well. For example, the medical history of Africa, though vital, remains a neglected field. Patterson<sup>43</sup> reports how disease has been a significant factor throughout African history, and attempts to control endemic and epidemic afflictions have been an important aspect of change in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, historians have rarely paid more than cursory attention to issues involving human health; yet they are central to the effectiveness of any governance mechanism.

Politics is one of the oldest activities of humanity and, as soon as people began to live in organized groups, a need to devise ways to govern themselves emerged<sup>44</sup> as

a broader strategy to create social order. Njoh<sup>45</sup> gives a comprehensive description of the governance apparatus that existed in pre-colonial Africa, and that African scholars should proudly espouse in their teachings of Public Administration. Pre-colonial African societies had sound administrative systems that featured a variety of polities, including the city-states, empire-states, as well as conquest states. The continent is known to have had a great deal of accomplishments in the areas of political and social organization, architecture, city building, arts and crafts, commerce and trade, tax administration, grievance-handling and discipline as well as democratic arrangements.<sup>46</sup> This pre-colonial governance apparatus was based on communalism, which revolved around the *Ubuntu* ideology.

*Ubuntu* means humanness or being human.<sup>47</sup> Within its philosophy is the community ownership and respect of society as opposed to individualistic tendencies characterized most by pre-colonial governance frameworks. The family, clan and tribal orientations were a common bond that provided unity. It was common for family members to scatter geographically for better occupation prospects and, in the process, develop new territorial authorities.<sup>48</sup> As Ifechukwu<sup>49</sup> posits, the core values of African communities involved the extended family, human relations orientation, co-prosperity or social mutual concern, respect for elders and tradition, consensus, competition and hero-worship.

Pre-colonial political governance arrangements guided power and authority

distribution as exercised by the various elements of government.<sup>50</sup> The political systems were brought together by acceptable common norms, institutions and cultures of people, and had a common language in a territorially delineated space or in different situations. While many different types of governance systems existed, three political categories, namely, (1) centralized kingdoms and empires; (2) centralized small kingdoms and city-states and (3) decentralized or stateless political societies, summarize the systems. In each of these political systems, trade and a strong military force were important factors in the development and maintenance of social order. Ukpabi<sup>51</sup> elaborates, for example, how kingdoms and empires evolved elaborate and often complex military organizations to ensure adequate protection of the royal court and the safety of the rulers. They had a group of professional warriors charged with this responsibility and whose qualification for office included unquestioned loyalty to the government in power.

Public administrators perform legal duties within society. Indeed, leaders of the pre-colonial period had a regulatory function which covers the legal definition of public administration. Njoh<sup>52</sup> documents how leaders of the time were pre-occupied with discipline and administering punishment to those who went against the established rules of society. These systems ensured harmony and discipline, an indication of a well-organized society. Mazrui<sup>53</sup> also explains how the fragmented or highly decentralized systems were the majority, while the highly

centralized polities were few and included the well-known kingdoms such as the Songhai Empire, Ashanti Kingdom, the City-State of Benin, all in West Africa, the Bakongo Kingdom in Central Africa and the Buganda Kingdom in East Africa. African societies, throughout the centuries, were organized on the basis of a social contract.

On the same subject, Jarret<sup>54</sup> has done a fine job of describing the governance apparatus of pre-colonial African polities that typically comprised three major elements. In their hierarchy, the administrative bodies included (1) the council of elders, (2) chief priests and moral elders and (3) chiefs; all capable of executing functions ranging from mundane tasks, such as using the talking drum to summon a meeting of the king's aides, to complex undertakings, such as planning and executing war. Each body was placed in charge of a well-defined set of activities. The council of elders had the responsibility of conceiving, planning, implementing and managing the community's development projects, which were critical undertakings expected by members of the society. Projects, such as public infrastructure building and maintenance, building and maintaining the chief's palace, and building and maintaining weekly markets, fell under the jurisdiction of the council of elders. The idea of crime as an anti-social act certainly existed, and it was the concern of those entrusted with authority in society to restore and promote social relationships. Reconciliation and the restoration of social harmony were the objects of judicial proceedings, rather than retribution. Hence, the

importance attributed to compensation, and even ritual feasting as the outcome of a process of reconciliation, was great.

The chief priests, who were people endowed with special spiritual powers and or/skills that were often inherited rather than learnt, had important governance responsibilities. As Jarret<sup>55</sup> points out, these people functioned as religious authorities and acted as a bridge between members of the communities and their ancestors. The belief in ancestral powers was a common practice in pre-colonial societies and a special body of administrators had to be responsible for such spiritual matters. The chief priests were also charged with the responsibility of educating the community on African spiritual laws, religious doctrines and principles. In this regard, they provided knowledge on the importance of living in harmony with the natural environment, including land, rivers, lakes and forests, and why members of the community must see themselves as custodians and not owners of the natural resources. The chief priests further performed the role of modern day health officials or medical practitioners, as they were responsible for healing the sick.

The moral elders (who were similar to the officials responsible for ethics and integrity in most contemporary systems) were responsible for teaching moral conduct and upholding moral standards throughout the community. They were also responsible for recording all major events that took place in their communities. In this case, they served as community historians. The fact that most

pre-colonial African societies did not boast a written culture does not mean they were incapable of recording information. This task was often accomplished through two main strategies:

- 1) The most common involved story telling. These stories were then passed on from one generation to another until they became legendary.
- 2) Through drawings or sketches. Such drawings and sketches have surfaced in caves, and other artifacts have been uncovered through archaeological and other discoveries.

Examples of the Songhai's empire, whose governance apparatus comprised, among other units, several ministerial bodies as Njoh<sup>56</sup> reports, help us to understand the pre-colonial governance apparatus. Prominent in the empire was a ministerial body in charge of agriculture, headed by an inspector of agriculture; an equivalent of contemporary ministries of agriculture. There was also a ministerial body in charge of etiquette, headed by a chief of etiquette and protocol. Another ministry was responsible for the Calvary under the leadership of the chief of Calvary. They also had the ministerial body in charge of minority affairs, which had several agencies responsible for the various minority groups resident in the empire. In the empire, justice was an important issue, as the leadership created positions of chief of justice or *cadi* (*qadi*). The *cadi*'s who were posted to major cities, such as Djemne and Timbuktu, were appointees of the king and were responsible for dealing with disputes

between citizens and foreigners or among citizens. The king or loyal justices were in charge of more serious crimes such as treason. Individuals found guilty were sentenced based on the severity of the crime.

In another elaborate attempt at demonstrating how pre-colonial African societies were organized politically, Ndlovu-Gatsheni<sup>57</sup> gives an account of the governance apparatus in the Ndebele polity, which had very elaborate mechanisms with checks and balances that significantly regulated the power of the king. The hierarchy of power facilitated communication between the leaders and the ordinary people, the lesser chiefs and the senior leaders, up to the king. The governance arrangements are shown in Figure 1,

which demonstrates that the king was at the apex of a power hierarchy and had no absolute powers, as several layers of officials existed to check the king. The king was the head of state, head of government, religious chief, commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the supreme judge of all criminal cases. Below the king were layers of powerful officials who played an active role in the governance of the state as well as checking on the absolute dictatorship of the king.

The first layer of the administrative official in the Ndebele kingdom was the prime minister called *indunankulu yesizwe* and he acted as the head of government. This compares effectively to the ancient Greek society

**FIGURE 1: Hierarchy of power in the Ndebele state**



Source: Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) Who Ruled by the Spear? Rethinking the Form of Governance in the Ndebele State, *African Studies Quarterly*, 10 (2 & 3):76

arrangement where the prime minister occupied the top hierarchy position and a number of gods (ministers) below him were responsible for specialized functions. The Ndebele king did not rule by decree as state policies were subjected to serious debate, and meetings were considered important in deciding the future of the state. The king's personal confidants, comprising inner advisers, collectively termed *umphakathi*, played a crucial role in determining state policy and they effectively made difficult judicial decisions.

Another set of advisers of the king were a large group of the state's prominent men collectively termed *izikhulu*. It was through these two councils that the ordinary Ndebele people were able to participate in the government of their country. This has a resemblance to our contemporary governance apparatus where elected representatives represent the people's views. *Umphakathi* and *izikhulu* in the Ndebele society operated as representative councils. Like the commercialized politics of modern African societies today, before colonialism, the members of these representative councils were mainly rich people, rather than ordinary persons. They were not freely chosen by the people; their positions were largely hereditary.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni<sup>58</sup> further reports how the Ndebele king tried to keep as much power in his hands as possible, but the leaders of *izigaba* worked tirelessly to gain more and more power and increasing influence in state affairs. It was these people who practically commanded the armed forces

during military assignments. They also determined outcomes of difficult judicial decisions. While the king could differ with the views of his advisers on a number of issues, he was often forced to endorse the popular views of his advisers. The leaders of *izigaba*, rather than the king, were the practical representatives of *amahlabezulu* (the ordinary population). The king had to listen to their views in order to keep in touch with the popular sentiments of his people. Chiefs of *izigaba* were initially appointed by the king, especially during the inception of the state and the formation of specific *izigaba* as the state grew. Provincial chiefs, however, had to work hard to cultivate the allegiance of the people within the territorial area of their rule. Upon the death of an appointed chief, the king's power to appoint another chief fell away, as the deceased chief was to be succeeded by his eldest son from his senior wife (*indluenkulu*). If the senior wife failed to produce a son, other sons from junior wives were accepted as successors.

Similar societies in pre-colonial Africa exhibited a well-organized governance mechanism based on common societal beliefs. Tosh,<sup>59</sup> while writing from the contexts of the Uganda Protectorate, reports how in both centralized and acephalous societies, the British ruled through a uniform system of native administration. This arrangement was found prudent to align the British system to the indigenous structures through what is popularly known as indirect rule. The indigenous administrative governance structure had on its apex the District, which usually corresponded to the



territory of one tribe, or a combination of related tribes. With few exceptions, local people did not occupy executive positions at District level, as such was the preserve of European officials.

The internal administration of the District was carried out by locally recruited chiefs, appointed from above, and distributed over four grades according to the territory they ruled: county, sub-county, parish and village. Each of these constituted an administrative unit. At each of the administrative levels, the chief had responsibility for maintaining law and order, tax collection, the mobilization of labour for public works and the enforcement of administrative orders from his superiors. In the senior grades of county and sub-county, the chief also exercised judicial authority: his court settled the vast majority of civil and petty criminal cases, and he could use a small detachment of armed police to make arrests. This system appealed to British officials, because it was endowed with some traditional legitimacy. The system was derived from the pre-colonial Buganda where the basic principle of graded administrative posts was a common administrative governance mechanism among the Bakungu hierarchy of nineteenth-century Buganda.

Politics and economics have historically been hostile partners although their outright "divorce" has not yet materialized. The two have a symbiotic relationship although such a relationship is largely ignored in most discourses. By its nature, politics shapes the economics of any society. However, the economics also determine the kind of politics by

those who are in charge of managing society affairs. Some economic decisions are political mechanisms to control the affairs of the state. Africa's economy, in the pre-colonial period, was diverse and in a large measure was driven by extensive trade routes that developed between cities and kingdoms. Some trade routes were overland, while others involved navigating rivers and some developed around port cities. Large African empires became wealthy due to their trade networks.

Falola<sup>60</sup> reports to us how the Yoruba indigenous economy and politics were organized. In the empire, extensive commercial activities linked one Yoruba-speaking town to another, and the whole of the southwest with northern Nigeria and some other parts of Africa. The trade with the Europeans on the coast was similarly intense and the network of commerce involved both local exchange, long-distance trade between the Yoruba and others, and exchange with foreigners, Europeans and Arabs. The Yoruba Empire had an elaborate toll system with toll gates operational in all Yoruba towns. Such tolls were a major source of revenue, together with taxation, levies, judicial fees and fines and death duties. The Yoruba also had large-scale production of agricultural and crafts products such that the markets were constantly supplied, despite the endemic warfare of the century. It involved large-scale movements of people and goods, and called for transport, markets, currency and other institutions. Commercial activities provided opportunities for individuals and the state to exploit and benefit from.

While individuals produced for the market, sold to make profits and offered their labour for different services, the state, through the political leaders, made use of commerce in varying ways to sustain itself: traders not only offered gifts to rulers, but paid dues in the markets and different types of levies and tolls when they engaged in trade that transcended boundaries. All these economic activities were undoubtedly supported by a sophisticated administrative mechanism.

While African political systems had all the trappings of government, with the consent of the governed and a balance between centralized and decentralized power to prevent the misuse of authority by one person,<sup>61</sup> there were some weaknesses worth noting in our effort to develop an African Public Administration theory. While indigenous systems had a governance apparatus with checks and balances as well as an accountability mechanism, they had some degree of exclusion. Secondly, indigenous societies survived on wars, conquests, raids, kidnappings and the collection of tribute payments, which led to the enslavement and sale of millions of men, women and children as Falola and Warnock<sup>62</sup> demonstrate. In primitive societies, fighting was recognized as a legitimate means of obtaining redress for an injury, though not a means of dominating others.<sup>63</sup>

Certain African rulers used slave soldiers as the means of creating a centralized administration aimed at enhancing the authority of the monarchs against the competition of their subordinate chiefs. The Kabaka

Kalema of Buganda, in the late nineteenth century, when he found himself losing popular support, relied on the Arabs and their bands of slaves for his safety.<sup>64</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni<sup>65</sup> tells us how the Ndebele system of governance was not fully based on consensual politics. It was characterized by a mixture of democratic tendencies, on the one hand, and aristocratic, autocratic and/or militaristic tendencies on the other. Tension, competition, jealousies, and violence also characterized Ndebele systems of governance. Kinship was one major ideology, in the Ndebele state, that was a source of both strength and weakness.

### **PARADIGM SHIFT: A THEORY OF AFRICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?**

The preceding section has exemplified how the indigenous governance apparatus operated during pre-colonial times. The section recognized that, despite weaknesses in pre-colonial governance apparatus, the balance sheet of its unique features makes it worth the scholarly attention of African Public Administration scholars. This demands a paradigm shift from a western-based theoretical stand to one shaped by the indigenous realities, especially as they existed before colonialism. Gbadamosi<sup>66</sup> reports how western management concepts and writings have dominated the thinking of academics and managers in Africa for a long time. This approach has been a dire disadvantage to administration theory development based on African cultural beliefs and values.

Colonialism disoriented the systems of administration with a western-based ideology, a historical error that needs to be reversed. Kiggundu<sup>67</sup> long warned how various colonial powers destroyed or devalued local institutions and management practices, substituting them with their own colonial administrative systems out of the belief in western cultural, biological and technological superiority over Africans. Kasfir<sup>68</sup> challenges African scholars that so little of value had been written about development administration in Africa, as much of the writing came from expatriate civil servants and academic personnel involved in technical assistance to administrative training institutes. Duke,<sup>69</sup> in his analysis of the impact of colonialism on the development of management in Nigeria, affirms how the administrative system, adopted in managing the Nigerian state by the British, essentially organized government apparatus along a centralized and hierarchical structure. This system emphasized direct and strong control, as it required that all personnel remained unquestionably subordinate to the top (colonial) authority, personified by the High Commissioner and his executive lieutenants. The local content of the administration – the native political agents, warrant chiefs, clerks, messengers and constables – were merely subordinate field executors or foot soldiers of colonial policies and decisions of the top hierarchy.

Osabu-kle,<sup>70</sup> on the same subject, demonstrates how major policies and decisions that governed colonized people were determined by the colonialists, but their

implementation was effected through the local chiefs. They redefined indigenous institutions and customary laws and chiefs effectively became officers of the colonial administration, and were no longer responsible to their own people who had originally selected and made them chiefs. Fashoyin<sup>71</sup> is of the view that any management education that facilitates the entrenchment of western management theories and practices in Africa is not desirable. His call was that African scholars needed to transform imported theories and concepts into acceptable cultural norms that could be applied to management practices in Africa. The only way out was the development of indigenous African management principles and practices that accommodate African cultural, social, political and environmental factors. Africa's Public Administration academia needs new leadership.<sup>72</sup> The new academic leadership should be pre-occupied with the reconstruction of African management models and theories. Such coordinated efforts will nurture an African theory of public administration.

A theory, in the context of our debate encompasses a systematic collection of related principles and management theory as a way of categorizing pertinent management knowledge.<sup>73</sup> This would imply that African public administration theory should involve a collection of indigenous African principles, practices and knowledge that depict how such societies managed public affairs. One of the underlying root causes of the west's inferiorisation of African indigenous management practice stems from lack of concerted efforts by African

scholars to document their own indigenous systems to counteract those espoused by western ideologues. African scholars need to build a coherent analogy of the elements of African systems that would see the African paradigms of administration being covered in public administration training. This effort should primarily be informed by the extensive indigenous knowledge as a starting point to the construction of alternative administrative theories. This knowledge should be adequately disseminated and shared among interested scholars of Public Administration as well as among policy makers and practitioners for a vivid understanding of the uniqueness of the African culture.

The African paradigms/theories of public administration could be coined under at least four sections: (1) the indigenous African administration, (2) colonial African administration, (3) post-colonial African public administration and (4) the contemporary paradigm. The first paradigm would be examined under three forms of governance systems that existed – centralized polities, decentralized and stateless societies. A description of the fundamental characteristics that informed governance practices will form a critical component of the paradigm building. The purpose is to educate our students and other actors about the uniqueness in the African governance apparatus. That paradigm of nomenclature would largely follow four strands of the (1) pre-colonial bureaucratic African administration, (2) colonial public administration, (3) comparative public administration, (4) post-colonial public

administration and (5) contemporary public administration.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

If underdevelopment can be seen as a major cause of Africa's problems, the experience of the last three decades suggests there is still a very unclear understanding of what to do about it. Liberal democracy, exhortation, ideology, force, expertise, mobilization, central direction and recent structural adjustment reforms have all been tried, and have all failed.<sup>74</sup> The question is what next? This paper advises that re-founding the administrative systems based on African values is likely to be the answer to the development challenges bewildering the continent. While some elements of globalization will undoubtedly have to be adopted in solving some of the contemporary governance and administrative challenges, efforts must be made not to immensely disadvantage the unique features in Africa's administrative systems.

One of the reasons for the failure of most reforms has been the importation of systems under the one-size-fits-all phenomenon and total neglect of the African context factors. We need to learn from the way African societies governed their affairs and what lessons can be picked up from such systems, especially the best practices that united people to a common purpose, which are lacking in contemporary administrative systems. It becomes the ultimate duty of African scholars to carefully document these facts and pass them on from one

group of students to another. There is a need to develop an African theory or paradigm of administration whose paradigm of nomenclature would largely follow four strands of the (1) pre-colonial bureaucratic

African administration, (2) colonial public administration, (3) comparative public administration, (4) post-colonial public administration and (5) contemporary public administration.

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**Benon Basheka** is Professor and Vice-Chancellor at the Uganda Technology and Management University (UTAMU). Among various academic leadership roles that he played, Basheka was a Dean of the School of Business and Management at the same University. He has been a team leader on different consultancy assignments for the World Bank, DFID, UNDP, USAID and GIZ, among others.

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# MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSCIENCE AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN PUBLIC LEADERSHIP IN THE POST-1994 SOUTH AFRICA

Kwandiwe Kondlo  
University of Johannesburg

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## ABSTRACT

The article examines what some may regard as the intangible elements of public leadership in South Africa. The absolutely intangible elements of public leadership are difficult to pin down, yet their presence is felt when they are there as is the case when they are absent. One could argue that the simmering tensions arising out of popular discontent, sometimes finding expression in isolated incidents of public protest and sometimes in performances by opposition parties in parliament, attest to the fact that there is something missing in the edifice of public leadership. That which is missing is the presence of the intangible aspects of public leadership that this article seeks to examine. The article invokes the significance of the twin notions of conscience and consciousness as intangible imperatives whose absence is creating challenges in public leadership in South Africa's young democracy. The article takes the reader back to some old but still influential, scholarly perspectives from Karl Marx, Carl Jung and Chabani Manganyi in an effort to examine the meaning

and significance of consciousness. The article also draws from *isiXhosa*, to demonstrate the richness and depth of this indigenous language to help us understand the deeper meaning of the concept of conscience, which in *isiXhosa* translates as *isazela* or *umvandedwa*. These concepts are meant, in *isiXhosa*, to tell one something about the roundedness, or lack of it, of one's ethical being. This is not about being perfect or about absolute morality, but about self-reflexivity or the ability for personal reflection to help in self-correction, which defeats the "egoistic self" so as to serve the overarching greatness of community, kinship and societal causes. It is in line with this conception that one is deemed healthy in mind and spirit, hence the saying in *isiXhosa*, *isazela siyamakha umntu* which translated to English means "conscience maketh the person". The ripple effects of "a living conscience" as opposed to a "dead conscience" are what emerge from the *isiXhosa* idiom *isazela esiphilileyo nengqiqo ezinzileyo*. But the article proceeds to examine instances where lapses of "conscience and consciousness" in leadership performance in South Africa occurred to create



a basis for the theorisation of conscience and consciousness in public leadership. The article concludes that, as long as public leaders fail to prioritise self-transformation and strict adherence to a code of leadership values as an indispensable component of the leadership, the ripple effects will eventually destroy public institutions and public life.

## **INTRODUCTION**

When examining this issue, it is important that philosophical speculation should be backed by empirical data and empirical investigation must also be informed by theory. This is the kind of balance needed when scholars examine sensitive, socio-political issues, especially issues involving the country's leadership. Of course, this does not discount the importance of pure theoretical scholarship, especially the significance of that kind of African scholarship which disturbs the *status quo* in order to push the frontiers of theoretical analysis and debate. This is the kind of scholarship which, even though "disturbing", helps us imagine other possible futures rather than endure the future we are likely to have thrust upon us, sometimes, by inept public leadership. Vaclav Havel probably refers to this breed of intellectual who as he puts it "should constantly disturb; should bear witness to the misery of the world; should be provocative by being independent".<sup>1</sup> The balance in scholarship is important when dealing with issues of public leadership but is not sacrosanct.

This article starts by "mapping the conceptual fields", and then examines instances of

public leadership actions which make the debate about conscience and consciousness in public leadership important. The concepts of conscience and consciousness are widely used, but the interpretation of what they mean and the implications they have for leadership practice require a certain nuance and depth, which this article seeks to capture. In order to make a case for the theoretical argument advanced in the article, the section on the track record of lapses of conscience and consciousness in public leadership, below, presents some examples. The last two sections provide some analysis and discussion and, lastly, pose some challenges for scholarship.

## **MAPPING THE CONCEPTUAL FIELD**

The choice of this particular topic – "The meaning and significance of conscience and consciousness in public leadership in the post-1994 South Africa" – is deliberate and evolves out of great concern about what is happening in South African society, politics, culture and the economy. "There is serious cause for concern about the fragility of the future".<sup>2</sup> The fact that after 20 years of freedom, South Africa is still deeply divided, poverty is still so endemic, the demographic distribution of wealth and privilege in South Africa still favours very strongly the white minority are causes for concern and call for "conscience and consciousness" in public leadership. The article focuses on leadership in South Africa's public sector, not that the private sector is without challenges or is perfect, but because the public sector is

the chain which links all of us; it is a prism through which the quality of our nation is seen or even perceived by other nations of the world. The article wishes to start by engaging how conscience and consciousness are theorised in the South African discourses on public leadership. How do non-academic intellectual leaders conceive of conscience and consciousness and how are these positions useful in our situation in South Africa today?

Sometime in the late 1970s, Kenneth Pelletier wrote in his book, *Towards a science of consciousness*,<sup>3</sup> that "the study of consciousness can be conducted under many of the conventions and methodologies of contemporary science, although limitations also need to be acknowledged".<sup>4</sup> This was profound, as it has not been falsified to date. Despite what may be understood to be its ever-moving state, conscience and consciousness could be framed symbolically to represent a sphere of "human experience" in relation to which "significant meanings and values are condensed and given a forward carrying coherence and intensity".<sup>5</sup> In a nutshell, conscience and consciousness capture and convey the "double aspect of the human condition" to both contain and surpass itself.<sup>6</sup> Conscience and consciousness, even though composed of various qualities, represent a dimension of concrete human experience, which once appropriately developed and mobilised, provides coherence around which a balanced view of life is established. It talks to the abstract essence of concrete existential qualities of human beings. According to Foucault,

conscience and consciousness relate to that part of one's self which assists to regulate one's actions<sup>7</sup> whereas Paul Freire refers to this as one's "innermost being" without which one cannot authentically exist. What these scholars underline is the importance of self-formation, which involves "methods, techniques and exercises directed at forming the 'self' within a nexus of relations".<sup>8</sup> The "state of the human condition", ladies and gentlemen, especially in our time, gives the impression of a growing crisis and this contributes in a very fundamental way to leadership challenges globally. The worst forms of rapacious greed and the self-serving quest for power have become very prominent such that human beings are gradually losing that which is essential to being human, i.e. their spirituality and humanness. Hence the scholarship on conscience and consciousness has vital elements for the development of solid public leadership.

One finds the writings of Chabani Manganyi, in his book, *Being black in the world*<sup>9</sup>, particularly illuminating in the area of consciousness. As Manganyi puts it, citing what the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* says, consciousness is about "mutual knowledge"; "knowledge as to which one has testimony within oneself", and "the totality of impressions, thoughts and feelings, which make up a person's conscious being". Most importantly, he argues that, "from mutual knowledge to solidarity is a very short and logical step".<sup>10</sup> This can be translated to the relationship between conscience and consciousness. Carl Jung describes consciousness as a "precondition of being"<sup>11</sup>

to illustrate its significance in the general scheme of human life.

Public intellectual discourse also has important pointers or angles that illuminate the debate. One concurs with Steve Biko's view that consciousness, in particular, is about "an attitude of mind"<sup>12</sup>, but Vaclav Havel argues that, as for conscience itself, it is more about an "orientation of the heart" hence the two terms, once conjoined, give the picture of a complete human being. The inscription on the tombstone of Robert Sobukwe's grave is actually very loud and informative on the meaning of conscience and consciousness, which is needed in public leadership in South Africa. The inscription reads as follows:

True leadership demands complete subjugation of self, absolute honesty, integrity and uprightness of character and fearlessness, and above all, a consuming love of one's people. Go and demonstrate to your people that imprisonment is not a disgrace at all, and that to be arrested and charged 'as a dangerous criminal' is the highest honour that the Government of this country can ever bestow upon you.<sup>13</sup>

What the inscription on Robert Sobukwe's grave refers to as "true leadership" is what, in the context of this discussion, is referred to as a leadership of conscience and consciousness. It begins with one's personal journey of self-transformation, which requires the subjugation of self and absolute honesty. It stands by leadership practices that are sincere and focused, and it ends with a leadership that walks the talk. Honesty is what we

are told cannot be found in politics or among politicians. This does not seem to be the case if one considers the views of political giants of ethical standing such as Vaclav Havel. He argues that "genuine politics – even politics worthy of the name – the only politics I am willing to devote myself to – is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility expressed through action, to and for the whole".<sup>14</sup> It is therefore not naïve or unfair to expect a politics of conscience and consciousness from public leaders. The point about "a consuming love of one's people", inscribed in Sobukwe's tombstone, goes very deep. It is about knowing fellow men through the lens of solidarity and it is about the construction of the indispensable other. It shows how conscience and consciousness intersect like tributaries of the same river, in the making of ethical beings.

In *isiXhosa*, the word conscience is expressed as *isazela* or *umvandedwa*. It is that which is never seen but is forever within you. It admonishes you about the wrongs done, but its language is silent but loud within you. *Umvandedwa* literally translates to "what I feel in me alone". Both *isazela* and *umvandedwa* depend on the response, or lack of response, by the individual. In other words, you may ignore them and hence people who know the role of *isazela*, will say *isazela sifile* meaning "the conscience is dead". In modern terminology, one would say the two concepts from an indigenous language are about self-knowledge, hunches

and positive intuition, which corrects the human being and leads him or her to admit if he or she is wrong. What seems to be a challenge in public leadership in South Africa, today, is the orientation of this instinctive energy; where the orientation is negative, the relational configurations of society tend to be negative.

What is lacking in the discourse on consciousness is a discussion or distinction between false consciousness and true consciousness. False consciousness is discussed elaborately by Karl Marx and Engels in *The German ideology*<sup>15</sup> and they relate false consciousness to the grip of ruling class ideas and world outlook on the minds of the oppressed and exploited masses. This article argues these concepts on the basis of practical realities in today's South Africa. True consciousness is not about being politically on the right side in terms of having been involved in the liberation struggle, as in the case of South Africa. It is about a realistic awareness of sacrifices to be made and the personal example it takes to deliver on the national promise. In Marxist terms, it relates to the readiness to commit class-suicide as a metaphor of commitment to the service of people rather than self-interest. False consciousness is the opposite of this. One may be politically correct in ideas and the history of involvement in the struggle, but not committed to taking the pain of self-sacrifice for the upliftment of poor communities. Leaders may have fought on the same side in the liberation struggle, but this does not mean they were driven by the same conscience and consciousness. Hence, when in office as

public leaders, the ethical example or lack of it occurs within the same generation of liberation struggle cadres and dampens the glory of national liberation.

### **A Track Record of Lapses of Conscience and Consciousness<sup>16</sup>**

In the statistics quoted in *City Press*, 11 March 2010, (presented by Troye Lund), "almost half of President Zuma's cabinet (42 percent) own companies; the Auditor General has found that one in two members of parliament holds directorship in private companies and that between 33 percent and 50 percent of all members of provincial legislatures also moonlight". If these figures are indeed correct, then the situation is a cause for concern. Of course, these issues have now been overshadowed by the widely publicised and debated Nkandla debacle. This is about how approximately R240 million of taxpayers' money was spent on the upgrades of President Zuma's private home. The report of the investigation, done by the Public Protector, goes into detail on this matter and exposes how the entire project was badly managed by government. The Public Protector's report has recently been contested by another report prepared and presented by the Minister of Police. Of course, the report of the latter is clearly an exercise in defence of the President; it is wobbly and analytically amateurish. But the most important question is how a President, who supposedly has a lively conscience and patriotic consciousness, should have handled the Nkandla matter. The issue is debated in the analysis in sections below.

At the level of government administration, it was reported in the *Sunday Times*, of 8 October 2012, that "during the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 financial years, 16 directors-general and deputy directors-general had been fired for mismanagement or gross financial negligence". A number of these issues are covered in the various reports of the South African Public Service Commission. At political leadership level, opposite to President Zuma, is the public leadership track record of his former ally, Julius Malema, now a firm opponent and leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), an authoritarian populist political formation run in quasi-military style and selling among some youths in South African communities. *The Sunday Times*, 11 October 2012, covered the report of the Public Protector, which exposed how Malema benefited improperly from "a lucrative roads and bridges tender" from the Limpopo provincial government.

At local government level, the sphere closest to the people, the reports are too many and even worse. Just by way of example, *The Sunday World*, 27 January 2013, carried a story indicating that the "Deputy Chief whip of the ANC in the city of Johannesburg is facing allegations of having an inappropriate relationship with Zero Defect Trading, a contractor that is involved in the R170m Alexandra smart metre project". It's important to highlight cases such as these because, even though not as high profile as the cases involving President Zuma, they underline major issues of concern about public leadership in South Africa – this is

about their beneficial involvement in projects meant for poor communities.

### **Analysis: Towards a New Synthesis**

One is acutely aware of the fact that for scholars, part of the difficulty is that the country now has a President and regime which is very "allergic" to intellectual critique. But scholars should not bow to pressure from any power block – they should not fail to articulate critique where it is due. It is very important that scholars, through research and public dialogue, break the "circle of humiliation",<sup>17</sup> which affects all black people, and the circle is being rounded out by recurrent lapses of conscience and consciousness among public leaders, as demonstrated above. In fact, it is now time that intellectuals in this country unite in their uncompromising quest for truth and the quest for truth requires a critical attitude. So scholarly criticism should never stop, be it the critique of political opposition or the majority party or the leadership of academic institutions. As Jacques Derrida puts it, scholars need to realise "the unconditional freedom to assert" and the "right to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge and thought concerning the truth".<sup>18</sup>

During one of my field research trips to the Eastern Cape, at the height of the Nkandla debate in parliament, where the EFF for the first time, burst into the chorus, "pay back the money", thus interrupting President Zuma's question and answer session in parliament, I decided to engage members

of the community of Mlakalaka location just outside King Williams Town to gauge their perspectives. What really caught my attention was the response by one old lady who questioned the manner Mr Zuma has handled the Nkandla debacle. Her response was "*sayaphi na isazela salendoda. Nokuba lemali akayithathanga kodwa makabonise isazela esiphilileyo*"<sup>19</sup> literally meaning, "where is the conscience of this man (the President)? Even if he did not take the money at least he must show us he has a living conscience". To me, as a researcher who focuses on issues of ethical leadership, this came as a profound statement. President Zuma could have shown more leadership in the handling of the Nkandla matter by taking the nation into his confidence regarding what he knows and what he doesn't know; he could have extended a gesture of rectitude, even to opponents, by agreeing on a symbolic atonement that could range from a small payment to a public apology on behalf of government for what was done wrongly in the entire process. History might judge Julius Malema more favourably, because he has appeared before court to answer to his corruption case and the case was withdrawn. He has made public pronouncements of apology for the excesses in his role while he was leader of the ANC youth wing.

The 1979 poem of Mario Benedetti,<sup>20</sup> titled "Why we sing" (*Por que cantamos* – translated by D'Arcy Martin and paraphrased below), if carefully analysed and interpreted, has important messages for South Africa. The poem reads:

If our finest people are shunned, our homeland is dying of sorrow and the human heart is shattered even before shame explodes, you will ask why we sing. We sing because we believe in people and we shall overcome these defeats; we sing because it is raining in the furrow and we are the militants of life and because we cannot and will not allow our song to become ashes.

Many of our finest people in this country, people who can deliver great things for the country were they to be placed in key leadership positions in our public institutions, stand on the margins; some have been threatened in various ways and are now quiet and are concentrating on "own business", but, on the other hand, the homeland is dying of sorrow. The fast growing requirement for a partisan stamp before one can hold certain positions in public institutions, positions which are crucial to the development of our economy and the sustenance of our democracy, is a big challenge, and if it is not seriously reviewed and minimised to target very few and fundamentally strategic positions, this country's development path is likely to be very painful.

As Mario indicates in the poem, it is "raining in the furrow" and we need leaders who are "militants of life". But I wish to underline, especially in the case of political leaders and other leaders in government and state institutions, that from them we expect more than merely "militants of life"; we expect militants of *a selfless life*. Yes, we do have militants of life, but many have come

across as being too selfish and mean – yet we forget that, in our case here in South Africa, "the human heart" is becoming shattered – shame is very likely to explode. But on a more positive note, we cannot "allow our song to become ashes" – this song is the democratic South Africa – the country we dreamt of together – a South Africa of unlimited possibilities for us and our children.

The leadership challenges facing our country begin at the level of community – these include not only community fragmentation but the moral decay and loss of self-love one finds among certain individuals in our communities. At government level, there is a lack of leadership example in terms of self-conduct, work ethic and behaviour. There is also the lack of overall coherence in government policy implementation strategies involving communities – in many circles this is called public participation. The manner in which people are involved in projects meant to develop them is too state-centric rather than people-centred – it is carefully stage-managed to secure political gain for leaders and really less about the impact which reduces "the cares and sorrows" of ordinary citizens. If our institutions and public leadership were strong on public participation, and if the paradigm and operationalisation of public participation were strong and honest, the country would not be facing growing rates of public protest and international embarrassment because of violence related to xenophobia. There is also a challenge of lack of trust in public leaders and institutions and this

feeds from perceptions of neo-patrimonialism, patronage and, in general, corruption in the landscape of our political economy. There is also the knowing-doing gap which still persists in certain public institutions, hence the challenges of service delivery. But most importantly, we also have presidential leadership which is not proactive in providing an overall guiding eye in public policy. The President's own touch in policy matters is very important to give confidence about visionary leadership – but this is not happening or we don't feel it. For instance, former President Mbeki championed the African renaissance project and his hand could be felt; former President Mandela did the same with the nation building project – yes, institutions and their leaders play an important role but this does not mean you disappear as president and only appear to give reports to the nation.

### **What of Academic Intellectuals?**

The question which is raised now and then in various quarters is where and what really are the voice and role of intellectuals in South Africa, in times like this? Well, the question can be addressed in various ways and it can even be trivialised. But one is of the view that scholars need to be vocal and firm on issues of leadership in our society and the much needed renaissance among black communities. Public administration discourses need to move beyond concern with technical procedures and systems of governance to encompass the much bigger project of social emancipation, a project which took the back seat

during transitional negotiations in 1990 to 1993. From a multi-disciplinary perspective, scholars need to shine the spotlight on this neglected project. Aspects of this project include issues of language and public administration, the relationship between expert knowledge and public participation, social cohesion, the family and the construction of the ethical self – one can mention just a few examples of a much bigger task. I like Odora Hoppers when she says that "leadership, in the way I see it, demands both hardware and software components. There are contents we can package into a curriculum and teach to groups of students".<sup>21</sup> This shows that intellectuals have an important role to play in moulding future generations of leaders, but, of course, have to be careful about issues of paradigm transformation, so that we mould a generation of leaders who are attuned to and resonate with our communities. Leadership does matter and bad public leadership deforms even constitutional institutions of oversight. Good public leadership creates institutions that may be as good as the leadership which created them. There is a saying which goes like this: once the rot starts at the top, it affects the entire body. In other words, once you fix the leadership at the top, the trickle down effects, flowing from the power of exemplary leadership, will help regenerate the body. At a practical level, there is also a great need in South Africa to build leadership from below, so that we can have informed, self-reliant and assertive communities who can consistently demand both accountability and appropriate dividends of democracy.

Hence, it is important for academics to not only teach and then go and sit in the library, but to also do fieldwork and interact with communities and community organisations.

There is a certain kind of leadership South Africa needs, so that the looming crisis of democracy doesn't deepen. At a political level, there is a need to restore the centrality of a lively conscience and true consciousness as virtues in political leadership. There is a need to restore the authority of knowledge in policy development and decision making. Pulling political rank and mobilising support networks to push certain policy positions, thus overriding facts and research information, is going to drown public leadership and injure the whole country. As scholars, we need to caution on this and we need to do research that exposes hasty policy making based on scanty evidence. Public leaders with lively conscience and true consciousness seek for evidence on which to base policy decisions. The balance between conscience and consciousness is very important in public leadership. But what we have seen so far is that leaders, who have political consciousness and a track record, may not necessarily have a lively conscience. Conscience, more than everything else, is a spiritual self-awareness and it exposes fraudulent "political consciousness", which excites the masses only to hang them out to dry. A leadership of conscience and consciousness is an honest leadership – an honest leadership requires the transformation of the self at a personal level. The first step towards greatness in public leadership is honesty, but as Christian



Nestell Bovee indicates in his poem, titled *Many thoughts of many minds*, "honesty is not only the first step towards greatness, it is greatness itself".<sup>22</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Conscience and consciousness in public leadership is not simply about political correctness and being with the right crowd politically; it is not about taking radical political positions or being politically active and aligned. It is about an individual's journey of self-transformation; it is about what

Nelson Mandela called "the RDP of the Soul"<sup>23</sup>. This is a paradigm of self-awareness and honesty. Public leadership with conscience and consciousness is a model for true humanity. The challenge for scholars, besides teaching, is to collaborate in doing research that constantly reviews the state of leadership in our country and proposes measures for assessment and development. Scholars need to bridge the gap between the work they produce and what is relevant for community self-awareness and development. In other words, public administration and society needs more attention.

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**Kwandiwe Kondlo** is a Research Professor at the University of Johannesburg. He has been a Visiting Professor at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and University of Witwatersrand's School of Public and Development Management, now School of Governance, among others. He worked for the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) as the Executive Director of the Democracy and Governance Programme and the University of Free State as the Director of Africa Studies. He is the author and editor of many books and journal articles.

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# LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE: LESSONS FROM AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Manamela DJ Matshabaphala  
University of the Witwatersrand

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## ABSTRACT

This article seeks to make a contribution to the project of narrative development in the universe of Public Administration. As it were, this article is in agreement with the understanding that metaphysics, which is a branch of philosophy that studies reality, that is both physical and social reality, does in several ways have an influence on the narrative construction in social and political philosophy. This suggests that studies in natural reality, in more ways than one, informed the content of studies on social reality, as in social and political philosophies. Every society in the world has its own worldview of both the physical and social realities that issue from their cultures. Western philosophies, as well, come across as products of western cultural systems with major influences on social and political systems. African philosophies, too, are found to be products of African cultural systems, political philosophies and legacies.<sup>1</sup> In world communities' social and political philosophies, we come across these communities' concepts of leadership and good governance. This is with reference to the leadership and governance

models that would assist with the delivery of an enabling environment for the attainment of public value, the life of dignity and the pursuit of happiness for the communities in question.

This article seeks to add to the project of narrative construction and development in Public Administration with some of the insights drawn from the philosophy traditions in Africa that also draw their materials from, and talk to, the African reality. This is with reference to the traditions and epistemological frontiers such as ethnophilosophy, nationalistic-ideological philosophy, professional philosophy and philosophic sagacity.<sup>2</sup> Some of these traditions are found to be in resonance with the *Batho Pele* principles that serve as guidelines for leadership and good governance in the public service, and they are also found to have outlived the colonial overlay. This article argues that there are leadership and good governance lessons that can be learnt from these traditions, philosophies and systems. This is with reference to those values borne of African worldviews that are found to be still relevant to the worlds of both leadership and governance

in the public service such as respect, a caring public service, a considerate public service and a public service that is able to do more for society with limited resources. The public service landscape presents leadership and governance approaches that are in some ways out of kilter with the African social reality. This article postulates the integration of some of the enduring African philosophy elements into the Grand National Narrative for the delivery of the public servants and public service of the future.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership and good governance are generally regarded as critical for effective and efficient delivery of services, more especially the delivery of public goods, as it is the business of the public service.<sup>3</sup> Commentators in the discipline of Public Administration are in agreement on service excellence in national governments, national government departments, provincial governments and local government as attributable to leadership and good governance. The concepts of leadership and good governance are arguably as old as human history and also the history of philosophy. Every society in the world, in its history, has always had its concepts of what constitutes leadership and good governance as often encapsulated in these societies' social and political philosophies. Some of these philosophies and theories of leadership and good governance began to lose their reality value with the onset of new leadership and good governance narratives. But then again, some of the elements of these philosophies and theories

endured despite the onslaught of time and the emerging narratives. This article further notes that the emerging and evolving narratives in public leadership and governance are in some instances informed by context, as asserted and alluded to in the historical-hermeneutical investigation of Theophilus Okere on African philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

## **LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The concepts of leadership and good governance can best be explained in the context of a philosophical question that was once asked: "What is the purpose of life?" Responses to this question find expression in a number of theories trying to present a logical and convincing answer. Responses seem to converge and agree on the understanding that the purpose of life, in the main, is the pursuit of happiness. This further suggests that the concept of leadership is about making people happy. One of the domains of making people happy is when people experience good governance, especially in the delivery of services by the public service. We have recently seen how people make their feelings known whenever there are deficiencies on the good governance infrastructure.

Various works, theories and philosophies on the concept of leadership are in agreement on the understanding that leadership is about making the world a better place for other people. Human history presents great men and women who sacrificed their lives in making the world a better place for others. Their altruism informed some of the

ideologies and political philosophies that guided the liberation movements on the African continent. Africa shares with the global community some of its finest leaders who left an enduring legacy for humanity, as these leaders taught humanity, all over the world, the lessons of what it means to be human. This observation assists with the understanding that leadership, in some situations, is not only about the positions that people occupy. This article further asserts that leadership is also about making the world a better place for others and making a difference in the lives of others at any level of the organisation or of human functioning.<sup>5</sup> Such commitments are often informed by the cultures of the societies in question. Furthermore, this article is of the view that the public service challenges of today require men and women who are committed to the cause of bringing about improvements in the lives of people through the delivery of public value. This is the kind of commitment that resonates with African philosophies and cultures as in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. This suggests that the public generally would like to see a show of *Ubuntu* in public officials as they discharge their responsibilities in the public service.

Leadership is further defined as having to do with the behaviours that others notice and the behaviours in the handling of relationships with other people. This dimension on the discourse on leadership relates to another branch of philosophy called ethics. Ethics is the philosophical study of human behaviour. It has to be borne in mind that the behaviours of some of the politicians

and public officials have, in the recent past, been raised as points of bother and concern in the public service. Societies in the world socialise their people into what is regarded as acceptable behaviours through enculturation. This further suggests that leadership development, in general, and in the public service, in particular, is possible through enculturation processes into the desired state of morality.<sup>6</sup>

The focus of leadership development, especially in the public service in the recent past, has been on character development, especially in keeping with the growing discourse on the public servant of the future. A premium and accent are placed on the imperative of men and women of character as the public service cadres of the future. It is expected that much of the raw material in these interventions will be drawn from a society's culture. This further suggests that culture does form the basis for an epistemological project for knowledge production, transfer and dissemination. This gives credence to the claim by Nigerian philosopher Theophilus Okere that philosophy is, by its very nature, a product of culture, and that as it were, it has to be understood in the context of the culture from which it issues. This inevitably is also found to be applicable to the leadership and good governance interventions in the public service, as it is expected that they talk to the African reality.<sup>7</sup>

On the frontier of good governance, leading commentators in this discipline are in agreement on the understanding that it is all about ensuring that we get the right people

to do the right jobs, with good processes and accountable leadership. The history of African social and political systems or philosophies tells us that African communities, in the past, had their own vernacular systems of governance that ensured that there was accountability, and that some of these systems are still in practice, presenting lessons for today's governance activities and processes in the public service. Today, the government of Rwanda continues to apply the age-old practices of the *Umuganda*. The *Umuganda* is a mandatory community service that ensures citizen participation and accountability on the part of public officials in the delivery of public goods and public value. This traditional practice, borne of the Rwandese traditional past, is being used as a post-colonial public works programme and also as a platform of community participation.<sup>8</sup> Through this cultural practice of the *Umuganda*, communities are socialised into the responsibility of contributing to community development and environmental responsibility. As it were, the community gets to join forces with the government, and the public officials also get to account for the deployment and utilisation of resources. The relevance of these systems is a subject of intense debate among academics, revolutionaries, philosophers and leaders in West Africa, and further afield on the African continent. The councils of elders, for instance, in some traditional African communities, were and are still viewed as the centrepiece of African governance whose approaches and models present a potential for the strengthening of the delivery of Africa's democratic promises.<sup>9</sup>

## **AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

As stated in the introduction to this article, African philosophy can provide an epistemological basis for leadership development and good governance in the public service. This article intends to steer clear of the patronising discourse as to whether an African philosophy exists or not. A philosophical take on the concept of philosophy tells us that philosophy is about thinking or a pursuit of wisdom. If philosophy is about thinking, then, philosophy is when who thinks about what? All people on earth think and have their own worldviews and respond in their own ways as to how their lot can be improved. The African philosophy project, as seen by Odera Oruka, is identified and divided into four trends: ethnophilosophy, nationalistic-ideological philosophy, professional philosophy and philosophic sagacity.

### **Ethnophilosophy**

The philosophers that emerged on the plains of ethnophilosophy in African philosophy, such as Placide Tempels, Leopold Sedar Senghor and John Mbiti, described the worldviews and thought systems of particular communities as philosophy. This article does not have a problem with this position, as most philosophical traditions across the world are born of this process. In terms of this approach, communities all over the world have a way, sometimes through their cultures, of communally agreeing on what constitutes public value to them. They have a way of agreeing on what they regard as good for society and also what they regard

as morally desirable to them. This also comes across as the project of other philosophical traditions in other parts of the world.<sup>10</sup> In communities, with strict cultural systems, you often come across very strong and solid governance systems. A detour into Botswana presents us with a country with a very strong culture with a globally acknowledged governance system. The observance of the rule of law in Botswana draws heavily on the culture of the Batswana people. The South African public service is crying out for a very solid and strong governance system. In terms of the theory of the scope of leadership, culture comes across as one of the frontiers of leadership development. Culture plays a significant role in leadership development, especially in character development.

Leadership development, as the anatomy of leadership theory would have it, entails the development of both character and competence. This further suggests that cultural virtues such as care, respect, humility, sympathy and considerateness can be built into the character development project for leadership development in the public service. This further suggests that African philosophy can be of service in the leadership development initiatives in the public service. The members of the public tend to evaluate public servants in the context of the officials' respect for the communities they serve. It is therefore important for the public servants of the future to have knowledge of the worldviews or philosophies of the communities they serve and what constitutes public value for the communities they serve.

Okere, in his African philosophy and the hermeneutics of culture, avers that philosophy is developed out of culture, and has to be interpreted and understood in a particular community's context. This has been the case in the evolution of philosophical traditions in other parts of the world.<sup>11</sup> The Black Consciousness philosophy in South Africa calls for the understanding of one's history, culture and humanity for the completion of the psychological liberation project. This kind of understanding is also required in the discourse in public administration. This is the understanding that is found to be important for the leadership project in the public service, especially when it comes to the handling of relationships. Public servants and politicians are expected to show respect and *Ubuntu* when interacting with members of the public.

The other area of African culture is that of music as in song and dance. It is through music that the African people can, in terms of existential nomenclature, mobilise for challenges to the world of negation. They have always affirmed their being, as a way of restoring their dignity and articulation of what constitutes public value, through music. Song and dance have always been very important rituals for morale during the wars of liberation against the colonial project. The relevance of this discussion for the universe of the public service is that whenever the communities are not happy with the handling of the delivery of public goods, they articulate their displeasure through song and dance during service delivery protests. As the epistemological project is

geared at understanding, it is important that these songs and dances are interpreted with a view to understanding the thinking of the clientele communities and understanding as an epistemological project for the academic community focusing on the universe of Public Administration.

### **Nationalistic-Ideological Philosophy**

The nationalistic-ideological philosophy traces its origins and evolution to the founding fathers of the liberation movements on the African continent. This is with reference to great leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko and others in their league who presented models of leadership worthy of emulation in the public service. Their contributions, as reflected in their writings, provide an epistemological base for further discourse in public leadership and narrative development. Political philosophies were developed and political parties were formed in response to life-denying or life-negating social and political systems. The Black Consciousness philosophy, for instance, calls for an informed understanding of the universe of the black people in South Africa, as they happen to be the majority populace that receives services from the public sector. Even after the onset of the democratic dispensation in South Africa, there are instances where, when the majority happen to be black people, they receive sub-standard services from some of the public officials simply because they are black, as though poor standards are reserved for black people. This frontier

of African philosophy also has its share of leadership practices that are not worthy of emulating. This is with reference to the trends of life-presidents, dictatorships and other undesirable behaviours that lead to a compromise of the prospects and promise of good governance in the public service.<sup>12</sup>

Today, there is a trend to form political parties in response to the dearth of leadership and weaknesses in the governance systems in the public service. There is a trend to forming breakaway political parties, as some people within some of the political parties believe that the existing ideologies have become moribund for today's socio-economic and political realities. With the reality of the mutation of political ideologies, there is a need for the understanding of the emerging political philosophies, theories and narratives, more especially in the universe of Public Administration. This is an invitation to reflect on the relevance of some of the ancient political and governance systems for the public service, as some of these systems are still in place in the social and political practices of African communities in their micro spaces. The concepts of consultation and consensus are still highly prized and respected in traditional African communities.

### **Professional Philosophy**

The professional philosophy frontier in African philosophy, led by professionally trained students and teachers of philosophy such as Kwasi Wiredu, Paulin Hountondji and Peter Bodunrin, rejected the ethnophilosophy



approach as too anachronistic for epistemology. This approach in African philosophy postulates the adoption of universal approaches towards the understanding of reality and, of course, for the purpose of this article, a universal approach towards understanding of emerging realities in the universe of Public Administration. This article agrees with this approach as well, especially in the area of public management ethics. The basic principles of ethics, good governance and leadership are found to be universal and present in cultural, social and political systems across the world.<sup>13</sup>

The first principle of ethics and leadership is that of the value of life. For leadership development in the public service, the public servants of the future have to demonstrate their sensitivity to the value that they attach to the lives of the people that they serve. Every public servant across the world is expected to show respect and appreciation of the people they are tasked to serve. There are lessons that can also be learnt from African philosophy about the value of the community of life. African communities have, in many instances, taught the world what it means to be human, despite challenges with the resources that they need to bring about improvements in their lives. Traditional African communities have an incredible capacity to take care of their own people, as in people providing great project leadership when making preparations for ceremonies or funerals, where we come across interesting leadership and governance. The public service world can learn a lot from these communities, with a view to heralding a caring

public service. The other universal principle of ethics is that of justice and fairness. There definitely is a need for justice and fairness in governance systems in the public service. There have been, in the recent past, complaints of preferential treatment and bias in the public service especially when it comes to the procurement of goods and services, as there is a persistent belief that only the connected stand to benefit.<sup>14</sup>

### **Philosophic Sagacity**

The philosophic sagacity approach was pioneered by Odera Oruka, as he went about his project of trying to preserve the philosophical thoughts of traditional Kenyan sages. The philosophic sagacity approach is predicated on the understanding that in both the traditional and modern Africa, there exists both literate and illiterate men and women who commonly engage in philosophic reflection on various problems of human life and nature in general. Most of these people are, today, found to be providing leadership in the organs of civil society, raising issues, especially on the handling of the delivery of services to the public. In leadership parlance, it is said that these are the people who are providing leadership from below. For the purpose of this article, this is an acknowledgement that there exists leadership capacity in the communities to whom services are rendered by the public service. This observation comes across as very important for the participatory leadership imperative in the course of the delivery of services to the public. Such people often have a very good knowledge of the communities and the

problems that these communities face and have very good ideas as to how the problems in question can be overcome. They can be a great resource if brought into harness as partners in the delivery of services to the public. As it is, participatory leadership is found to be very important in the delivery of services to the public.<sup>15</sup>

## **AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE PUBLIC LEADERSHIP NARRATIVE**

From the foregoing discourse, it is evident that African philosophy is providing an epistemological horizon for the construction of narratives for public leadership and good governance. It is evident that the various frontiers of African philosophy can be of assistance in the theory development project for the construction of the public service of the future. African culture pervades the African people's concepts of ontology and cosmology about their universe. Avoidance or exclusion of culture in the theory-building process can easily render the theory in question irrelevant. Leadership theories that are meant to talk to the African reality have to tap into the resources provided by African cultures. Communities generally prefer to be served by respectful men and women of character and who are competent in their tasks. Character development, as it were, also has to be informed by the impulses of the cultures of the communities in question. Great African leaders have blazed the trail to be followed as a legacy also for leadership in the public service. Their legacy can be woven into the tapestry of the evolving public service leadership and

good governance paradigms. The professional philosophy frontier in African philosophy has a case in arguing for an African epistemological project that is in step with other global trends with their emphasis on universalism.<sup>16</sup> This argument can easily be extended to the universe of leadership and good governance in the public service. No longer should we be having cases of leadership failure justified on the grounds of their being uniquely African. African philosophy, whether cultural, epistemology, ethical or socio-political, does bear the attributes of universality. Africa can march into the future with other fellow travellers in the community of scholarship. This further suggests that even on the leadership and good governance fronts, with commitment, Africa, in general, and South Africa, in particular, can measure up to the pedigree in the global community of nations.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this article is of the view that African philosophy can be of service in the process of developing theories for leadership and good governance in the public service, for the creation of the public servant and the public service of the future. From the foregoing discussions, it is evident that the African epistemological project is not completely anchored in the anachronism of traditionalism, as demonstrated in the discussion on professional philosophy and its embrace of the open systems paradigm. The South African public service can learn a great deal from contributions of African philosophy, especially the works that comment on social reality, and in keeping with the position of the professional

philosophy frontier, the South African public service can also learn from the best practices in the industries from other parts of the world. Discourse and conversations on

African philosophy and the South African public service cannot proceed in isolation from the epistemological agenda in other parts of the world.

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**Manamela David Johannes Matshabaphala** is a Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Governance, Johannesburg. He was the Regional Chairperson of the SADC Leadership Academy – Leadership Regional Network Programme – for capacity building initiatives in the rural areas of Limpopo and the SADC region. He taught at various universities. The focus of his scholarship is largely in the following areas: leadership, project management and strategic management.

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# MARTIN AND MANDELA: TWO LEADERS, TWO CONTINENTS AND A SINGULAR GOAL

Leland Ware  
University of Delaware

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## ABSTRACT

The civil rights and anti-apartheid movements produced two iconic leaders, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. Both leaders confronted white supremacist regimes with no resources beyond the volunteers who participated in organised protests. They ultimately prevailed against tremendous odds. Segregation and apartheid shared a common purpose. They rigidly controlled each country's black population. Laws and practices determined where blacks could reside, where they could work and where they could attend schools. Under apartheid, every South African was classified into one of three racial groups: white, coloured and black. Blacks could not own property in 80 percent of South Africa's land area. Racial segregation was enforced in all public areas including buildings, services and transportation.

In America's southern states, schools, restaurants, hotels, theatres, public transportation and waiting rooms were segregated, as were elevators, parks, public restrooms, hospitals, drinking fountains, prisons and places

of worship. In the northern states, many restaurants, theatres and hotels would not serve black patrons. Segregated neighbourhoods were perpetuated by the real estate industry. Blacks were confined to occupations such as maids, cooks, chauffeurs, porters and labourers.

This article examines the ways in which segregation and apartheid were fought with marches, boycotts and demonstrations and, in the case of South Africa, armed resistance. King and Mandela took courageous stands against unjust laws. Mandela was banned by the South African government and subsequently imprisoned for 27 years. King gave his life to the struggle when he was assassinated in 1968. Despite the many obstacles, both leaders were able to lead the decades-long struggle to end segregation and apartheid. The Civil Rights Movement in America culminated with the federal legislation of the 1960s. South African apartheid lasted for a generation longer, ending in 1994 with the election of Nelson Mandela as president. In both countries, justice eventually prevailed. "[T]he arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice".

## INTRODUCTION

The civil rights and anti-apartheid movements produced two iconic leaders, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. Both leaders confronted white supremacist regimes with virtually no resources beyond the volunteers who participated in organised protests. They ultimately prevailed against tremendous odds. From 1910, when the Union of South Africa was established, until 1994, black South Africans endured a system of racial exclusion and oppression. The constraints were tightened in the 1940s and '50s when the South African government implemented apartheid. In America, from 1896 until 1968, blacks experienced similar forms of discrimination under laws and practices that enforced racial segregation.

Segregation and apartheid shared a common purpose. They rigidly controlled each country's black population. Laws and practices determined where blacks could reside, where they could work and where they could attend schools. Parks, restaurants, hotels, public buildings and transportation were divided by race. In South Africa, the intent was to have a large supply of cheap labour residing near the gold and diamond mines. South African blacks could also serve as maids, cooks, drivers and in other low-level occupations. Apartheid envisioned a servile black population that would be dependent on whites for all of its needs.

In America's southern states, schools, restaurants, hotels, theatres, public transportation and waiting rooms were segregated, as were

elevators, parks, public restrooms, hospitals, drinking fountains, prisons and places of worship. In the northern states, many restaurants, theatres and hotels would not serve black patrons. Segregated neighbourhoods were perpetuated by the real estate industry. Blacks were confined to occupations such as maids, cooks, chauffeurs, porters and labourers. As was the case in South Africa, blacks were expected to be deferential and subservient. An obsequious "yes sir" or "no ma'am" were the ways blacks were required to address whites in the American South; "yes baas" was the South African equivalent.

Under apartheid, every South African was classified into one of three racial groups: white, coloured and black. Blacks could not own property in 80 percent of South Africa's land area. Apartheid was enforced in all public areas including buildings, services and transportation. Urban communities were divided into "group areas" in which residence was restricted to designated racial groups. South African blacks were prohibited from working in any occupation except those designated for blacks. Laws enforced racially separated schools. A law created ten black "homelands" as independent states. The citizenship of millions of black South Africans was revoked and they were required to carry passbooks to enter white areas. The system was all-encompassing.

This article compares segregation in America to apartheid in South Africa. It examines the ways in which segregation and apartheid were fought with marches, boycotts and demonstrations and, in the case of South

Africa, armed resistance. Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela took courageous stands against unjust laws. Mandela was "banned" by the South African government and was subsequently imprisoned for 27 years. King gave his life to the struggle when he was assassinated in 1968. Despite formidable obstacles, both leaders were able to lead the struggle to end segregation and apartheid. The Civil Rights Movement in America culminated with the anti-discrimination legislation of the 1960s. South African apartheid lasted for a generation longer, ending in 1994 with the election of Nelson Mandela as president. "[T]he arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."<sup>1</sup>

## SEGREGATION IN AMERICA

Martin Luther King, Jr was born on 15 January 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1944, King graduated from Booker T. Washington High School and was admitted to Morehouse College at the age of 15. After graduating from college, he entered Crozer Theological Seminary in Upland, Pennsylvania. King was ordained as a Baptist minister on 25 February 1948, when he was 19 years old. In 1951, King entered Boston University. He received a PhD in Theology from that institution on 5 June 1955. King married Coretta Scott and settled in Montgomery, Alabama, where he became the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

In the 1950s, segregation was a deeply entrenched American institution. The system was officially sanctioned by the 1896 decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*<sup>2</sup>, which held that

segregation did not violate the Constitution if the separate facilities provided for blacks were equal to those reserved for whites. After *Plessy*, a regime of white supremacy was imposed. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments<sup>3</sup> of the United States Constitution were essentially nullified in the South. African Americans were disenfranchised, confined to substandard housing in segregated neighbourhoods and excluded from all but the lowest paying, least desirable occupations. They were always separate, but never equal.<sup>4</sup>

Whites and blacks were born in separate hospitals, educated in separate schools and buried in segregated graveyards. Segregation was codified in state and local laws and enforced by intimidation and violence. There were, in effect, two criminal justice systems: one for whites and another for blacks. When the colour line was breached, violence was unleashed against offenders by the Ku Klux Klan and local whites, often in concert with local law enforcement officials. Lynching and other forms of racial violence and intimidation were routine.<sup>5</sup>

In the North many theatres, restaurants, places of entertainment and public accommodations barred black patrons. Segregated neighbourhoods were enforced by racially restrictive covenants. The covenants were clauses in deeds that prevented property owners and subsequent purchasers from selling their homes to racial and religious minorities. When northern cities began to industrialise at the beginning of the twentieth century, thousands of African-American

families migrated from the rural South to cities in the Northeast and Midwest. Local ordinances were enacted that prohibited African Americans from occupying properties except in black neighbourhoods.

The ordinances were challenged and declared unconstitutional in a 1917 decision, *Buchanan v. Warley*.<sup>6</sup> After *Buchanan*, the real estate industry resorted to racially restrictive covenants. The Supreme Court implicitly endorsed the covenants in a 1926 decision, *Corrigan v. Buckley*.<sup>7</sup> The Fourteenth Amendment applies only to "state action", which consists of actions taken by the state and local governments. The covenants, however, were private agreements.

During the post-World War II era of the 1940s and '50s, suburban communities were developed in areas adjacent to cities. For most Americans, home ownership was made possible for the first time by the introduction of fixed-rate, 30-year mortgages insured by the Veterans Administration and Federal Housing Authority. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a federal agency established during the 1930s depression, fostered discriminatory practices through "redlining".<sup>8</sup>

The HOLC rated every neighbourhood in America "A", "B", "C" or "D", using colour coded maps. The lowest quality rating, "D", was coloured red. Neighbourhoods rated "A" had to be homogenous and occupied by whites. Neighbourhoods in which blacks resided were rated "D". The neighbourhood's boundaries were marked by a red line. The

federal government required racially restrictive covenants on loans it insured. This barred African Americans from suburban communities in which most of the homes were purchased with federally-insured mortgages.<sup>9</sup>

## **THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Martin Luther King's career as a civil rights leader began in 1955 and ended thirteen years later with his assassination in 1968. During this relatively short period of time, America underwent a profound change. Beginning in the mid-1930s, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) challenged segregation with court cases that culminated with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.<sup>10</sup> That case effectively reversed *Plessy* and held that racial segregation in public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution.

After *Brown*, the Civil Rights Movement went from the courts to the streets. On 1 December 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested after refusing to yield her seat to a white passenger.<sup>11</sup> A few days later, the Montgomery Improvement Association was organised by local black leaders. Martin Luther King, who was just 26 years old at the time, was elected president. After a tense year, in which car-pools were organised and weekly prayer meetings held, in November of 1956 the US Supreme Court ruled that segregation on public transportation was unconstitutional, ensuring victory for the bus boycott.<sup>12</sup>

In 1960, lunch counter sit-ins began in Greensboro, North Carolina, and rapidly spread across the South. In Atlanta, King was arrested during a sit-in, as he waited to be served at a segregated restaurant. He was sentenced to four months in jail, but after intervention by John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, he was released.

In 1963, King launched the Birmingham campaign.<sup>13</sup> The effort started with a boycott and switched to nonviolent marches and sit-ins. Eugene "Bull" Connor, Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety, ordered police officers to use high-pressure water hoses, police dogs and tear gas to control protesters, many of whom were children. The extreme brutality inflicted on protestors was featured on nightly newscasts that shocked the nation. King was arrested. During his incarceration he wrote the *Letter from Birmingham Jail* in which he argued that individuals have "a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws."<sup>14</sup> After weeks of tense negotiations, an agreement was reached that provided for the desegregation of Birmingham's stores, restaurants and schools.

The historic March on Washington was held on 28 August 1963.<sup>15</sup> It was the result of the collective efforts of several civil rights groups. The march was the largest civil rights demonstration in American history. It received international attention. Approximately 250 000 people gathered peacefully on the Mall in Washington, DC. King was an inspirational speaker. He used the black preachers' "call-and-response style" driven by rhythmic cadences. King captivated the

audience and the nation with his "I have a dream" speech in which he articulated his vision of a just and egalitarian society.<sup>16</sup> The speech catapulted him to international acclaim. On 3 January 1964, King's image appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine as its "Man of the Year". On 10 December, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which made him, at the age of 35, the youngest person to be awarded the honour.

In the summer of that year, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted.<sup>17</sup> The major provisions of this landmark legislation are: Title II, which outlawed discrimination in hotels, motels, restaurants, theatres, and other public accommodations; Title VI, which authorised the withdrawal of federal funds from programmes, including public schools, which practised discrimination; and Title VII, which prohibits discrimination in employment and created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to review and investigate complaints.<sup>18</sup>

This was a major accomplishment that met several of the legislative goals of the Civil Rights Movement. The denial of access to places of public accommodation stigmatised and demeaned African Americans. The threat of the loss of federal funding made discrimination in schools, colleges and universities too costly to continue. This dramatically expanded the educational opportunities available to blacks. Discrimination in employment relegated African Americans to the lowest paying, least desirable occupations. The law forbade employment discrimination.



The 1964 Civil Rights Act did not address voting rights. The Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution guaranteed African Americans the right to vote. However, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, almost all of the southern states had enacted laws that disenfranchised African Americans. The Selma, Alabama, voting rights demonstrations were publicised in January of 1965, when Martin Luther King addressed a mass meeting in that city. Members of a civil rights group, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, had been attempting to register voters in Selma for several weeks.<sup>19</sup>

During their first march, the protestors were stopped by police officers who savagely attacked them with billy clubs and tear gas. After a second march was aborted, King led a group of demonstrators on a journey from Selma to Montgomery. They set out on 21 March with approximately 3 000 demonstrators. Four days later they reached Montgomery with 25 000 marchers. This effort spurred Congress to enact the Voting Rights Act, which President Lyndon Johnson signed into law on 6 August 1965.<sup>20</sup> The Act prohibits states from imposing any requirement that would deny the right of any citizen to vote on account of race. This was another significant accomplishment of the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1967, African Americans' frustrations and impatience erupted in 159 race riots in cities across the United States.<sup>21</sup> The first occurred in Cleveland, Ohio. The most destructive violence took place in Newark, New Jersey, and Detroit, Michigan. In Newark, 26 people

were killed and 1 500 injured. The riots reflected the anger and frustration that had been building for decades. Northern ghettos had long been tinderboxes waiting to explode.

In 1967, Dr King announced his intent to organise a Poor People's Campaign that would focus on unemployment and poverty. As plans were being finalised, King travelled to Memphis, Tennessee, to support striking sanitation workers. In March of 1968, King led a demonstration in Memphis that went out of control and turned violent. Disappointed but undeterred, King returned to Memphis. On 3 April, he delivered a powerful, and what would be his final, speech. Appearing to anticipate his death, King said:

I got into Memphis. And some began to say the threats, or talk about the threats that were out... But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, *that we, as a people*, will get to the Promised Land!<sup>22</sup>

On 4 April, King was fatally shot by an assassin while standing on a balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. Riots erupted in 130 American cities; 20 000 people were arrested. Washington, Baltimore and

Chicago were the heaviest hit among the cities that experienced unrest following King's assassination.<sup>23</sup> While many of the nation's cities were still smouldering from the riots, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 was enacted.<sup>24</sup> This law forbade discrimination in the sale and rental of housing and allowed blacks to move away from the ghettos to which they had been confined. With the passage of the Fair Housing Act, the Civil Rights Movement's legislative agenda was achieved. By the time of his death, King had become an international Civil Rights icon. In 1983, a law was enacted that made his birthday a federal holiday. "The Stone of Hope" memorial, featuring a statue of King, was opened to the public in Washington DC, on 22 August 2011.

## **SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID**

The careers of Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela bear a striking resemblance. Both men were internationally renowned leaders in the struggle against black oppression. Mandela organised rallies and protests in the 1950s. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964. He was imprisoned until 1990. After his release, he was elected the first black president of South Africa in 1994. Over the course of these years, South Africa transitioned from a white ruled oligarchy to an egalitarian democracy.

On 18 July 1918, Rolihlahla Mandela was born in Mvezo, a small village in the Transkei, a former British protectorate in the South. His father, Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa, was a chief of the Thembu people, a subdivision

of the Xhosa nation, and counsellor to the monarch. When Nelson Mandela's father died in 1930, the paramount chief, Jongintaba Dalindyebo, became his guardian. Mandela grew up with his two sisters in the village of Qunu. He attended Clarkebury Missionary school and graduated from Healdtown Methodist school. The name Nelson was given to him by a school teacher when he was seven years old.<sup>25</sup>

In 1938, Mandela enrolled at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa's first university for black Africans. At Fort Hare Mandela met Oliver Tambo, who would become his close friend and law partner. Mandela and Tambo were expelled from Fort Hare in 1940 for leading a student protest. Mandela subsequently moved to Johannesburg to avoid being forced into an arranged marriage. He found work as a night-watchman at a gold mine.<sup>26</sup>

In Johannesburg, Mandela met Walter Sisulu, who became his close friend. He began to work as a clerk in a law firm. In 1941, Mandela completed the work for his bachelor's degree and began to study law at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. In 1944, Mandela married Evelyn Ntoko Mase, Walter Sisulu's cousin. The marriage produced four children. Over time, however, Mandela's frequent absences and heavy involvement in protest activities strained their relationship to breaking point. The couple divorced in 1958.<sup>27</sup>

Nelson Mandela was born into a society in which black Africans were severely

oppressed.<sup>28</sup> Apartheid in South Africa was, in some ways, even harsher than segregation in America.<sup>29</sup> In 1910, the Union of South Africa was established by former British colonies of the Cape and Natal and the Boer republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State. The 1911 *Mines and Works Act*, and its 1926 successor reserved skilled jobs in the mining and railway industries for white workers. In 1913, the *Land Act* was adopted to prevent blacks, except those living in the Cape Province, from buying land outside of designated areas. The law effectively limited black land ownership to 8 percent of South Africa's land area.

The *Natives Act* of 1923 regulated blacks residing in urban areas. It gave local authorities the power to establish separate black areas on the outskirts of urban and industrial areas. Local authorities were expected to provide housing for Africans or to require employers to provide housing for their workers. In 1934, South Africa's parliament enacted the *Status of the Union Act*, which ended its colonial ties with England and established South Africa as a sovereign nation.<sup>30</sup>

In 1948, the formal policy of apartheid was adopted after the National Party prevailed in the elections. The National Party was founded in 1915 and was South Africa's governing party from 1948 until 1994. The Party's supporters included most of the Dutch-descended Afrikaners and many English-speaking whites. This ultra-right wing party rose to power on a platform of "apartheid" which is Afrikaans for "separateness".

Over the following decades a series of apartheid laws were enacted. Black citizenship was revoked. Education, residential areas, medical care and common areas, public transportation, beaches and other amenities were segregated.<sup>31</sup>

The *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* of 1949 forbade interracial marriages. The *Immorality Amendment Act* of 1950 forbade extramarital sex among people of different races. The *Population Registration Act* enacted in 1950 required every South African to be classified into one of three racial groups: white, coloured (mixed race or Asian) and Bantu or native (African/black). In 1950, the *Group Areas Act* segregated blacks and whites. Urban areas were divided into "group areas" in which residence was restricted to designated racial groups.

The 1951 *Bantu Building Workers Act* prevented black South Africans from performing skilled work in any occupation except those designated for blacks. In 1952, the *Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act* required black South Africans to carry identification that included a photograph, place of origin, employment record, tax payments and any arrest records. The 1953 *Bantu Education Act* established a black Education Department. This law enforced racially separated educational facilities. A curriculum was developed that was designed to prevent blacks from receiving higher levels of instruction. A 1959 law prohibited black students from attending white universities. The 1953 *Reservation*

of *Separate Amenities Act* imposed racial segregation in all public areas including buildings, services and transportation.

The 1951 *Bantu Authorities Act* created ten black "homelands" as independent states. It provided the legal basis for the deportation of blacks into designated homeland reserve areas and established tribal, regional and territorial authorities. The 1970 *Bantu Homelands Citizens Act* revoked black South Africans' citizenship and required them to become citizens of a homeland designated for each individual's ethnic group, even if they didn't actually live in their designated homeland. The purpose of the law was to ensure that white South Africans constituted the majority of the South African electorate.

## **THE ANC YOUTH LEAGUE AND THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN**

Nelson Mandela was an engaging speaker and a charismatic leader. He was tall and imposing, but he was always humble and modest. He gave credit to others and readily acknowledged their contributions. In 1944, Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu founded the Youth League of the African National Congress (ANC). The ANC had been established in 1912 to bring Africans together to defend their rights and freedoms. Leaders of the youth league felt the ANC's cautious approach moved too slowly. They decided to take a more active approach. In 1948, Mandela became national secretary of the ANC's Youth League. In 1950, he was elected president of the Youth League.

In December 1952, Mandela and Oliver Tambo opened South Africa's first black law firm in Johannesburg. That same year, the ANC commenced its "Defiance Campaign". The nonviolent tactics employed were similar to those Martin Luther King would use in the United States. The Defiance Campaign was the largest nonviolent protest in South Africa's history. It was the first demonstration that included all racial groups under the leadership of the ANC and the South African Indian Congress. On 26 June 1952, a group of volunteers led by Mandela and Sisulu openly defied South Africa's apartheid laws in Johannesburg and other cities. A national action committee was formed by Sisulu and Ismail "Maulvi" Cachalia. Mandela was the leader of the effort.

During the many protest demonstrations, participants sang freedom songs and gave the ANC's thumbs-up sign as a symbol of unity. They shouted *Mayibuye i Afrika* (come back, Africa) and were greeted with cheers from onlookers. A total of 52 Africans and Indians, including Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela and Ismail Cachalia, marched into Boksburg, a location near Johannesburg, without permits. All of the demonstrators were arrested, except Mandela and Cachalia who attended as observers, having planned to avoid arrest.

In Port Elizabeth, 30 people entered a railway station through the "Europeans Only" entrance and were arrested. Others were arrested for entering the European sections of post offices, sitting on benches reserved for whites or violating other apartheid

regulations. The campaign spread from Port Elizabeth to smaller towns in the Eastern Cape Province and from Johannesburg to Cape Town, to Bloemfontein and Durban.

The government reacted by arresting the leaders of the protests. A number of them were charged with violating the *Suppression of Communism Act* for promoting communism. The trial began in November and, on 2 December 1952, all of the 20 persons charged were found guilty of "statutory communism" and sentenced to nine months imprisonment. The sentences were suspended for two years.

Mandela was banned under the *Suppression of Communism Act*. Banning in South Africa was an administrative action in which individuals could be subjected to severe restrictions on their travel, associations and speech. A person deemed to be a communist, a terrorist or a threat to the security and public order of the state could be confined to the individual's home or immediate surroundings.

At a 1955 meeting of the Congress of the People, the Freedom Charter was adopted. The government's ban on Mandela prevented him from attending. The initiative for the Freedom Charter was developed by a multi-racial coalition of organisations, including the ANC, the Congress of Democrats, the Indian National Congress and the South African Coloured People's Congress. The Freedom Charter was intended to facilitate a united, anti-apartheid movement with a common vision. It was adopted by

approximately 3 000 delegates at the Congress of the People in Kliptown, near Johannesburg, on 26 June 1955.

The Charter was the product of more than a year of meetings and discussions that were convened with groups across South Africa. It envisioned an egalitarian society that would replace the apartheid regime. In a reformed South Africa, the wealth of the country would be shared and adequate housing, education and healthcare would be provided for all South Africans. The Freedom Charter states that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it" and that "all shall be equal before the law". It promised to continue the struggle against apartheid until it was replaced by a democratic order.<sup>32</sup>

On 6 December 1956, Mandela was arrested and charged with treason, along with 156 other political leaders. The arrests included most of the executives of the ANC, as well as representatives of the Congress of Democrats, South African Indian Congress, Coloured People's Congress and South African Congress of Trade Unions. The persons arrested were charged with "high treason and a countrywide conspiracy to use violence to overthrow the present government and replace it with a communist state". While the charges were pending, Mandela met and married a social worker, Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela, in 1958. Their marriage produced two daughters.

On 29 March 1961, Mandela and his co-defendants were acquitted after a four-year trial. However, in 1960, the Sharpeville

demonstrations were organised to protest laws that required black South Africans to carry passbooks with them whenever they travelled out of their home areas. The ANC planned an anti-pass campaign that would have commenced on 31 March 1960. The Pan Africanist Congress, a younger and more militant group that broke away from the ANC, organised a campaign that was scheduled to start 10 days before the ANC's demonstration.

On 21 March, a demonstration involving 5 000 to 7 000 people convened in Sharpeville. The protesters went to the local police station where they demanded to be arrested for not carrying passes. Police reinforcements arrived during the incident. In the afternoon, scuffles broke out and some of the demonstrators began throwing rocks at the police. As the crowd moved forward, the police began to fire live rounds into the crowd. A total of 69 people were killed, 180 were injured. The "Sharpeville Massacre", as the incident became known, sparked protests and riots among black South Africans throughout the country. On 30 March, the South African government declared a state of emergency. Thousands of blacks were arrested. The African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress were banned.<sup>33</sup>

## **FREEDOM FIGHTER**

After the ANC was outlawed, Mandela decided to go underground to carry on the organisation's activities clandestinely. For 17 months, he was a fugitive. During this period, the South African press referred to Mandela

as "The Black Pimpernel" based on his ability to avoid the police, using several disguises, including a favourite that involved posing as a chauffeur.<sup>34</sup>

Mandela travelled to Addis Abba, Ethiopia, to attend a conference of African nationalist leaders. From there, he went to Algeria to receive guerrilla training. Afterwards, he went to London to meet with Oliver Tambo, who was heading the ANC in exile. During this period, Mandela established the ANC's military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (abbreviated as "MK" and translated as "Spear of the Nation") and became its first leader. Mandela viewed nonviolent protest as a tactic to be used only as long as it was effective. The circumstances had changed. Violence had to be met with violence. Mandela became a freedom fighter.

MK engaged in acts of sabotage including bombing military installations, power plants, telephone lines and transportation links at night, when civilians were not present. Mandela said they chose sabotage, because it was the least harmful action and it did not involve loss of life. MK set off 57 bombings on 16 December, 1961. Additional attacks were launched on 31 December. MK did not suspend its armed struggle until Mandela was unconditionally released from prison and the ANC was unbanned.

On 5 August 1962, Mandela was arrested after returning to South Africa. After a trial, Mandela was convicted of leaving the country illegally and incitement to strike. He was sentenced to five years in prison. On 11 July

1963, while Mandela was in prison, the police raided the ANC's secret headquarters at a farmhouse in Rivonia, a suburb of Johannesburg. They found documents that outlined "Operation Mayibuye", which was a plan for a possible commencement of guerilla operations stating how they might provoke a mass armed uprising against the South African government. Operation Mayibuye was drafted by members of the National High Command. Mandela was imprisoned at the time and did not participate in drafting the document. He later described Operation Mayibuye as a "draft document" that he considered "entirely unrealistic in its goals and plans".

Mandela and other ANC leaders were charged with recruiting persons for training in the use of explosives and in guerrilla warfare for the purpose of violent revolution and committing acts of sabotage; conspiring to commit those acts and to aid foreign military units when they invaded the Republic; acting in these ways to further the objects of communism and soliciting and receiving money from sympathisers outside South Africa.

At the conclusion of the trial, Mandela said:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.

It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

On 12 June 1964, Mandela, Sisulu and six other ANC leaders were convicted, sentenced to life imprisonment and taken to Robben Island prison.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Soweto Uprising and the "Free Mandela" Campaign**

On 16 June 1976, thousands of school students marched through the streets of Soweto, an area in the city of Johannesburg, to oppose a law requiring the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in black schools. The South African government decided to enforce a law requiring secondary education to be conducted in Afrikaans, rather than in English. This was bitterly resented by teachers and students. A protest march was organised in the Soweto township on 16 June 1976. Over 20 000 students turned out for the march. There was a heavy police presence.

The bloodshed began when police set off tear gas and fired guns into the crowds. Students of all ages were attacked without warning. Many young, defenceless children were killed including 13-year-old Hector Pieter-son. The students used sticks, rocks, bricks and schoolbags to attack the police. Heavily outnumbered, and unable to protect themselves from the students, the police fled to regroup. When the police retreated, students began destroying government property. The students set up barricades to make sure that

the police could not return. The riots spread to other South African townships.

The government reacted with force. Anti-riot units and armed vehicles were sent to Soweto and other townships. Government officials restricted the activities of anti-apartheid groups. Meetings were stopped and activists were harassed. After Soweto, however, an uprising or march would take place almost every day, often completely spontaneously. Young blacks expressed their anger by marching, rioting and setting fire to government property. In the end, over 360 blacks were killed in the Soweto riots of 1976. The government's heavy-handed tactics ignited a fire that would burn until the end of the apartheid regime.<sup>36</sup>

In the late 1960s, the ANC launched an international anti-apartheid campaign. Nelson Mandela became the personification of this effort. His photograph, with the caption "Free Mandela", appeared on flyers and literature that were widely distributed.<sup>37</sup> In the United Kingdom, the Anti-Apartheid Movement was established in 1959. The organisation led one of Britain's most successful social campaigns. The organisation started as the "Boycott Movement". In 1960, it was re-named the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM). The organisation sought an end to apartheid in South Africa. It demanded sanctions and the economic isolation of South Africa. For more than three decades, hundreds of thousands of people in Britain joined AAM campaigns. During that time, the Movement campaigned for the release of people detained without trial. It encouraged

banks and other British companies to sell their South African subsidiaries and led a national boycott of South African imports.<sup>38</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Anti-Apartheid Movement spread to America.<sup>39</sup> Supporters urged institutional investors to withdraw their investments from South African-based companies. Institutional investors, such as public pension funds, were the most susceptible to these types of lobbying efforts. The anti-apartheid disinvestment campaign moved to Michigan State University and Stanford University in 1977. The movement spread to campuses across the nation. Students organised and demanded that their universities stop investing in companies that traded with or had operations in South Africa.

On 21 November 1984, Randall Robinson, the founder of TransAfrica,<sup>40</sup> District of Columbia Congressman, Walter Fauntroy, and Professor and Civil Rights activist, Mary Frances Berry, were arrested at a sit-in at the South African embassy. This high profile event elevated the Anti-apartheid Movement to the national stage and ignited the Anti-apartheid Movement in the United States. Within a few days, sit-ins and other demonstrations against the South Africa government were held in cities across America.<sup>41</sup> By 1985, more than 3 000 people were arrested during anti-apartheid demonstrations.

The Congressional Black Caucus developed a legislative strategy that led to the enactment of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.<sup>42</sup> This law imposed sanctions



against South Africa and stated a number of preconditions for lifting the sanctions. The legislation banned all US trade and investment in South Africa. Direct flights to South Africa were banned. The act also required various federal departments and agencies to withhold funds and other assistance to the South African government. The Bill was passed in August of 1986. President Ronald Reagan vetoed the legislation on 26 September. Congress overrode Reagan's veto on 2 October.<sup>43</sup>

The international sanctions imposed significant pressure on South Africa's economy. The government finally recognised that some actions were needed to address the situation. On 31 January 1985, South Africa's President P.W. Botha offered to pardon Mandela if the ANC renounced violence. Mandela declined saying South Africa's government needed to dismantle apartheid and grant full political rights to blacks. In July of 1989, President Botha invited Mandela to his official Cape Town residence for a 45-minute talk. Mandela's comments on his conversation with Botha were broadcast on government radio and television stations.<sup>44</sup>

On 15 October 1989, Walter Sisulu and four other ANC prisoners were freed by F.W. de Klerk, who had replaced Botha as president in August. On 2 February 1990, De Klerk lifted the bans on the ANC and 60 other organisations that were outlawed. He promised to free all political prisoners, end restrictions on 374 individuals and to impose a moratorium on executions. On 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released. He was 71 years old.

On 20 December 1991, negotiations commenced to prepare an interim constitution based on political equality for all South Africans.<sup>45</sup> There were tense intervals during the negotiations. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, ANC supporters and the Inkatha Freedom Party were involved in several bloody clashes. The Inkatha Party was founded in 1975 by Mangosuthu Gatscha Buthelezi, a Zulu chief and minister of the KwaZulu homeland. Under Buthelezi's leadership, Inkatha indicated that it was willing to accept power-sharing arrangements that would fall short of majority rule in a post-apartheid South Africa. In 1991, the South African government admitted that it had secretly subsidised Inkatha's conflicts with the ANC.<sup>46</sup>

On 15 October 1993, Mandela and De Klerk were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for working to end apartheid and putting South Africa on a path to democracy. On 27 April 1994, the apartheid regime formally ended when the ANC won a majority of the vote and elected Mandela as president.

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established after the elimination of apartheid. Witnesses who were victims of human rights violations presented testimony about their experiences.<sup>47</sup> Police officers and other perpetrators of violence testified about their crimes and could request amnesty from civil and criminal prosecution. The Commission was viewed by many as an important aspect of the transition to democracy in South Africa. In 1996, Nelson divorced Winnie Mandela. In 1998, on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, he married Graça Machel. In May of 1999, Mandela stepped

down as President after choosing not to run for re-election. On 5 December 2013, Nelson Mandela died in his home at the age of 95, surrounded by his family.

## CONCLUSION

In the decades that followed the enactment of the American Civil Rights laws of the 1960s, the black middle-class has grown exponentially. Levels of educational attainment are higher. Employment opportunities are greater. Family incomes are higher. The election of Barack Obama as President, in 2008, represented an unprecedented advance in race relations in America. "However, an examination of the current status of African "American" families reveals a mixed picture". For those in a position to take advantage of the opportunities created by the Civil Rights revolution, the gains since the 1960s have been remarkable. For the 28.1 percent of the African-American population residing in the nation's impoverished communities, the obstacles to advancement can be as formidable today as they were a generation ago.<sup>48</sup> We have not, as a people, made it to the Promised Land, but some of us are close.

The number of families in South Africa's growing, black middle class has surpassed that of their white counterparts over the past

eight years. They are now seen as the driving force behind the country's economic growth. While the African government still has major challenges to overcome in its efforts to improve the lives of the nation's impoverished families, millions of black South Africans have advanced into the middle class since apartheid ended in 1994. Recently released studies by the University of Cape Town's Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing found that the black middle-class population had grown to 4.2 million.<sup>49</sup> This increased from 1.7 million in 2004.

There are still many challenges. The poorest 10 percent of South Africans receive less than 1 percent of the national income. The richest 10 percent get 57 percent. In South Africa, 67 percent of black children live below the poverty line compared to 2 percent of white children. The overall poverty rate is 23 percent.<sup>50</sup> However, the African National Congress has made significant strides since the end of apartheid. The economy has expanded for nearly two decades. Literacy and access to electricity have advanced considerably. An affordable housing programme and welfare payments to low income groups have elevated nearly all South Africans out of abject poverty. The nation is rapidly moving forward. Americans and South Africans owe a debt of gratitude to Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King.

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**Leland Ware** is Interim Director of the School of Public Policy & Administration; Louis L. Redding Chair and Professor for the Study of Law & Public Policy at the University of Delaware in the United States of America. He has been a Visiting Professor at Ruhr University, Bochum-Germany and Boston College of Law School. He is the author and editor of many books and journal articles.

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# THE TRANSFORMATION OF VIOLENCE TO PEACE: SKETCHES OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS THAT MATTER

Berhanu Mengistu and Stephanie J Menefee  
Old Dominion University

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## ABSTRACT

This article sketches the leadership skills and lifetime commitments to peacemaking of three individuals: Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. The choice of the personalities is based on the fact that they not only made a difference in the lives of communities and nations, but they also made contributions in the advancement of a field of academic study: conflict resolution and peacemaking. Based on the literature review we conducted, these three leaders appear to share Drucker's characterisation of effective leaders. A sketch for each is provided, which starts with a critical incident in the life of each that symbolises his leadership style. This is followed by a brief description of the transformative attributes they share, and concludes with a table depicting the meaning of the accomplishment of each.

## INTRODUCTION

The study of human history, in general, and the political-economy of nation states, in particular, is the study of leadership. Leadership literature is replete with theoretical

constructs and even empirical studies of what leadership is and ought to be and, as such, it is a challenge to write about it with any degree of originality. It is even difficult to avoid repeating clichés of leadership such as charisma, leadership traits, leadership personality, servant leadership, and so on. An additional challenge in writing about leadership is that it is often described and understood as observed behaviours, influenced, and maybe even determined, by cultural and personal experiences, which is limiting its transcultural and transorganisational values and lessons. While acknowledging these challenges, using Peter Drucker's<sup>1</sup> work on leadership as a guide, in this short article we will attempt to sketch the leadership skills and lifetime commitments to peacemaking of three individuals, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. These men not only made a difference in the lives of communities and nations, they also made contributions in the advancement of a field of academic study, conflict resolution and peacemaking.

Contextual and "limitless diversity" notwithstanding, Drucker asserts that the

effective leaders he observed shared seven characteristics. In this context, characteristic is defined as abilities and skills that one is able to develop. According to Drucker, effective leaders ask, "What needs to be done?" rather than "what do I want?" And then they ask, "What can and should I do to make a difference?" Other characteristics of effective leaders that Drucker observed include keen interest in understanding the organisation's mission, extreme tolerance of diversity in people and not looking "for carbon copies of themselves", trusting strength in their associates, passing the "mirror test" and finally, being "doers" rather than "preachers". Based on the literature review we conducted, the three leaders, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr and Nelson Mandela, appear to share Drucker's characteristics of effective leaders. They further share other narratives, including childhood experiences and transformative attributes that helped transform them personally and helped to shape future events in which they were involved.

As we wrote at the outset, and as is already widely known, the three men, Gandhi, King and Mandela, whom we have chosen to highlight below, are the embodiments of non-violent peacemaking in conflict situations. Gandhi saw non-violence as a path to achieving human dignity, King saw non-violence as a path toward recognition of an oppressed minority group, and Mandela saw non-violence as a path toward freedom for an oppressed majority. Each sketch will begin with a critical incident in the life of each man that symbolises his leadership style. This is followed by a brief description of the

transformative attributes the three leaders shared, and concludes with a table depicting the many accomplishments of each leader.

## **CRITICAL INCIDENTS SHAPING THE LIVES OF THREE LEADERS**

### **Mohandas Gandhi**

When Mohandas Gandhi was a child, he learned from his mother and from the Jain traditions of the region to be compassionate to any being able to perceive or feel things. He also learned of the importance of mutual tolerance between individuals with different beliefs or religions. And, as the story below depicts, Gandhi learned from his father the powerful effects of non-violence.

... When I was fifteen ... I stole a bit of gold out of my meat-eating brother's armllet. This brother had run into a debt of about twenty-five rupees. He had on his arm an armllet of solid gold. It was not difficult to clip a bit out of it. Well, it was done, and the debt cleared. But this became more than I could bear. I resolved never to steal again. I also made up my mind to confess it to my father ... I wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to him myself. In this note not only did I confess my guilt, but also I asked adequate punishment for it, and closed with a request to him not to punish himself for my offence ... [When he] read it through ... pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note... Those

pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart,  
and washed my sin away ... This was, for  
me, an object-lesson of Ahimsa.<sup>2</sup>

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, was born on 2 October 1869 in Porbander, Gujarat. He was sent to school as a child, and upon graduation decided to move to London to pursue a degree in law. After obtaining his degree, Gandhi was offered a position in South Africa. Upon his arrival in South Africa, Gandhi became extremely aware of the racism toward his people when he was thrown out of a first-class railway car even though his ticket was for the first-class compartment.

Once realising the political divisibility between South Africans and Indians, Gandhi coined the term *satyagraha*, the theory and practice of non-violent resistance. He believed that the only way to seek truth (*satya*) was through non-violence (*ahimsa*) and celibacy, striving toward God (*brahmacharya*). Gandhi's goal in South Africa was to encourage both sides to recognise their common humanity so that everyone could be truly free, or indivisible.

One example of Gandhi embodying his beliefs is the famous Salt March of 1930.<sup>3</sup> During this time, the British were imposing a salt tax on India. This tax made it illegal for workers to collect their own salt, and the cost of purchasing salt was unaffordable for most. Because salt is essential in daily diet, everyone in India was affected by this tax. In an attempt to appeal to the Viceroy, Gandhi wrote him a letter. In that

letter, he informed the Viceroy that should his letter not resonate, Gandhi would march with others in protest of the law. The Viceroy responded that he would not lift the salt tax, so Gandhi and his fellow activists began the 240-mile journey from Sabarmati to the coast of Dandi. After 23 days of marching, and picking up other activists on the way, Gandhi and his group of non-violent protesters made it to the coast. Here, Gandhi made a speech and proceeded to pick up salt in violation of the British law. Others too began to pick up salt and the movement began. In the months following, Gandhi was jailed for breaking the law, many other protests ensued, and policemen killed many non-violent protesters when they refused to fight back. Subsequently, the world embraced the non-violent movement and eventually India was able to gain independence from Britain.

Over the course of leading the non-violent movement, Gandhi was given the nicknames "Mahatma" meaning "high souled" in Sanskrit and "Bapu", a term of endearment in India for fathers. Unfortunately there was also great resistance to the movement. Not only was Gandhi jailed many times, but he was also almost lynched once by South African whites wanting him to stop his mission in India. Additionally, there were five assassination attempts on Gandhi's life, and the last proved successful. Surrounded by friends and family on the lawn outside a prayer meeting, Gandhi was shot at point blank range. And, as he fell to the ground from the fatal wound, he blessed his assassin.

As Gandhi's life came full circle, it was evident that he embodied the actions of his father and the lesson of Ahimsa he had learned the day his father chose compassion over punishment for his son's wrongdoing. In the words of Gandhi, "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

### **Dr Martin Luther King, Jr**

We begin the life sketch of Dr King with a moment in time that stayed with him throughout his life. As King wrote in his book *Stride toward freedom: The Montgomery story*:

I remember a trip to a downtown shoe store with Father when I was still small. We had sat down in the first empty seats at the front of the store. A young white clerk came up and murmured politely: "I'll be happy to wait on you if you'll just move to those seats in the rear." "My father answered, "There's nothing wrong with these seats. We're quite comfortable here." "Sorry," said the clerk, "but you'll have to move." "We'll either buy shoes sitting here," my father retorted, "or we won't buy shoes at all." Whereupon he took me by the hand and walked out of the store. This was the first time I had ever seen my father so angry. I still remember walking down the street beside him as he muttered, "I don't care how long I have to live with this system, I will never accept it."<sup>4</sup>

Michael King was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on 15 January 1929. Later, his father would

change Michael's name to Martin Luther, after the great reformer of the sixteenth century. Martin's father was a minister who devoted his life to planting the seeds for a national civil rights movement. Martin was well educated and very interested in school. He was even able to skip his senior year of high school to begin college one year early. After becoming a Baptist minister, he received a bachelor's degree in sociology and a doctorate in theology. Martin Luther King, Jr was deeply moved by Gandhi and the philosophy of non-violence, and compared race problems in the United States with the Indian caste system.

Helping the seeds, that his father planted, to grow, Martin became the leader of the American civil rights movement. While struggling for the recognition of the black minority group, Martin was jailed, stabbed and even had his house bombed. But despite the opposition, he was able to embody his belief in the spirit of non-violence. And that belief spread to the rest of the nation, causing many to sympathise with the cause. Many are familiar with Dr King's "I have a dream" speech, but how many are familiar with how it was organised? In the summer of 1963, 250 000 people showed up on the Mall in Washington, DC, to hear the talk. There were no invitations, and no technology existed to apprise people of the details. However, 250 000 people attended to hear about Dr King's dream – a dream to which they could relate. Anyone who believed in the movement understood that it was about the role of each individual person in the movement. It was not about Dr King, it was not about black vs white. In fact,



25 percent of the attendees were white. It was about humanity and the right for each and every person to live freely in an equal society.

A number of events took place before and after Dr King's speech, but perhaps one of the most memorable happened in the months just before the speech was given. In April of 1963, Dr King marched into a police wagon, was arrested, and sent to the Birmingham, Alabama jail for demonstrating without a permit. During his eleven-day stay at the jail, Dr King wrote a long letter in response to those who criticised the campaign to desegregate Birmingham. Dr King addressed many things in this letter, but perhaps the most notable here is the accusation from white clergy members that he was being impatient. The whites seemed to think that if Dr King and his followers would be patient, wait and pray that eventually God would grant the desegregation they yearned to see. However, Dr King believed that, in this case, having patience meant that segregation would continue. This belief in peacefully advocating for equal rights and the refusal to submit to patience and waiting were no doubt ingrained in Dr King at a very young age by his father.

This non-violent fight that Dr King was leading took many twists and turns, ending with a successful assassination attempt the day after he spoke these words: "... I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land... *My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.*"

## **Nelson Mandela**

For our purpose here, the life sketch of Nelson Mandela best begins with a story, told by South African photographer, Steve Bloom, son of Harry Bloom, a political activist, that gives insight into Mandela's way of thinking as a lawyer, freedom fighter, leader in peace and reconciliation of a country that was racially and ethnically divided.

During the 1950s, my parents, who were anti-apartheid activists, knew Nelson Mandela. I remember the story he told them about the occasion he saw a white woman standing next to her broken car in Johannesburg. He approached her and offered to help. After fiddling with the engine he fixed the car. Thankful for his help, she offered to pay him sixpence. "Oh no, that's not necessary," he said, "I am only too happy to help." "But why else would you, a black man, have done that if you did not want money?" she asked quizzically. "Because you were stranded at the side of the road," he replied.<sup>5</sup>

Rolihlahla Madiba Dalibhunga Mandela was born on 18 July 1918 in Mvezo, the Transkei, South Africa. Later in life, his English school-teacher would give him the name Nelson. As a child, Nelson learned from his parents and his people the African traditions of kinship, hospitality, collective decision-making, reconciliation, honour and *Ubuntu* (human kindness). His father was royalty, so Nelson was destined to attend school. Although he was expelled from college for joining a student protest, Nelson would eventually go back

and obtain an LLB through the University of South Africa. This two-year diploma in law, plus a bachelor's degree, allowed Mandela to practice law.

Mandela had great loyalty to the African National Congress (ANC), a Congress that thought highly of non-violent means to achieve national independence from the bondage of apartheid. However, Mandela did not always share their ideas – he wanted more militant ANC policies. Until 1950, Mandela was strongly opposed to means such as strikes and other general acts of non-violence, but that year, he became aware that the best way to combat apartheid was through unity. Thus, Mandela broadened his stance to include that of non-violence. He then began to read about Marxism and colonialism, and even reconciled with the ANC's decision to embrace working with other anti-apartheid organisations, without regard to skin colour or political preference. From this transformation in 1950, Mandela addressed thousands of new volunteers dedicated to non-violent civil disobedience and advocated for strict adherence to avoiding retaliation if provoked. He realised there were others fighting for the bigger picture – he saw a place where oppressed people could band together to overcome policies of racial discrimination in favour of policies giving fundamental human rights to everyone – regardless of race, colour, gender or language. And yet, in 1961, when the apartheid government had amped up its brute forces, Mandela was convinced that the only path to freedom was to fight fire with fire, and he made a public announcement

that the days of peace and non-violence for his group were over. He then formed a guerilla group and travelled outside of the country illegally for basic and strategic military training. After successfully evading the police for 17 months, he was caught and put on trial for treason. He would barely make it through this trial before being put on trial again and sentenced to life imprisonment.

While in prison, he remained active, treated all prisoners as equals and advocated for prisoner rights. Mandela valued his will to live, and was able to unite prisoners for the same cause. Twenty-seven years after his sentence, Mandela was released from prison back to his life. And what an incredible life he had left to live. Because he had stayed so connected while he was serving his sentence, Mandela still had a place at the political table. And, this time, he would begin to see real change in his country. In addition to becoming ANC president and negotiating with government on ending apartheid, Mandela was the first black man to become president of South Africa. Even further, he, along with the help of other great political figures, was able to establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a model for the transformation of conflict to peace.

Throughout his life, which ended peacefully in his home in 2013, Mandela did what he thought was right for himself and for his people. He saw a bigger picture and was always able to act based on the African traditions he learned as a child. Mandela was the perfect balance between patience and impatience. He knew that the most

powerful weapon was education. And from this knowledge not only did he become the epitome of forgiveness (which is an individual act), but also the embodiment of reconciliation (which required working with the architects of apartheid).

### **SHARED TRANSFORMATIVE ATTRIBUTES OF THE THREE LEADERS**

As children, all three of these leaders were surrounded by some element of wealth that afforded them an education. Gandhi and Mandela learned from the people of their countries the values of compassion and reconciliation. Dr King learned from his father these same values. All three leaders experienced with their own eyes, from a young age, the mistreatment of their people and could not sit in wait and watch the injustices continue. Each man felt a calling to become involved in changing his respective world. As such, one thing all three of these men shared in their adult lives is the vision of a common humanity and freedom. And while, at least at the beginning, Mandela's advocacy of non-violence was more of a tactic than a way of life, as it was for Gandhi and Dr King, all three men were able to appeal to fundamental human needs in peaceful ways. In short, these men were the embodiment of the change they were trying to affect. They were, in fact, being the change they wished to see in the world, as Gandhi is often credited to have said. The highlights of each man's respective accomplishments, as well as the leadership similarities of each, are summarised in Table 1.

### **TRANSFERABLE LESSONS**

"Transformation feels as if some basic architecture is being remodelled rather than just new furniture being put in the house or moved from room to room. There is some deep structural change... that alters the backbone of existence." – Dan Siegel

On a personal level, transformation is when who one becomes is different from who one is. In other words, as Wright and Wright assert: "transformation is a metamorphosis from one state to another".<sup>6</sup> The three leaders in peacemaking, that we describe here, were transformed and, in the process, transformed events around them. While their respective self-transformation may vary, for example, Mandela's transition from violent to non-violent means to achieve liberation from the bondage of apartheid, they appear to share three attributes of transformation: yearning, engagement and growth.

In the deepest sense, yearning is a desire of an absolute requirement of the heart, mind and soul for achieving higher ordered human goals. As John Eldredge observed, nothing of human greatness is ever accomplished without a desire. "Not a symphony has been written, a mountain climbed, an injustice fought, or a love sustained apart from desire. Desire fuels our search for the life we prize."<sup>7</sup> The deep yearning these leaders shared had, in the first place, propelled them to do something about the injustices that were perpetrated in the

**TABLE 1: The accomplishments and similarities of each leader**

Mohandas Gandhi	Martin Luther King, Jr.	Nelson Mandela
Father was Prime Minister of Porbander state	His father, a minister, devoted his life to righting wrongs: (basically planted seeds for national civil rights movement) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organized a protest against elevator segregation at county courthouse</li> <li>Ran a drive to register African-American voters</li> <li>Marched to Atlanta city hall to show AA political strength</li> </ul>	Father was royalty/politically connected: Fought for rights in a deposition and was stripped of land and wealth by white settlers
Learned from his devout mother and Jain traditions of the region: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compassion to sentient beings</li> <li>Vegetarianism</li> <li>Fasting for self-purification</li> <li>Mutual tolerance between individuals of different creeds</li> </ul>		Learned the following African traditions as a child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kinship</li> <li>Hospitality</li> <li><i>Ubuntu</i></li> <li>Collective decision-making</li> <li>Reconciliation</li> <li>Honour</li> </ul>
Educated (lawyer)	Educated - very interested in school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Became Baptist minister</li> <li>Received bachelor's in sociology</li> <li>Doctorate in theology from Boston University</li> </ul>	Educated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expelled from college for joining a student protest</li> <li>Took a break from studies but eventually obtained an LLB through University of South Africa</li> <li>Two-year diploma in law plus his BA allowed Mandela to practice law</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Went to South Africa and experienced first-hand the derogatory behaviour of whites toward Indians living there</li> <li>Adopted satyagraha (devotion to the truth) or non-violent protest to defy laws rather than resistance through violent means</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moved by Gandhi - read all he could about philosophy of non-violence, later visited India to speak with Gandhi's followers</li> <li>Compared race problems in US with Indian caste system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Began by adopting Gandhi's non-violence methods</li> <li>Used violent methods after believing non-violence yielded no results</li> <li>Went back to non-violent methods after release from prison</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Founded Natal Indian Congress</li> <li>'Great march' for Indian rights in South Africa</li> <li>Protested peacefully against racism, sexism and caste system</li> <li>Organized Indian Ambulance Corps during Boer War for British soldiers</li> <li>Established Phoenix Settlement</li> <li>Founded, edited and published <i>Indian Opinion</i> journal</li> <li>Established Satyagraha Ashram</li> <li>Salt march</li> <li>'Quit India' movement</li> </ul>	Led nation's civil rights movement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worked with NAACP</li> <li>Elected president of Montgomery Improvement Association - organized boycott of city buses after Rosa Parks incident</li> <li>MIA boycott - before it ended MLK's house was bombed and MLK was convicted of boycott related charges, BUT US Supreme Court declared bus laws unconstitutional. MLK was one of the first passengers on the integrated bus</li> <li>Elected chairman of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference</li> <li>Appeared on cover of Time magazine</li> <li>Delivered 'give us the ballot' speech</li> <li>Launched voter registration drive across entire South</li> <li>Wrote a book on bus boycott and idea of non-violent protest</li> <li>Inspired string of 'sit-ins' at white only diners</li> <li>Gave 'I have a dream' speech</li> <li>Gave 'I've been to the mountaintop' speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-founder of Congress Youth League</li> <li>Organized many peaceful protests, including 'stay-at-home' protests</li> <li>Gave free legal counsel in opposition of apartheid</li> <li>Gave 'speech from the dock' during Rivonia Trial</li> <li>'No easy walk to freedom' address</li> <li>South Africa's first black president</li> <li>Co-convenor of Truth and Reconciliation Commission</li> </ul>
Jailed many times	Jailed several times	Jailed many times
Human dignity	Struggling for recognition of minority group	Struggling for an oppressed majority
Nearly lynched by whites who heard of his advocacy of the Indian cause in his native land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faced opposition from likes of Malcom X who questioned value of non-violent protest when whites were bombing, beating and killing protesters</li> <li>Was stabbed at book signing - then issued statement forgiving his attacker and reaffirming belief in 'the spirit of non-violence'</li> </ul>	
	Awarded Nobel Peace Prize	Awarded Nobel Peace Prize
Assassinated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blessed his assassin as he was dying</li> </ul>	Assassinated	Died (naturally?) in his home

Source: Author

societies of which they were a part; and sustained them in remaining engaged. By engaging, however, we do not mean simply paying attention to or carefully listening and concentrating on a task, things which are human attributes that are important but not necessarily transformative. The type of engagement these leaders exhibited, in the course of their struggle against injustice, seems one that seeks novelty and experiences that are new and different, where mistakes are taken as building blocks to engage better next time and hurts are reframed to serve as a foundation for envisioning new approaches to resolving problems. In 1957, Dr Martin Luther King was invited to speak to the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) at the University of California at Berkley. Below is an example taken from his speech that shows an engaged growth mindset.

He who works against community is working against the whole of creation. Therefore, if I respond to hate with reciprocal hate I do nothing but intensify the cleavage in broken community. I can only close the gap in broken community by meeting hate with love. If I meet hate with hate, I become depersonalized, because creation is so designed that my personality can only be fulfilled in the context of community. Booker T. Washington was right: "Let no man pull you so low as to make you hate him." When hate pulls you that low he brings you to the point of defying creation, and thereby becoming depersonalized.<sup>8</sup>

These three leaders lived what they believed and led a life that was intentional, engaged and dedicated, characteristics that Drucker observed in effective leaders.<sup>9</sup> What distinguishes the three leaders, whose exemplary life work in peacemaking we sketch here, from other leaders is that not only were they not afraid of what would happen to them as they pursued the goal of liberty and justice, but they also lived, in the words of Plato, "the life light". As Plato (427-347 BC) put it: "we can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark. The real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light". The three leaders lived a life of transparency, commitment to a cause bigger than themselves and indeed the life of light that inspires current thinking about peacemaking.

## CONCLUSION

One could safely argue that many of the lessons offered today by way of peacemaking strategies, and alternative dispute resolution methods, are espoused theories. In practical application, however, these strategies and methods are exemplified in the lives and actions of the three men whose exemplary life experiences are outlined here. By the lives they led and by the leadership they offered, Gandhi, King and Mandela proved to all of us that Arthur Schopenhauer was indeed correct when he asserted: "All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."

The question before us now involves our willingness to learn and to teach our posterity that lasting peace can only be achieved by non-violent means. In seeing peace, as sketched above and detailed in

Table 1, the three leaders discussed in this article taught us to choose a non-violent method and to remain firmly connected to our compassionate nature even under the most trying of circumstances.

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**Berhanu Mengistu** is Professor of Public Administration at the Old Dominion University's College of Business and Public Administration in the United States of America. His areas of expertise are conflict resolution, public management, urban studies and ethics. Mengistu published extensively. Stephanie J Menefee is a PhD candidate at the Old Dominion University.

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# WORLD AFFAIRS AND SOUTH AFRICA: COUNTRY RANKINGS

Jonathan Story  
INSEAD – The Business School of the World

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## ABSTRACT

In 2012, a panel was set up, chaired by Trevor Manuel, South Africa's former Finance Minister, to examine the validity of the World Bank's annual Doing Business report. The Bank's annual Doing Business report judges 185 countries on 10 criteria and compiles an index on the ease of doing business, assigning each country a rank. Governments, it was observed, tend to attach great weight to the ranking whether their country features in the lead platoon, brings up the rear, edges upwards or slips down. The report recorded a host of detailed complaints, such as a focus on the country's largest city, or the small sample sizes employed. As the report stated, "It is important to remember that the (Doing Business) report is intended to be a pure knowledge project. As such, its role is to inform policy, not to prescribe it or outline a normative position, which the rankings to some extent do."<sup>1</sup> "Emotions", Trevor Manuel observed, "were charged at both poles of the debate."<sup>2</sup> At one end, were those who did well in the rankings or who were in broad agreement about the report's underlying assumptions and, at the other end, were

those who considered that their countries were being penalised, that the rankings did not capture the important nuances that often make the difference in business decisions, or who disagreed with the report's underlying assumptions. In other words, the panel was addressing the fundamental question of what constitutes best practice in national economic policy, what are the relevant criteria to judge, whether it was appropriate to rank diverse countries according to a single set of criteria, and whether the report provided a sound basis on which to establish public or corporate policies. This article will argue that there can be no single set of answers to these questions, and for two very good reasons.

First, the globalised world economy is composed of separate civilisations, nations and states, with their own histories and peculiarities, living in an unprecedented degree of intimacy one with another, but nonetheless notably distinct, and facing their own peculiar mix of challenges. What is good for one, in short, may not be good for another. Second, the world is inherently pluralist, so that there are as many answers to the

questions as there are participants in the debate. Nonetheless, coexistence among the peoples of the global community assumes that there must be some broadly conceived criteria of right or wrong, of better or worse. We cannot live in a postmodern world where anything goes: we cannot live without some agreement on rules, criteria and ethics.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In what follows, we will start with a brief discussion of the dynamics of world affairs, first prior to, then after the great transformation of world affairs in the years 1989 to 1992. In so doing, we draw up a matrix whereby country risk methods may be assessed. The focus is on "risk", because the perspective is not just of governments, but, in particular, of business investors, assessing whether or not to locate scarce corporate resources in one territory or another. We then discuss whether the world is converging or diverging, a central debate if we are to try to assess how individual countries or regions may be understood in the context of a world political economy. We will then apply the argument to South Africa from the vantage point of 1994 and of 2014. Given the nature of the ongoing process of world affairs, we will argue that it is more important to accept the inevitable subjectivity of country rankings, and gauge them as proxies to a fallible global market opinion, important enough to process into our policies, but far from decreeing statements of absolute truth. The realities of world affairs are far too nuanced to be squeezed into pre-established categories and rankings.

## **GLOBAL SYSTEM AND THE DEBATE ON MODERNISATION**

There can be little doubt, after the experience of the last century, that the world is dynamic. When Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in the 60<sup>th</sup> year of her reign in 1897, there were few intimations of what was to come: the South African War; Japan's defeat of Russia in 1904; the two Balkan wars, followed by the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914; the Russian Revolution of 1917; the acceleration of new technologies spurred by war expenditures; the experience of state management of war time economies; the development of communications; Hitler's access to power, and Japan's war on China, followed by world war, the apparent triumph of the Soviet Union in 1945, the nuclear bombing of Japan and then the global cold war. None of this had been anticipated, and our ability to pierce the veil of the future proved no better in the 1960s and onwards. Possibly, the one nuanced lesson from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was that if there was progress, it came at a terrible price.

We have been no better at predicting the future in the second half of the past century, not to speak of the opening decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We can observe a graveyard of shattered expectations as the promise of one Eldorado after another has turned to stone. From the 1960s on, foreign investors flooded into Africa, Iran and Latin America. But in the 1970s, Africa spun into unsustainable debt; Khomeini seized power in 1979, and in 1982 Argentina, Brazil and Mexico



suspended payments on the interest of their loans from western commercial banks. After the yen's rise in 1985, Michael Porter urged the world to imitate Japan's mercantilism, at the time that Japan entered its decades of stagnation;<sup>3</sup> investors poured into East Asian markets until the sudden withdrawal of confidence in June 1997, with serious knock-on effects in 1998 in Russia and South Africa. Meanwhile, Mexico's crash in 1994 reverberated through Latin America; in 2001, the terror attacks were launched on New York and Washington, and Enron, the dotcom boom and Argentina's economy all imploded; China's entry to the WTO in 2002 was accompanied by gloom in China about the likely impact; then in 2008, after unprecedented Chinese growth, the US suffered the mother of all crashes. On each occasion, foresight was minimal.

There are some very good reasons for this. The world is turbulent and unpredictable per se. During the key years of 1989-1992, Germany's move to unity dismantled the cold war structure built around the two Germanies, the two Europes, their two alliances and the two great powers,<sup>4</sup> launching the world on the process which came to be called "globalisation".<sup>5</sup>

Globalisation may be said to hold four key components, which interact in highly complex ways. The first of these components is the primacy of the USA, and the transformation of the state system as the number of states multiplied, from 51 in 1945 to 195 now. The second component has been the relentless retreat of any alternative forms of

government to market democracy as various forms of despotism collapsed, populations became better informed, market scope widened and institutional competition took its toll. The third component was the recreation of the world market under the aegis of the western powers, and by the United States in particular, to reach a level of integration unknown since the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and lubricated by the explosive growth of global financial markets. The fourth element was the growth of the industrial or service corporation, initially based in a home country, and with subsidiaries or market outlets in host countries, towards becoming a transnational group with subsidiaries and markets located around the globe, and with a widely dispersed shareholder community, and a non-national recruitment policy.

This rapidly evolving context prompted at least four significant debates for country risk analysis in the years prior to the great transformation of 1989-92. The first involved theories of modernisation and development, prompted by the process of de-colonisation, combined with bitter ideological disputes between the two lead party-states of the USSR and China over support for revolution in the "Third World". The classic statement of this perspective was Walt Rustow's *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto*, published in 1960. Rustow proposed a model of economic growth whereby economic modernisation occurs in five stages of varying length: traditional society, preconditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and high

mass consumption. It followed that the more "well-to-do" a nation became, the more democratic it was likely to be.<sup>6</sup> For Rustow, the process could be advanced by the granting of western aid, state-promoted growth policies, the rejection of communist methods of class warfare and the suppression of market mechanisms. The Asian developmental state stood as testimony to Rustow's insights.<sup>7</sup>

The second significant debate for country risk analysis dealt with questions of political transformation. In the course of the 1960s, events in Africa and Latin America showed that political developments were far from uni-linear. Rapid economic growth was not a stabilising factor, but a sure-fire prescription for political instability.<sup>8</sup> Too rapid social and economic changes could erode traditional solidarities, widen wealth gaps, multiply sources of dissatisfaction and promote political decay.<sup>9</sup> As De Tocqueville had observed about the French revolution, men tended to rebel<sup>10</sup> as expectations rose but could not be met. Ruling élites would fracture, in their competitive appeals to differing constituencies within the regime and beyond its boundaries.<sup>11</sup> Their people, however, could accept the iron chains of dictatorship as the price to be paid for stability and economic improvement for a large majority.<sup>12</sup> There was not one but many paths to modernity.<sup>13</sup>

The third significant debate for country risk was the burgeoning literature in the 1970s and 1980s dealing with regime change. The question asked was: how does a democracy come into being in the first place? Dankwart

Rustow identified a process in four phases: there had to be a pre-existing sense of nationhood; a prolonged and inconclusive political struggle, prompted often by a new social force of political leaders or modern business groups; a decision point, where the contesting élites agree to compromise; and a habituation phase, where the new rules of the game would be introduced and then implemented.<sup>14</sup> His article laid the conceptual foundations for later work on the decline and collapse of authoritarian regimes in southern Europe, then in Latin America and beyond. The common theme running through this literature was that splits within the regime, throughout the whole process, would be the detonator of regime change, not "external shocks".<sup>15</sup> Consolidation of the new regime would only occur once political parties had alternated in power and, most importantly, that the recently agreed settlement becomes "the only game in town".<sup>16</sup>

Finally, it was observed that political transitions in one country were never just a domestic affair;<sup>17</sup> they are complex, not just because as the momentum towards regime change builds, the stakes of politics are raised, but because regime changes in one state occur in a world of states, interdependent among themselves, all in specific geographic neighbourhoods, and all effected by the workings of the power balance, by the cyclicity of the global economy, or by the individual perspective of leaders more or less involved in the intimate details of the transitional process itself. This was the arena in which corporations had become co-players with stakes in the new diplomacy

between states and corporations, which overlay and differed from the bi- or multi-lateral diplomacy of states.<sup>18</sup>

## **A MATRIX TO LOCATE COUNTRY RISK**

Country risk analysis refers to both foreign direct and financial investments on world markets. The aspects of country risk interrelate: financial loans will tend to be recorded through the short-term capital account of the country, and involve investment in the currency and/or in paper on the local capital market. The risk for both lender and borrower is that investors may withdraw speedily from the market on the receipt of adverse news. A more secure form of investment from the viewpoint of the host country is a foreign direct investment involving a transfer of technology and skills, while generating jobs and revenue. Once embedded in the host country, withdrawal is more problematic. Both forms of country risk analysis ask similar, though distinct, questions. Both attempt to come up with a judgment about the risk of lending or investing in a country in the light of an assessment of the political and economic factors informing a target country's prospects. Both face the reality that international business involves taking a bet on the target country's politics and performance.<sup>19</sup> Given this definition, how has country risk analysis covered the multiple forces at work in the world?

There can be little doubt, looking across the matrix, that the US shaped the development of the state system, promoted the

spread of market democracy, fostered an ever more open world market, and was the prime source of multinational corporate foreign direct investment. Because the post-1945 global economy gave a leading role to national governments into the 1970s, country risk was largely in the hands of rich world governments and the international institutions, particularly the World Bank. Prior to the first oil price shock (1973-74), most developing countries received foreign funds largely in the form of long-term, mostly concessional and project-related, loans from multilateral and bilateral official sources. However, in the 1960s, as countries went for growth, their debt service began to climb.<sup>20</sup> In 1965, the World Bank produced a seminal three-volume work on country risk.<sup>21</sup> The report charted debt in developing countries between 1955 and 1962, and derived a model whereby as growth proceeded, external borrowing would rise and then fall as the trade accounts turned to surplus. The debt would continue to rise, but be serviced by even faster growth of exports. This process was particularly sensitive to the rate of a country's growth, especially its exports, its savings rates, the quality of its investments and the terms of repayment.

This conceptual cycle of development and growth was applied in a cross-country analysis in 1971.<sup>22</sup> Two metrics were recommended: the rate of return on investment has to be higher than the interest cost of the external loans used to finance it; the growth of the borrowing economy had to exceed the interest rate on new external debt. Clearly, these formulas would favour

export-oriented countries, and penalise countries with import substitution regimes.

The major turning point in country risk analysis came with the 1982 crisis, following the second oil shock of 1979-80. The major shareholders of the World Bank did not vote for adequate capital increases for the organisation to cover the needs of developing countries, which had to rely on private capital flows. There was thus a redeployment of tasks: the World Bank and the IMF took to providing advice on rigorous adjustment processes, particularly with regard to Africa and Latin America; financial institutions and agencies acquired their own country risk capabilities; and corporations developed their in-house political assessment function. As has been observed, banks had little house knowledge about politics; most managers had ethnocentric views; and perceptions on the political environment varied greatly.<sup>23</sup> That was before the analysts sought to look through the dark glass towards an uncertain future.

Given the multiple problems of assessing country risk, no consensus could be reached on methodology. Instead, corporations, banks and ratings agencies plumbed for more qualitative or more quantitative analysis, and most usually for a varied combination of both. A survey conducted by the US Eximbank in 1976 categorised various methods of country risk appraisal:<sup>24</sup>

**Qualitative method:** A typical qualitative report would include a general discussion of a country's economic, political and social

conditions and prospects. Its benefit was to draw attention to the details of a country's evolution, but its drawback was the difficulty in establishing comparability across countries, and the method's failure to yield a number for market participants eager to make decisions among a range of options.

**Structured qualitative method:** The aim here was to establish a uniform format across countries, augmented by selected economic data, and including observations of a political, cultural or social nature. A widely used example of this was the political risk index provided by Business Environment Risk Intelligence (BERI) SA.<sup>25</sup> The method's benefit was that it covered all the horizontal dimensions of our country risk matrix, and in the shape of a reproducible format.

**Checklist method:** This involves scoring the country on a scale with regard to a set of economic, financial, legal or political criteria. An example here is the CRS Group's International Country Risk Guide (ICRG). Each item is weighted, and scaled from lowest to highest score – an inevitably subjective evaluation. All items are summed on a matrix, whose one side represents, say, the political/legal dimension and the other side, the economic/financial dimension. The method also allows for the creation of a country profile, comparable to other territories, over time.

**Other quantitative methods:** These methods use econometric and statistical studies of country risk analysis. They compare a large set of countries, and conclude with a list

of variables, which their authors consider most explanatory.<sup>26</sup> The problem with these techniques was multiple: their focus was narrow, their models were no better than their assumptions, non-statistical information was not incorporated, and the method focused purely on economic data.

Overall, the conclusion that emerges from this overview is how inconclusive the battle of methods remained. This should not come as a surprise. There are deep problems relating to the subject of country analysis. Whatever the method, bias is inescapable; the material, whether qualitative or quantitative, can only be from the past; there is an insoluble problem of causality; the future remains a dark glass. Nonetheless, country risk prior to 1990 yielded a useful debate about comparability of information in a format, while the index method produced a country profile and some numbers, albeit subjective. Not all effort was in vain.

### **GLOBALISATION: CONVERGENCE OR DIVERGENCE?**

With the collapse of the cold war structure in the years 1989-92, the question widely asked was: Where was the world heading? One view, to become very influential in country risk analysis, was of a world converging on western political norms, on western economic policy, and on a market-driven process of world integration. A cascade of new technologies – in particular the privatisation by the US Department of Defense of the world wide web – would accelerate the pace of innovation. Western corporations

would pour technologies into the poorer regions of the world where labour was abundant, cheap and talented. Global financial markets, no longer under political lock and key, would provide capital, ending the historic savings shortages of developing countries. For those who wanted to tap into international capital, the price would be an end to national capital controls. With global growth rising, productivity levels, living standards and longevity would soar. Better educated populations would help to spread constitutional democracy, promote greater security between states with similar values and regimes, and eventually equalise incomes at an unprecedented high level of well-being. As global civil society developed, a public law would emerge to override state sovereignties as the world progressed to a higher civilisation.

Convergence was the underlying theme of country risk rankings offered on the web. The launching of the world wide web transformed country risk analysis, in providing universal and rapid access to a growing number of sites.<sup>27</sup> The availability of a huge amount of information, though, has been accompanied by a multiplication in the underlying frameworks, assumptions and theories. This may be easily illustrated: the competitiveness of websites from IMD and the World Economic Forum have been greatly influenced by Michael Porter's writings on the competitiveness of nations.<sup>28</sup> The UNDP's Human Development Index has been inspired by Amartya Sen's re-definition of labour from being a factor of production to being a bundle of potential, measurable not

in terms of prices in commodity exchange, but in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment and per capita income. The Heritage Foundation's economic freedom index is predicated on classical liberal market theory and measured in terms of trade freedom, business freedom, investment freedom and property rights. The Berthelsmann transformation index states clearly that it derives from the theory of Germany's social market economy.<sup>29</sup> The World Bank governance indicators are based on the observation that, as Douglass North<sup>30</sup> and others have argued, institutions matter, and that good governance, the rule of law and a quality bureaucracy are key in accounting for where investors go.

For their partisans, the benefits of the rankings are self-evident: listing countries competing for business in a semi-integrated global market encourages benchmarking, motivates learning, may promote reforms, and allows countries to brand themselves to attract investors. Because the data provided on the indices is either publicly available or based on opinion surveys, there is no possibility for governments to negotiate before, during and after the judgment has fallen, as has been the habit of governments for instance, in negotiations with the IMF on structural adjustment programmes. Countries and governments face the court of global opinion in the form of the indices: no insider negotiations are possible.

There is, though, an alternative narrative about where the world is heading. Accordingly, the historical world in which we

live is one of inherited inequalities among states or classes, and very diverse motivations among peoples of differing religions or cultures. States have different adaptive capabilities, forged in discrete, historical circumstances,<sup>31</sup> yielding not one but a diversity of capitalisms.<sup>32</sup> Efforts to pack them onto a single tramline heading to a One World united in market democracy is bound to cause accidents, and is as unreliable as was the communist utopia to create a worldwide communism.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the cause of divergence is now taken up by radicals who see global capitalism as seeking to impose uniformity on a diverse world. Better to assume that the world's diversity is its wealth, and that the system of global governance under construction is a negotiated construct that reflects the institutional arrangements – national, regional or global – from which they emerged.<sup>34</sup> Overall, future divergence is rooted in a world of history and variety rather than one which demands linearity, integration and convergence.

The websites have no problem in dealing with diversity. The rankings, their composite indicators and scales facilitate differentiation and a comparative standard.<sup>35</sup> But that is precisely their problem: the accusation against the rankings is that they are ethnocentric; they tend to promote "neoliberal" agendas; they assume a one-size-fits-all template for a diverse world;<sup>36</sup> they are riddled with methodological problems such as the fact that the final number in the ranking is an average of distinct observation points; the data they produce appears objective but their composite indicators derive from

a hodgepodge of sources; the weightings of the factors are arbitrary; and, not least, they conceal their subjectivity behind a veil of semi-scientific gloss. Having connived in misleading their clients prior to the 2008 crash, the big three ratings agencies – Moodys, S&P and Fitch – were challenged when S&P downgraded Greece in April 2010.<sup>37</sup> Inversely, their deficiencies indicated that they were arguably open to gaming: Georgia, in 2005, was ranked by Transparency International's corruption perceptions index as occupying number 122 in the global corruption stakes and, by 2012, ranked number 51 – a Pauline conversion towards virtue.

Whether the rankings serve to benchmark or to be gamed, they are no more than rough guides to investors. What is necessary in a global market is for investors to acquire local knowledge.<sup>38</sup> In particular, in a diverse world, corporations, it is suggested, have to consider themselves as political players and not just as economic agents. Just as managers have to know the history that makes their corporations as they are, they also have to learn about the territories they enter.<sup>39</sup> That means that managers have to develop political capital, join coalitions of interests, master the art of political spin and "hit the pressure-points of local decision-makers".<sup>40</sup> They have to develop a non-market strategy, not least because they compete for airspace on global media with non-governmental organisations, while governments use regulation to extract corporate resources. The globalised world is a goldfish bowl with few places left to hide.

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

On 10 May 1994, millions watched as Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first post-apartheid president, invited his compatriots to "enter a covenant" and build "a rainbow nation at peace with itself and with the world". Invoking the ANC's Freedom Charter, the only viable state form for the country, Mandela stated, was constitutional democracy, predicated on one person, one vote. How did the rankings record the new South Africa? I have used the various rankings available at that time, and developed a profile in my Globalisation – Making Smarter Decisions software.

The first task in assessing a country's potential is to ask where it has come from. In the case of South Africa, the history was complex. Indeed in the mid-1990s, I held an INSEAD Advanced Management Programme session on South Africa, attended by participants from all possible backgrounds. The discussion dwelt for over an hour on the country's history, from which it was apparent that there was no consensus. Did the trouble all begin when Jan van Riebeeck reached Table Bay on 6 April 1652? When the British seized the Cape from the Dutch to prevent it falling into French hands? With the unification of the Nguni peoples under their formidable leader, Shaka Zulu? With the defeat in 1838 of the army of his successor, Dingane, by a small Boer force at the battle of the Great Fish River – a sure sign, the Boers concluded, of God's divine benevolence? As Rian Malan phrased it, the Boers

concluded that the lesson to take from the victory was "you have to put the black man down, plant your foot on his neck, and keep him there forever, lest he spring up and slit your white throat".<sup>41</sup> A later lesson from the South African war of 1898 to 1902 was to split the Boer people between those, like General Smuts who made peace with the British Empire and others who never did. As diehard Calvinists, many Boers supported National Socialist Germany during the world war of 1939 to 1945, without perhaps appreciating that Hitler was radically hostile to Christian creeds.

Following the elections of May 1948, Daniel Malan became Prime Minister in the first Nationalist government. As Rian Malan points out, it may have been possible to make apartheid work had the proposals of the 1954 Tomlinson report been followed to redistribute vast tracts of land from white to black farmers. But this was never on the cards. The screws were tightened on the ANC and, in 1960, Hendrik Verwoerd had South Africa declared a republic. Blacks were driven off their land into separate areas, with the economy recording high growth rates into the 1970s. But high oil prices, the collapse of the Portuguese empire in nearby Angola and Mozambique, US pressure on Rhodesia to end white minority rule and, above all, the spread of Black Consciousness among the younger generation, combined with the strengthening of the trade unions in the mines, set a beleaguered apartheid South Africa on a near permanent war footing. In the 1980s, under Piet Botha, "die groot krokodil" (the

great crocodile), and then under F.W. de Klerk, the regime moved reluctantly to reforms, while ruthlessly clamping down on internal opposition. With German unity in the winter of 1989/1990, and the implosion of Soviet power, De Klerk sought to end his country's status as an international pariah, released Mandela from prison in February 1990, and thereby launched the country on the transition to becoming a multiracial democracy.

From the perspective of 1994, the extraordinary feature of South Africa's profile is that the rankings told a fairly optimistic story of the new South Africa's politics, noticeably more optimistic than the more negative economic assessment. This was surprising in view of the two key questions that were asked about South Africa at the time: why did the formidable Boer tribe abandon apartheid? And why did South Africa not dissolve into a spiral of ethnic violence?

There are many reasons for the implosion of apartheid, ranging from the policy's inherent economic failings, to western sanctions, and the ever-heightening cost of maintaining South Africa on an effective permanent war footing. But one is worth mentioning, because it had such an important impact on the transition. Simply, the Boer tribe came to doubt its own ideology. It was not just that US sitcoms peddled the ideas of tolerance, fairness, and sexual and racial justice into Boer homes. Even more importantly, trainees who went to study in the seminaries of the Dutch Reformed



Church in the Netherlands imbibed the prevalent liberal critique of inherited Calvinist verities, and returned to spread the new gospel in South Africa. The Dutch Reformed Church subsequently withdrew its blessing of apartheid, so that by the time De Klerk came to high office, Boer conviction about the rightness of apartheid was a thing of the past. Boer diehards were either won over by Nelson Mandela's charm,<sup>42</sup> or extreme parties failed to win minimal popular support.

Another reason was that the ANC offered the only possible exit from apartheid for a multiracial South Africa: one man, one vote. Group rights, advocated by the regime in the 1980s, and by the Zulu leader, Buthelezi, were no more than modified forms of ethnic consociational democracy, which had demonstrated, for instance in Lebanon, that they only lasted as long as the demographic formulae on which they had been originally based. In particular, the various minorities of South Africa recognised that the 1955 Freedom Charter formed the only basis for a *modus vivendi* in the new South Africa. The broad appeal of the Charter became all the more attractive, when, as the late Anthony Sampson records in his authorised biography of Mandela, the great man visited the World Economic Forum at Davos in February 1992, where he was dissuaded from nationalising key industries, as had been the consensus view among economists in the 1950s. When the leaders from Vietnam and China told him that this was not a good idea in an interdependent world economy, Mandela changed his mind. "Chaps," Mandela told

his people back home, "we have to change." Pragmatism was a key factor contributing to the surprisingly peaceful transition.

The Constitution incorporated many of the Freedom Charter's provisions, clearly instituted a parliamentary system that enabled the first post-apartheid government to reach out and include many of the ANC's previous rivals, and benefitted by very high voter participation in the first elections of April 1994, which, under the circumstances, were well-run.<sup>43</sup> All of this was recorded in the rankings, as was the absence of any major challenge to the new incumbents, along with the inherited and still independent-minded judiciary. In addition, the rankings recorded the transformed international position of the new South Africa: embassies were reopened around the world; South Africa fast became a full participant in regional and global international organisations; South Africa was once again an important player in the Anglophone world; the country had a sound technological base; and was ranked high in terms of freedoms by the US-based Freedom House.

Not surprisingly, the economic and social indicators were less positive. It was no mystery that the new government faced major challenges. These included the vital task of achieving racial reconciliation, while dealing with the festering memories of cruelties perpetrated on all sides; promoting job creation in a fast growing demography; addressing the major issue of poverty and inequality, which permeated every aspect of the country from educational and life chances, to

housing; and the urgent need to create a widening domestic market without which it would prove difficult to attract inward direct investment, which had exited under the western sanctions policy imposed during the last years of the old regime. These features were captured in South Africa's high score on the Gini index, measuring income inequality; a ranking of 23 out of 54 on Transparency International's new corruption perceptions index; indicators of high crime and violence; a large and inefficient public sector; a poor record on inflation; a volatile foreign exchange rate; and a record of capital flight.

The economy, though, held a number of ace cards: if inequality could be reduced, and/or income levels raised significantly, South Africa could look to a widening domestic market; the same could be said for human capital potential; the financial system was world class, and the country held a range of high potential corporations; South Africa's transport infrastructure was arguably the best in Africa; the country had a modern and competitive agricultural sector alongside subsistence farming in the homelands, occupying low productivity labour; a high cost protected market for industrial goods, and a minerals sector accounting for 40 to 50 percent of exports on trade account.

How has South Africa fared, judging from the standpoint of 2014? What is evident from the profile is that the rankings record improved overall performance for South Africa both in terms of politics and economics. But, unlike in 1994, it is now

the overall profile of economic policy and performance that records a higher ranking than the political system. South Africa's international standing is better than it has ever been and, as in 1994, there is no visible challenge to the regime. Indicators of crime and civil strife have improved relative to 20 years earlier, but remain a significant negative factor, as does corruption. The outstanding feature of South Africa, captured by the rankings, has been the deterioration in the Gini index, recording a widening of the income gap, with all that that entails in terms of unfulfilled expectations and the permanent threat of radical politics.

It is economic policy that has yielded the most impressive results. Post-1994 governments demonstrated their commitment to open markets, privatisation and a favourable investment climate. The Motor Industry Development Plan (MIDP) was put together in consultation with the automotive industry. Lower tariffs enabled South Africa to develop as a manufacturing export platform to the left-hand drive markets, notably Japan. Manufacturing's share of total exports rose from 35 percent in 1994 to more than 50 percent now. Trade liberalisation policies prompted farms, mines and manufacturers to improve productivity, initially at the expense of local job creation. Facing stiffer competition, South Africa's corporations focused on core competences, unravelled cross-shareholdings, cut staff and went for shareholder value. South African breweries expanded abroad, while the major mining houses launched exploration drives throughout the continent.

What is particularly noticeable is the improvement in macro-economic performance. The government's flexible exchange rate, inflation and fiscal stances have been rewarded in terms of an upgrading of South Africa's status by the three major ratings firms. Despite a volatile foreign exchange rate, South Africa had, and continues to enjoy, a solid reputation for sound public finances. In the first decades of this millennium, growth rates rose significantly. In 1994, 80 percent of the budget was directed to 15 percent of the population. By 2007, the tax base had risen from 1.6 million, in 1996, to 5 million. In that time, 1.7 million jobs were created; 2.6 million homes were built; the number of homes with electricity doubled to nearly 9 million; 87 percent of people had access to running water. Over 14 million people were benefitting from welfare benefits, the largest welfare programme in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, the downsides in 2014 also remain conspicuous. The most important underlying trend in the two decades or so since the foundation of the new South Africa, as mentioned, has been the growth in inequality. One trade union report, of 2008, cites racial income disparities on class lines, where whites are reported as enjoying an average income 450 percent higher than blacks, while the Gini index, which records income distribution, actually reports a steep rise in income disparities since the handover of power. This has gone along with high continuing rates of un- and under-employment; an explosion in crime; and reported high levels of corruption.

What may one conclude? First, it is clear that in 2014 the new South Africa is still a work in progress. There have been three presidents, Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma, very different personalities, all with records that have been challenged at home by a free press. The ANC remains the dominant party-movement. The opposition parties exist, but neither they nor the ANC have successfully broken through the racial divisions of South African politics. What holds the fort in South Africa is the country's rich natural endowments; a reputable central bank and finance ministry; a worldclass financial centre in Johannesburg; some powerful corporations; good universities; a considerable and increasingly inclusive infrastructure; an independent-minded judiciary; a rapidly expanding black middle class, and a political and legal environment conducive to more equality in opportunity.

Second, there has been clear progress along many of the lines that the ANC originally dreamt of achieving. As averages go, South Africa is a middle-income country, and a member of BRICS (the high potential emerging markets of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Far from the isolation of apartheid, South Africa is deeply inserted in the global diplomatic network; is a target for inward investment; a beneficiary of the boom in raw material prices, with China now its prime trade partner; and is positively ranked in the World Bank's ease of doing business index. It is also a significant part of the world's Anglosphere. What is most noticeable, in 2014, is that an improved economic performance is underpinned by the constitutional state: in 1994, the constitutional state

was overwhelmingly the main positive feature of the country, while the main drag on the country's development was apartheid's economic legacy.

Third, popular expectations have inevitably been disappointed. For the years 2000 to 2012, growth averaged 3.6 percent per annum, against sub-Saharan Africa's 6.3 percent. Inequalities have risen, limiting thereby the potential of the domestic market, and registered in a lack of skills and wide gaps in health and education. Government programmes are held back by weak local government capabilities. Black businesses have prospered, but the commanding heights of the economy remain in white hands: under 10 percent of corporate assets in South Africa are in black ownership. There is also a sense that, while a new class of super rich has been created through the black empowerment programme, corruption has become a cancer that could destroy all that has been achieved. A token of this gap between expectations and wealth disparity is the rumbling debate about possible radicalisation of South African politics, leading to a Zimbabwe-type land grab, and the accompanying fear of a collapse in what remains a prosperous agricultural sector.

The conclusion must remain that the new South Africa has achieved much, but its achievements remain fragile. The one reason why moderate optimism is justified is that there is no serious challenge to the constitutional state by extra-constitutional forces. South Africa's messy constitutional democracy is the only game in town.

## **NEW DIALECTICS AND COUNTRY RISK**

Given this sketch of the South African case, where does this leave us in the debate about the reality of the world's diversity, and the necessity of us finding some common criteria against which to judge policy and performance? The argument here is that the world is converging and diverging simultaneously, not one or the other. Markets, communications or travel drive integration; differentiation is preserved and accentuated in terms of legacies or collective memories. The new world system to have emerged since 1990, in the course of the 1990s, is characterised by complementary opposites: a diversity of states in a non-homogeneous world, penetrated and shaped by global markets operating powerfully to create a more homogeneous world civilisation, alongside aspirations to create a system of global governance out of the world's existing institutional framework as the counterpart to a world of relentless competition between states, corporations or currencies. The impact of the world's driving forces on this system generates the ongoing process of transformation, which is captured by the juxtaposition of present prospects for an increasingly wealthy and inclusive world, as global civil society develops towards a higher civilisation, and a world of history where the forces of globalisation operate as a stimulant to divergence, to conflicts and to a ruthless competition between peoples, states and corporations. It is this double movement between the forces, driving towards the prospect of a radiant

future and the world's very divergent capabilities to adapt, that lie at the heart of the new dialectics in global affairs. Cold war dialectics was structured by the global configuration of the international system; the post-cold war dialectics is a global process working at the level of cultures, markets and politics.

In the case of South Africa, we may say that the country is converging on a set of criteria that are always up for discussion, given the ebb and flow of debate about appropriate policy in the global conversation. However, South Africa remains *sui generis*, comparable in many ways to many countries: to the UK, for instance, in terms of law, politics or finance; to The Netherlands, in terms of the Dutch Reformed Church and Roman Law; to Brazil in terms of its natural wealth and its race/class disparities; to India, in terms of the legacy bequeathed by Nehru and Mandela, two very different leaders, but convinced of the rightness of their cause that group politics was not the answer to the necessary modernisation of their countries. South Africa, in short, is different, like all other states and peoples, with their own histories and trajectories, which are not predestined to take one path or another, but from which there can be no escape.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion for our discussion of the international rankings industry is straightforward: there is a place for all the methods and insights developed. But the one approach, which is inappropriate, is that the rankings be taken as akin to the laws of physics – the disease of modern economics, and of econometricians who take their discipline too seriously. Country rankings cannot be scientific in the way that the physical sciences are. They are one tool, in the toolkit of the analyst, just as is the method of the historian or the results of the opinion pollster. The historian seeks to record to the best of his ability what happened in the past, while accepting the open challenge from his peers. He may be well armed in argument; but he does not speak *ex cathedra* on doctrine. He does not claim to speak truth. Likewise, the pollster records current opinion. In the context of country rankings, the rankings and indices are there as proxies to form a country profile of considered opinion as to where a country stands. No more, no less. For South Africa, the suggested conclusion from a reading of the rankings may be: well done; keep going; remember Nelson Mandela's statement that South Africa stands at the beginning of its future.

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**Jonathan Story** is Emeritus Professor of International Political Economy at INSEAD. He worked in Brussels and Washington. He has held the Marusi Chair of Global Business at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and is currently Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Graduate School of Business, Fordham University, New York.

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# CLASS DYNAMICS AND STATE TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Joel Netshitenzhe  
Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)

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## ABSTRACT

An attempt is made in this article to dissect the state of the South African state post-1994 as well as class dynamics that attach to the challenge of the liberation movement's ascendancy into formal organs of political power. In this regard, ideas presented in various fora are integrated.<sup>1</sup> Few issues have been selected 21<sup>st</sup> to illustrate the strategic challenges that South Africa faces as it strives to build a state that can speed up social transformation. For purposes of this treatise, it is not necessary to trace the evolution of the state as such – the Athenian and Spartan versions, the pre-colonial manifestations of social organisation as in the Mapungubwe and other African civilisations and the *mfecane* wars of nation-formation, or the rise of the colonial state in the geography today called South Africa. Nor is an attempt made to interrogate the Weberian, micro-foundational and Marxist theories of the state and their utility. Drawing from this tapestry, some generalisations are made on the state of our state today and its interplay with class dynamics, and the actions required to ensure that the state plays an

optimal role in leading the efforts to improve people's quality of life.

## CONCEPT OF THE STATE AND CLASS DYNAMICS WITHIN THE COLONIAL STATE

Why is the state central to social organisation, at least during particular periods in the evolution of human society? It has been argued quite cogently that the very existence of the state arises out of the need to manage social conflict. Friedrich Engels in his seminal work, *The origin of the family, private property and the state*, makes this assertion in the following manner:

The state is ... by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the ethical idea', 'the image and reality of reason', as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes



with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state.<sup>2</sup>

But should we infer one-directional causality between the level of development of economic organisation and industry, on the one hand, and instruments of social organisation, on the other? As many would argue, forms of social organisation can evolve and assume autonomous identities. Indeed, Engels himself makes this qualification in his *Letter to Bloch*.

According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – ... political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form.<sup>3</sup>

The evolution of the state in a unified South Africa bore all the hallmarks of a colonial imposition, promoting and protecting the material interests of the colonial settlers. The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 represented racial solidarity founded on dispossession, exclusion and repression of the black people. However, within this racial solidarity, and indeed reflecting what Engels in the *Letter to Bloch* refers to as "an infinite series of parallelograms of forces", various secondary contradictions played themselves out. While issues of language and culture were an important veneer, the essence of these tensions was about how to narrow the divide between numbers and real power, between the statuses of a ruling political elite and a ruling class. With the introduction of racially circumscribed "democracy", the Afrikaners, as the majority within the white community, ensured through corrective or affirmative action not only that their political dominance translated into general socio-economic benefits, they also sought to translate their position as the political ruling elite into becoming a full part of the ruling class across South Africa, that is, owners of the means of production beyond agriculture.

As this happened, and as is in the nature of the capitalist system, massive stratification also took place within the Afrikaner community, putting a strain on the nationalist project of mutual solidarity. Thus, the supposed communal nationalist cause had to be re-invented and rationalised afresh. In an article, entitled *Die Calvinistiese beskouing van die arbeid*<sup>4</sup> in the Journal, *Koers*, of

October 1946, the point is made by the ideologues of Afrikaner Nationalism about the white lower classes that:

No one's task is too humble, because in the national economy we are all members of one body, in which there is indeed a head and a heart, but also the lesser members without which the body would be crippled. There is nothing wrong with the types of work we do ... it is all needed to serve the church, the *volk* and the state.

One of the unique features that attach to this experience is that this political ruling elite had the possibility to use job reservation, land dispossession and other forms of racial discrimination and the super-exploitation of black people, to accord the white lower classes privileged status. This somewhat ameliorated the intra-communal tensions and delayed their acute manifestations, which later took the form of the intense *broedertwis* of the 1970s and beyond. Where is all this quasi-historical meandering leading to?

### **TRAGEDY OR FARCE OR NEITHER?**

In his observation on Hegel's remark "somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice", Karl Marx<sup>5</sup> says Hegel "forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce". And so, to become more explicit: contained in this experience of the Afrikaner nationalist movement are three illuminating dynamics about:

- firstly, the conduct of a political elite that is not as such the ruling class, using political office to capture part of the commanding heights of the economy, and for a section of this elite to ascend to higher socio-economic status
- secondly, how such progress can also be facilitated by the extant ruling class courting the political masters by ceding some of its economic power
- thirdly, how advancement of a supposedly communal nationalism, within a capitalist socio-economic formation, may benefit all its adherents somewhat, but in fact also results in a small minority rising to the very top, and thus generating disquiet within the nationalist broad front.

In other words, if this truncated account of the experience of Afrikaner nationalism does invoke familiar images about the present, it is because there are instructive parallels. At the centre of this is the question of the capture of political power by a coalition of forces in a "nationalist movement", its attempt within an unchanged (capitalist) socio-economic formation to use political power to re-order the distribution of income and wealth, and the stratification and tensions that ensue, as the elite within this political elite climb faster and higher in the economic stakes than the rest.

It can be argued that in the past 19 years, within an unchanged socio-economic formation, the South African black political elite has been striving to use political power to re-order the distribution of income and wealth.

The new elite, much like the Afrikaner elite did throughout the apartheid period, has been straining to use such power to ensure that the elite within the nationalist movement rises to become part of the ruling class, the owners of the means of production. The established white ruling class has, in turn, been courting this elite in various ways, thanks to post-apartheid transformation instruments such as black economic empowerment and affirmative action. As in the past, it is a begrudging compliance, but they are doing it all the same. Stratification and inequality have intensified within the black community; and the disquiet of the masses is manifesting on a grander scale than in the *broedertwis*, as reflected in the August 2012 Marikana tragedy and the ensuing mineworkers' and farmworkers' revolts. The challenge with these social dynamics is that the changing class structure within the black community, the bourgeoning of black middle and upper strata, is largely driven by the political project itself and consequently raises concerns of patronage and parasitic tendencies.

Another challenge is that these mainly first-generation middle and upper strata quite legitimately aspire to and pursue the artificially high standard of living of the white community. This endeavour is legitimate because it forms part of the project of social change and non-racial equality. Yet, unlike their white counterparts, these emergent middle strata do not have historically accumulated assets, and they have large nuclear and extended families to support.

As a consequence, they have to rely on massive debt and the windfall of patronage. Having dipped their toes into that lifestyle, but with no such historical assets as are available to the white middle and upper strata, some then try to acquire the resources by hook or by crook. Ascendancy to these higher rungs of the social ladder happens through a variety of channels, including:

- management positions in the civil service and state-owned enterprises
- 'streetwise' unemployed people who get into political leadership positions at local level and by the stroke of a pen become councillor or parliamentarian and migrate to the middle strata (of course, other streetwise peers then want to displace them in *phuma singene* mobilisation)
- the university student leadership where, besides perks attached to SRC positions, some student leaders now demand a seat in university tender committees to get kick-backs
- trade union leadership, which exercises authority over pension funds amounting to billions of rands, or even at shop-floor level where shop stewards can influence catering and other service tenders.

While there is a new crop of young black professionals and entrepreneurs who are rising on the social ladder only due to their skills and acumen and who do not require affirmative action, they are still the exception that proves the rule. In the main, the position of the emergent middle and upper strata is tenuous and insecure. The consequence of this

is that, unlike the middle strata in "mature" class societies, the *raison d'être* of these emergent strata is not so much pride in the professions, or engagement in discourse on the nation's vision, or the shaping of positive value systems for society, but rather, it is survival and climbing up the steep social ladder; or inversely the strongest impulse that drives their conduct is the fear of falling.

The "sins of incumbency" derive in large measure from this. Within parties, intra-party patronage and corruption take root. The political centre is unable to correct the local mediators to mass constituencies and the foot soldiers on whom it relies to garner votes. In pursuit of numbers, a price is attached to a conference delegate's vote. And, to paraphrase a lecturer at a Gauteng ANC political education workshop, a toxic leadership then begets toxic members, some of whom actually demand financial and other incentives to vote in particular ways. Within society, there develops among rabble-rousers, a nationalism of convenient victimhood, where radical slogans are used to hide incompetence and greed. The logic in this instance is: because you were oppressed or because you delivered at conference, you can mess up, steal and plunder, and shout racism or factional targeting when challenged. The entire apartheid project manifested similar narratives, *albeit* with particular undertones.

But it would be correct to pose the question: is such a comparison of the behaviour of the Afrikaner and post-1994 political elites not too simplistic? Even if we may

be dealing with dynamics within one socio-economic formation, aren't there nuances? Is this an inevitable course of a nationalist cause within a capitalist socio-economic formation? Without going into detail on the theorisation of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), which aims to create a National Democratic Society (NDS), it is critical to highlight the nuances, some of which may reflect qualitative contrasts. The African National Congress, and indeed the liberation movement at large, argue that the purpose of struggle was to resolve the basic contradictions spawned by apartheid colonialism: national oppression, class super-exploitation and gender discrimination. It is a nationalism of the oppressed that trumps narrow confines to embrace non-racial equality.

The NDR, it is argued, should result in the building of "... a society based on the best in human civilisation in terms of political and human freedoms, socio-economic rights, value systems and identity."<sup>6</sup> The economic system of a NDS would essentially be capitalist, "shorn of ... racial and gender exclusions ... and freed from barriers to entry and competition" and it will have:

a mixed economy, with state, cooperative and other forms of social ownership, and private capital. The balance between social and private ownership of investment resources will be determined on the balance of evidence in relation to national development needs and the concrete tasks of the NDR at any point in time.<sup>7</sup>

It is further emphasised, in the same document, that "[i]f there were to be any single measure of the civilising mission of the NDR, it would be how it treats the most vulnerable in our society". The results of Census 2011, and other data do underline the progress that has been made in improving the quality of life of the overwhelming majority of South Africans over the 19 years of democracy. One can quote instances such as the slight narrowing of the racial income gap, the extension of basic services to the majority of the population and a social wage unequalled in many parts of the world, the reduction of absolute poverty and the opening of access to opportunity undreamt of under apartheid colonialism.

Yet, the aggregates on the racial income gap conceal the income inequality within the black community, among others. There is also a need to drill deeper into the ebbs and flows of inequality trends within and among races even beyond income, which the grand narrative of Census 2011 may not fully clarify. Extension of access to basic services does not necessarily translate into quality of such services. Unemployment remains a terrible blot on the humanity of our society. While the state has played an important role as an instrument of redistribution, its effectiveness in this regard is hampered by poor capacity, patronage and corruption.

These are truths all South Africans are aware of, and there is consensus that the political economy, as currently configured, is unsustainable. To use the metaphor of colonialism of a special type: the pace at which the state

(and the new political elite) can address all these issues, as compared to the historical period referred to above, is also constrained by the reality that the current political elite cannot resort to, but should in fact eliminate, the super-exploitation of the masses in the "internal colony". Such super-exploitation previously made it possible for the white political elite to buttress the living standards of the white lower classes in the "internal metropolis". Besides, the inherited impoverishment of the black majority, compared to the "poor white problem" of yesteryear, is much more massive in terms of intensity and extensiveness. And so, we come back to the question, is the evolution of class dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa a tragedy, a farce or neither?

## **IN SEARCH OF A NEW DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY**

In the maelstrom of a political elite striving to rise to the status of a ruling class, in intimate embrace or shadow-boxing with the established white economic elite, and in the midst of mass disquiet and tragedies such as Marikana, we can be forgiven for the temptation to invoke, quite extensively, Karl Marx's observations after the 1871 defeat of the Paris Commune:<sup>8</sup>

During the subsequent regimes [*after the 1789 French Revolution – author*], the government, placed under parliamentary control ... became not only a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing taxes; with its irresistible allurements of place, pelf, and patronage, it became not only

the bone of contention between the rival factions and adventurers of the ruling classes, but its political character changed simultaneously with the economic changes of society ... After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief ... The bourgeois republicans, who, in the name of the February Revolution, took the state power, used it for the June [1848] massacres, in order to convince the working class that 'social' republic means the republic entrusting their social subjection, and in order to convince the royalist bulk of the bourgeois and landlord class that they might safely leave the cares and emoluments of government to the bourgeois 'republicans'... Under its sway, bourgeois society, freed from political cares, attained a development unexpected even by itself. ... [F]inancial swindling celebrated cosmopolitan orgies; the misery of the masses was set off by a shameless display of gorgeous, meretricious and debased luxury. The state power, apparently soaring high above society and the very hotbed of all its corruptions.

These observations by Marx, perhaps not entirely applicable to the state of our state today, do send a chilling reminder of what should not be; for the arrival of the worst in our body politic may not announce itself by knocking on the front door. It is an injunction that the national democratic state should urgently organise itself into an

effective instrument of rapid growth and development, or consign itself to monumental irrelevance as the democratic revolution strays from its course. For, without this, the state will be rejected as a mere dispensary of elite patronage, mocked as an instrument of pork-barrel regional or ethnic "delivery", and attacked as a defender of super-exploitation. By avoiding this, we shall escape the fate that befell the pre-colonial Mapungubwe "civilisation", which failed to negotiate the vicissitudes of environmental change, allowed social stratification to rend society apart, suffered marginalisation as new neighbouring "civilisations" emerged and trade routes changed, and failed to contain the excesses of a debased leadership.

South African leaders of transformation believe that there is a way out of the pedestrian economic growth and development in which we are currently trapped. This is reflected, in part, in the expression of intent to build a developmental state, in the manner of the so-called Asian tigers, which have historically sustained high rates of growth and social inclusion over decades, and thus lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. Such a state, it is argued, should have the strategic orientation for development, premised on the political will of the leadership to stake their all on a developmental project. It should have the legitimacy to mobilise society behind a vision and programmes to attain set objectives. Such a state should be optimally organised to meet its objectives; and it should have the technical capacity within the bureaucracy to bring its intentions to life.

We should, however, acknowledge that the trend in most of these Asian developmental states was to rely on the trickle-down economics of high growth rates. Further, in the earlier phases of the evolution of most of these polities, authoritarianism held sway. In contradistinction to this, South Africans assert that ours should be a democratic developmental state, and that social policy should continue to feature prominently as part of speeding up the drive for social inclusion or "developmental citizenship", values espoused in the country's Constitution which are inspired, among others, by the African Claims of 1943 and the Freedom Charter of 1955. The fact that the South African leadership is striving *a priori* to build a developmental state is itself a positive reflection on the commitment to deal with the social challenges we face. In the words of Professor Linda Weiss, for South Africa to have set itself

... the unusual and challenging goal of becoming a developmental state ... is a unique and noble enterprise: unique in so far as no state has ever self-consciously set out to become a Developmental State; and noble in so far as such a project draws inspiration from the experience of certain countries that achieved shared growth – growth with equity. Predatory states have appeared in abundance; developmental states are a much rarer breed.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of effort, two striking instances of progress deserve mention. Firstly, it is the adoption by Cabinet and endorsement by

Parliament and the "ruling party" of the National Development Plan (NDP), and the commitment that where there may be conflict between current policies and programmes and the NDP, the latter will take precedence. This is reinforced by the fact that all political parties and most of society also support Vision 2030 as elaborated in the NDP. Secondly, the setting up of formal monitoring and evaluation capacity and the performance agreements within the executive that attach to this have the potential to increase accountability and, thus, the implementation of what has been decided upon. If there was any urgent challenge to address in this regard, it would be ensuring that these latest initiatives are effectively operationalised and become truly embedded across all spheres of government.

## **WILL AND CAPACITY**

The question has been raised quite legitimately whether, beyond declarations, there is the will and the capacity to implement the National Development Plan. This question should be approached differently: so popular and so legitimate should the NDP be that, in the election hustings in 2014, the basic question posed to all parties should be how their manifestos accord with Vision 2030, and what, concretely, they are going to do in the five years of their mandate to ensure that it is implemented. And the performance of government should be monitored against that yardstick. In other words, all of society should be the guardians of, and active participants in, ensuring that the NDP is implemented. What are the critical actions

that success in implementing a development plan requires, and how are the South African state and society at large faring in this regard? To cite a few of these: The first one is about a social compact. Professor Thandika Mkandawire, a leading development scholar, elaborates this notion thus:

Social compacts refer to the institutionalisation of consultation and cooperation on economic policy involving representation from the state, capital, labour and other organisations of civil society. Social compacts have been used to address distributive and growth objectives of society at the micro-level; to improve labour management at the firm level and, as in the current usage of "social pacts" in Europe, to manage the distributional issues of macroeconomics policies ... The proactive initiatives emerge when societies aim at a future objective that requires high levels of cooperation and trust ... and is evoked when nations seek to embark on ambitious projects that require coordination and co-operation in both the political and economic spheres. Nation-building and economic development are good examples of such efforts ... Social compacts play an important role in such situations to assure citizens that their current sacrifices will be duly and fairly rewarded in the future.<sup>10</sup>

As such, in our situation, a social compact will have to be pro-active and all-embracing, covering such issues as investment, employment and income policy, interest rates, inflation and cost of living, competition policy, spatial issues and so on. It will require commitment on the part of all sectors of society

to facilitate high economic growth and social inclusion, encompassing the totality of things required progressively to attain a decent standard of living for all. This demands activism across all sectors, and preparedness on the part of the broad leadership to weigh trade-offs and to make choices for the common good. It requires the will and the acumen to eschew narrow self-interest; and leadership capacity to accept and communicate decisions that may not entirely be popular with one's own constituency.

It is, therefore, critical to avoid the danger of devaluing the notion of a social compact by confining it merely to immediate responses to a wave of strikes or even short-term measures to minimise the impact of the current global economic crisis. This is one of the weaknesses of the outcome of the 2012 High Level Dialogue on the Economy, besides the fact that it did not at all refer to Vision 2030 and the NDP. The second issue is about coherence in policy development and coordination. Researchers on developmental states caution that we should not expect an artificial homogeneity within as large an organisation as the state. In the words of Linda Weiss:

The state is not a unitary structure like an orange where all the segments fit neatly together. As a complex of political institutions, states are actually quite messy configurations ... As power structures, we say that they are polymorphous. So the state may well be free-market in one sphere (like finance), yet developmental in another (e.g. industry and technology),



a promoter of free trade in some sectors (financial services), yet mercantilist in others (agriculture or textiles).<sup>11</sup>

But all scholars of developmentalism do correctly argue that, precisely because states are "messy configurations", one of the most critical and necessary attributes of a developmental state is a central institution, a pilot agency, with the strategic capacities, leverages and authority to drive economic policy and ensure its implementation. One of the weaknesses in the South African state currently is the multiplicity of centres from which economic policy is driven – Economic Development, Trade and Industry, National Treasury, Public Enterprises and so on – with each actually believing that it is the ultimate authority. As such, we run the danger of re-living the words of Alexei Tolstoy<sup>12</sup> in his epic work, *Ordeal*:

The hurricane of events roared and the sea of humanity swayed. Everyone considered himself commander, and flourishing his pistol directed that the helm be turned now to port and now to starboard. All this was illusion ... The illusions were born of brief glimpses of the mirage.

The third issue is the balancing act by the state in providing societal leadership: what Peter Evans<sup>13</sup> refers to as "embedded autonomy". On the one hand, the state should be so networked across society as to be able to exercise ideational leadership or what Antonio Gramsci refers to as "hegemony". On the other hand, the state should be buttressed

by a professional bureaucracy that is insulated from undue political interference and patronage. The state as a whole should have the will to break logjams in the interactions among various sectors of society – to prevent narrow sector interests paralysing the capacity of society to move forward. In a society such as ours, with wide social fissures, deadlocks among social partners should be expected. While the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) was set up primarily to resolve critical issues among these partners, it has become fossilised in its approach; each constituency pursues frozen mandates; representation has been juniorised and the interactions are technocratic.

For example, earlier paralysis around interventions to deal with youth marginalisation, and the proposed youth wage subsidy in particular, reflects this malaise. In other words, the state can become too indecisive to act autonomously of interest groups. At the same time, informal forums of interaction such as the Working Groups of government and a variety of other social partners have been jettisoned, worsening levels of mistrust across society. The last issue is about the state's sources of legality and legitimacy. On the face of it, issues of legality and legitimacy should not arise in the context of our state, given the generations of rights that the Constitution proffers, the separation of powers and the institutions to protect and enforce these rights. But in the context of tragedies like Marikana and the 2012 mine and farm workers' revolts, as well as many instances of confrontation

between the police and demonstrators, we may need to drill deeper to assess whether, unsighted, there aren't worms eating into the very edifice of the state colossus.

And so, beyond the constitutional and formal legalities, we need to examine the sturdiness of the system of rule of law in relation to the most ordinary of citizens all the way to the highest echelons of society. When strikers and demonstrators carry weapons and, in fact, murder others with impunity; and when an impression is created that court orders are not honoured, we need to ponder whether the "threat of threat", combined with civilised and intelligent conduct, that should underpin state hegemony is not in fact hollow – ready to unravel in insidious but profoundly destructive ways.

We need to examine how the intent and capacity to provide services by all spheres of government impact on the legitimacy of the state. Needless to say, because of the levels of poverty and inequality in our society, an unavoidable feature of our nation, for a long time to come, will be the inflammable tinder ever ready to catch fire. In some cases, it may not be actual "delivery" that douses the fires of expectation, but the evidence of general progress and the hope that tomorrow will be better than today, as well as visible and effective measures to deal with corruption and patronage.

Where, as in the Marikana informal settlement, the social wage is virtually non-existent – with both the state and the

mine-owners seemingly having washed their hands – the lack of hope is the spark that sets the tinder alight.

We need to examine whether our theoretical distinction between government and the state, as well as between the state and societal leaders, does matter in terms of the legitimacy of the state and the broader socio-economic formation. As such, unethical conduct by leaders in government, business, the trade union movement and the rest of civil society, impressions of lack of respect for public resources, and the ostentation of the elite delegitimise not only the party political and societal leadership, but also the state as such.

We need to do all this appreciating that ours is essentially a capitalist system, with a state that seeks, through developmental programmes, to bridge deep and wide fissures inherited from the system of internal colonialism. As the ruling elite, quite naturally, seeks to raise itself and those in its courtyard to the position of the ruling class, failure to more effectively socialise the benefits of economic growth has the potential to unleash a conflagration a million times more destructive than the *broedertwis* of yesteryear.

The reconfiguration of this capitalist system should entail more than just the racial dimension at elite level, the so-called black economic empowerment to which "economic transformation" is usually reduced. The time has come, in addition to all the other programmes of economic

transformation, for the political ruling elite and the ruling class, together to contribute to forging stakeholder capitalism in which the working class is a real beneficiary.

The aim in raising this matter is not to delve into various aspects of economic transformation, ranging from the structure of the economy, efficiency and cost of infrastructure, skills training, the multifaceted role of the state and so on. It is merely to emphasise that, at the core of the ownership component of economic empowerment programmes going forward, in mining, manufacturing, services and other industries, there should be meaningful employee share-ownership schemes (ESOPs) and community participation, which should be emphasised above all other ownership elements of BBBEE. This should be part of our contemplation on the place and role of labour: *die beskouing van die arbeid* of the current age.

## CONCLUSION

This then is the central message: the state of the South African state and its legitimacy cannot be divorced from the state and legitimacy of the socio-economic system that it manages, and the conduct of the elite beneficiaries of this system. Is the extant and aspirant ruling class capable of behaving as more than just "a class in itself" but also as "a class for itself"? Is it capable of identifying and pursuing broader societal interests, and co-operating in forging a social compact for its own long-term benefit? As Professor Thandika Mkandawire and other accomplished African scholars have suggested, this perhaps is one of the crucial questions of the political economy of our times that researchers on our continent need to interrogate. Addressing this, and other issues, will be critical in defining the trajectory of the South African state and society at large in going forward.

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**Joel Netshitenzhe** is the Executive Director of Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)—a Think-Tank rated as one of the top ten globally, according to the 2013 Report of Global Go-To Think Tanks. Netshitenzhe was the Head of Communication in President Nelson Mandela's Office. He later became the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) and Head of Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) in The Presidency. He is a member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the African National Congress (ANC)—a governing party in South Africa.

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# STATE ATTRIBUTES: SOUTH AFRICA AS A DECLARATORY DEVELOPMENTAL STATE THROUGH DIKTAT?

Chris Landsberg  
University of Johannesburg

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## ABSTRACT

South Africa a developmental state? South Africa has since the dawn of democracy in 1994, and the assumption of power of the African National-led government, struggled to come up with a unique and workable state-led development model that would help it to confront the legacies of apartheid. By 2004, one decade into the post-apartheid era, it began to play with the idea of transforming the Republic into a developmental state, and this debate drew much fascination and interest. Having learnt some tough lessons from its GEAR experience, and public reactions to this contentious trajectory, the Mbeki government approached its second term with confidence, and wasted little time in introducing one of the most important debates in post-apartheid South Africa, the idea that South Africa wished to become a developmental state. Henceforth, the Republic would embark on a new developmental path, one that would seek to openly challenge the Washington consensus, and to bring the state firmly back in. It would start the long and painstaking process of transforming

South Africa into a developmental state, (led by the African National Congress). This intention has since been reflected in speeches and communiqués by top government officials. Government hoped to transcend the sterile capitalism-vs-socialism debate with the introduction of this new development path. It would learn lessons from the experiences of the East-Asian Tigers of the 1960s and 1970s, as opposed to the obsession with Western development experiences and models.

It was in his 2004 *State of the Nation Address* that President Thabo Mbeki declared these government intentions. Determined to overcome apartheid's devastating legacies, and convinced that to pursue a developmental path as a means of realising this strategic goal, Mbeki declared that government had crafted a new "comprehensive programme to grow the economy". Having depicted South Africa as a country of "two economies" and "two races", with one of these racialised economies being largely poor and black, and the other predominantly white and prosperous, Mbeki vowed that his government

would pursue "interventions in both the first and second economies". The Jacob Zuma government has now appropriated the idea of South Africa as a "capable developmental state" and has hinged all its bets on the much-vaunted National Development Plan (NDP). The question that remains is when the South African government can move beyond stated policy and rhetoric and focus on the hard-nosed business of process and institution-building as it seeks to become this capable developmental state. South Africa may soon learn that a developmental state is not one that comes about through declarations, fiats and diktats. Instead, it is the result of a long, drawn out process that comes about through following meticulous benchmarks and criteria that need constant cementing and re-cementing.

## **INTRODUCTION**

States are key players in world affairs, because states enjoy power and they have the ability to influence others and to control outcomes, so as to produce results that would not have otherwise occurred. States have power vis-à-vis each other, and towards those under their control. Mingst's discussion of the nature of state power provides a useful point of departure for our examination of the determinants of foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> There are three basic sources or ingredients of state power: natural sources, tangible sources, and intangible sources. Natural sources refer to geography, natural resources and population, while tangible sources refer to industrial development. The intangible sources are national image, public

support and leadership. People within states have images of their own power potential.

When we talk about state attributes, we are referring to state characteristics that shape national foreign policy behaviour, such as its size, wealth and the extent to which its leaders are accountable to its citizens. Kegley identifies four state characteristics that shape foreign policy. Note that there is some overlap between these attributes and the sources of state power discussed above. You could integrate the two sets of determinants of foreign policy. Kegley highlights four state attributes: geopolitics (cf. with Mingst's natural sources, specifically geography); military capabilities, which limit a state's availability of prudent foreign policy choices; economic conditions (compare with Mingst's tangible sources); the level of economic and industrial development a state enjoys affects the foreign policy goals it pursues; and type of government (cf. Mingst's intangible sources). A final important attribute affecting a state's international behaviour is its political system.<sup>2</sup>

In this article, we will focus on South Africa and zero in on two of Kegley's attributes: (1) the type of government and state that South Africa wishes to bring about, and (2) the prevailing socio-economic conditions in South Africa and how these militate against its desires to become the state its political governing elite wish it to become. South Africa a developmental state! Really? The Republic's leaders have taken the unusual step of declaring itself a developmental state, that type of state that Chalmers Johnson,

one of the doyens of the idea, epitomised as a state that is able to "plan rationally".<sup>3</sup> It is a state, he said, in which "the politicians reign and the bureaucrats rule".<sup>4</sup> In doing its "rational" planning, such a state is able to set "substantive social and economic goals",<sup>5</sup> and more importantly, put in place the state apparatuses that would enable it to realise such goals. In line with Johnson's point here, Thandika Mkandawira argued that a developmental state is one that is able to set developmental goals and is willing to create and sustain a policy climate and an institutional structure that promotes development.<sup>6</sup>

Writing at the turn of the millennium in 1999, analyst Woo-Cummings wrote about the developmental state: it is "neither socialist...nor free market...but something different: the plan-rational capitalist Developmental State...[which links intervention with rapid economic growth]".<sup>7</sup> It is probably the post-capitalist-post-socialist ideological underpinnings of this state form, one that would be able to intervene in the economy and drive the market, that attracted South Africa's post-settlement government to start, just one decade into the new order, with this design as a means of getting it out of the mire caused by centuries of white minority domination and decades of apartheid. The idea grew in traction after Thabo Mbeki's first term as head of state, and the start of his second term in 2004. Indeed, the decision in 2004 by the Thabo Mbeki government to place the idea of a developmental state firmly on the policy agenda did not fall from the sky. South Africa had, since the dawn of democracy in 1994, searched

for an appropriate development model that would help it to address apartheid's devastating socio-economic legacies. It started first with the crafting of a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), with its aims of job creation, economic growth, housing development and addressing the health crisis, including HIV/Aids.<sup>8</sup> The problem government had to confront was that the RDP was not a real development strategy; it was at best a visionary document with a wish-list of aims. By 1996, the RDP was supplemented with the controversial and much-debated Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy, a thoroughgoing neo-classical strategy that sought to overcome "the challenges of the second economy".<sup>9</sup> GEAR's aims were to eradicate poverty, reduce unemployment and create jobs, fight crime and build the capacity of state.<sup>10</sup>

The next seven years following the introduction of GEAR – including the first four years of the Thabo Mbeki government (1999-2004) – saw a South African polity tense and polarised, with debates around the appropriateness of GEAR as an appropriate development model for the Republic. Civil society organisations labelled GEAR a neo-liberal scheme pursued by government. Left-leaning civil society actors, notably the labour federation (the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)), and other social movements were pitted against government and industry around GEAR debates. As 2004 and the second term of Mbeki approached, something was going to give, and many observers waited with

anticipation to see what direction government would take.

## **ENTER THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE DEBATE**

Concerned by the apparent failure of GEAR to realise its goals, the government was looking for models and solutions that would give economic growth and job creation a proverbial "big push". Mbeki's Minister of Finance at the time, Trevor Manuel, entered the debate when he declared government's strategic intentions to "accelerate the pace of growth and job creation and extend the scope of development and empowerment."<sup>11</sup> Manuel was emphatic: the post-2004 government would pursue a "changed trajectory", that of "a more agile state and more vigilant state institutions."<sup>12</sup>

Mbeki made sure that the developmental state discourse would enjoy the buy-in and blessing of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and, by the end of 2004, this movement was able to assert that "the state everywhere, including in our country and the rest of Africa, should discharge its responsibilities to the people, fully understanding that development without an effective state is impossible".<sup>13</sup> The state was brought back in and out frontally in the debate.

By 2005, the Mbeki government opted to back up its developmental state vision with a strategy that would give practical expression to the aspiration. Government adopted the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGI-SA),

a broad modernisation framework of steps to raise the levels of growth to much higher levels.<sup>14</sup> It focused on<sup>15</sup> building infrastructure to grow the capacity of the economy; boosting sectors of the economy with special potential for faster growth; developing the requisite skills; addressing inequalities that marginalised the poor in the second economy; continuing with the policies that had created a good climate for growth; and making government more effective and more efficient.

It is clear, from the above, that Mbeki and his government were concerned about the need to bring about in South Africa a strong, technocratic state committed to fast industrial growth. These are typical concerns in a developmental state. A key focus of ASGI-SA was to deal with, and remove, a set of binding constraints that inhibited faster growth – a theme in line with Mbeki's modernisation project.<sup>16</sup> These constraints were currency volatility and macro-economic stability; cost and efficiency of the national logistics system; skills shortages; high levels of inequality; barriers to competing in the sector; the regulatory environment for small and medium sized enterprises; and deficiencies in the capacities of government and parastatals. It should be remembered that by 2004 the Mbeki government firmly placed onto the policy agenda the question of a developmental state, that is to say a fast growing state with a meritocratic civil service that would prioritise education, skills development and healthcare, and engage society around a common development programme and agenda.<sup>17</sup>



By the time of the ANC's Polokwane Congress of December 2007, the developmental state debate was well-institutionalised within the country. The African National Congress 2007 *Strategy and Tactics* document was quite up-front about its ambitions: it declared its intentions "to build a developmental state shaped by the history and socio-economic dynamics of South African society. Such a state", said the ANC, "will guide national economic development and mobilise domestic and foreign capital and other social partners to achieve this goal".<sup>18</sup> In the ANC's scheme, such a developmental state "will have attributes that include capacity to intervene in the economy in the interest of higher rates of growth and sustainable development; effecting sustainable programmes that address challenges of unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment with requisite emphasis on vulnerable groups; and mobilising the people as a whole, especially the poor, to act as their own liberators through participatory and representative democracy".<sup>19</sup> The ANC clearly took as a given the requisite of a developmental state and its ability to "intervene in the economy". It was equally confident about its apparent ability, through developmental state tactics, to address the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

All the promises of change away from the Mbeki trajectory proved to be just that: promises. Instead of moving away from the Mbeki posture, the Zuma government continued along Mbeki's developmental path, so much so that the new administration proclaimed, in July 2009, that it was committed

to "build(ing) a developmental state."<sup>20</sup> Just like the Mbeki government's developmental agenda, the new Zuma administration is placing the emphasis on improving state capacity for growth and development. Further priorities for the new administration include improving the delivery and quality of public services; building partnerships with society for equitable development; and strengthening democratic institutions.

### **SO WHAT IS A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE?**

In spite of its relatively late introduction into the public policy discourse in South Africa, the concept of a developmental state is fast becoming one of the most over-used words in the national discourse, and one of the problems is that key role players prefer an *a la carte* approach to South Africa becoming one. Many people have much to say about this new-fangled concept; few, however, have a real grasp of what exactly it means. Let us proceed here to try and give some meaning to this concept. In its most basic sense, the concept of a developmental state denotes a state that is able to direct development, and to get its society to support and follow a particular development trajectory. It is thus a state that endeavours to steer economic development in a particular direction and determine the pace at which such economic progression is achieved. According to Bagchi, a developmental state "is a state that puts economic development as the top priority of government policy and is able to design effective instruments to promote such a goal."<sup>21</sup> The economic growth

dimension is so key to the developmental state debate that you cannot have such a state without this component, or without any other of the components for that matter. The developmental state must create new state institutions that will act as agents in the quest for long-term development; it must facilitate the establishment of relationships between traditional and unconventional players within the economy; and the state must be innovative and capitalise on new opportunities for trade due to the positive impact that an outward-orientated economy has on internal growth. Government and state agencies again cannot simply follow an *a la carte* approach to this challenge and pursue this task half-heartedly and in piecemeal fashion; there has to be unreserved dedication to pursuing this goal, as there has to be unwavering commitment to pursue all the other prerequisites to the project.

A developmental state furthermore places a high premium on education, as it seeks to efficiently utilise human capital so as to achieve growth.<sup>22</sup> Indeed education and health are major policy priorities to be championed by the government, and South Africa faces enormous backlogs in these areas caused, in the main, by decades of apartheid health and Bantu education. One of the doyens of the concept, Peter Evans, identified a number of key characteristics of the developmental state. For Evans, a developmental state is broadly characterised by<sup>23</sup> a preoccupation with bringing forth rapid, sustainable economic growth; a well-developed, meritocratic bureaucracy, which is efficient, possesses capacity, and is

relatively autonomous in relation to the state and the political elite; existence of a "pilot agency", a navigating unit, often a super ministry, within the governmental bureaucracy, tasked with driving and co-ordinating the developmental process; and devotion to the public interest and the welfare of the public sphere. This is illustrated by the prioritisation of the expansion of social infrastructure and human capital by placing issues such as education and health high up on the developmental agenda; and embedded autonomy, which is defined as the concrete set of social ties that binds the state to society and provides institutionalised channels for continual negotiation of goals and policies.

Elsewhere, Evans argued that, "in order to be 'developmental', a 21<sup>st</sup> century developmental state must be a capability-enhancing state".<sup>24</sup> Evans continued to argue that "expanding the capabilities of the citizenry is not just a 'welfare' goal. It is the inescapable foundation for sustained growth in overall GDP".<sup>25</sup> The key point to stress here is that a developmental state comes about due to a staunch following of all these criteria, not cherry-picking which ones we like and which ones we would like to discard. The elements identified by Evans do not represent some variety menu; they form a comprehensive package of essentials that states must commit to work towards. Linking to the conceptualisations of Chalmers, Evans and others, Vusi Gumede advanced a working definition: "A developmental state is [a state] that is active in pursuing its developmental agenda, maintains strategic relations with stakeholders, and has the capacity and

is appropriately organised for its predetermined developmental objectives".<sup>26</sup>

In all the depictions of a developmental state, the emphasis on a strong, technocratic state is central to the debate here. State autonomy and state embeddedness, in other words, the insulation of the state from being captured by narrow self-interests of elites, is key here. The quest for fast growth and strong elements of industrialisation is just as important in the case of a developmental state. What South Africa urgently requires, that is central to a developmental state, is to promote visionary leadership, a meritocratic civil service, the ability to plan "rationally" and, more interestingly, to implement policies effectively and show major concern for, and commitment to, national development goals. How would South Africa fair on this score?

### **SOUTH AFRICA'S A LA CARTE, DECLARATORY APPROACH TO BECOMING A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

The foregoing reveals that South Africa's shift towards a developmental state was firmly placed on the agenda in 2004, and has since remained a policy priority. It is also worth pointing out that significant progress had been achieved *en route* to this emerging paradigm. For example, there has emerged, over the course of the past six years or so, general ideological consensus among interested stakeholders around the idea of such a developmental state trajectory. But there also continues to be significant stumbling

blocks confronting South Africa as it seeks to embark on this new path. To cite but one example, there continues to be tensions between those perceived to be emphasising growth, and those who appear to place the emphasis on greater levels of state activism.

Space does not permit a treatise of all the features of a developmental state, and their application to the case of South Africa. The article settles for an assessment of the much vaunted National Planning Commission (NPC), asking whether the establishment of the NPC places South Africa firmly *en route* to becoming a fully-fledged developmental state. Specifically, the author is interested in assessing whether the NPC has the makings of becoming a navigating unit. As Omano Edigheji reminds us, "planning agencies, often referred to as super-ministries, are vital institutions of developmental states".<sup>27</sup> "Over recent decades," argued Edigheji, "every state that aspired to become a developmental state established a planning agency within the state." In short, the question is whether the recently established NPC can be regarded as a navigating unit that leads and co-ordinates South Africa's developmental goals.

For the first year of the new post-April 2009 presidency, much debate about policy decision-making in the Zuma government focused on the NPC. The purpose of the NPC, according to the former Minister in the Presidency responsible for National Planning, Trevor Manuel, would be "to prevent government from being trapped in its own institutional preconceptions."<sup>28</sup> According to

Manuel, South Africa was in need of a "long-term perspective, focus and determination to realise our vision"; the issues of "growth and development, strengthening of institutions, nation-building and the making of a developmental state" were dubbed "long-term projects."<sup>29</sup>

In September 2009, the Presidency released its Green Paper on National Strategic Planning, which recognised that "two striking weaknesses in government are the lack of a coherent plan and poor co-ordination."<sup>30</sup> It identified the need for "better long-term planning to inform shorter-term plans, resource allocation, trade-offs and the sequencing of policies."<sup>31</sup> In creating a rationale for its existence, the Green Paper asserted that "markets alone cannot initiate and lead such fundamental change. The state has to play a leading role in reshaping the economy so that it is better able to meet the needs of the majority."<sup>32</sup> It recognised that "there are also substantial vulnerabilities in the capabilities of the state, and state failures are as harmful to poverty-reduction as are market failures."<sup>33</sup> It clearly stated that constructing a developmental state was not an event, but a process. In the words of the discussion document, "the construction of a developmental state cannot happen by decree, nor is it a single event. It is an ongoing process of building intelligent public institutions."<sup>34</sup> It stated further that such a process of constructing a developmental state "is about building a culture of caring public services, of prudent conduct and honest interaction with society."<sup>35</sup> It is a fast developing state, able to meet its development goals. Countries that

have developed rapidly, argued the Green Paper on Strategic Planning, have had three critical characteristics:<sup>36</sup> rapid economic growth; education and skills development; and high quality, strong and credible public and private institutions.

In order to meet its goal of bringing about a developmental state, there was a need to ensure "policy coherence, policy co-ordination and performance monitoring and evaluation". The Green Paper cautioned that "fragmented policymaking can lead to duplication of efforts and contradictory outcomes."<sup>37</sup> It described coordination as "essentially about ensuring that government as a whole can develop and effectively pursue its objectives and priorities through a myriad of institutions, spheres, agencies and public corporations."<sup>38</sup> According to the Green Paper, many, if not all, of government's objectives – for instance, increasing employment, reducing poverty and improving skills – would require the interaction of several departments, all three spheres, national, provincial, and local, numerous public entities and state-owned enterprises.

The international dimension also featured in the Zuma government's plans, as the Presidency sought to learn from international experiences and other countries that have experimented with planning departments over the decades. The Presidency conducted research in the form of country studies, and in some instances visits, on planning in a range of countries, including Malaysia, South Korea, Brazil, India, Botswana, Tunisia, Nigeria, Chile and Sudan. The research

undertaken by the Presidency showed that the rationale for national strategic planning, in many of these countries, stemmed largely from a number of structural considerations, including complex challenges faced by modern societies; uncertainty and turbulence in the global environment; and the long lead-times required to transform a society's socio-economic structure and culture.

What about structures and entities involved in the Planning Commission? In recognition that strategic planning is a broad process involving multiple institutions, government decided to recognise, and establish, where they did not already exist, five key planning institutions, namely, Cabinet; the President's Co-ordination Council; a National Planning Commission (consisting of external commissioners); a Ministerial Commission on Planning (to provide guidance and support to the planning function); and a Secretariat (to support the work of the commission).

The NPC would be responsible for developing a national plan for South Africa in consultation with government, and "in partnership with society"; it will consist of respected intellectuals, leaders and experts in South Africa, and the Minister for National Planning will be the chair.<sup>39</sup> The NPC will be a permanent institution with part-time commissioners, and its mandate will be updated and renewed annually. The minister will work with the Commission in conducting research and developing papers on critical trends that would feed into government's policy and planning processes. Expert panels will advise government on issues such as

food security, water security, energy choices, economic development, human resources development, social cohesion, health profiles, scientific progress, and international relations and cooperation.

The Ministerial Committee on Planning, for its part, will be established to provide collective input into planning. This Committee is appointed by the President, and the President and Deputy President are ex-officio members of this structure. The Minister in the Presidency for National Planning feeds the work of the NPC into government and Cabinet through the ministerial committee. The committee's overarching role will be to<sup>40</sup> provide political guidance to the planning process; support the planning ministry in driving strategic planning; and ensure consistent and integrated policies and programmes across multiple layers of policy-making, planning and implementation.

The Ministry of National Planning will contain the Secretariat to the NPC, and the former Policy Communication and Advisory Services in the Presidency (PCAS) will serve as the Secretariat. The Secretariat will support the Commission's work and do background work on the commission's needs to fulfil its objectives. While the objectives and institutional design of the NPC had been clearly spelled out, there was a major political fallout in tripartite alliance ranks over the establishment of a Ministry in the Presidency for National Planning and, in particular, the appointment of the first Minister, Trevor Manuel, to head that Ministry. It is clear that the fallout had to do with major suspicions

between the so-called Mbeki and Zuma camps in government, and Trevor Manuel was viewed by COSATU and the SACP as an Mbeki loyalist who was bent on turning the NPC and his Ministry into some super structure. COSATU, in particular accused Manuel of wishing to dominate macro-economic policymaking, and of continuing to foster "neo-liberal" policies, which, according to them, was the hallmark of policy during the Mbeki years. This they dubbed the "1996 class project", named after the establishment of the macro-economic policy, Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR).<sup>41</sup>

Some in the ANC have accused COSATU and the SACP of wishing to impose a socialist agenda on the ANC. President Zuma was even accused by some in his own ranks of having succumbed to leftist pressures on a number of decisions since he became president.<sup>42</sup>

While this tug of war between the two alliance partners and some in the ANC was playing itself out, Zuma's silence was conspicuous, and his only direct intervention was to seek legal advice. Weeks went by without the president taking a stand or trying to calm the waters in this feuding battle. Zuma was trying to extricate himself from the firing line, and did not wish to be seen to choose between camps that were both instrumental in elevating him to the highest office in the land. Critics interpreted this as indecisiveness and said that tensions would grow in the years to come, because of Zuma's lack of assertiveness. While the interregnum persisted, valuable time was

lost in the establishment of the much needed super ministry. Because of this vacuum in political leadership, as opposed to the core leadership that is required in a developmental state, we saw a growing battle for political and economic control of the ruling party, and this even threatened to spill over into matters of government and state in the years to come.

### **2009: THE JACOB ZUMA-LED ADMINISTRATION AND THE SEARCH FOR A CAPABLE, DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

The Jacob-Zuma-led administration's commitment to position South Africa as a developmental state became apparent in the institutionalisation of the National Planning Commission (NPC).

The purpose of the NPC, according to Manuel, would be "to prevent government from being trapped in its own institutional preconceptions". South Africa was in need of a "long-term perspective, focus and determination to realise our vision"; the issues of "growth and development, strengthening of institutions, nation-building and the making of a developmental state" were dubbed "long-term projects".

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allocation, trade-offs and the sequencing of policies".<sup>44</sup> In making a rationale for its existence, the Green Paper asserted that "markets alone cannot initiate and lead such fundamental change. The state has to play a leading role in reshaping the economy so that it is better able to meet the needs of the majority."<sup>45</sup> It is a fast developing state, able to meet its development goals. Countries that have developed rapidly, argued the Green Paper on Strategic Planning, have had three critical characteristics:<sup>46</sup> rapid economic growth; education and skills development; and high quality, strong and credible public and private institutions.

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The Ministerial Committee on Planning, for its part, would be established to provide collective input into planning. This Committee would be appointed by the President. The President and Deputy President were to be ex-officio members of the committee. The Minister in the Presidency for National Planning was to feed the work of the NPC into government and Cabinet through the ministerial committee. The committee's overarching role would be to<sup>52</sup> provide political guidance to the planning process; support the planning ministry in driving strategic planning; and ensure consistent and integrated policies and programmes across multiple layers of policymaking, planning and implementation. As already stated above, while the objectives and institutional

design of the NPC had been clearly spelled out, there was what I call the "Polokwanisation" of this issue, manifested in the major fallout and tension within the ranks of the ruling alliance, which came as a direct result of that 2007 ANC congress.<sup>53</sup> While these tensions, examples of which are provided above, were playing themselves out, it was difficult to gauge the views of Zuma on these matters. One interpretation was that he was highly indebted to the alliance partners for their role in helping to challenge Mbeki and securing the former president's recall, and for helping to elevate him to the presidency. The SACP leader, and Minister of Higher Education, Blade Nzimande, was accused by ANC NEC member, Billy Masetl, of trying to control the direction of government. With some in the ANC seeking to fight back against attempts of a leftist takeover, the SACP accused them of trying to liquidate them.<sup>54</sup>

Tensions in alliance quarters were not confined to disagreements over the role of Trevor Manuel in government. There were also bitter feuds over economic policy, and tensions between the Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, and newly appointed Minister for Economic Development, Ebrahim Patel. Gordhan was later shifted to the Ministry of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. He was replaced by Nhlanhla Nene, who too was replaced by David van Rooyen. Following public outrage against the appointment of Van Rooyen to the Ministry of Finance, Gordhan was brought back to this Ministry. Van Rooyen took over the Ministry of Co-operative Governance and traditional

Affairs from Gordhan. All these happened recently. Let's revert back to the tension of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economic Development. So serious did these tensions become that Zuma had to seek legal advice on who was responsible for economic policy.<sup>55</sup> What made the President's role so curious was that he created new positions in government, including those of Minister in the Presidency for National Planning and Minister for Economic Development, in efforts to ease tensions and suspicions in alliance ranks, only to find that these new positions actually helped to heighten tensions.

Not only did the NPC metamorphose into something other than the desperately needed super ministry, but it was patently clear that the social compacting, needed to help construct a developmental state, was at an all-time low, and the fractures and schisms between social partners had become even deeper than during the Mbeki era.

## **TOWARDS A CAPABLE, DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

By 2012, we saw yet another attempt at tabling a mode of the ANC-led government's search for a rational governance-cum-development model. The government had released its much anticipated National Development Plan (NDP), supposedly to give details about how government would give practical expression to the developmental state concept, and how it would place the emphasis on implementation. As it continued to struggle to introduce its rational



governance model, it began to recognise openly that the issue of state capacity and implementation capability had become a huge challenge confronting the government. In the words of the Executive Summary of the NDP, (2012), "there is a real risk that South Africa's developmental agenda could fail because the state is incapable of implementing it".<sup>56</sup> The NDP identified the need for a new approach, premised on<sup>57</sup> people being active champions of their own development; redressing injustice; faster economic growth and higher investment and employment rates; effective capable government; and the need for leadership, unity, cohesion and trust, in other words, creating national consensus.

No sooner had the Zuma government promised to focus on making sense of, and deepening its understanding of, a "developmental state" than it introduced the idea of a "capable state", which it regarded as a "precondition for development".<sup>58</sup> It believed it "requires collaboration by all sections of society".<sup>59</sup> Such a state also requires strategic leadership. The NDP was very explicit in recognising that South Africa faced challenges of uneven state capacity, including political deployments, policy instability, skills shortages, and lack of clear vision of where the next generation of public servants would come from.<sup>60</sup> A human resources skills crisis is thus an important challenge faced by the state, and the NDP tackles this issue squarely. According to the NDP, the following proposed actions need to be redressed: (1) building a professional public service (graduate recruitment programme); a Public

Service Commission, which should be given power to develop and monitor norms and standards for appointment, make public service a career of choice, have a public service that is both skilled and representative; (2) stabilise the political-administrative interface through hybrid appointments; heads of department report to a head of the civil service on administrative matters; (3) respond to inward migration and its strain on resources; (4) state-owned enterprises should be globally competitive (clear mandates; clear governance structures; deal with capacity constraints); and (5) improve relations between national, provincial and local government. What is interesting about the narrative that is emerging is that, while the emphasis remains on what the developmental state literature calls a "meritocratic civil service", it is surprising that the NDP seems to place emphasis on a "capable state" on staffing issues. While human resources and staffing issues are key determinants of capability, it is important that emphasis also be placed on political capability, technical capacity, organisation capacity, and indeed, ideational capacity.

No sooner had government placed the notion of a "capable state" on the agenda, than the issue of fighting corruption again enjoyed centre stage. There was a recognition that corruption is a serious challenge facing South Africa. The NDP called for the development of a resilient anti-corrupt system, stressing deterrence, prevention and education. It proposed actions such as centralising the awarding of large long-term tenders, while also strengthening the tender

compliance monitoring office. The NDP states that there was a need to strengthen accountability and responsibility of public servants, while also bolstering judicial governance and the rule of law, as well as a multi-agency corruption system. To cite the NDP, "there is a real risk that South Africa's developmental agenda could fail because the state is incapable of implementing it".<sup>61</sup> Government is now openly concerned about capacity and service delivery challenges at local level. South Africa has, in recent years, experienced a spike in "service delivery protests" to the point that it is now referred to as "the protest capital" of the world. This has prompted the former Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Pravin Gordhan, to state that "municipalities across the country should work differently, serve with care and respond to community concerns timeously".<sup>62</sup> He launched a "Going back to basics capacity" with the aim to "ensure that in every municipality, traffic lights work, potholes are filled, water is delivered, refuse is collected, electricity is supplied, and refuse and waste management takes place".<sup>63</sup> Gordhan was placing a focus on the developmental state's prerequisite of building a capable bureaucracy and civil service, especially at local government level, which appears to be the poorest developed stratum in post-settlement South Africa, 20 years after democracy.

## CONCLUSION

Twenty years into democracy, South Africa has nailed its political heart to the "developmental state mast", a project started by

Mbeki in 2004. Even though South Africa remains highly committed to transforming the State into a developmental one, the reality, of course, is that such a state does not come about through declarations, proclamations and edicts. Becoming a developmental state is a process; you become one, not by decree, but by painstaking commitment to the elements and criteria that make for one. Such states have evolved through continuous commitment to fast economic growth, and putting all the elements in place that would help to realise that goal. In a developmental state, government consistently prioritises education and human resources development, on the one hand, and health-care alongside fast growth, on the other hand. A developmental state also evolves through dedication to building a meritocratic civil service, populated with the best talent, who serve in government and the bureaucracy, and ensuring that people with the best technical, vocational and intellectual training join the civil service, and that their skills are being utilised. One of the most important features of this meritocratic civil service, the one we zeroed-in on in this policy essay, is the idea of putting at the centre of government a lead agency, a powerful navigating unit that could become, over time, a super ministry. Vusi Gumede is correct, therefore, when he asserts that "the consensus seems to be that South Africa is a developmental state in the making".<sup>64</sup>

While the new Jacob Zuma-led government started off with clear intentions to see the putative National Planning Commission (NPC) becoming this powerful navigating

unit and potential super ministry, the sad reality is that this agency became a victim of ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance politics, and a victim of the Polokwane squabbles. The latter two partners reacted negatively to the planned NPC for avowed political reasons: the NPC, and its proposed new leader, Minister Trevor Manuel, were too closely associated with the persona of former President Thabo Mbeki, and COSATU and the ANC saw it fit to campaign for diminished powers and a limited role to be played by the NPC. With this, the seeds were sown for an NPC that would perform below par, and certainly not behave like a super ministry; thus South Africa had lost a golden opportunity to transform the NPC into a powerful navigating unit at the centre of government. By 2012, the Zuma government had experimented with another variant of the developmental state,

that of a "capable, developmental state".

All those interested observers committed to a developmental state in South Africa should appreciate that such a state comes about by respecting all the criteria and benchmarks that make for one. You cannot have a developmental state *a la carte*, by picking and choosing the elements that you like, and rejecting the ones you do not like. A developmental state comes through total commitment to all criteria, not just adherence to the ones we are comfortable with. Chances are, if South Africans continue to pursue a piecemeal approach to the developmental state debate, it will end up with a piecemeal developmental state. South Africa should commit to a long-term process rather than hoping for fiats and declarations, for proclamations do not make a developmental state.

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**Chris Landsberg** is a Research Professor at the University of Johannesburg and NRF SARChI Chair: African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. He is Senior Associate Fellow in the School of Leadership at the same University. Landsberg is the co-founder of the Centre for Africa's International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand. He held Visiting Professorships at various universities. Landsberg has published extensively.

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# PUBLIC SERVICE BY, OF AND FOR THE PUBLIC

Barry Gilder  
Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)  
University of the Witwatersrand

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## ABSTRACT

A public service by, of and for the public – a utopia or a realisable ideal? This question undergirds the thematic essence of this article, which is penned from the optimism of a former senior public servant and a freedom fighter, who was a member of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* [Spear of the Nation] – the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC). For contextual reasons the article starts by succinctly historicising the struggle against apartheid. This is important in order to establish a premise from which "a public service by, of and for the public" could be understood. Thereafter, the article analyses how the ANC uses state power to achieve a humanitarian public service. The article offers important suggestions to this end.

## INTRODUCTION

It may be grossly unfashionable to confess this now, but in the heady days of struggle against apartheid, of the great working class and national liberation struggles of the twentieth century, of the global clash

of ideologies and economic systems, those of us who imbibed our own history and the history of our planet and the theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin at the feet of Rusty Bernstein in a flat in London, or sitting in the abandoned coffee plantation in *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK)<sup>1</sup> camp in Quibaxe in Angola or under the tutelage of Comrade Vladimir in a safe flat in Moscow, were enamoured with the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Twenty-one years into democracy, with the African National Congress (ANC) being the governing party, in alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the fundamental question is: to what extent does the phenomenon of the dictatorship of the proletariat manifest itself in the quest for a national democratic society? In other words, does the working class have control of political power? Despite the importance of these questions, this article is not necessarily about them. Its focus is on building a national democratic society through a humanitarian public service. It starts with a brief history of the struggle against apartheid. This is important in order

to establish a premise from which a people-centred public service and the reason for its pursuit could be understood. This is followed by the analysis of state power and transformation of the apartheid bureaucracy, which leads to the consideration of the notion of a developmental state in the hope that it would instruct our quest for a "public service by, of and for the public". Towards the end, important suggestions on how to build a humanitarian public service are made.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE**

The proletarian revolution aside, for those of us focused on overthrowing apartheid and undoing centuries of colonialism, the notion of the need for a decisive seizure of power by the oppressed majority, and its muscular use to put right the social, political, cultural and economic inequities that these systems had imposed on our land, made profound sense. We understood, then, that those who ruled us in the political realm and lorded over us in the economic realm would not, being convinced as they were of their might and their right, surrender real power unless they were forced to do so, unless power was wrested from them. And we understood, too, that, should we manage to wrest power from them, we would face years, if not decades, of continued attempts by them to turn back the tide – what we called "counter-revolution". This, we understood, was the way of the world, the way of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism, of national oppression.

These beliefs were not born of idle intellectualism, nor wishful thinking, nor yearning for revenge, nor a mean desire to do unto others as they had done unto us. They were, we believed, scientific truths, proven in the laboratory of history, in the short-lived but instructive Paris Commune, in revolutionary Russia, in inspirational Cuba and, closer to home, in Mozambique and Angola. And, for those of us who spent some of our exile years in the supposedly democratic West, we observed first-hand how what we called the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie imposed the will of the capitalist class on their citizens. After all, we roamed the planet in the days of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

And we supported the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe in spite of their imperfections not, as our detractors would have us believe, out of blind loyalty or simple gratitude for the support they gave our own struggle, but because we believed that the class war and the war of national liberation were being fought on a global battlefield, and that war, as inhumane and ugly as it is, is ultimately about the exercise of force, scruples aside. For we perambulated the planet in the time of the Bay of Pigs, the Chilean coup, the invasion of Grenada and the defeat of the Sandinistas.

And we well understood that those in the opposite trenches to the ones we elected to fight from – the countries of the West, the capitalist class of the world – supported tacitly and explicitly our own national enemy, in spite of the iniquity of the system we

fought against and the justness of our cause. And those on the other side of the Cold War barricades, who did give us some support – the social democratic countries, parties and movements of the world – did so mainly to wean us from our determination for a radical seizure and exercise of power – more so as our own struggle progressed and the defensibility of supporting apartheid waned.

Well... we "lost" the war. We watched as the detachments in the neighbouring trenches were decimated, retreated and surrendered. We watched the Soviet Union collapsing, taking with it its neighbours. We watched the triumphalism of the West and its neo-liberalism and anti-radicalism. We, still holding firm in our trenches in Lusaka, Harare, Gaborone, Maseru, Manzini, Robben Island, Pretoria Central, Soweto and Gugulethu, Mangaung and Seshego, Kwa Mashu and Mdantsane, began to hear rumours that our leaders were negotiating an end to our own war. At the Seventh Congress of the South African Communist Party in Matanzas, Cuba, in early 1989, the party adopted its programme "The Path to Power", which contained a section entitled "Prospects of a Negotiated Transfer of Power" which read in part:

There is no conflict between [the] insurrectionary perspective and the possibility of a negotiated transfer of power...

...Liberation struggles have rarely ended with the unconditional surrender of the enemy's military forces. Every such

struggle in our continent has had its climax at the negotiating table, occasionally involving compromises judged to be in the interests of revolutionary advance. But, whether there is an armed seizure of power or negotiated settlement, what is indisputable to both is the development of the political and military forces of the revolution...

...Whatever prospects may arise in the future for a negotiated transition, they must not be allowed to infect the purpose and content of our present strategic approaches. We are not engaged in a struggle whose objective is merely to generate sufficient pressure to bring the other side to the negotiating table. If, as a result of a generalised crisis and a heightened revolutionary upsurge, the point should ever be reached when the enemy is prepared to talk, the liberation forces will, at that point, have to exercise their judgment, guided by the demands of revolutionary advance. But until then its sights must be clearly set on the perspectives of a seizure of power.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps, in retrospect, the wording of this passage can be construed as somewhat disingenuous, given that senior leaders of the party and the ANC present at the congress were already aware of and involved in putting out pre-negotiation feelers to the apartheid regime. In the same month as the congress, Mandela sent his memo on negotiations to P.W. Botha, and about a month after the congress, Thabo Mbeki had his famous meeting with Willie Esterhuysen in

a pub in London, which set the stage for discussions between apartheid's National Intelligence Service and the ANC. Be that as it may, for those of us still in the trenches, the wording of this passage reflected our ongoing belief in a revolutionary seizure of power, negotiated or otherwise, and an outcome that would enable us to *impose* our revolutionary, transformatory agenda on a post-apartheid South Africa.

But history, and the global and domestic dynamics of the time, together with the perhaps necessary compromises of negotiation and reconciliation, conspired to deny us this decisive intervention. Indeed, we won political power decisively enough through the 1994 election, but that was largely a policy-making power, itself diluted by the constraints of a government of national unity, and the myriad influences on policy of the powers-that-were in the economic sphere, the international arena, and the disparate influences and philosophies within the broad church of the ANC and the many interests in broader society.

### **STATE POWER AND TRANSFORMATION OF APARTHEID BUREAUCRACY**

State power, on the other hand, was a totally different matter. We had to sidle our way into the public service, a service which, until then, regarded the public as consisting of only 20 percent of the population. We inherited a public service whose ethos and practice had been geared towards managing and protecting apartheid. It was certainly not

geared towards imposing a *dictatorship of the oppressed*, proletariat or otherwise. It was not even geared to effectively implement the policies of the new democratically elected government, in many cases obstructing, diluting and sometimes actively opposing those policies.

Our primary challenge as we entered the public service in the mid-1990s was, as quickly as possible, to bring into the service change agents – people who understood and were committed to the ANC's transformatory agenda, and who had the tenacity to enforce the will of the governing party against all the odds. Such people, relative to the size, scope and geographical spread of the public service, were few and far between. And understanding, commitment and tenacity were not always accompanied by experience, administrative skill and capacity. That was the nature of apartheid exclusion and the relative suddenness of our admission to the halls of state power.

But the injection of change agents into the public service was only one part of the challenge of state transformation. We also had to change the complexion of the public service and its management and leadership. Some may argue that this was our historic error – if we wanted to use the tools of the state to effectively transform our society, we should have put the administration in the hands of the skilled and experienced rather than trying to achieve race, gender and ethnic representivity. Apart from the obvious fact that there is an inherent racist assumption that the skilled and experienced were, in



the main, white and therefore anti-change agents, we could not escape the historical obligation, imposed by apartheid, of making our public service representative of the demographics of our country. There was not, and could not have been, any escaping this reality. But there is no natural correlation between demographic representivity and change agency. In fact, many of the black public servants who benefited from affirmative action were those who had served the former Bantustan administrations, certainly, in the main, not change agents. And for many of the new public servants, a job in the administration was just that – a job, an opportunity to survive, advance and prosper that had been denied them and their parents before. There was certainly no requirement for understanding, commitment and tenacity. And for some, the opportunity of a job and a steady income was not enough. In the way of the human species, compounded by apartheid deprivation, it was also an opportunity for "a bit on the side".

## **POST-APARTHEID PUBLIC SERVICE**

South Africa's post-apartheid public service, from its inception to the present day, is made up of a hodgepodge of old apartheid bureaucrats, Bantustan administrators, struggle veterans and hand-to-mouth recruited new public servants. There is no such thing in South Africa as a public service career. There is certainly no such thing as a public service ethos. Since 1994, we have muddled along, fighting fires, pushing policies, making new rules, being discordant

and uncoordinated, struggling for transformation and – above all – bemoaning the difficulties of implementation.

I remember a Cabinet *lekgotla*<sup>3</sup> in 2004, if memory serves, in which the then president, Thabo Mbeki, paused a discussion on some or other presentation and asked the pointed question as to why it was that we found it so difficult to implement our programmes and policies. After some discussion, he tasked the directors-general, present, to go away and draft a discussion document identifying the challenges to implementation. We were happy for the tasking. After all, we were perhaps at the sharp end of the frustrations of trying to make the things which we all agreed needed to be done, happen. I do not, now, remember the details of our deliberations, except for our long discussion on the fretfulness of the political-administrative interface and the resulting loss of expertise, institutional memory and continuity as directors-general came and went. I do remember that, in the end, our document was considerably watered down, perhaps out of deference to the sensitivities of our ministers. I do note, now, that many of the issues we dealt with, at the time, are dealt with reasonably forthrightly in South Africa's recently-adopted National Development Plan, specifically in the chapter that deals with the capacity of the state.

This is the crux of the matter and ultimately speaks to the nature of the state and the nature of our public service. Many may argue about, and increasingly contest, the correctness of some of the policies of the ruling

party and its government. Speaking from my own time in government, I was never in any doubt that our hearts were in the right place, that our intentions were noble and that our focus was always on undoing the legacies of our past and effectively manoeuvring our way through the complex web of domestic and international interests that impinged on the terrain in which we operated. But we constantly bruised ourselves against the challenges of making things happen.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

Perhaps, in response to the foregoing frustration (and other realities), we developed the notion that South Africa needed to become a developmental state. I used to joke at the time (perhaps only half-jokingly) that, for us "old revolutionaries", a developmental state was the closest we could get to our once beloved dictatorship of the proletariat in the historical circumstances in which we found ourselves. Of course, we recognised that, unlike the so-called developmental states of Asia, that were able to drive their developmental agenda with some authoritarianism, ours would have to be a democratic developmental state. In other words we would have to "impose our will" through the democratic institutions and processes that our negotiated constitutional democracy imposed on us.

There is a simple truth here, on which my allusion to the dictatorship of the proletariat is based. In spite of arguments to the contrary from opposition parties and in "public discourse" the ANC has, by necessity, to

remain a party of liberation. I argue elsewhere<sup>4</sup> that there seems to be an underlying, if unprofessed, assumption that the ANC coming to power, in 1994, was analogous to the Labour Party in the United Kingdom unseating Margaret Thatcher after her eighteen-year reign, or the Democrats unseating Ronald Reagan after his twelve years in power – that, in other words, the South African electorate, which was tired of forty-six years of National Party rule, simply decided to give the opposition a chance. Any party that governs South Africa would, by historical necessity, have to be driven by the need to address the inequities and injustices inherited from the past and perpetuated in the present. In other words, the governance of South Africa has to be people-focused and transformation-driven.

The state is the primary organ for this and the public service is its front-line instrumentality. Thus, if we wish to speak of a humanitarian public service, we must speak of a public service whose primary focus is on the well-being of people. In the South African context, this must mean a public service that is geared in everything it does towards making life better for South Africa's inhabitants, which, in turn, must imply undoing the legacies of colonialism and apartheid – our (more benign) version of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

When I was appointed director-general of the Department of Home Affairs in 2003, I spent my first four months in the department travelling to offices and border posts around the country, talking to staff and

clients and observing the workings of our offices. At the end of my odyssey, we held a strategic planning workshop at which I presented my findings and proposed the key elements of a turnaround strategy for the department. In that presentation, I made the following remarks related to service delivery:

I have said this many times as I travelled through the regions. But I must say it again here for the record. Visiting a Home Affairs office must be like going into an expensive store with a lot of money in your pocket. No matter how many clothes you try on and how many times you change your mind, the sales attendant is at your beck and call – advising, cajoling, ever willing to assist. I think that is why some of us are so addicted to shopping. It's about the only time you get treated like a DG!

In the private sector they have a slogan: The customer is always right. Our slogan at Home Affairs is: The customer is always wrong!

Think about it. We expect our clients to know all the laws and regulations, to know how to fill out a form, and which documents to bring along. And God forbid if a client should fill out a form incorrectly, or stand in the wrong queue, or forget a document! It's "Away with you and come back when you are ready to do this thing right!"

We need to remember, in the way we relate to our clients and design our

systems, that the client did not ask to be required to carry an ID, or to register their births, marriages and deaths, or to carry a passport to travel abroad, or to comply with our complicated immigration requirements when visiting our country. It is we who [us that] require these things of them.

We therefore need to find a way of changing our attitude to our clients to one in which we assume they are right, that they are entitled to the service they have come for, until we have proved conclusively that they are in fact wrong.

This attitude that the client is always right needs to infuse our systems, our processes, our training and our interaction with our clients. We need a campaign to inculcate this in our staff and to interpret for them what this means in practice.<sup>5</sup>

I believe things have improved at Home Affairs, in recent years, at least as far as its citizen services are concerned, although I have not used the Department enough myself to have observed whether the client now is indeed always right. But the chief point of this anecdote is the need for people-centrism in our public service. This is not only about how we interface with our clients, although that is key. It is also about the bigger issues – ensuring that the focus, the resourcing, the ethos, the organisation and the management of our various public service departments – at national, provincial and local levels – is indeed humanitarian:

focused on providing services, opportunities and support to our people, whether it be in the state-imposed requirements for identity documents or whether it is the provision of housing, healthcare, education, welfare support, economic support and so on. In other words, it is about both what we do and how we do it.

## **TOWARDS A PEOPLE-CENTRED PUBLIC SERVICE**

The question to ask is: what do we need to do to make our public service more people-centred? At the macro-level, it is the policies and programmes of government in all three spheres that are the key driver in addressing the challenges of inequality, poverty, social injustice, the economy and so on. There are indeed many ongoing and vociferous debates – especially in this election year – about whether the policies and programmes of the ruling party and government are sufficiently addressing these challenges. This article is not about these debates. I have already made the point that, in my experience in government, our hearts were largely in the right place. I have also made the point that, correct policies or not, the major challenge remains implementation. Even if an election produces a new government, with possibly better policies, that challenge will remain.

There are many elements that constitute the matrix of the challenges of effective implementation – organisational design, leadership, the political-administrative interface, financial and procurement management,

human resources management, corruption and many others. But at the centre of all these challenges is the public servant her- or himself. The individual human being who leads, manages, administers, operationalises, serves and interfaces with the public is the primary tool and medium of implementation and delivery.

We are now surely beyond the time of having to inject change agents into the public service to drive the transformation of the service and the delivery of its programmes. Should we not indeed be moving to a time when every public servant is a change agent, whatever their background, political and ideological preferences, race or gender? That perhaps sounds far-fetched and ambitious. But, in reality, it is an ambition that must be strived for, however long it may take. What does it take to become a public servant in South Africa today? In the main, it involves seeing a job advert for a particular government department, sending in an application form and CV, being short-listed (if you are lucky), going for an interview and, if successful, after a few checks of criminal record and qualifications, starting your employment. After that you may be sent on some induction and/or specialised training. This is not very different from getting a job in the private sector (and many of the larger private sector entities have much more stringent selection processes).

In India, entry into the civil service is highly competitive and a civil service career is highly regarded in society.<sup>6</sup> There is an exhaustive selection process. It involves a

multi-step examination process that spans a calendar year, overseen by the Union Public Service Commission. Applicants undergo a first preliminary examination for initial screening purposes, followed by a second preliminary examination in which they have to write two papers – one on general studies and one on an optional topic. For those candidates, who clear this preliminary round, there is a second stage that consists of written tests (comprising nine papers) and an interview. The marks obtained in these tests and the interview determine the candidate's future rank in the civil service. The tests seek to determine the candidates' grasp of academics and awareness of current affairs and social issues.

This comprehensive selection process is not the end of the story. Successful candidates then undergo two years of probation and training. They spend nine months undergoing foundational training at an academy, which is aimed at strengthening their understanding of the political, social and administrative environment and developing the ideas, attributes and values expected of a civil service officer. After this foundational phase, candidates then spend twelve months in one of the Indian states working at the coalface, so to speak, during which they are expected to imbibe the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the state, state administrative systems, legislation, institutions and language. After this, they spend another three months back at the academy processing what they have learned from the state experience. Once permanently employed in the civil service,

they have to undergo regular compulsory in-service training programmes.<sup>7</sup>

It has, perhaps, to be said that the mixed nature of the efficacy and efficiency of India's civil service underlines the point that a comprehensive selection and training programme is not a panacea to the challenges of effective, people-centred public service delivery and implementation. There are many other challenges that have to be simultaneously addressed, as I have intimated above. But the Indian model is a marked contrast to the way our own public service has been constituted over time – what I called a hodgepodge, *de facto* inheritance and hand-to-mouth recruitment of new public servants. The Indian model is surely, at the very least, a signpost towards the ambitious vision of populating our own public service with change agents capable of delivering a people-centred and humanitarian public service.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE VISION**

If we had a programme, in collaboration with schools and universities, to identify the best of forthcoming school leavers and graduates, encouraged them to consider a public service career, and then put those so persuaded through a rigorous selection process, measuring not just their intellect and skills, but also their values, morals and understanding of and commitment to South Africa's development agenda, we would be making a good start, wouldn't we? If we then put the successful candidates, so selected, through a rigorous, extended full-time

education and training programme, which, as in India, included coalface time spent in a provincial or local administration or, say, at the front-line in a Home Affairs office, we would surely come out of the other end of this process with a public service cadre far more attuned to, and prepared for, serving a people-centred public service, a cadre who understands our history, our political economy and our social challenges, in addition to all the administrative and technical requirements of the public service.

The graduates of such a programme would form a pool of public servants from which individual departments, in all three spheres of government, could recruit, taking into account the specific skills and interests of this new public servant and the requirements of the department. Of course, such a programme would have to be tailored for different levels or functions in the public service, from administration to management, as well as for specialised public servants such as doctors, nurses, teachers and engineers. Apart from anything else, such an approach to the selection and training of our public servants would, over time,

create cadres of public servants who have had experience in all spheres of government and would have, in the process, developed networks of fellow cadres (as is the case in India) across national departments and the three spheres of government, thus enhancing intergovernmental cooperation and coordination. Ambitious? Yes. And it would take years, if not decades, for such an approach to decisively transform our public service. But it is surely the only way into the future.

## CONCLUSION

So, after all, moving conceptually from the dictatorship of the proletariat to the building of a state and a public service geared towards decisively addressing the inherited and new challenges of South Africa, as it finds itself in the current historical conjuncture, is not such a big conceptual leap. The spirit is the same – impose on our country a rigorous transformatory agenda. Does this therefore mean that a question about the dictatorship of the proletariat, raised in the introduction, is an ideological nostalgia of a former liberation struggle activist?

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**Barry Gilder** served variously in the post-apartheid government as deputy director-general of the South African Secret Services, deputy director-general of the National Intelligence Agency, director-general of Department of Home Affairs and as Co-ordinator for Intelligence until his retirement in late 2007. He has recounted his experience of the liberation struggle and the challenges of post-apartheid governance in the book titled, *Songs and secrets: South Africa from liberation to governance*, published by Jacana Media in South Africa and by Hurst Publishers internationally in 2012. He is currently a Fellow of the Mapungubwe Institute, a Senior Visiting Fellow in the School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand, and a member of the Council of South Africa's newly-established National School of Government.

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- 4 Barry Gilder. 2012. *Songs and secrets: South Africa from liberation to governance*. Johannesburg: Jacana. p.270.
- 5 Barry Gilder. 2003. Director-General's Address to Senior Management Team-Building, 25 September 2003. Pretoria: Gilder's archive.
- 6 Information on the Indian civil service selection and training is drawn from a desktop benchmarking done by the author on behalf of the Advisory Task Team set up by South Africa's Minister of Public Service and Administration, Lindiwe Sisulu, to advise her on the establishment of a new National School of Government in South Africa.
- 7 Note that the information on the selection and training of Indian civil servants applies to India's Central Services. India has quite a complex civil service architecture. The Central Services are concerned with the administration of India as a whole and include, inter alia, foreign affairs, defense, income tax, customs, posts and telecommunications.

# ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE: A FINITY OF TRANSFORMATION

William Gumede  
University of the Witwatersrand

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## ABSTRACT

The new democratic government in 1994 inherited the apartheid public service, which combined the so-called former "independent" states, homelands and Bantustans, which all had distinct administrative cultures. Even though genuine attempts have been made since 1994 to transform the apartheid-inherited public service, by democratising it, making it developmental, effective and accountable – changing its *culture* – the results have at best been uneven. A key part of the post-1994 transformation reforms of the public service was a strong emphasis on changing the racial make-up of the public administration, not only to make it more representative, but also to transform the racially discriminatory developmental outlook of the state. The organisational culture of the ANC, South Africa's dominant governing party, has had a strong influence on the administrative culture of the democratic public service. In the post-1994 era, some of the apartheid and Bantustan administrative cultures have been entrenched in the democratic public service and have been reinforced with undemocratic aspects of the ANC's liberation

movement organisational culture, which have come to dominate the party since it took power. The article will argue that the ANC government has mostly succeeded in transforming the racial make-up, but that it has not transformed the administrative culture of the public service into one that is democratic, developmental and accountable. The inability to transform the administrative culture of South Africa's public service is the root of its poor performance. Given the ANC's dominance, to transform South Africa's public service's administrative culture, the ANC's organisational culture will also have to be overhauled.

## INTRODUCTION

Even though genuine attempts have been made since 1994 to transform the organisational structure, character, systems and orientation, and individual behaviours – whether at junior or senior levels – within the administration, or collectively, the *administrative culture* of the South African public service, from an apartheid one, into a democratic, developmental, effective, accountable and socially responsive one<sup>1</sup> – the results have at



best been uneven. Former Public Service and Administration Minister, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, remarked about the challenge: "We had to dismantle the old administrative order, transform it, democratise it, re-orient its ethos, its structure and culture and we had to do this with a sense of urgency; we had to both repeal race-based apartheid legislation and bring in new legislation based on a new constitutional dispensation."<sup>2</sup> The particular characteristics of the apartheid public service could hardly be compatible with the notion of a democratic one. In itself, transplanting democracy, a developmental outlook, a constitutional value ethos and a racially and ethnically inclusive outlook, into the peculiar apartheid and homelands public service structures inherited, was never going to be an easy challenge. The problem of the poor performance of the public service and low administrative capacity in South Africa is much more than technical incompetence, its root causes are deeply embedded in the social norms, behaviour patterns and administrative culture, entrenched in the apartheid state and *reinforced* by elements of the organisational culture of the ANC as a liberation movement with a dominant military wing, underground and clandestine operational mode.

### **THE CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE FRAMEWORK**

The concept of administrative culture as a framework is derived from the theories on organisational culture<sup>3</sup> and, also for the

purposes of this essay, from Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba's ground-breaking work on "civic culture".<sup>4</sup> Like any organisation, a public administration has a certain "culture",<sup>5</sup> which is "socially embedded".<sup>6</sup> Culture is "a set of values, beliefs, common understanding, thinking and norms for behaviour that are shared".<sup>7</sup> In organisations, culture provides "guidance to behaviours" and "profoundly influences decision-making". Almond and Verba<sup>8</sup> argue "civic culture" is about individual "norms", "attitudes", "values", "behaviour", and "perceptions".<sup>9</sup> Administrative culture is the collective patterns of inculcated behaviour, attitudes, traditions and values that are widely shared in the public administration and which provide a "framework for behaving, acting, and forming preferences". The actions of the individual employee within the administration are *socially governed* by the particular administrative culture.<sup>10</sup>

Henderson argues that administrative culture is "related to the broader political culture, from which it derives".<sup>11</sup> Surendra Kumar<sup>12</sup> emphasises the two-way relationship between public administration and its external environment – the political, socio-economic and cultural, where each influences the other. Wilson<sup>13</sup> says "the long-term character of a bureaucracy is not determined by the technical tasks it confronts but by the political and social forces operating on it". Jamil<sup>14</sup> argues, insightfully, that within the context of administrative culture, the public service's orientation to society's socio-economic environment, dominant governing politics, and the administration's cohesiveness – the dimensions of

"internal sources of control and the exercises of authority and power within a bureaucracy" – is very important. An administrative culture that is based on democratic governance<sup>15</sup> demands that public servants act in a morally responsible way, serve justice, are accountable and pursue an "honest effort to achieve the common good and welfare of citizens".<sup>16</sup>

In many developing countries, whether "bureaucratic actions" are based on merit, skills and the rule of law, or whether they are based on political loyalty, and what extent public servants' lives and careers depend on responding to "narrow political interests"<sup>17</sup> is very much determined by the administrative culture. Often in many developing countries, informal rules, relationships and networks, in reality, become the administrative culture, rather than the formal rules, procedures and regulations,<sup>18</sup> when "informal relations then become important for gaining access to public services, and official rules are frequently violated or neglected".<sup>19</sup>

In some developing countries clientelistic behaviour becomes part of the administrative culture.<sup>20,21</sup> The rule of law is often selectively applied; "there is little distinction between public and private life, public offices and positions are frequently abused for private gain".<sup>22</sup> Political loyalty is a prerequisite for promotion, displacing merit, fairness and justice, which breaks down the *esprit de corps* of the bureaucracy and fragments the bureaucracy, and connected insiders who get lucrative benefits for doing very little for outsiders.<sup>23</sup>

Jamil, Askvik and Hossain argue rightly that changes in the administrative culture of a bureaucracy do not come easy because often in a bureaucracy, where administrative culture is institutionalised, values are often "persistent" and "deep rooted".<sup>24</sup>

## **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Survey methods are often very useful and popular tools to analyse administrative culture.<sup>25,26,27,28,29,30</sup> The article will aggregate the results of a number of government-commissioned surveys. Chief among these will be the annual reports of the Public Service Commission (PSC), the annual audit reports of the Auditor General, and key government assessments of the state of the public service over the past 20 years. These include the 10-year, 15-year and 20-year reviews of the performance of the public service, done by the South African Presidency, National Treasury, Public Service and Administration Department, the National Planning Commission's National Development Plan and other relevant government surveys.

To analyse the organisational culture of the African National Congress, the paper will analyse the five-yearly ANC general secretary state of the ANC reports at the ANC's national general councils, policy conferences and national conferences. These are supplemented with reports and surveys presented to the ANC's national executive committee, provincial and other party structures.

The *South African Constitution* (1996) set out nine values and principles for a

democratic public service:

- The promotion and maintenance of a high standard of professional ethics.
- The promotion of efficient, economic and effective use of resources.
- Public administration must be developmental.
- Public services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.
- People's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policymaking.
- Public administration must be accountable.
- Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.
- Good human resource management and career development practices to maximise human potential must be cultivated.
- Public administration must be broadly representative of the people of South Africa.

These nine Constitutional values and principles provide us with a benchmark for measuring progress towards transforming the administrative culture of the South African public service. The Public Service Commission, in its annual surveys since 1994, used these values and principles to analyse the transformation of the public service. The paper used these Constitutional principles and values as a benchmark to analyse the dimensions of South Africa's administrative culture.

## **THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

In South Africa, the ANC is the dominant party – its influence extends to every nook of society, far beyond its electoral success.<sup>31,32</sup> The ANC's organisational culture strongly influences the administrative culture of the South African public administration and broader society. Because of its leading role in the struggle for liberation, the ANC has widespread popular legitimacy. The ANC's organisational culture has a dominant influence on the culture of public administration. There are some aspects of the ANC's organisational culture that have a negative impact on the administrative culture of the public service.

The ANC's March 2007 discussion document on organisational renewal, warns that the ANC was succumbing to "micro-manage governance as if they (the party) are the executive authority or administrative arm of the state".<sup>33</sup> There appears to be a strong belief among ANC leaders and members that the ANC and its leadership are above that of democratic institutions and bureaucracy, and that the rules *of the party* have preference over the country's democratic laws or Constitution. President Jacob Zuma expressed the sentiment when he said "no one is bigger than the ANC".<sup>34</sup>

Justice Minister, Jeff Radebe, said "the ANC intended to reduce the powers of the Constitutional Court, because it had made decisions going against the ANC government".<sup>35</sup>

The ANC's Strategy and Tactics<sup>36</sup> discussion document said "elements", specifically which "promoted a national consensus", have "proven inadequate and those of the Constitution needed to be reviewed". Party rank in the ANC is seen as more senior than in government.<sup>37</sup> A party leader who is employed in government may be more junior than his or her superiors, but he or she may be more senior in the party ranks, and therefore give instructions to his or her own government superiors.<sup>38</sup>

Democratic centralism is a key tenet of the ANC, which roughly means that a few leaders make decisions and send out commands, and members and supporters must unquestioningly obey.<sup>39</sup> Members are not allowed to publicly criticise leaders or expose wrongdoing by them. Loyalty to the party and leadership is sacred.<sup>40</sup>

Because the liberation movement was the leading movement in the fight for liberation, many of its members argue that not only is it *entitled* to the spoils of government, but only its loyal cadres should be appointed to key positions in government.

The ANC has introduced the policy of deployment whereby the party decides who should be appointed to key positions in the public service, who should get government contracts and tenders and who should be included in large black economic empowerment transactions with private companies. Gwede Mantashe, the general secretary of the ANC, said the party will not do away with cadre deployment, because the ANC does

not want "graduates and businessmen and women who are competent, but who are hostile to the programme of the ANC".<sup>41</sup>

South Africa's Constitution calls for a "public administration that is broadly representative of the South African people",<sup>42</sup> but makes it clear that the pursuit of this objective must be "based on ability, objectivity, and fairness",<sup>43</sup> and ensuring that the public service delivers "efficient, economic and effective use of resources".<sup>44</sup>

During the African liberation struggle, many liberation movements, such as the ANC, saw opponents, colonial and apartheid governments, as well as rival opposition groups and individuals as "enemies".<sup>45</sup> In government, these movements often try to crush opposition or cut them off from state patronage. The ANC appears to be increasingly following this trend.

The ANC appears to be increasingly governing in the interests of what it deems its own constituencies. The ANC's March 2007 discussion document on organisational renewal says there is a tension between the "imperatives of the ANC as a national liberation movement with a distinct culture and revolutionary traditions", and the "demands and obligations" of the government overseeing a democracy, which is supposed to represent "the nation as a whole".

Worryingly, it appears that the ANC's organisational culture has increasingly become ossified in government. President Jacob Zuma said corruption was only a crime in

a "Western paradigm", and even if it was a crime, there are "no victims".<sup>46</sup> However, Gwede Mantashe, the ANC general secretary, said greed and corruption was "devouring" the ANC.<sup>47</sup> "(Greed) is eating (the ANC) to death ... (Some ANC members) have become like mice in a cheese factory", Mantashe said. Kgalema Motlanthe,<sup>48</sup> then ANC general secretary, in his 2005 ANC organisational report to the ANC's national general council, said that many of the problems of the public service have much to do with the "preoccupation on the part of (ANC) public representatives with securing access to and control over public resources".

### **THE INHERITED ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN BUREAUCRACY**

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service of 1995 analysed the state of the public service at the time: lack of representativity, lack of legitimacy, lack of service delivery, centralised control and top-down management, secrecy, lack of accountability and transparency, absence of effective management information, low productivity, poorly paid and demotivated staff, conflicting labour relations, and a lack of professional ethos and work ethic<sup>49</sup>. Inefficiencies were endemic.

The public service was highly fragmented, whether along ethnic, regional or political lines. The public service was insular, from the black majority, run along hierarchical and militaristic lines; with fragmented structures and services, lack of co-ordinated

policy frameworks, unequal allocation of financial and human resources, mismanagement and little adherence to the concept of accountability.<sup>50</sup>

Red tape was endemic, from complex bureaucratic procedures to foot-dragging on what should be routine applications. At the lower levels of the state, administration was characterised by a compliance culture. The culture was one of "bureaucratic accountability", "the extent to which rules and procedures were adhered to and not with regard to the services delivered to members of society".<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, at the time of the transition to democracy, the state inherited from the apartheid regime had substantially less of what Michael Mann calls "infrastructural power"<sup>52</sup> – the ability of the state to penetrate civil society and get its decisions to be carried out.

The apartheid state was focused on serving a small white minority. It was positioned to oppress the black majority. It was racially segregationist in its DNA. The Bantustans and homelands linked to the "mother" apartheid state were positioned to service specific ethnic groups. Linked to the apartheid state was customary power,<sup>53</sup> especially in the rural areas, where some traditional leaders were locked into the apartheid state structures, either as part of the Bantustans or homelands or alongside it in the rural areas.

The diverse make-up of the different components – national departments, provinces, Bantustans and homelands – inherited from

the apartheid public services, reinforced a silo-style operation. The ANC government inherited the state as part of a compromise deal, with the civil servants of the ancient regime, whether from the apartheid state proper or the homelands, the customary structures of the traditional leaders, the administrative culture of the apartheid and homelands states, and its norms and values all retained.

With an apartheid state already fragmented along regional, racial and ethnic lines, the danger was that the incoming ANC government would superimpose its own fractures above the already fragmented apartheid state. The apartheid state was removed from progressive civil society, yet it was embedded in white civil society – white business, white labour, white academia. The democratic state, when it came to power, was viewed with suspicion, if not on occasion was actively opposed, by civil society groups that were institutionally linked to the apartheid government.

The ANC General Secretary, Gwede Mantashe, said the ANC government had "inherited a well-entrenched value system that placed individual acquisition of wealth at the very centre of the value system of our society as a whole".<sup>54</sup> Mantashe quoted Mbeki as having argued "now because the white minority was the dominant social force in our country, it entrenched in our society as a whole, including among the oppressed, the deep-seated understanding that personal wealth constituted the only true measure of individual and social success".<sup>55</sup>

## **DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE – RACIAL PARITY, BUT UNTRANSFORMED ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE**

It is estimated that South Africa has lost at least R700bn in public sector corruption over the past 20 years.<sup>56</sup> The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of the National Prosecuting Authority, in a report, said South Africa was losing as much of 20 percent or between R25bn and R30bn of the total public sector procurement budget to corruption annually.<sup>57</sup> Auditor-General, Kimi Makwetu,<sup>58</sup> said that public sector corruption goes unpunished too often, and findings of audits are rarely addressed. Willie Hofmeyr said there was "a culture of impunity"<sup>59</sup> in the public service.

The Auditor-General reported in 2013 that only 22 percent of the public sector institutions achieved clean audit opinions in the 2012/2013 financial year. In the 2011/2012 financial year, the Auditor-General had actually audited 29 fewer departments and entities than the year before, yet the resources wasted were more. The Auditor-General blamed weak political leadership and oversight, lax internal financial controls, disregard for procurement rules and deviations from supply chain management processes as the major reasons for public funds being wasted, and ineffectively and uneconomically used.<sup>60</sup>

In the 2013/2014 financial year, the public service spent more than R30bn on consultants and outsourcing,<sup>61</sup> the year before

R33.7bn was spent on consultations. Heads of departments regularly give themselves performance bonuses without conducting proper performance appraisals.<sup>62</sup> The PSC says performance reporting in the public service is mostly compliance based rather than focused on value for money and quality of services.<sup>63</sup> The PSC report states that "decisive measures are necessary" to ensure the public service is fully developmentally orientated. The PSC (2009) noted the public service needed "to ensure that complaints and recourse mechanisms are functional, and that these inspire confidence among citizens that their concerns will be addressed timeously and seriously".<sup>64</sup>

Policies, decisions and senior appointments in the public sector have often been centralised in the same way that they are centralised in the ANC. Similarly, the public service appears to have become intolerant of dissent, in a similar way in which criticisms and dissent are frowned upon in the ANC. There appears to have been a convergence between the top-down style of the inherited apartheid public sector and the top-down administrative culture of an influential sector of the ANC liberation movement. There has recently been an upsurge in community protests against poor public services. The PSC has noted that this development "should come as a signal to government that effective communication and public participation must remain a fundamental priority".<sup>65</sup>

The public service appears not to have sufficient and well-distributed competencies, capabilities and functional skills. The PSC

says that the ANC's "cadre deployment" has often been misused to reward undeserving, unqualified and inexperienced political party apparatchiks.<sup>66</sup> The PSC (2013) says: "Cadre deployment has, in recent times, assumed a negative connotation as it is taken to mean the appointment, on purely political considerations and patronage, of persons who are not suitably qualified for the posts concerned". There appears to be a culture in the public service of keeping even routine information away from the public, often under the rubric of the "national interest". The proposed Protection of State Information Act will, if signed into law, undermine transparency in public institutions – and thus undermine the accountability of these institutions. By 2009, nearly 79 percent of all public servants were black.<sup>67</sup> However, the PSC worried that making the public service representative had become a "target-chasing" exercise, without consideration for the quality, competence and suitability of the candidates appointed. Progress for gender representativity has been slower, with only 35 percent by the end of 2009.<sup>68</sup> The modest disability target of 2 percent has not been met over the term of the ANC government.

## CONCLUSION

The ANC government has mostly succeeded in transforming the racial make-up of the public service, but that has not transformed its administrative culture. Aspects of the character of the apartheid, Bantustan and homelands public services have endured. Negative aspects of the ANC's own organisational culture have also taken root in the

public service, and, combined with the apartheid-era culture, have brought about a hybrid administrative culture in the public service, which has undermined efforts to make it developmental, accountable, effective and democratic, despite efforts undertaken by the democratic government to do

so. The inability to transform the administrative culture of South Africa's public service is at the root of its poor performance. While the ANC is dominant, to transform the public service's administrative culture, the ANC's organisational culture will also have to be overhauled.

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**William Gumede** is Associate Professor at the University of Witwatersrand's School of Governance in Johannesburg. He is a bestselling author and prolific writer who often shapes the public discourse. He writes for the different media houses. His book *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC*, is one of the finest analyses that offers invaluable insights into the politics of the ANC as the governing party and Mbeki as its leader, and the President of South Africa. He is the founder of Democracy Works – a Foundation established to promote democracy in South Africa and other African countries, as well as in developing countries in the rest of the world. He has been a lead advisor of the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA). Gumede is the former deputy and managing editor of *The Sowetan* newspaper.

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# DEFINING, DESIGNING AND DELIVERING INDUCTION TRAINING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

Thean Potgieter  
National School of Government  
University of the Witwatersrand

Fran Greyling  
National School of Government

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## ABSTRACT

One of the tools for creating a professional South African public service, committed to the values, principles and ethics of government, is a compulsory, government-wide and generic induction programme. The Public Administration, Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) – now the National School of Government (NSG) – was tasked with the development and rollout of such a programme. Due to the size of the South African Public Service, geographic realities, the limitations of traditional induction programmes and the value of workplace learning, finding an innovative approach to learning and the development of new entrants was essential. The result was that conventional contact tuition evolved into a blended learning approach, enabling participants to tap into the benefits of eLearning. This research article focuses on induction training in the South African Public Service with emphasis on the rationale and context

of induction, as well as the function of ICTs in facilitating learning and development across the public service.

## INTRODUCTION

In life, first impressions count. This probably also applies to the workplace, as induction, and therefore induction and on-boarding processes, for new employees are an important beginning to a career path. These processes are specifically important in the public service to acquaint new entrants with the values, principles and ethics of the workplace, as well as their responsibilities in the organisation and to the citizens whom they will be serving. Induction training in the South African Public Service must ideally take place within the context of a democratic, developmental state. Based on the annual intake into the South African Public Service (estimated at as many as 3 100 new entrants per month) more than 36 000 new public servants might become eligible for

induction training per year.<sup>1</sup> This training demand requires new learning and development approaches that transcend the borders of a face-to-face classroom. In addition, the potential target population for public service training in national, provincial and local government could be as high as 1.7 million public servants.<sup>2,3</sup> It would therefore be critical to find an applicable learning and development approach, which includes the use of ICTs to tap into the benefits of eLearning to roll out training to scale. This research report emanates from two comprehensive, recent research projects on induction, various surveys and organisational reports, as well as monitoring and evaluation findings from the Public Administration, Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA), now the National School of Government (NSG). Although literature on relevant theory was utilised, the focus is rather on the application of theory in the context of public service induction in South Africa. Hence, primary sources from PALAMA and the NSG were heavily relied upon in an effort to provide an original picture of the issue at hand.

The first broad research project on the induction and on-boarding processes in the South African Public Service commenced in 2012 and was completed by March 2013. The purpose of the research was to study the policy imperatives regarding induction, obtain views and perceptions of public servants and trainers on the broader formal and informal induction processes, and provide useful guidelines for the further development of induction and reorientation within the public service.<sup>4</sup> This project was followed

by a second comprehensive research project on induction during 2014 and 2015. The significance of this project lies in its focus on trends and patterns in government-wide, generic induction training programmes from 2004 to 2014. It is an interpretive understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of induction, the changing policy environment and the associated training that occurred over a period of time, and it might inform future policy development.<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime, PALAMA was tasked by a Ministerial Directive (November 2012) to develop and implement a new compulsory induction programme (government-wide and generic) with the aim of promoting the professionalisation of the South African Public Service.<sup>6</sup> The primary intention of this programme was to "induct new recruits into the values and principles of the public service; instil the calling of the public service as a profession that thrives on ethical behaviour in the delivery of public goods, services and works to the citizens, and the protection of the financial resources and assets of the State."<sup>7</sup> The intention was to move away from typical short interventions to distributed practice in order to promote the retention of learning and the implementation of new knowledge, skills and values in the workplace. This is in line with Ebbinghaus' (1885) thinking, who, as early as the nineteenth century, established that new learning materials need to be reviewed over time in order to be stable in memory.<sup>8</sup> A blended solution was proposed to harness the opportunities offered by ICTs to support and enhance contact tuition in the extended

induction programme spread over a year. The development of the eLearning component of the blended solution was shaped by guidelines for effective practice and practical experience of eLearning implementation in the South African Public Service.

Between November 2012 and May 2013, a formative evaluation of the programme, including the eLearning component, and after the piloting phase of each module, consultations occurred with stakeholders (referred to as *Indabas* – from the Zulu word meaning matter for discussion). Learners, facilitators, material developers and monitoring and evaluation practitioners reflected on programme performance and developed improvement plans. In addition, monitoring and evaluation practitioners conducted site visits during contact tuition sessions and interviewed learners about their learning experience. In March 2013, an online survey was distributed to the participants in the pilot programme, specifically to obtain their views of their online learning experience. This article then, reports on the investigations and practical experience regarding public service induction. It contains information on the rationale for induction, the nature and scope of induction, as well as a blended learning design approach to address this training need. It is an attempt to share research and experience-based insights on induction and provide practical guidelines for developing, implementing and evaluating induction training design. In order to accomplish the above, the following pertinent questions will be considered in the discussion: Why is induction training important

to the public service? How can induction be conceptualised, and what should such programmes include? How should induction programmes be designed and what is the role of ICTs in their implementation? Which lessons can be shared and what is the contribution of ICTs in the rollout of induction programmes?

## **RELEVANCE OF INDUCTION TRAINING TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE**

In government's efforts to develop a public service that cares, belongs, serves and delivers on its developmental agenda, few processes are as important as the initial induction and orientation process. Since many attitudes and behavioural patterns that influence the way in which public servants go about their business are probably forged within the first few service months or year, much attention has recently focused on induction. One of the requirements for South Africa to be a successful developmental State is for the public service to be committed to national values, principles and ethics. In addition, the public service must display the zeal, knowledge and skills necessary to diligently and with commitment serve the citizens of the country. Therefore, the Minister of Public Service and Administration called for the professionalisation of the South African public service, which commenced with the implementation of a meaningful and relevant compulsory induction programme (from late 2013 onwards), aimed at instilling the values, ethos and commitment for implementing the developmental agenda of the State.

## **RESEARCH ON INDUCTION PROCESSES IN GOVERNMENT**

Given that induction training is accepted as important to the South African Public Service, a crucial consideration is how to then conceptualise induction. Orientation and induction programmes in government departments usually aim at familiarising new employees with the demands of their work environment and with the skills and attitudes necessary to effectively execute their responsibilities in line with the appropriate values, within legislative and policy frameworks.<sup>9</sup> Induction programmes were not initially mainstreamed and did not always receive appropriate institutional support and/or resources. Moreover, little attention was placed on the need to ensure that existing employees continue to uphold values and principles emanating from policy frameworks. Public servants, who have been in the service for several years, seem to lack a sound understanding of government and their role and value in providing services. This also applies across levels of appointment. The consequence was that newly appointed public servants took time to settle into their jobs and to appreciate the philosophy of service delivery associated with the developmental state. Hence, the need to provide more depth as part of induction became evident.<sup>10,11</sup>

The Public Service Induction Programme (PSIP), rolled out between 2008 and 2012, was developed as a mandatory two-day training course in an effort to provide a common response to induction and

reorientation to public servants. It formed a distinct part of the induction process in government, aimed at acquainting new public servants with the core values and competencies that are generic to the public service, to develop their understanding of how the public service works and what it means to be a public servant. It was rolled out for approximately 70 000 new public servants and did not replace department-specific orientation activities or "on boarding", but was complementary and generic. Besides formal training, intangible or unique workplace socialisation impacts on any induction process which, during the initial work period, could substantially influence attitudes and behaviour in the workplace. Due to the importance of the induction process in government, it was evident that further research on the matter was necessary and, early in 2012, the research unit at PALAMA commenced with a comprehensive research project on the nature of induction, the induction policy environment and the PSIP. Later in the same year, in accordance with a directive by the Minister of Public Service and Administration, the rollout of a compulsory year-long induction programme commenced.

The purpose of the research project on the induction and orientation in the South African Public Service (first project) was to study the policy imperatives guiding induction, obtain views and perceptions of public servants and trainers specifically on the PSIP, but also on the broader formal and informal induction processes. The study aimed to come up with useful policy guidelines for

the further development of induction and reorientation within the Public Service.<sup>12,13</sup>

The research methodology was structured, commencing with a contextualised desktop study on South Africa as a developmental state and the relevant concepts, practices, experiences and policy imperatives in the field of induction and orientation. Primary research included a survey of induction and orientation attendees as well as a survey of facilitators and trainers. Data collected was validated and cross-referenced against monitoring and evaluation data, transcriptions of focus group discussions held across the country and within the various government clusters and interviews with key stakeholders (including staff members directly involved in induction at the NSG and other departments). This research phase was followed by the final analysis and formulation of findings and recommendations. The experiences, perspectives and opinions of more than 2 000 individuals across South Africa in national and provincial departments were documented and analysed. The data provided a wealth of information relevant to the further rollout and development of induction and orientation in South Africa.<sup>14,15</sup> The research project was completed in March 2013.

During 2013, a further brief (but systematic) review of induction training, and its associated requirements, occurred. A comprehensive competency framework for various appointment levels in the public service was compiled and questionnaires as well as focus group discussions, were used to obtain views and perceptions from officials on induction

training and curriculum. Data was collected in various provinces and participants were from both national and provincial government departments. An important research project, focusing on trends and patterns in the public service induction training programmes over the period 2004 to 2014, followed. It is a comprehensive review of relevant sources, is aimed at drawing attention to inadequacies in public service induction programmes during the period, and informs future induction policy development and implementation processes. The analysis focused on the changing policy landscape and its effect on rolling out induction programmes, the discernible trends and patterns over the ten-year period (2004 to 2014), as well as what should constitute an appropriate design model for generic induction training in the public service.

The project is therefore an effort at interpretive understanding of generic public service induction programmes within the philosophical and political context. A qualitative research design was used for gathering and analysing data, which was appropriate due to the predominantly narrative nature of the information contained in the large number of sources utilised. This study focused on both primary and secondary sources and the authenticity of the documents was determined at inception with emphasis being placed on policy documents, documents of strategic importance, reports and evaluations with official status, and approved documents.<sup>16</sup> Relevant data was extracted per theme and analysis occurred in accordance with main themes and sub-themes,

ranging from the philosophical and policy underpinnings to planning, rollout, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The document analysis provided the "lenses" to rigorously and systematically conduct a comparative analysis of key categories across the different types of documents and made it possible to identify emerging trends and patterns that could inform future induction design.<sup>17</sup> The process followed, thereby, enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS ON INDUCTION PROCESSES IN GOVERNMENT**

A clear distinction was made between "induction" and "orientation", which is consistent with the interpretations reflected in available literature, local and international experience and the views reflected in the surveys and focus groups.<sup>18</sup> Whereas "orientation" reflects the initial welcoming and familiarisation with the workplace, "induction" is the longer process that conveys core values, objectives and ethos of an organisation. Both, however, are linked to "socialisation", which is a longer process that over time adjusts the newcomer to the responsibilities, values and norms of the group and the organisation.<sup>19</sup>

Respondents, including both new employees and long serving members, were very emphatic in their view that both formal and informal orientation and induction processes are of considerable value in the public service. In their view, it benefits the organisation

and individuals and also extends to peers and non-attendees. Although the initial two-day PSIP was short, it was evident from the respondents' reaction to a number of questions that, through participation, most of them gained a far better understanding of how government functions and their role in it.<sup>20</sup> It also became evident that the content covered in the PSIP and in the departmental-specific orientation often overlapped. This was taken as an indication that greater coordination and integration in distinguishing between departmental orientation processes and the wider induction training in government is required.

Not only was the principle of induction training strongly supported, the timing of the training also seemed important. Most respondents were of the opinion that it would be most beneficial if it occurs as early as possible in the working career: 51 percent of the respondents supported induction training occurring within the first month, 22 percent before starting work in a new position and 20 percent suggested it in the first six months.<sup>21</sup> The above was corroborated by the interviews conducted in 2013 on induction training. Induction was regarded as important and had to occur as early as possible in the working career. In terms of the duration of such training, indications were that induction training for junior officials should be longer in duration than induction for senior staff and management.

Research on induction also provided information on how public servants learn, what the main sources of learning are, and the



significance of informal learning processes as well as workplace socialisation. Formal induction training was regarded as the most important with regard to the functioning of government, but not for understanding a specific department or learning and coping with work responsibilities and the work environment. Whereas the role of human resources staff was seen as crucial for understanding how departments work, supervisors and colleagues were identified as key sources of learning and for understanding specific responsibilities.<sup>22</sup> This places much emphasis on the notion that interaction with other people in the work environment plays a crucial role in the induction and development of new employees. Induction and orientation is therefore a process of socialisation, an aspect that is evident in the literature and was clearly illustrated in the research project. In their investigation into the socialisation of new employees and their engagement during induction, Lewis, Thomas and Bradley found that knowledge transfer is positively influenced by interaction with colleagues.<sup>23</sup> Managers can play a key role in the induction process and, if managers do not encourage socialisation or correctly introduce new employees into an organisation, it may result in disengagement. However, if they do encourage new employees, the benefits can include the employee becoming more cognitively, emotionally and affectively engaged. Proper socialisation is important for positively integrating new employees.<sup>24</sup>

Public service respondents recognised induction and orientation as a process of

socialisation and the importance of learning from colleagues. Informal socialisation and workplace learning is therefore significant, but it can have both positive and negative effects. The nature and effect of socialisation must be monitored to limit negative processes and ensure that the positive effects are encouraged and strengthened through emphasising to existing staff that they need to assist and support new employees.<sup>25</sup> Since many skills are learned from supervisors, and such learning is usually informal, it can be formalised through mentorship. Mentoring can be used effectively to encourage positive interaction in the workplace. Mentor-mentee relationships tend to be more informal than induction training and although not as informal as socialisation, mentoring can support informal socialisation. If done correctly, it can establish and entrench a sound value system, a good work culture and ethos, and good practices.<sup>26</sup>

It is evident from the research on the induction processes in government that multiple approaches to learning are required (including eLearning, face-to-face tuition, and mentoring and coaching in the workplace). Learning materials should be available in various formats, as respondents generally supported the notion that various modes of delivery be utilised for induction training and even suggested that participants should be able to choose the medium of delivery to achieve learning and development.<sup>27</sup> Though the notion of a blended approach to induction training and a greater use of ICTs is a consistent result of research on the topic, the levels and capacity of the

specific group undergoing training must be taken into consideration during the delivery process.

Despite the wider acceptance that a greater reliance on ICTs in induction training is inevitable, implementing such an approach across the board poses some challenges. Major disadvantages include inadequate literacy levels among some staff members on the more junior occupational levels (one to five) and irregular access to computers and the Internet. Most staff members on these occupational levels indicated that they are not adequately ICT literate to use computers for learning, even if regular access could be provided. The experience of gathering data for the induction research project is a pertinent example of these and other challenges to be overcome. Of the 12 546 persons invited by email and through SMS messages to complete the research questionnaire (attached to the email or accessible through a web link provided) around 1 500 emails were blocked by firewalls or marked as spam. Some departmental email servers blocked access to the web link and some respondents could not complete the survey due to restricted access to the Internet. These issues have significant implications for eLearning in the public service.<sup>28</sup>

The findings, above, were in essence reconfirmed by the research project on trends and patterns in the public service induction training programmes from 2004 to 2014. A few unique issues came to the fore, such as the lack of indigenous values and knowledge systems within the philosophical and

policy frameworks underpinning induction. As a result, future programmes should build more on the "belief set" of the *Batho Pele* White Paper: namely, "We Belong, We Care, We Serve". Furthermore, evidence-based policy formulation is a government strategy that should also be applied to the sphere of induction programmes, and greater consideration needs to be given to the implications of intended policy provisions. Conceptually eLearning needs to remain an inherent part of future induction programmes, as well as on executive and senior management level. Conceptual frameworks on executive induction emphasise a teaching and learning approach aimed at engaging participants and stimulating learning through a focus on theory and practice. Learning from peers is crucial as insight and understanding must be enhanced through practical applications.<sup>29</sup> Learning should continue during the informal discussions, networking and coaching, while eLearning support must be a constant feature before, during and after the rollout of executive induction.

Induction into the public service needs to be a seamless process that facilitates entry. For this to occur, the design and delivery modalities are important. Induction should take place as soon as possible after appointment. Due to the expected effect of socialisation processes, mentorship is an important tool to assist newcomers in the induction process. In addition, a blended learning approach should be implemented that consists of classroom instruction, frequent discussions with direct managers, as well as eLearning.<sup>30</sup>

## **OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT COMPULSORY INDUCTION PROGRAMME**

Section 11(2) of the *Public Administration Management Act* (South Africa 2014) mandates the NSG to "promote the progressive realisation of the values and principles governing public administration and enhance the quality, extent and impact of the development of human resource capacity in institutions".<sup>31</sup> In addition, in terms of Clause 4 of the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council Resolution 1/2012, the qualifying period for new entrants into the public service for pay progression is extended from 12 to 24 months.<sup>32</sup> The aim of this extension period is to ensure the development and professionalisation of public officials. This section provides a snapshot of the design and implementation of a compulsory induction programme (for appointment levels one to twelve) piloted by the National School of Government in 2012 and 2013. This brief overview of the induction programme is followed by a discussion of the potential role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to support participation in an extended induction programme for public officials who are geographically dispersed.

The purpose of the CIP is to integrate new entrants into the public service by socialising them and equipping them with the knowledge, skills and values to effectively and efficiently carry out the State agenda. Therefore, the instructional materials, activity structures, and instructional strategies

are designed with the aim to professionalise the public service in order to meet service delivery expectations. The outcomes of the CIP are aligned with the National Development Plan 2030,<sup>33</sup> which aims to eradicate poverty and inequality through building a "capable, developmental, professional and responsive State", with the public service as the engine for growth and development.<sup>34</sup> This vision is, in turn, aligned with the global initiative against poverty, disease and inequality captured by the International Millennium Development Goals for 2015.<sup>35</sup> The CIP facilitates an understanding of the intents of the South African Constitution, government's mandate, as well as service delivery and the public administration process. In addition, it aims to develop norms, values and attitudes that contribute to building a professional, honest and considerate public service. The CIP also introduces participants to human resources and financial management processes of government.<sup>36</sup> Table 1 provides a high level overview of the modular programme of study.<sup>37</sup> The themes outlined in Table 1 are relevant for all levels of appointment. However, it is important to ensure that the focus and the depth, as well as the complexity, of discussion are level appropriate. Notably, the programme forms the foundation for the professionalisation of the public service. Once participants have successfully completed the CIP, they are then capacitated as public servants working within their various specialist areas, such as leadership, strategic management, finance and human resource management and development. The CIP is designed with the view that successful completion of the five

modules provides access to further study in public management and administration.<sup>38</sup> The design of materials and activities for the CIP, outlined in Table 1, is underpinned by the principles of active learning. MacDonald provides a useful definition of what makes learning active, explaining that it is "a process whereby learners are actively engaged in constructing knowledge in a meaningful, realistic context through exploration, reflection and social discourse with others, rather than passively receiving information".<sup>39</sup> Participants in the CIP are required to do more than listen. They are also required to read, write, discuss and solve problems. Moreover, participants are required to solve real-life problems to reflect the way knowledge, skills and values will be used in the workplace.

To illustrate the active learning approach, an example is used from Module 1 of the programme: Participants are required to engage with the principles underlying the Constitution and *Batho Pele* framework. Participants must, firstly, demonstrate that they know these principles by defining their meaning and purpose. Participants must then demonstrate that they can apply relevant Constitutional and *Batho Pele* values and/or principles to solve typical workplace challenges, which are presented in the form of case studies. Finally, participants must demonstrate their ability to transfer their learning to the workplace by using practical examples to illustrate how these principles are applied in their departmental context.<sup>40</sup>

The above-mentioned example, typical of the course-related activities, also illustrates

the authentic learning approach followed throughout the programme. In addition, taking into consideration the NSG's target audience, the design and implementation of the CIP curriculum are grounded in the principles of adult learning.

In order to help participants achieve the outcomes of the comprehensive programme, implemented over a year, learning is supported in a variety of environments: in-class learning is facilitated by an instructor, followed by the practical application of knowledge, skills and values in the workplace, with the support of a supervisor. In-class and workplace-based learning are complemented by an online learning environment where participants can access information to prepare for in-class sessions, interact, share resources, submit evidence of their workplace learning and have access to on-demand support. Figure 1 (see page 612), outlines the intended design, and explains how participants navigate the blended learning landscape.

The next section provides a brief rationale for integrating ICTs in NSG offerings and drills down into the use of ICTs to support and enhance learning in the CIP.

## **THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPULSORY INDUCTION PROGRAMME**

eLearning at the NSG is defined as the optimal integration of ICTs in materials and

**TABLE 1: Overview of the modular programme of study**

Modules	Focus	Workplace application
<b>Module 1:</b> Understanding the Constitution and your mandate	Application of Constitutional values and <i>Batho Pele</i> <sup>1</sup> principles to service delivery.	Participants are guided to reflect on their departments' mandate and their role in achieving it.
<b>Module 2:</b> Working the service delivery system and public administration process	The operation of the system of government and democracy.	Participants are guided to define their role in rendering the services their departments are responsible for. They are required to reflect on the regulations and processes that frame their projects and reports.
<b>Module 3:</b> Being an ethical, honest and considerate public servant	The norms, values and attitudes, which contribute to building a professional, honest, equitable and considerate public service.	Participants are guided to consider their departments' professional requirements and the benefits of working professionally, ethically and honestly.
<b>Module 4:</b> Building people relationships	Managing and building good working relationships.	Participants are guided to understand their departments' human resources policies, processes and management systems. They are required to determine how these affect them and others in their department.
<b>Module 5:</b> Understanding the financial processes of government	Responsible and efficient management of finances and supply chain processes.	Participants are guided to understand how financial and supply chain management and processes affect their work and how they account in relation to their day-to-day work.

Source: Authors

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<sup>1</sup> *Batho Pele* means "people first". The eight principles were developed as a guide to improve customer relations and service and to promote the government as a quality organisation.

activities to support and enhance learning. eLearning, applied in the right way to appropriate capacity building needs, can deliver significant gains to the NSG, as well as the overall public sector and, ultimately, the citizens of South Africa. What follows is a brief rationale for integrating eLearning in NSG offerings. The implementation of eLearning enables the NSG and its client departments to use capacity building resources optimally. Significant cost savings can be experienced when comparing traditional instructor-led programmes with technology-mediated learning and development, simply because ancillary costs are cut out. Using ICTs to facilitate distance learning saves on travel and accommodation, catering and duplication of course materials. Moreover, eLearning can be rolled out quickly to any number of learners. Speed and competence are therefore improved, while learners are not required to be away from home or the workplace for extended periods of time. As a result, productivity lost from staff being away from the workplace is significantly lower.

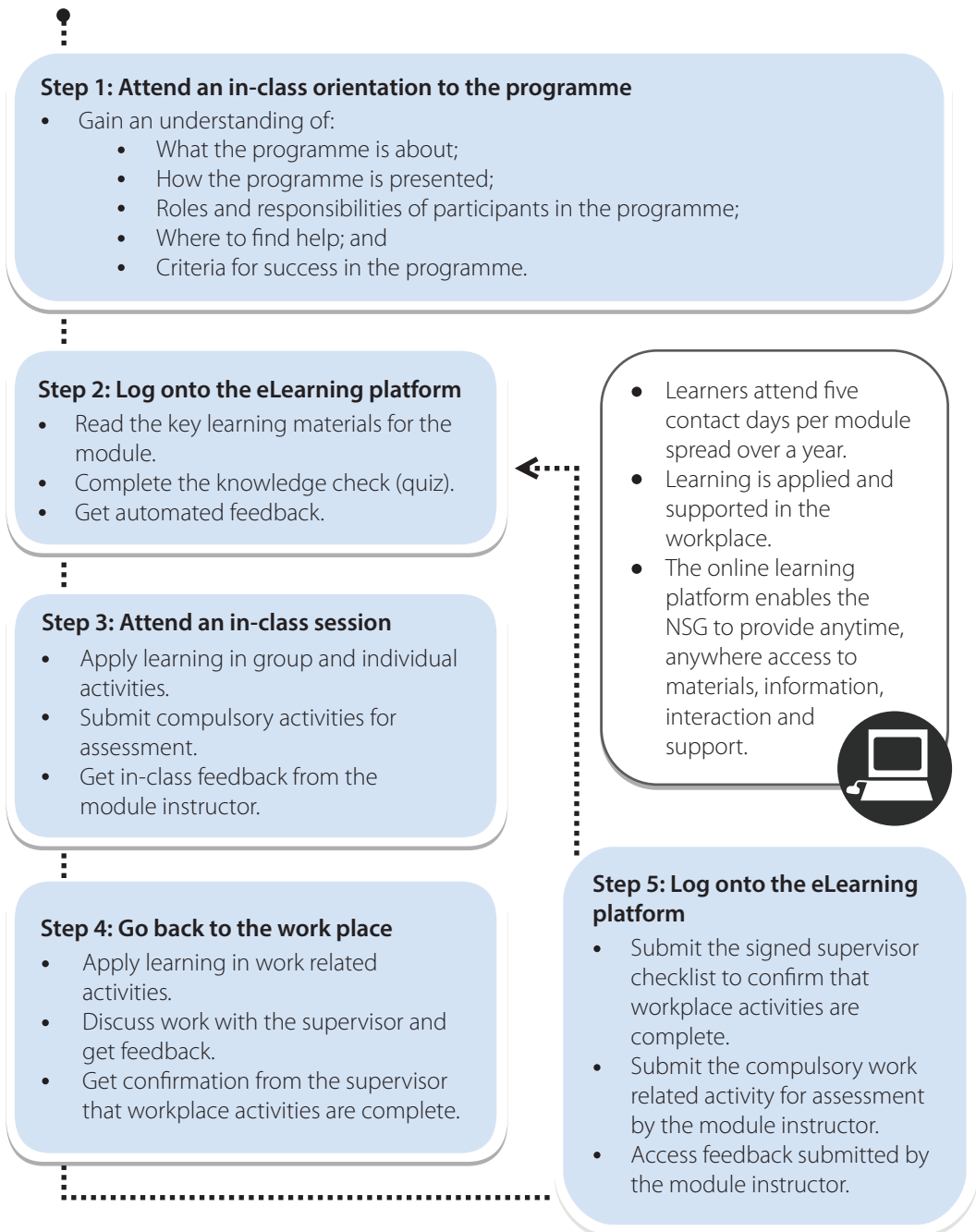
ICTs, when implemented correctly, can support learners through interactive course design and regular feedback. Likewise, tracking of and reporting on learner performance throughout the learning process permits the flagging of at-risk learners and timeous intervention. Furthermore, learning analytics will assist the NSG to understand learners and the context of their learning. The collection, analysis and reporting of user data aim to continually improve learning experiences in order to better prepare

learners for service delivery. Furthermore, participation in eLearning interventions builds literacies and competencies that are required to perform effectively in an information society.

As mentioned previously, the CIP brings together in-class and workplace based learning complemented by anytime, anywhere access to an online learning environment. The online learning environment is designed to provide access to materials, information, interaction and on-demand support to large numbers of participants in different locations. The use of online learning tools, as outlined below, is described in the CIP programme strategy. The design of the online learning environment is grounded in practical experience and underpinned by the research findings and recommendations of eLearning experts.<sup>41,42,43,44</sup>

Induction into the public service is compulsory; learners are required to complete the induction programme successfully and therefore learner support is critical. The eLearning component of the CIP is designed with a view to prepare learners for in-class sessions and keep them engaged in the time between contact sessions. In addition, the online learning environment provides a space for continuous, as well as on-demand, learner support. The online space aims to provide a rich learning environment, comprised of eLearning tools that provide anytime, anywhere access to learning materials, learner-facilitator and learner-learner interaction, as well as assessment opportunities with feedback.

**FIGURE 1: Navigating the blended learning landscape**



Source: Authors

The same design pattern is followed for every module. Firstly, learners complete a knowledge check presented in the form of an online quiz, based on the key learning materials of the unit, which are accessible in the online learning environment, the purpose of which is to ensure that learners are familiar with key concepts. This optimises face-to-face contact time, which can be used for discussion to collaboratively solve real-life problems. Quizzes are automatically graded and feedback is provided on submission of learners' answers. This is a handy tool to engage learners with learning materials and gauge their understanding of the topics at hand through the collection, analysis and reporting of quiz data. Learning analytics can be used to plan appropriate interventions for learners who are falling behind in the achievement of learning outcomes. The automated nature of the quiz, and reporting tools, simplifies the collection of large volumes of learner evidence and the management of assessment processes.

Learners complete a variety of activities in class, but are also expected to demonstrate their implementation of newly acquired knowledge, skills and values in the workplace. Providing an online "post-box" for the submission of compulsory workplace-based activities serves a dual purpose. Learners who are geographically dispersed can complete activities in their workplace and submit evidence of their learning online. In addition, this functionality facilitates the management of learner evidence: submissions are date-stamped and recorded in the system. Assessors have anytime, anywhere access to the submitted learner evidence and can use

the eLearning platform to quickly and easily share feedback with individual learners. In addition, through tracking and reporting, administrative and support staff can identify learners who miss deadlines and who are at risk of not fulfilling the requirements of the CIP.

Due to the large number of potential learners, the bulk of assessment and feedback is workplace based, utilising the knowledge, skills and experiences of learners' supervisors for assistance with, and feedback on, work-related activities. Supervisor-learner interaction is recorded in a workbook and submitted online as evidence of learning. In addition, space is created to submit a document, signed by the supervisor, declaring that learners met the workplace requirements of the programme. This streamlines the involvement of multiple role-players, as learner evidence is collected and managed centrally.

The perceived contribution of ICTs in the CIP was one of the elements monitored and evaluated through a number of activities. These activities are discussed below.

### **PROCESS OF EVALUATING THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES OF THE COMPULSORY INDUCTION PROGRAMME**

Feedback on the performance of the intended integration and use of online learning tools in the CIP was gathered throughout the pilot phase, with a view to improving the programme design and implementation for



future rollout. A reaction evaluation questionnaire (REQ) completed by learners at the end of an in-class session, as well as a feedback form completed by the instructor, were used to collect data on the five face-to-face contact sessions. On-site evaluations were conducted to collect data from a convenient sample of participants regarding their profile and interaction, the quality of learning materials, the quality of instruction as well as the logistical arrangements for face-to-face training. To augment the data generated by the questionnaires and observation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a convenient sample of facilitators and learners by using interview schedules.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned monitoring and evaluation activities, post-module *Indabas* were held during which key role-players reflected on the programme performance to develop improvement plans.<sup>46</sup> Finally, on completion of Module 4, a self-completion survey was distributed electronically to all learners in order to determine their perceptions specifically about the eLearning component of the CIP<sup>47</sup>. Learners received a link to the survey via email. Although the survey was completed anonymously, a unique link was automatically generated for each learner and completion of the survey could be tracked. Learners continuously received reminder emails to submit their feedback, and all learners responded.

The data gathered during these processes enabled the assessment of the quality of the CIP and provided answers in terms of its efficiency and effectiveness. The key findings

relevant to the perceived role of ICTs in the CIP are recorded in the next section.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE CONTRIBUTION OF ICTS IN THE CIP**

This section provides insight into the implementation of the intended design in real-life public sector contexts. The first part reports on how participants responded to the integration of ICTs in the induction programme. Secondly, we report on the performance of the intended design, that is, to make materials available, provide channels for communication and learner support, and facilitate the submission and management of learner evidence. With regard to the integration of ICTs in the induction programme, the orientation to the programme aimed at explaining the purpose of the online learning environment and to capacitate learners to use the online tools to maximise learning. The observer's perception was that learners, especially levels one to five, found it difficult to use computers and follow instructions; this observation was confirmed in an interview with the facilitator. The facilitator added that some learners indicated that they did not have access to computers at work for learning. However, in the REQ, all learners on levels one to five and 96 percent of learners on levels six to twelve, indicated that they understand how to use the online platform. The majority of learners also indicated that they knew where to find assistance when needed. To strengthen participation in the online learning environment, learners have access to telephonic assistance

during office hours and unlimited access to email support. Learners typically feel unsure in a new learning environment.<sup>48</sup> This confirms the importance of preparing learners to function in a new learning environment, especially if learners are new to technology-mediated learning and the need to provide ongoing learner support.

The discussions during the post-module *Indabas* reinforced the concern that not all learners have access to computers in the workplace. However, all the respondents in the electronic survey indicated that they could access a computer in the workplace, but to some, computers were not accessible for learning. The learners who indicated that they were not allowed to use computers and the Internet for eLearning activities cited the following reasons. They have a heavy workload and are expected to complete CIP-related activities during their lunch time or work from home. According to the learners, time allocated to CIP activities was not negotiated with their supervisors.<sup>49</sup> The learners' responses have implications for workplace-based and online induction training, as well as capacity building of supervisors to support participants in the workplace. Even though the CIP directive instructed heads of departments to provide access to technology and the Internet for CIP participants and time to engage with CIP activities, this was not always feasible, especially for participants outside PALAMA. This experience shows that the availability of guidelines, policies and other regulatory documents does not guarantee implementation. The implication for the design of induction training (which

incorporates ICTs) is that an in-depth analysis of the context of implementation is critical in order to appreciate the real extent of access to technology. In addition, change management and eLearning awareness needs to be addressed in departments – in the same way that learners cannot be expected to attend face-to-face training in their own time, it is critical to provide time to participate in eLearning activities during the work day.

The lack of access to computers and the Internet in the workplace naturally compromised the design of the CIP as a blended solution. One of the main challenges discussed, at the majority of post-module *Indabas*, was that the full potential of ICTs could not be utilised. This was not only ascribed to limited access. Other systemic and procedural factors include the following:

- Materials are not always available in time to upload to the online learning environment in preparation for in-class sessions.
- Learners do not have the opportunity to complete quizzes before an in-class session.
- Few learners submit workplace activities and supervisor checklists online.
- Manual administrative processes restrict the ability to establish an online link between learners and the instructor who facilitates the in-class learning.

The under-utilisation of ICTs compromised quality learner support in between contact sessions as well as preparations for in-class sessions. In addition, the fragmented

submission of learner evidence made it difficult to keep a reliable and accessible record of submitted learner evidence and the provisioning of feedback to learners. Capacity, planning and accountability internal to the training organisation, as well as in the context of delivery, is equally important to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of technology-mediated learning.

For the modules where materials were received in time for online access before in-class sessions, learners benefited. Eighty-eight percent of the learners who responded to the electronic survey indicated this, and pointed out the following benefits:

- Materials, once loaded onto the system, are accessible at any time.
- The guidelines for utilising online learning materials are clear, simple and straightforward.
- Learners are able to print or review documents, prior to the training, in order to understand what the training is all about.
- Interaction with the content, prior to the contact session, helps learners to be better prepared.
- Learners can be informed about what is needed for an in-class session.

In addition, learners pointed out that they don't want to spend a lot of time on the Internet (in the online classroom); they just do what is necessary and log out.<sup>50</sup> Although learners experienced challenges, which included materials not being available on time, as well as sporadic Internet access,

slow systems and limited time to access the online materials, the perceived benefits reported here merit the use of ICTs to distribute learner materials, use the online environment to prepare learners for face-to-face sessions and provide communication tools.

Ninety-eight percent of learners indicated that they prefer to have access to learning materials online in future programmes. Learners indicated that the online learning environment is convenient, because peers, the facilitator and resources can be accessed irrespective of time and distance. They also felt that the online learning environment exposed them to the Internet and equipped them with useful ICT skills. Learners also rated the availability of technical support and regular feedback on their progress as priority areas for successful participation in the online learning environment.<sup>51</sup> These responses make it clear that ICTs have an important role to play in the support of extended face-to-face programmes, such as the CIP, and support research findings on induction processes in government that indicated a need for blended solutions.

The experience, with the rollout of eLearning for induction, illustrated a number of tacit lessons. These lessons could be used to make some recommendations, which follow.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

As the government department mandated to address the training and capacity-building needs of the South African Public Service, the National School of Government is responsible

for compulsory training programmes, such as induction training. Due to the sheer potential size of the target population on national, provincial and local government level (it could be as many as 1.7 million officials), the use of ICTs has become important in enabling the NSG to also tap into the benefits of eLearning.

The mandate of the NSG is closely associated with developing a responsible and productive corps of public servants who would serve the country with zeal and display the attributes and values required for enhanced service delivery. Induction training is regarded as the first step, because it introduces public servants to the working environment and acquaints them with relevant normative aspects. It is also a process of socialisation for new entrants into the public service and, together with workplace experiences, enables public servants to be prepared to be functional in the workplace. As a result, induction training must occur as soon as possible after appointment into the public service, and contribute towards making the integration of new staff members as seamless as possible.

A noteworthy aspect to be mindful of is that induction is a foundational opportunity for further training and development, rather than a training programme in its own right. Research findings illustrated the limitations of traditional induction programmes, the value of workplace learning and the fact that innovative learning strategies are required. Although different ways of delivering induction programmes and materials should be explored and encouraged, it is important to

bear in mind the limitations posed by the participants and the context of implementation.

Exposure to a new learning and development approach, such as implementing a blended solution in a traditionally face-to-face tuition environment, requires a clear understanding of the context of implementation and change management. It is critical that all involved (learners, instructors, supervisors, as well as designers, implementers and managers of training) fully comprehend the role of technology in the learning process. Such an understanding can enhance the optimal use of ICTs to support and enhance learning. Moreover, the infrastructure, integrated systems and effective and efficient procedures need to be in place prior to the rollout of eLearning to scale – both internally to the training organisation as well as in the context of implementation.

The findings contained in this paper are grounded in research and practical experience, with due appreciation of the dynamic and complex public service context. Though it is difficult to predict the likely influence of the research findings and lessons learned, it might inform future policy formulation on induction, indicate gaps in the broader induction and orientation process in government and inform further developments of induction training. As no baseline on induction in the public service existed when the research commenced, these findings address issues that are crucial for future research projects on induction and are part of ongoing research aimed at reinforcing the capacity to evaluate public service training.

**Thean Potgieter** is a Professor and Head of Training Policy and Planning at the National School of Government in South Africa. He is an Associate of the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Governance. He has been a Director of the Centre for Military Studies at the University of Stellenbosch, Secretary General of the South African Military History Commission, Chair and Non-Executive Director of Westcoast Aquaculture, and Chief Director of Research and Innovation at the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA), now the National School of Government.

**Fran Greyling** is Chief Director at the National School of Government, responsible for planning and organising the rollout of eLearning initiatives in the public sector. She worked as an instructional designer at the Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Johannesburg, and eLearning Manager at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her areas of research interest are eLearning and professional development.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to the *Journal of Public Administration* are invited from academics, experts, and practitioners in the field of Public Administration and Management. Before publication, contributions will be subject to adjudication. Contributions must be accompanied by a certificate that the language editing had been done by a suitably qualified person.

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A variety of contributions may be made to the *Journal*. These include full articles, review articles, viewpoints, and research results. It should be noted, however, that these articles are weighed differently for the purposes of publication.

## MANUSCRIPTS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO:

Professor M H Maserumule  
Chief Editor  
Tel: (012) 382 9769  
E-mail Address: SAAPAM@tut.ac.za  
Postal Address: PO Box 14257  
Hatfield  
0028

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PO Box 14257  
Hatfield  
0028  
South Africa  
Tel: +27 12 382 9769  
Fax: +27 12 382 9042

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