

# Unpacking the concept, “building a capable state” through learnings from theory and practice

## Provincial Vision

By 2030, KwaZulu-Natal will be a prosperous Province with a healthy, secure and skilled population, living in dignity and harmony, acting as a gateway to Africa and the World.



**Public Service Trainers’ Forum Conference  
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# OUTLINE

1. Purpose
2. Chapter 13 – National Development Plan
3. Theoretical Underpinnings
  - 3.1 Developmental Theory
  - 3.2 Social Constructivist Theory
  - 3.2 Integration Theory
4. Lessons on Public Human Resource Development
  - 4.1 Technical Skills Development of Public Servants
  - 4.2 Initiatives Targeting Senior Managers
5. Future Research Questions
6. End

## PURPOSE

- To attempt to **analyse** the concept of a “**capable state**” with the aim of creating a common understanding of **what the concept means**
- To argue for a platform in which Public Service Trainers facilitate further discussions leading to the development of **practical meaning** of the concept, “capable state”, in the context of **implementing the National Development Plan**

## CHAPTER 13 – NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- Emphasis placed on pursuit of “long-term sustained focus to tackle major obstacles to **improve the performance of the public service**”
- Some challenges identified as a result of the absence of the sought sustained focus are—
  - Poor political-administrative interface
  - Unstable executive administrative leadership
  - Skills deficit
  - Inappropriate staffing
  - Low staff morale

# DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

- **Developmental State** is a **developmental theory** - model of development driven by government “...whose ideological underpinnings are developmental and...seriously attempts to construct and deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development...” Public Service Commission, 2014
  - Develop capable institutions to implement policy (leadership)
  - Professional bureaucracy
  - Collaborative relationships between state and non-state actors
  - National goal to drive development

# SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM/ST THEORY

Learning happens through social and cultural interactions



# INTEGRATION THEORY

- Process of agreeing on a shared system of meaning, language, culture...**connected to the common Vision, Vision 2030**
- Drawing from the principles underpinning the Developmental State and constructivism theories, the community of public service trainers can develop—
  - Characteristics of a capable state to drive Vision 2030
  - Raise consciousness about the concept, “capable state” such that skills development initiatives are directed at a common outcome

# LESSONS ON PUBLIC HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Public Service Commission project on, what type of a public service drives a developmental state?

## Methodology

- Theoretical underpinnings of a Developmental State
- Literature on common characteristics of public institutions in Developmental States
- Country visits to key public service institutions critical in driving country vision to develop the economy

[**Brazil, Malaysia, China, Botswana** and Mauritius]

- Discussion document presented at a conference

# TECHNICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SERVANTS

- State capacity is regarded essential to achieve the developmental goals of a state
- State capacity – administrative effectiveness which facilitated the ability of government to survive and overcome its socio-economic and environmental challenges
- Meritocratic appointments of public servants
- Political and administrative interface
- Public confidence in inclusive policies and general commitment to policy implementation

# INITIATIVES TARGETING SENIOR MANAGERS (1)

- Centralised public service training systems
- Training programmes fully-funded by government
- Top-down approach to training with mandatory technical programmes and number of days spent on training
- Training programmes linked to performance management systems
- In some countries, appointment into senior administrative positions is a political decision
- Career public service with only the Director-General positions on fixed-term contracts
- Training programmes designed to serve the needs of social and economic development and mainly practical

# INITIATIVES TARGETING SENIOR MANAGERS (2)

- Example of a “good civil service workforce” i.e. capable state:
  - Professional competence
  - Political loyalty
  - Personal integrity
  - Citizen satisfaction
- Training of Senior Managers focuses on—
  - Political awareness
  - Lawful administration
  - Public service research
  - Communication
  - Innovation
  - Co-ordination
  - Problem-solving and psychological adaptation

# INITIATIVES TARGETING SENIOR MANAGERS

## (3)

- Fast-track training programmes targeting young civil servants for leadership roles
- Promotion into senior management positions is depended on successful completion of structured mandatory themed training programmes
- Some training programmes involve, knowledge updates and prescribed list of books to be read by senior managers

### **Some challenges**

- Difficulty to establish outcomes of training implemented
- Top-down approach demotivates civil servants to increase uptake of voluntary training programmes
- Needs assessments are dictated by policy needs as opposed to practical performance gaps

# FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do public service training programmes **contribute to** the development of the required **technical skills** to facilitate the achievement of Vision 2030?
2. What has been the **uptake** of training opportunities by members of the Senior Management Service?
  - 2.1 DPSA Directive on Compulsory Induction Programme?
  - 2.2 DPSA Directive on compulsory training days?
3. How can South Africa **strengthen institutions** designed to facilitate building capacity of public servants?
  - 3.1 To what extent does the current **funding model/facilitation/programme design/** enable/disable effective capacity-building?

END

*Thank  
you!*