



GOVERNMENT DIALOGUE IN CONVERSATION WITH THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE

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Institutionalising professionalism through the School of Government

By Lindiwe Sisulu

"Professionalisation of our Public Service is an important part of establishing a capable and competent public administration. Institutionalising professionalism within the Public Service is thus innately one of our key priorities.

With the launch of the National School of Government in October this year, the Public Service will train and develop new recruits and re-orientate and educate all currently employed public servants.

The Public Service is not short of challenges. The Diagnostic Overview of the National Planning Commission points out that many of the problems with public-sector performance have to do with deeply rooted systemic issues. Yet there is no 'quick fix' substitute for a long-term and strategic approach to enhancing institutional capacity. Addressing the uneven performance of the Public Service

will [therefore] not be achieved through multiple new initiatives, but rather through a focused and coordinated approach.

The National Development Plan represents the vision and aspirations of our people, making it crucial that all public servants gear themselves to lead in the implementation of the plan. It is through the professionalisation of the Public Service that we can fast-track the implementation of the National Development Plan.

The introduction of the National School of Government is one of the measures to institutionalise a culture of efficiency, effectiveness and professionalism within our ranks.

The school will serve as an incubator of ideas and a catalyst for reform and modernisation of the Public Service. To this end, the school, working in collaboration with similar institutions, will serve as



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a repository and disseminator of best international experience and practice in Public Service.

The goal is to have the National School of Government as a centre from which public sector training is coordinated and curriculum and training standards are directed. It will be a hub for training and development opportunities to professionalise the organs of State and develop required competencies, in support of service delivery that drives sustainable growth and other development goals.

To achieve this goal, the school will be different from the current, by being a pro-active and corrective vehicle to provide solutions to address the systemic and perennial challenges of Public Service delivery. The school will ensure that State institutions are functioning with skilled public servants who are committed to the public good and capable of consistently delivering high quality services – fostering a sense of professional common purpose.

Tapping from the experience of those who have served in different levels in the hierarchy of Government will enrich training and development interventions.

The School of Government will provide in-service and professional development and training to improve competency in the Public Service. The programmes delivered by the school will be based on knowledge of the public administration systems, governance ethos and the expected culture of service delivery. Seasoned, ethical and principled facilitators and instructors who understand the Public Service will train in the school.

To ensure that new public servants understand the values and ethos of the Public Service, we have introduced a compulsory induction course for all new public servants during their first 24 months of employment. This is central to our programmes to develop a new Public Service cadre whose only preoccupation is meeting the needs of the people.

Over the next few years, all public service training and development programmes for Public Servants at all employment levels will be context-based, that is, based on the strategic and operational milieu of the Administration. The new approach to professionalisation of the Public Service and the consequential competent and capable Public Service, will be achieved through a number of strategies which include

the compulsory induction programme.

A range of in-service training and development programmes will be introduced – especially for middle to executive management levels in local, provincial and national departments and public sector agencies – to build capabilities to deal with job-specific skills and competencies gaps.

The school will also introduce legislative capacity-building training and development for public representatives within Parliament, provincial legislatures and municipal councils.

The distinctive feature of the school is that it draws its faculty mainly from former and current Public Servants. With demonstrable and direct experience and expertise in the Public Service, the faculty provides a training that is rooted in reality. As such, the faculty is able to combine both theory and practice by infusing a grounded, practice-based contribution in its programmes. Its accredited programmes will ensure that its standard of provision is comparable to the best of management and leadership academies in the world.

Our Constitution requires excellence from the Public Service. The Preamble of the Constitution of South Africa provides a clear vision of the kind of South Africa we come from and the country we should all aspire to build. It provides that public administration must be governed by the values and principles that include a high standard of professional ethics; effective, efficient and economic use of resources; development orientation; impartiality, fairness, equity and non-biasness; responsiveness; accountability; transparency including timeliness, accessibility and accuracy.

The transformation of the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) into the National School of Government will position the Public Service to widely respond to the ethos and values as prescribed in our Constitution. Through the school, we will be able to build a professional service ethos and competence across all levels – thus responding to where the next generation of public servants comes from. ”

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