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***A Revitalized, Reinvented & Better  
Co-ordinated Role for Higher Education  
in Public Sector Capacity-Building***

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# **Potential *Role(s)* of HE Sector in Public Service/Sector Capacity-Building**

- **Generic Foundational Skills**
- **Specific Professional Education & Training**
- **Ongoing Professional Development**
- **Pre-service Public Administration Education**
- **Mid-career Public Management Education & Training**
- **Strategic & Applied Research**
- **Innovation Facilitation**

# ***1. Generic Foundational Skills***

- **This is considered to be the “main” role of HE in public sector capacity-building - but the idea that this is what Universities mainly do is out-dated**
- **However it is far from clear that even this basic role has been subject to systematic investigation & consultations in regard to the core (present & future) requirements of a capable and developmental state**

## ***2. Specific Professional Education & Training***

- **Clearly many of the professions produced from HE are essential to the public sector, eg “traditional” profession such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, accountants, economists, engineers, town-planners, social workers; and new professions such as ICT, communication, policy, monitoring & evaluation, statistics, systems design.**
- **However, consideration & consultation in regard to public sector programme tracks, options & electives has been minimal.**

### ***3. Ongoing Professional Development***

- **HE provides a wide menu of ongoing professional development services, most especially in the form of Executive programmes, certified short courses & thematic professional talks, lectures and seminars.**
- **Yet the capacity to offer the above most effectively according to need/demand is often random, uneven & dependent on personal or particular initiatives at particular institutions.**

## ***4. Pre-service Public Administration Education***

- **Many HEIs offer pre-service (mainly undergraduate) public administration programmes.**
- **The value of these programs is frequently disparaged yet there has been no systematic attempt since the Mount Grace meeting in 1991 to radically rethink the function, purpose and utility of such. That would need to be a rigorous and systematic collaborative assessment by government and the HEIs**

## ***5. Mid-career Public Management Education & Training***

- **This typically takes the form of part-time post-experience Postgraduate Diplomas, Masters Degrees and Certified Short Courses.**
- **Only very few HEIs offer a full menu of such programmes which are mainly “co-ordinated” through market mode modalities. Although there is some collaboration (eg *Wits School of Governance* & the *NSG*). Huge potential exists to optimize such programmes through collaborative redesign, planned funding and by creating significant *full-time* mid-career study opportunities.**

## ***6. Strategic & Applied Research***

- **Much research already carried out at HEIs has relevance to public sector capacity & performance**
- **However there is insufficient strategic consultation & collaboration in regard to research programmes/projects targeted at specific urgent, acute or wicked problems in the South African public sector**
- **This would include public policy/public management issues, as well as broader issues beyond the governance & public policy management domain.**



## ***7. Innovation Facilitation***

- **The SA National Innovation System is currently orientated to scientific & technological innovation**
- **However even products & proposals emanating this system cannot enter, influence & transform the public sector if we continue to underachieve in terms of social & institutional innovation**
- **HE-based research is part of the current innovation system, but should play a more collaborative & direct role in stimulating and driving public sector innovation efforts**

# ***Proposal for Forum and/or Platform and/or Vehicle***

- **A forum/platform/vehicle is proposed for sustained and systematic strategic collaboration between HE and public sector capacity players and actors**
- **Such a platform would allow for co-ordination and allocation of specific education, training, research and innovation roles to the various HEIs on the basis of a funded and incentivized framework**
- **This would ensure that SA's relatively powerful and knowledge-rich HE sector would play a much more proactive and integral role in tackling public sector capacity & transformational problems & needs**

# ***Institutional Ubuntu***

**Need for less institutional aggrandizement and grandstanding and more *institutional Ubuntu* to tackle South Africa's pressing problems, specifically capacitating the public sector in the interests of a capable and developmental state system.**