Public Administration Training and Development in Africa: The Case of the Republic of South Africa

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ABSTRACT
South Africa is a developmental state that suffers from a lack of management capacity in the public service. Hence, a national imperative focuses on addressing talent management and building a cohort of qualified and competent public servants. The synergistic link between public sector management and the content of public administration can be associated with and contribute to addressing critical skills shortages in the public service. Training in this regard with the demand for and supply of competent managers raises some serious consideration. Given that academicians and scholars often criticize the history and evolution of education and training in public administration as being overly administrative and outdated, how has the need for a transformative management-governance context advanced in South Africa? In this regard, a range of “soft skills” deemed necessary for the developmental agenda in South Africa is a focal point of contemporary public administration. From a training perspective, methodologies include problem-based learning, performance-oriented and situation-emergent training, project management approach to managerial problems, and emphasis placed on indigenous management knowledge in a developmental context. We hope that these innovative approaches would address the wide managerial gap in the public administration environment.

KEYWORDS
developmental state, new public governance, capacity, action learning

This article commences with a brief overview of public administration education and training in South Africa. The growth of public administration as an academic discipline and a professional field is dated back to the times of Minnowbrook and Mount Grace conferences. During the Minnowbrook conference, the issue of relevance came up not only in the sense of responding to turbulent societal problems, but also in relation to the research in the discipline (Cameron & Milne, 2009, p. 382). For example, La Porte (Cameron & Milne, 2009, p. 382) pointed out that the literature in public administration has contributed almost nothing to major advances in either the analysis or the normative understanding of complex public organizations. Also, during the Mount Grace Conference at Magaliesberg in the early 1990s, “participants reflecting on the state of the Discipline argued that the current theory, teaching and practice of Public Administration were in crisis. Specifically, teaching and practice were too descriptive: lacking sufficient analytical, explanatory and predictive techniques;
[and]...reductionist: restricting and reifying Public Administration to one view of the administrative processes only,” asserts Cameron & Milne (2009). (Also refer to Chipkin & Meny-Giber, 2012.) Both of these conferences had worldwide comprehensive impact that brought wide-ranging public service demands for the transformation of financial, human resource, and institutional capacities.

In South Africa, “the democratically elected government, which came into power in April 1994, did not inherit a so-called clean slate on which to start governing. The legacies of the past, in particular the apartheid era of 1948 to March 1994 had to be used as the background for the development of new, non-racial policies that also provide for the eradication of past irregularities,” advances Kuye (2006). The transformation is justified with the fact that government programs perpetuated a strict racial hierarchy with the greatest allocation of the country’s wealth going to Whites, and African receiving the least. Economically, the country was isolated through sanctions, and the resultant import-substitution industrializations meant that many firms were unable to compete in global markets. In the years preceding 1994, growth declined to below 1% per annum, and the early 1990s growth had come to a standstill with the 1992 recession and the drought. Public sector debt was ballooning out of control as the apartheid regime sought to buy support. The country was isolated diplomatically and excluded from almost all multilateral institutions (Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Service [PCAS], 2003, p. 7). South Africa had its first democratic elections in 1994. Since 1995, the South African public service has engaged in the process of transforming itself into an efficient, effective, democratic, fully representative and development-oriented instrument of service delivery (Rakate, 2006).

TRANSFORMATION INTO CURRENT SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

“Transformation of the South African public service had its origin in the Freedom Charter of 1956, emphasizing the establishment of [public] administration to which all people irrespective of race, color, or sex can have access and participate in” (Republic of South Africa, 1956). This objective of the charter was moreover supported by various legislative frameworks, including the Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1994; Public Service Act, 1994; the “White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery” (Republic of South Africa, 1995) (Notice 1227 of 1995); South African Qualifications Act, 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995), Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998); the Skill Development Levies Act, 1999 (Act No. 9 of 1999); and the “White Paper on Public Service Training and Education,” 2007. These statutory documents played a pivotal role in transforming the objectives of a democratic society into a developmental state. The developmental state is defined as a “state where politics have assured that power, autonomy and capacity are centralized in order to achieve explicit developmental goals,” advances Taylor (in van Dijk & Croucamp, 2007, p. 665). Various government policies have contributed to an understanding of a developmental state as:

• A state that promotes social development;

• A state concerned with integrating the dual economy by addressing the socioeconomic needs of its entire population, especially the poor, the marginalized, and the historically disadvantaged;

• A well-managed and democratic state that builds its legitimacy on its capacity to simultaneously foster productive economic activities and economic growth, quantitatively improve the living conditions of its people, and reduce poverty; and

• A state that is partnership-based and globally connected. Its ability to promote and sustain development is understood as the combination of steady and high rates of economic growth and structural change in the productive system, both domestically and in its relationship with the international economy (Department of Provincial and Local Government [DPLG] and South African Local Government Association [SALGA], 2008).
The concept of a developmental state in theory and practice therefore is the center of debate and discussion in the current South African context (Sinha, 2003). In order to establish a public administration environment whereby services are customer-focused, an evolution to a “developmental state” framework is thus required. Hence, the African National Congress (ANC), the governing party, in its National General Council in mid-2005 committed itself to building a developmental state to transform the South African economy fundamentally (African National Conference, 1991). This theme was later reinforced at the ANC 52nd national conference in 2007 in Polokwane, and the ANC 2009 election manifesto (Edigheji, 2010; Kuye & Ajam, 2012).

Following on, the concept of administrative efficiency seems to call for the increased intervention of the state in determining the competence of employees, how organizations will be structured, and their responsibilities, while the oversight function of government is strongly emphasized. In the conceptualization of the developmental state, the purpose of realizing economic growth can only be achieved by a bureaucracy committed and competent to carry out the functions given to it. Realizing the developmental state will depend on the ability of the bureaucracy to respond to the challenges of productivity (van Dijk & Croucamp, 2007).

The developmental status allows the South African government to engage in active interventions in society to promote economic growth, and to ensure that growth has the resultant effect of improving living conditions of the majority of the population (Edigheji, 2005; Pienaar & Geldenbloem, 2013). Economic development therefore requires an effective state that can play a catalytic role, encouraging and complementing the activities of individuals and business firms (Chhibber, 1997). An essential prerequisite of the developmental state is some minimal level of administrative capacity (Sheoraj, 2007). Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) and Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), the first post-democratic attempts to eradicate poverty and bring economic development, are not successful due to the “lack of state capacity” (Simkins, 1996, p. 85).

Furthermore, regrettably, according to a report published by Department of Public Service and Administration entitled “15 Year Review: a review of changes in the macro-organization of the state: 1994–2008” (2013), states that implementation was often outsourced to service providers, who in turn did not possess the required skills. The former President Thabo Mbeki already voiced this concern in 2004 when he repeatedly asked this question: Do we have the capacity to deliver on our developmental programs? (Schoonraad & Radebe, 2007).

STATE OF MANAGEMENT CAPACITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa, as a developmental country, however, is still grappling with lack of capacity required for absolute transformation. Researchers of the Department of Public Service and Administration raised this concern in a report entitled “Assessing Capability in the Public Sector” (Schoonraad & Radebe, 2007). According to the report, former President Thabo Mbeki during the State of the Nation Address in 2005 said that instead of enjoying the outcomes of democracy, “there is a lack of all-round capacity and weaknesses in the implementation of certain national programs” (p. 115). He also submitted that there is a need to immensely improve the management, organizational, technical, and other capacities of government so that it meets its objectives.

The post-democratic “new [South African] government has the legitimacy which the prior government lacked, but it lacks the management capacity to plan and implement reconstruction and development activities on the massive scale it had in fact promised” (Naidoo, 2009, p. 993). This concern can be justified by the publication of the “Presidential Review Commission Report, Chapter 2: Overview of how government is working” (2008), stating that
national departments and their provincial counterparts (with a number of provincial departments [claimed] that their national counterparts had done little to build their capacity). ...[In] many strategic planning processes, much of the work has been facilitated by outside consultants, with little evidence of any significant skills transfer to staff within the organizations. ...Therefore, it does not seem that strategic planning processes have made a major contribution to the building of public sector capacity.” (p. 5)

Moreover, according to “A Report on the State of the Public Service” (November 2001), “following South Africa’s transition to democracy, transforming the public service became a national priority. This has been a gradual and slow process that has only been partially successful. Capacity, human resource and culture problems remain” (p. 3). A complex task, public sector transformation has been hampered by a lack of capacity, especially at the lower levels. However, powers have in many instances been devolved to lower levels without ensuring institutional readiness. Human resources are still not optimally used, while certain basic administrative systems are often still not in place. The dominant organizational culture is still not reflective of the country’s intended new values and principles (Public Service Commission, 2001).

“The Provincial Review Report” by the Department of Public Service and Administration (commonly known as “Ncholo Report”) was published in 1997 and explored the level of state capacity in South Africa, emphasizing “a dearth of expertise, with national and provincial departments competing for scarce experienced public administrators” (Ncholo Report, 1997). It continued

The staffing of new department structures in some provinces has resulted in an uneven skills range amongst staff, especially at the lower levels. This lack of skills in addition to the numerous vacancies in many provinces, has created an urgent need for capacity building in the areas of management, finance, administration, technical and professional staff; [and] whilst there are many skilled and capable people in the provincial Departments, there is currently a huge shortfall in critical skills. (p. 49)

The previous discussion shows that the state and administrative capacity constraints and deficiencies are a linchpin to the impact on the developmental state to realize its potential in fulfilling its mandate.

EVOLUTION OF TEACHING, TRAINING, AND DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

“The White Paper on Education: A Program for the Transformation of the Higher Education System,” prepared by the Department of Education in 1997, states that the “role of higher education in a knowledge-driven world is threefold:

Human resource development: the mobilization of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society.

High-level skills training: the training and provision of person power to strengthen this country’s enterprises, services and infrastructure. This requires the development of professionals and knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills, but who are socially responsible and conscious of their role in contributing to the national development effort and social transformation.

Production, acquisition and application of new knowledge: national growth and competitiveness is dependent on continuous technological improvement and innovation, driven by a well-organized, vibrant research and development system which integrates the research and training capacity of higher education with the needs of industry and of social reconstruction. (p. 12)

This scenario was furthermore academically researched by Gordon (in Waghid, 2002, p. 475).
The author posits that the major challenges to higher education (as emphasized in the South African context) require vital considerations for improvement. In order to achieve the aims of a developmental state with improved administrative and state capacity, some of the following aspects need detailed emphasis. The new modes and methods of teaching require greater flexibility in educational provision in order to equip students for the employment market. Through work experiential learning, the gap between theory and practice needs closure for effective implementation of learned concepts that moreover requires technological understanding for benchmarking. This practice may assist students to become efficient implementers of project-based and problem-based learning applications in the particular workplace. The outcome will be to prepare public administration students to strategically address equity and ethical issues as an integral component of the public value system in public administration, and students will react tactically to the national imperatives in the country.

The previous discussion indicates that the challenge remains for an institution of higher learning to reengineer and reposition itself in ensuring the relevancy and currency of its teaching paradigms and methodologies for effective public administration education.

The current era in South African public administration is placing emphasis on the quality and mix of knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for advancing the developmental agenda of the state, while building a cohort of qualified and competent public servants. To this end, the development of new approaches goes hand in hand with innovation, which in turn depends on the sharing of knowledge, skills, and the commitment of multiple groups and role-players (Scarbrough, Swan, & Preston, 1999). The field of public administration and related disciplines to promote the transformation of public administration in South Africa—for example, the New Public Administration Initiative (NPAI) in 1992, the Joint Universities Public Management Education Trust (JUPMET), the Association of Southern African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management (ASSADPAM), the KwaZulu-Natal Regional Forum, NAPISA and PASA—however, did not bring to fruition the required results (compare Cloete in Theron & Schwella, 2000; also refer to Kroukamp, 2003).

The resultant outcome is seen in the form of public sector reforms that were “initiated against the background that governments required a departure from the traditional methods of administration and the urgent need for a renewed public sector to propel government in its quest for sustainable socio-economic, political and technological development. There was a need for structural re-engineering of the public sector with the infusion of new values of professionalism, accountability, responsiveness and a focused sense of mission for maximum efficiency in the economy” (Omooyefa, 2008; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2011). These reforms brought a paradigmatic shift whereby new demands of public services were considered under the auspices of a developmental state. These demands include decentralization of responsibilities; contracting out of services; performance-based contract between the government and the private sector; corporatization; performance management systems; and information and communication technologies for enhanced, improved, and faster delivery of services.

Emphasizing the politically feasible support to the objectives of developmental state, the former Minister of Department of Public Service and Administration Geraldine Joslyn Fraser-Moleketi (2006) stated that the reformed public administration methodologies “that were adopted in the South African reform effort were specifically seen as tools, contributing to building an effective and efficient administration, in order to achieve the governance goals of a democratic South Africa” (p. 15). To achieve the objectives of developmental state, appropriate training and development tools are required to increase the capabilities of public servants, explored in the subsequent focus of the discussion.
NATIONAL CRITICAL CROSS-FIELD AND DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES

In tracing the evolution of teaching, training and development in public administration, this section locates it within the national critical cross-field and developmental outcomes. A pertinent discussion of these outcomes shows how they impact the status of teaching and learning in the field. The 12 critical cross-field outcomes provided to all South African higher education institutions are broad and generic to all programs, including public administration. Other than expected, these outcomes are not related to any level of performance. The critical cross-field outcomes are static, and the discipline (of public administration in this context) should decide on appropriate assessment strategies that provide evidence that learners have achieved them. Within the concept of constructive alignment, it is also expected of educators in higher education to apply appropriate didactic methods that provide learners with an equal opportunity in enacting them to solving problems.

The 12 critical cross-field outcomes highlight what students should achieve: identify and solve problems, thus making decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organization, and community; organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect, analyze, organize, and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively using visual, symbolic, and/or language skills in various modes; use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility toward the environment and the health of others; demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation; reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively; participate as a responsible citizen in the life of local, national, and global communities; be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts; explore education and career opportunities; and develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

The critical cross-field outcomes can provide the field and discipline of public administration with an opportunity to adopt new methods of teaching and learning that are relevant and adhere to national and international standards and support recent trends in higher education. The use of Outcome Based Education (OBE) at European institutions of higher learning dates back to as far as the early 1970s (Outcome-Based Education, 2008). As such, we should perceive this change as an opportunity to improve the quality of teaching and learning provided to all future learners who attend public administration classes. These developmental outcomes are established to develop and nurture administrative and state capacity. The efforts are henceforth directed to improve skills and capacity of public servants/public administration practitioners. The developmental outcomes are therefore incorporated in short course modules to train public officials bridging the gap between conceptual understanding and contextual implementation of public administration.

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES OF CAPACITY ISSUES

A current paucity of skills and indigenous talent indicate that high levels of management capacity are needed for national development, social development, economic development, and ultimately for building and improving public administration as a critical component for enhanced service delivery. Although continuing education has always been an acceptable part of public administration, there has recently been an upsurge of public administration education. Management training and development is seen as a predominant source of indigenous talent, and there is a sense of urgency to improve the skills of indigenous managers and train new public administrators, asserts Martin (in Kerrigan & Luke, 1989, p. 904).

The institutions of higher learning can play an important role in achieving this training. The education and training in public administration is one of the critical areas, wherein the seats of higher learning i.e., universities and training institutions play an impor-
tant role in teaching not only in structural and procedural aspects of public administration but also inculcating various value dimensions of the functioning of the state. The institution of public administration is a legacy of the colonial rule, hence a cooperative action aimed at enhancing the quality and standards of theory (university level education which prepares students for the entry into public services) and practice (training institutions level which impart training to public servants once they are selected through competitive examination) of public administration is possible if joint action is launched.” (Mishra, n.d., p. 15)

For further development, therefore, every student enrolled in a professional/applied degree program should be required to undertake the following (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Ababio, 2009):

- Major course in the principles and practices of democratic theory to inculcate knowledge of leadership styles at the workplace.
- Broadly focused course on the tools and methods for public engagement and group processes. The course should include a laboratory or practicum component that compels the student to apply the concepts learned in the traditional classroom setting. It may be noted here that such is the purpose of laudable legislation in the current dispensation. The objective of the White Paper on Public Service Training and Education, for example, is to get developed, a training and education program that is strategically linked to the broader processes of transformation, institution-building and human resources development within the public service. Further, the objective of the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998) is to develop the skills of the South African workforce and to improve and promote the quality of life and prospects of work and labor mobility.
- Prepare a major public presentation on a policy issue that is designed to inform and educate the general public. Such a presentation should be held in the community and outside the hallowed halls of academia.
- Course in the principles and practices of effective public administration. It is further noteworthy in this regard that the Skills Development Act as well stipulates a need for the establishment of learnerships for the promotion of multi-skilling and productivity among new graduates. Such learnership programs involve participation in an internship either volunteer service or a paid internship.
- Independent study to produce a major paper that identifies and describes at least ten cases/examples where engaging leadership has been demonstrated in recent programs processes or institutions of national, state or local government. The independent study would be a year-long study.
- Methodology courses that emphasize statistics and computer competencies should include a major component that focuses upon research and sampling. (p. 73)

In order to achieve this training in South Africa, the universities have established units with different names (Centre of Excellence, Centre of Governance, School of Governance) offering short courses in public administration/management incorporating the theoretical (content-based) and practical (assessment-based) elements for training and development of public servants.

SYNERGY THROUGH A NEW PUBLIC GOVERNANCE APPROACH

Training and development have changed from being action-oriented to being results-oriented. The focus of training and development has shifted from merely designing, developing, and conducting training programs to aligning individual learning needs and competency requirements to organization strategy, and ensuring that individual and organizational performance are enhanced as a result (Fourie, 2004).
NATIONAL SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT (NSG) FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

According to a report entitled “Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) Period 2012/13–2014/15: Annual Performance Plan 2012/2013” (2013), the government has therefore initially established the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) which was reconfigured into the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) (within the domain of Public Service and Administration) “ensuring that training and development initiatives support the building of South Africa’s developmental state and its training focus is in line with key government and ministerial frameworks and directives” (pp. 8–9). The national training academy in advancing the Further Transformation Plan aimed at “multi-skilled trainers delivering courses…with a combination of generic and customized quality training programs and courses that are relevant and responsive to the developmental focus” (PALAMA, 2013).

South Africa will celebrate 20 years of transformation and development in 2014, and coupled with government’s envisioned National Development Plan (Vision 2030), it aims to combat skills-related challenges through improved institutional capacity. In order to achieve this vision, the Department of Public Service and Administration has since established a national School of Government. The school is meant to synergize traditional public administration approaches with the new public governance approach (a synergized platform to bring public administration in the mainstream of NPM) through:

- Development of a teaching, learning and development framework that sets norms and standards for education, training and development in the public service.
- Development and examination of the institutional and organisational design involving review of six inter-related elements (strategic direction, human resources, financial resources, infrastructure and organisational systems, service delivery and linkages).
- Identification and recruitment of human resource capacity in the area of curriculum and course development, research and training capacity to deliver, especially mandatory programmes.
- Searching for and establishing a campus with extensive technological support for e-learning” (The Star, 2013)

STRATEGIC OUTCOME-ORIENTED GOALS

The strategic intent of the NSG centers on key aspects of public administration. By the end of 2015, it will have the following focus areas of attention: capacity building, partnerships with higher education schools of public administration, improving performance of departments through development programmes, and meeting capacity development needs. By the end of 2017, the NSG plans to meet the needs of government through the learning and development strategy, and by the end of 2019, it plans to strategically impact improved public sector performance through learning and development programmes from the field of public administration that meet key capacity development needs identified in the public sector learning and development strategy (Republic of South Africa, National School of Government presentation to higher education institutions, 2014). Therefore, the Minister of Public Service and Administration Lindiwe Sisulu (2013, p. 1) has shown an optimistic outlook toward this approach stating, “Capacity development requires, in addition to education and training, applied research and experiential learning and the institutionalisation of appropriate working practices and norms of behaviour to have the envisioned impact on employee performance and service delivery improvement” (p. 1).

PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

There is also currently a move as a national imperative to explore the prospects of institutionalising monitoring and evaluation through the Office of the Presidency in forging partnership with institutions of higher learning. This partnership, it is hoped, will help address the skills shortage on the “efficacy” of policy implementation and policy evaluation through
identified training programmes and directed research through institutions of higher learning. Through these efforts, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) was promulgated as a new department in April 2010 with a mission to work with partners to improve government performance via monitoring and evaluation. The forum aims to provide a platform for DPME and higher education institutions to collaborate with each other to strengthen the capabilities, systems, and processes that relate to monitoring and evaluation in government, and to make public administration and management schools more responsive to government vision of performance improvement (RSA: Terms of Reference Presidency, 2013).

The pace of change in South Africa will of necessity have an impact on public administration in the future. New approaches and specialized knowledge will be required, not only from politicians, but also from the corps of public servants. In this regard, training can fulfill a meaningful role. Institutions of higher learning providing learning opportunities will be expected to facilitate the integration of knowledge (information, concepts, theories, and methodologies) together with skills and values, into the learners’ practice in a participatory and reflective manner. This, however, has yet to be demonstrated in South Africa (Kroukamp, 2007). It can be emphasized that public administration training and development can play an important role in building human capacity, skills and knowledge in the South African system of government. The need to provide some form of professional education and training in Public Administration has been recognized as far back as the eighteenth century; since then the education of public servants has developed through many phases, to the point where Public Administration is a distinct academic subject (Adedeji & Baker, 1974; van Jaarsveldt, 2009). A paradigmatic shift is required for adequate training and development practices “where learning should inter alia produce learning, and not merely the provision of instruction, and focus on quality learning taking place. The approaches however, need to focus on the ability of the government to achieve its social objectives,” asserts Kroukamp (2003, p. 3).

**IRRELEVANCY OF TRAINING CURRICULA AND METHODOLOGIES**

In light of the overall discussion in this article and in addressing the key question raised in the abstract, there are four critical criteria regarding the relevancy of contemporary methodologies:

- Wholesale transfer of public administration theories, concepts, and tools cannot be expected;
- Public administration education and training must respect cultural differences;
- There will be a distinction regarding teaching and learning; and
- Faculty will be able to experiment with different educational and training approaches.

The foregoing discussion emphasizes that “building contextually on learners’ existing frames of reference, being learner-centered, adding value, developing attitudes of critical inquiry and preparing students for continued learning in a seamless world is the emphasis and one of the focal points of the discipline and field of Public Administration, amongst others” (Centre for Higher Education and Training [CHET], quoted in Waghid (2002, p. 476).

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The skills deficit in the South African public service warrants a turn-around strategy to address the capacity gaps. To this end, the curricula are geared toward building on the use of varied approaches, including problem-based learning, performance-oriented and situation-emergent training, project management approach to managerial problems, and emphasis on indigenous knowledge management. Four
integral points are raised in this discussion that involves enriched learning approaches in public administration:

- Formal education and training (through formative and summative assessment)
- On-the-job training
- Action learning and training ("think-on-feet")
- Experiential training

A further justification for the shift toward action learning programs is the argument that curricula need to be responsive to the needs of society. This intention of motivating for the notion of a program is best reflected in the Report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) which preceded (and informed) the regulations subsequently issued by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The following extract notes the connection made between a particular notion of educational design and the goal of greater responsiveness to economic and social needs.

From the preceding discussion of contextualizing the developmental state and public administration, and according to Marwala (2006), emphasis is placed on the foundation for building a developmental state that is dependent on South Africa’s ability to establish an educated population. Hence, demands for the future of South Africa as a developing country requires that programs, while necessarily diverse, should be educationally transformative. Thus they should be planned, coherent, and integrated; add value, building contextually on learners’ existing frames of reference; be learner-centered, experiential, and outcomes-oriented; develop attitudes of critical enquiry and powers of analysis; and prepare students for continued learning in a world of technological and cultural change (NCHE, quoted in South African University Vice Chancellors Association in 1999 [SAUVCA], 1999). This discussion has significance for the debate on public administration. In this regard, Kroukamp (2010) raised some significant points. The author highlights that, in order for governments globally to achieve their social objectives by improving the general welfare of inhabitants, the public should demand new visions from political leaders and public officials. In this respect, training can play a meaningful role.

In the Republic of South Africa, however, the systems and practices of public administration education and training do not appropriately address the increasing demand for high-level, up-to-date knowledge and skills to prepare politicians and public servants for the changes that had been brought about by globalization. A paradigm shift is therefore needed in the purpose of public sector education and training practices. Considering the pluralistic and diversified environment of South Africa, it must be preserved that in the coming future, suggested by Denhardt (1999, cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad & Simmonds, 2009) that

The new public manager will construct groups and networks of varied interests that can work effectively to solve public problems. In doing so, it will be the job of the public administrator to promote pluralism, to create opportunities for constructive dissent, to preserve that which is distinctive about individuals and groups, and to provide an opportunity for diverse groups to share in establishing future directions for the community. The administrator will play a substantial role in diminishing polarization, teaching diversity and respect, building coalitions, resolving disputes, negotiating and mediating. (p. 13)

This requires adequate knowledge and appropriate skills in strategically dealing with administrative and managerial problems, and community-oriented projects, explored in the following section.

**PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING**

Problem-based learning has become the didactic approach to teaching and learning with
emphasize on higher education in South Africa. Public administration-driven curriculum content requires a problem-based approach to teaching and learning. The demands of higher education, providing more responsive-oriented approaches to pedagogy and invoking a learner-participation approach, warrants action learning through the medium of problem-based learning. Hence this approach is advanced in the South African Schools of Public Administration to address contemporary teaching methodologies. Justification for problem-based learning is to foster active learning among learners (with application of reality-based problems) on the dynamism of the public service. The “locus” and “focus” of problem-based learning for enhanced public administration is depicted below.

From the preceding illustration advanced by Moust et al. (2005), forming learning issues for self-directed learning and promoting self-study are at the heart or crux of problem-based learning. The model contributes to the “ownership” of learning, which is encouraged in the theory and practice of public administration teaching and learning. Teaching the concepts of public administration “involves a myriad of issues and concerns that necessitates a very effective instructional method that challenges students to learn how to learn” (Sy-Aves, 2005). Studies on problem-based learning explore that this learning is feasible for students as future public administrators to develop adequate knowledge and skills focusing on problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking. These traits are vital for public administrators to inculcate significant intellectual contribution in public policy-making processes. Further research on problem-based learning has moreover shown that this approach has a positive

**FIGURE 1.**
“Locus” and “Focus” of Problem-Based Learning in Public Administration

impact on public administration students’ learning and grasp of concepts, context, and operations of learning materials.

In summary, problem-based learning in public administration may promote self-directed learning and interest in the subject matter moving from the premise of problem—to analysis—to self-study—to synthesis of acquired knowledge. It helps learners to focus on reality-based perspectives, which are necessary for understanding the dynamics in the public service and to relate them to contemporary challenges in public service delivery.

**PROJECT-BASED LEARNING**

Project-based learning not only provides opportunities to review and redesign mainly content-based curricula, and largely traditional teaching and learning practices, but also shapes graduates who are prepared for the world of work and lifelong learning. However, before identifying and designing projects, it is necessary to focus on the bigger picture, which is curriculum design. Project-based learning requires thoughtful involvement with curriculum design. Outcomes-based curriculum design is a fairly complex process that challenges some of the more traditional curriculum development approaches that are currently practiced, and is deemed a key focal point in the South African Public Administration landscape and pedagogical approach (Powell, 2007).

Institutions of higher learning need to produce a professional workforce that contributes to the economic development of the country. Institutions also have an obligation to develop well-rounded independent learners who contribute to research, development, and innovation within their discipline. Project-based learning is an approach that could go a long way toward bridging the gap between policy development and its operation, advances Powell (2007). This form of learning is imperative for public administrators because it commands technological-based cognitive skills for critically assessing the areas of inquiry with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary understanding. This nature of learning has positive impacts on effective planning and implementation of government policies and programs that demand project management expertise and competencies.

**KNOWLEDGE-BASED PERSPECTIVE**

The concept of knowledge generation and knowledge management are complex phenomena and are associated with supporting, creating, disseminating, and transferring knowledge. In the South African context, the field of public administration is viewed from a knowledge management environment wherein universities are seen as learning organizations with a continuum of learning taking place. Emergent new forms of knowledge production have had a profound effect on South African higher education policy and the development of a “high skills” society (Winberg, 2006). The research generated through acquired learning contributes to a Community of Practice (for both learners and practitioners through formal training programs). Table 1 provides a conceptual framework for a nexus between knowledge management and public administration, which is gaining momentum in the South African public service and public administration landscape. It is worth mentioning that these knowledge perspectives are one of the current focal training areas in the National School of Government’s training program for public servants in the South African Training Academy on the middle management training program as a nationwide focus.

From the foregoing illustration, knowledge application, access to information, enhanced learning and understanding, creating space for building core competencies, and assimilation of embedded knowledge are integral aspects to influence positive action and development of individual and institutional competencies with relevance to the South African public administration training and development arena.

**CONCLUSION**

In this article, we have attempted to trace the evolution and developmental trajectory of public administration education and training in South Africa amidst contemporary developments in the South African public service.
Within the notion of a developmental state. There is growing concern that the South African public service suffers from a lack of capacity and talent in some respects, while putting the right people in the right jobs is also creating awareness in the public sector. Public administration education and training are vital to addressing this skills and capacity shortage. A focus on competency profiling is dominating the workplace in the public service. Furthermore, the discipline and study of public administration has shifted its focus to incorporate in its curricula the need for training methodologies toward a transformative management-governance context in ensuring that the essence of the developmental state is fulfilled through the use of innovative teaching pedagogies as espoused in the paper.

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that many contextual variables are currently impacting public administration education and training in the South African public service. Hence, the need for coherency and integration, and trans-, inter-, and multidisciplinary approaches are attracting attention to locating the fit between public administration discourse in a contemporary environment to that of the ability and skill of public servants to contribute effectively to their functional work. The enhancement of new management education and training strategies will contribute to enhanced performance both individually and institutionally in the South African public service. Therefore, the locus and focus of this chapter have been on the contextual linkage of public administration education and training

**TABLE 1.** Knowledge Perspectives and Their Implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives</th>
<th>Perspectives</th>
<th>Implications for Knowledge Management (KM)</th>
<th>Implications for Knowledge Management Systems (KMS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge vis-à-vis data and information</td>
<td>Data are facts, raw numbers. Information is processed interpreted data. Knowledge is personalized information.</td>
<td>KM focuses on exposing individuals to potentially useful information and facilitating assimilation of information.</td>
<td>KMS will not appear radically different from existing IS, but will be extended toward helping in user assimilation of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of mind</td>
<td>Knowledge is the state of knowing and understanding.</td>
<td>Key KM issue is enhancing individual’s learning and understanding through provision of information.</td>
<td>Role of IT is to provide access to sources of knowledge rather than knowledge itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Knowledge is an object to be stored and manipulated.</td>
<td>Key KM issue is building and managing knowledge stocks.</td>
<td>Role of IT involves gathering, storing, and transferring knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Knowledge is a process of applying expertise.</td>
<td>KM focus is on knowledge flows and the process of creation, sharing, and distributing knowledge.</td>
<td>Role of IT is to provide link among sources of knowledge to create wider breadth and depth of knowledge flows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Knowledge is a condition of access to information.</td>
<td>KM focus is organized access to and retrieval of content.</td>
<td>Role of IT is to provide effective search and retrieval mechanisms for locating relevant information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capability</td>
<td>Knowledge is the potential to influence action.</td>
<td>KM is about building core competencies and understanding strategic know-how.</td>
<td>Role of IT is to enhance intellectual capital by supporting development of individual and organizational competencies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Alavi and Leidner (2001).
and their location within a contemporary discussion of a developmental state, as currently depicted in the South African landscape.

Public administration education has brought awareness and understanding regarding rights and responsibilities that each and every citizen holds. These rights incorporate the establishment of a society that is nonsexist and nonracial. The public administration policies have furthermore formulated significant statutory documents offering equal opportunities of everyone without any discrimination. The education and training of public administration approaches to public officials and political bearers have created a unison understanding regarding decision-making processes in policy-processes with equal representation of gender. This participatory approach created and established through the understanding of public administration principles is the foundation of being democratic in the post-apartheid South Africa.

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