

# The Critical Need for an Integrated Leadership Approach to Improve Service Delivery by the South African Public Service

Goonasagree Naidoo, Thani Xollie  
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

The South African Government recognizes that its public service requires effective leadership. However, it has repeatedly expressed concerns about poor and ineffective leadership and its impact on service delivery outcomes. Nevertheless, government has undertaken many leadership and management training and development initiatives, and has adopted a managerial leadership approach in the public service. However, there is little evidence of the effectiveness of these training and development initiatives and the leadership approach adopted. The conventional initiatives and approach adopted by the South African public service appear to have failed to improve service delivery. It is argued that successful and sustainable public service delivery requires a consideration of local narratives and local issues and an integrated leadership approach in South Africa. The literature suggests that leadership challenges in the South Africa public service have a direct impact on effective service delivery. It is clear that service delivery has not led to satisfaction of communities in South Africa because the country still has one of the highest deficits in the provision of basic services and the lowest level of access to basic services. This paper argues that there is a critical need for an integrated leadership approach and leadership training and development in multifaceted competencies in the South African public service. Such an approach should improve the leadership competencies required of managers in the South African public service. It should also promote good governance practices at all levels and ensure that this is done to achieve service delivery outcomes.

*Keywords:* leadership, good governance, service delivery, managerial leadership, transformational leadership, strategic leadership, leadership and management development

Fifteen years into South African democracy, leadership and management in the public service remains a daunting challenge, especially in relation to the demands for improved service delivery by a vociferous and impatient citizenry. Government recognises that this situation is firstly the result of a lack of capacity and appropriate leadership and management skills in the public service (Cronje & Willem, 2010; McLennan & Seale, 2010). Secondly, government recognises this situation is the result of the adoption of ineffective and inappropriate leadership approaches in the public service (Naidoo, 2010; Fraser-Moleketi, 2007). A literature review was conducted in the South African public service. The literature suggests that the previous leadership approach adopted by the South African public service has been imported from western countries without taking

---

**Corresponding author:** Goonasagree Naidoo, professor, Department of Public Administration, University of South Africa; research fields: leadership, governance, service delivery, transformation, reform, equity, racism and gender equity. E-mail: Naidog@unisa.ac.za.

Thani Xollie, lecturer, Department of Public Administration, University of South Africa; research fields: research methodology, policy, leadership studies.

into cognisance of the local context and narratives (Fraser-Moleketi, 2007). This is also evident in leadership and management development initiatives, whereby the South African public service currently follows the dominant international approaches in the discipline and practice (McLennan & Seale, 2010).

Nevertheless, it is clear that successful and sustainable performance in any organisation is linked to its effective leadership approaches and management practices, the capabilities and capacity of individuals and teams (Naidoo, 2010; Cronje & Willem, 2010; McLennan & Seale, 2010). Naidoo (2010) and Rowe (2001) argued that the public service will be more viable in the long term and better able to maintain stability in the short term, if an integrated leadership approach is followed. Freedman and Tregoe (2003) suggested that strategic leadership, which is an integration of managerial and transformational leadership, would promote greater productivity than either managerial leadership or transformational leadership. Combining managerial and transformational leadership approaches to provide strategic leadership will promote long-term organisational effectiveness and above-average performance, as well as help to maintain short-term stability (Rowe, 2001).

Although the South African public service has introduced a system whereby management should have demonstrated managerial and leadership competencies, the article argues that this has not been sufficient in ensuring that managers are competent if they apply these skills in the public service. The article therefore argues that multiple competencies are required by managers in the South African public service. However, this should be relevant to the specific needs in South African public service environment.

The aim of this article is to improve the current leadership approach and leadership competencies, by suggesting an integrated leadership approach for the South African public service. The implementation of an integrated leadership approach is therefore suggested for the South African public service. This approach takes cognisance of the challenges leaders in the public service face, and local context and narratives. We argue that the challenges should be addressed, and the current leadership approach and competencies should be improved. This could make a contribution to promoting effective service delivery in the South African public service. In this article, the context of the study is provided. It also explores the current state of leadership in the South African public service which identifies a number of challenges which point to the critical need for effective leadership and the adoption of an integrated leadership approach in the South African public service. This includes the need for strategic leadership and leadership development in multifaceted skills to address the service delivery backlogs by the South African public service. In suggesting an integrated leadership for the South African public service, the different perspectives on leadership are examined.

### **Background of the Study**

The Republic of South Africa is situated at the southern tip of the African continent. The size of South Africa is approximately 1.2 million square kilometres. It has common boundaries with the republics of Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, the Kingdom of Swaziland and Lesotho. The total South African population is approximately 50 million. South Africa has a dual economy. One part of the economy is modern and relatively well developed, while the other is characterised by underdevelopment and an entrenched poverty crisis. Moreover, there is a distinct relationship between underdevelopment, poverty and race in South Africa. The historical reason for this is that the previous National Party Government (1949-1994) promoted the interests of the white minority in all sectors of South African society, to the detriment of the other race groups (Naidoo, 2010). In terms of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996, the government of South Africa is divided

into three spheres: national, provincial and local government. The national government is responsible for policy formulation and developing national standards, rules and regulations. The exclusive functional areas of provincial governments include public health, provincial roads and provincial planning. Municipalities, which are the constitutional units of the local sphere of government, are involved in local issues, such as providing municipal roads, water, electricity and sanitation for the community.

In the last 15 years, government has embarked on a major drive to provide a range of basic services, such as housing and education, as required by the Constitution (McLennan & Seale, 2010). Government has attempted to accelerate economic growth, compete in global markets and create more opportunities for employment, through policies such as growth, employment and redistribution opportunities for employment, such as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA). Despite these major achievements, there remain serious challenges for improving service delivery, especially in the current financial and economic climate (McLennan & Seale, 2010). The recent global financial meltdown has a negative impact on South Africa. As demand for exports have dwindled and the overall contribution to the fiscus diminished, the present government has been faced with the enormous task of providing services under severe resource constraints. There have been ongoing protests by communities about the lack of good service delivery. Although adequate funding has been allocated for community development, in many instances, successful policy implementation is often hampered by poor leadership and management and the implementation of ineffective leadership approaches.

### **State of Leadership in the South African Public Service**

In his “*State of Nation*” address, President Zuma (2009) indicated a number of challenges in public service institutions in South Africa. The citizens of South Africa are adversely impacted upon by the state of leadership in the public service. While a number of valid reasons can be advanced for this phenomenon, the adverse situation invariably points to ineffective leadership and the adoption of inappropriate leadership approaches in the public service (Cronje & Willem, 2010; McLennan & Seale, 2010). This is evident in ongoing protests by communities against the lack of service delivery. Cronje and Willem (2010) argued that many public service leaders do not work for the common good of the society. The lack of effective leadership and the implementation of inappropriate leadership approaches manifested in an inability to provide the services that citizens expect from an effective state. There is a lack of inclusive local government in South Africa. In this regard, Cronje and Willem (2010) argued that there is little accountability by its leadership to constituents. Moreover, few efforts are made to engage citizens in meaningful consultation in order to address the service delivery problems or create realistic expectations of what is possible. Instead, matters drift along until communities explode in mob behaviour, out of sheer frustration. This lack of inclusion is also demonstrated by the lack of active engagement by leadership with communities in furthering local economic development and addressing other social problems.

Regarding leadership and management development, Fraser-Moleketi (2007) pointed out that while a number of initiatives undertaken by the South African public service were moving in the right direction, a number of challenges remained. In this regard, Schacter (2000), Cronje and Willem (2010), McLennan and Seale (2010) criticized the lack of appropriate leadership and management training, the duplication of training in some departments, poor quality and ad hoc crisis training that takes place in the South African public service. Miller (2005) also noted that low priority is accorded to education and training of managers in the South

African public service. Moreover, many national, provincial and local government departments consistently fail to utilise their training budgets.

Other challenges identified are firstly the lack of coordination, because training needs are addressed by a wide variety of providers from local and international, public and private sectors. Secondly, leadership and management development in the South African public service currently follows the dominant international approaches in the discipline and practice (McLennan & Seale, 2010).

Directors-general in the South African public service contend that human resource issues, such as the lack of management and leadership capacity, skills and experience, and personnel conflicts continue to pose problems (Naidoo, 2009). Despite massive investment by government in leadership development, many initiatives are regarded as failures (Naidoo, 2009). Three formidable barriers have been identified by the authors, all relating to the attitudes of the most managers in these organisations. The first barrier is that top management believe that the fact that they already occupy the most leader and leadership positions, confirming that they have “what it takes” to be a leader, and therefore regard their further development as unnecessary. Secondly, they believe that the managers below them require training. However, as a result of these managers undertaking leadership development initiatives, they become more aware of the poor quality of leadership practised by their superiors, resulting in greater frustration. This is deepened by the third major problem, namely that the suggestions made by those newly returned from development activities, are rejected or ignored by their somewhat defensive and/or reactionary bosses. The result is disenchantment, greater cynicism and lower morale in this group, who ultimately stop making any suggestions or trying new ways of leading. The investment in leadership development has arguably created greater dissonance and frustration among managers benefiting from leadership development, as they start to realise the poor quality of top leadership. The greatest challenge is that it is highly likely that the current top managers have not been selected into these posts on merit alone but on their political affiliation to the government of the day (Naidoo, 2009).

The key positions are therefore political, and government tends to place its own electives in critical posts. The public officials appointed to these positions therefore serve the agenda of the ruling party in this country. Malan and Smit (2001) referred to these political appointments and pointed to incompetence and a lack of exposure. Preferential policies such as affirmative action cause imbalances and fail to maintain a standard of efficiency. There is a lack of training or no time to train newly appointed leaders and give them the necessary exposure in their respective institutions and organisations. This relates to the freedom of leaders to exercise their rights. Ott and Russel (2001) referred to this freedom as “strong executive leadership”. They argued that this means that the government tends to be more effective and efficient when leaders have flexibility and the power to choose qualified people who can implement policies with little interference. This simply means that government should trust that the work will be done without interfering in the whole process of appointing implementers. This may be practical in theory, but at the end of the day, the government is regarded as the final decision maker in such issues of implementation. It is also important to note that a leader’s freedom is also limited by the constitution, bureaucratic laws, regulations and rules (Frederickson, 2005). This is a hindrance to service delivery by the public service. Occasionally, political sensitivities inhibited Director-Generals’ decision making, such as the reluctance to dismiss non-performing public servants because of political considerations (Naidoo, 2006).

Related to ineffective leadership is the lack of performance, which impacts on service delivery outcomes. Fraser-Moleketi (2007) suggested that non-performance by public servants either took the form of not

delivering services or goal displacement by complying with rules and regulations instead of achieving governmental goals. Moynihan and Ingraham (2004) also identified this challenge in the public service. They argued that leaders are failing to find a way of integrating management systems in order to achieve organisational goals. They also discussed the black box model of public management capacity, asserting that leaders need to manage for results (the means to manage across systems). The black box approach discussed by Moynihan and Ingraham (2004) provided leaders “with a means to set policy priorities, maintain oversight on the achievement of programs, allocate resources and hold managers accountable”. Leaders need to be creative when formulating policies. Van Zyl (2009) argued that creative leaders can consider “inspiring group members to push forward with standard solutions to organisational problems”. Van Zyl (2009) went on to say that leaders should think outside the box and overcome the traditional mental sets. On the same note, Eliassen and Sitter (2008) adopted a similar view to that of Frederickson (2005). They highlighted similar challenges of leadership, namely the challenges around organisation’s objectives and goals, rules and regulations in the public service. They further argued that organisations are faced with multiple and complex goals and objectives that are difficult to achieve. In this regard, there is the need to serve instead of steer. Denhardt, R. B. and Denhardt, J. V. (2000) contended that government should consider helping citizens to “articulate and meet their shared interests rather than attempt to control or steer society in new directions”. The main role of government in this regard should be to direct its citizens through regulation and not to manipulate people.

In an analysis by Sullivan, Downe, Entwistle and Sweeting (2006), they identified two challenges of community leadership at local level. One of these is the fact that local government is sometimes outward instead of inward looking. It is clear from Sullivan et al.’s (2006) analysis that government tends to protect its own interests instead of promoting the well-being of communities. One could argue that government should do both, protect its interests and promote the social welfare of society. The second challenge identified by Sullivan et al. (2006) is that local government exercises sole control instead of partnering with others to improve service delivery in communities. However, centralisation of power can promote the charismatic ideology of leadership. Denhardt and Grubbs (2003) asserted that a decentralised approach limited the abuse of power. Decentralisation promotes participative leadership in partnering with different stakeholders and promoting joint decision making on critical issues affecting communities. Participative leadership is therefore critical in promoting good governance at local government.

At the provincial sphere of government, the Premier of Mpumalanga, Mr. David Mabuza, stated that many service delivery protests in Mpumalanga had revealed problems with financial management, institutional capacity and leadership (Mail & Guardian, 2010). The Premier further argued that some individuals in government positions are doing little or nothing, and that the province as a whole would capacitate those who are incapable or replace them with more capable people. The Premier further acknowledged at local sphere of government some municipalities need to change their administration and in other instances effect leadership changes (Mail & Guardian, 2010). This example clearly relates to President Zuma’s (2010) address whereby he indicated that disciplinary measures would be taken against non-performing leaders in the public service. This also highlights the point of personal development. Through effective leadership, the people who are being led should be encouraged to develop and advance themselves in terms of training and development. The leaders themselves may consider leading by example instead of imposing rules on others.

There is therefore a critical need for the South African public service to ensure that there is effective leadership to promote effective service delivery. Rotberg (2004) and President Obama (2009) aptly highlighted

the importance and relevance of effective public leadership in the lives of citizens. Moynihan and Ingraham (2004) articulated that effective leadership is critical to organisational success and public performance management.

### **The Critical Need for Effective Leadership in the South African Public Service**

The importance and relevance of public leadership and the effective and ethical functioning of good governance institutions in the lives of citizens have been underscored by many individuals (Rotberg, 2003; President Obama, 2009; Annan, 2009). President Zuma also underlined the importance of leadership in the public service in building the South African society and economy. In his 2009 “State of the Nation” address, the President said the following: “... working with the people and supported by our public servants, we will build a developmental state, improve public services... We will ensure courteous and efficient service from front-counter staff in the provision of services in all government departments”.

The Minister of Public Service and Administration in South Africa, Mr. Richard Baloyi, in his 2009 budget vote speech, highlighted the crucial role of leadership in the public service in implementing the government’s service delivery agenda.

For fifteen years, our government has set policies that are meant to strengthen the state to be in a position to deliver in terms of our mandate, thus we have policy documents for dealing with all line-function activities of government, with the view to promote the basic values and principles of our administration, applicable in all the three spheres of our government...

Minister Baloyi focused specifically on the critical need for effective leadership and effective service delivery to consolidate the views of realising a developmental state responsive to the needs of society.

The previous Minister of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) in South Africa, Fraser-Moleketi (2007) suggested that leaders and management should adopt a managerial leadership approach in the public service, highlighting that:

It is their responsibility to direct and lead the operational and the programmatic aspects of implementing the political mandate. The responsibility rests with this leadership to give policy advice, based on factual context that enables political leadership to take policy advice, and identify the appropriate outcomes in order that programmes can be developed and implemented to produce these required outcomes.

These points highlight the critical importance of building effective administration, management and leadership capacity to drive the goals of government and meet the goals of ensuring a better life for all (McLennan & Seale, 2010). However, the challenges facing South Africa require a new way of thinking about leadership more generally, and leadership development, leadership approaches, models and strategies to ensure effective service delivery. This reflects the core of this article, namely that effective leadership is a necessity to promote effective service delivery—hence the critical need for an effective leadership approach in the South African public service. However, it is crucial to examine the different perspectives on leadership before suggesting an integrated approach to leadership.

### **Perspectives on Leadership**

Huxham and Vangen (2000) asserted that leadership is concerned with “a formal leader who either influences or transforms members of a group or organisation in order to achieve specific goals”. Leadership involves collaboration within the two groups, the leader and the people being led. Both parties can consider working together towards achieving the desired goals of the institution. Ingraham (2009a) adopted a similar

stance by acknowledging that the leader can attempt to work to develop in-group relationships with followers. The developments will include recognising the leadership styles, which are coercive, authoritative, democratic, pacesetter and coaching. The leaders should adapt or be able to develop several leadership styles and use them when a situation demands such usage (Ingraham, 2009a).

According to Van Wart (2003), effective leadership involves higher quality goods and services, personal development, higher levels of satisfaction, direction and vision, innovation and creativity and an invigorating organisational culture. While leaders are expected to lead, they should also provide an enabling environment by considering the elements outlined by Van Wart (2003). A sense of belonging also enhances an organisation's productivity and the achievement of the objectives formulated. Considering the diverse groups and the democratic nature of South Africa, leaders are confronted by the challenges of satisfying the various individuals involved. This also involves assessing what has been and still needs to be done. Barrington (1984) propounded a similar idea by stating that leadership involves intellectual and moral content in order to analyse what needs to be done and act on that analysis. This underscores the question of responsible leaders because they have to work on the shortcomings and project future plans and strategies. This discussion emphasises partnerships—a leader cannot work alone but needs a team.

When defining leadership at community level, Sullivan, Downe, Entwistle and Sweeting (2006) highlighted leadership involves providing economic and social infrastructure required by communities. This category also involves engagement of various stakeholders such as nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and the government. These parties should work together towards improving local communities to sustain their local businesses.

Effective leadership therefore applies to all spheres of government. Before tackling the other aspects of leadership, it is necessary to address the following critical question: What makes an effective leader? According to Frederickson (2005), effective leaders require the following characteristics:

- (1) A propensity for action and not being hindered in the morass of motives;
- (2) Not disqualifying themselves because of mixed motives;
- (3) Learning to trust competing motives and recognising the tradeoffs involved;
- (4) Understanding that organisational effectiveness and personal success are usually compatible outcomes;
- (5) Avoiding rushing forward with the answer;
- (6) Regarding compromises as challenges to the imagination.

Quiet, unassuming leaders embody a paradoxical mix of personal humility and personal will. These leaders tend to be modest, self-effacing and understated. They stand in clear contrast to publicity-seeking executives. Leaders channel their ego into the success of the organisation, not for their personal gain. They publicly take responsibility for bad decisions and company mistakes and attribute success to others. Effective leadership is definitely situational and all the qualities that make an effective leader are not mutually exclusive—they blend into one another in unexpected ways. Individuals can be powerful leaders in one venue and abject failures in another (Naidoo, 2009).

Nonetheless, approaches to leadership in the South African public service appear to be based on the premise that leadership is interpersonal influence, and as a result tend to focus primarily on leader attributes and follower reactions (Marion, 2001). Marion (2001) conceded that this is a critical aspect of leadership. However, it is argued in this article that this does not tell the whole story. The changing environment, normative theories, approaches and models of leadership will be ineffective if they are not appropriately situated and adapted in a

complex and changing environment.

### **An Integrated Leadership Approach for the South African Public Service**

Research conducted by Naidoo during 2004, 2006 and 2010 found that many managers in the South African public service have been trained in some elements of managerial leadership. However, despite this training, not all managers have a complete understanding of government priorities. Neither do they have the necessary skills to translate government policy into sustainable programmes that positively impact on the lives of citizens. Vanmuller and Hondeghem (2009) pointed to the critical need for transformational leadership in the public service. They mention the “four I’s” skills of a transformational leader, namely idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. Eliassen and Sitter (2008) contended that transformational leadership entails empowering and motivating individuals, which leads to self-sacrificing and minimising resistance to change. According to Ingraham (2009b, p. 218), some challenges to leadership pertain to changing mission demands, uncertain resources, human resource issues and political oversight. Ingraham’s view correlates with that of Vanmuller and Hondeghem, namely that transformational leadership needs to be considered. If a leader has the skills of a transformational leader, it will be possible to address the changing mission demands and political oversight, to mention but a few.

However, it can be argued that an integrated approach to leadership would be more appropriate for the South African public service. Research conducted by Rowe (2001) suggested that the impact of a combination of managerial and transformational leadership on organisational effectiveness is far greater than adopting only one leadership approach. According to Naidoo (2009), public managers could transform situations that seem impossible by adopting more than one leadership approach. A combination of approaches in the context of local narratives and context for the South African public service would be critical in improving service delivery.

A strategic leadership approach is multifaceted and multidimensional, with its own unique characteristics, diverse perspectives, approaches and strategies (Rowe, 2001; Freedman & Tregoe, 2003). The approach caters for sensitivities of culture, gender, and religion, and ethnic origin, socioeconomic and political differences. These divergent perspectives, approaches and sensitivities should be incorporated in such a way that the full potential of the South African public service can be optimally realised. A combination of leadership approaches is essential to improve service delivery. Hence, the aim is to utilise the divergent perspectives in the South African public service in order to achieve the highest possible levels of performance.

Transformational leadership is better known as visionary or charismatic leadership, is future-oriented, and is concerned with risk taking. Managerial leadership (also known as transactional leadership) involves stability and order, and the preservation of the existing order. Managerial leaders are more comfortable handling day-to-day activities and are short-term oriented. Strategic leadership is the ability to influence others to voluntarily make day-to-day decisions that enhance the long-term viability of the organisation (Rowe, 2001). Rowe (2001) argued that the public service will be more viable in the long term and better able to maintain stability in the short term, if strategic leadership is prevalent. Freedman and Tregoe (2003) suggested that a strategic leader will promote greater productivity than either a managerial leader or a transformational leader. Managerial leaders maintain the existing order but may not invest in innovations that will change the organization and enhance long-term organizational effectiveness. However, transformational leaders may enhance the long-term viability of the organization. Their goal is to change and be innovative in order to enhance long-term organizational effectiveness. Combining these two leadership approaches to provide

strategic leadership will promote long-term organizational effectiveness and above-average performance, as well as help to maintain short-term stability.

In realizing a developmental state in South Africa, Cronje and Willem (2010) argued that leaders should seek to influence networks and create atmospheres for partnerships, the formation of groups and collections of groups that permit innovative solutions to adaptive challenges. They should create conditions for bottom-up dynamics, leaving the system alone to generate positive emergence, yet still provide general control to keep the system generally (as opposed to specifically) focused and maintain its complex structure (Marion, 2001).

On a different note, Berkley and Rouse (2004) emphasised the fact that leaders get the work done through people. The success of a leader depends on his or her working relations with the employees. This poses a challenge in the South African public service because of the diverse groups in the country. Another crucial aspect to the leadership approach is leadership development in the South African public service.

### **Leadership Development**

The Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework developed by the Department of Public Service and Administration in 2007 defined the policies and performance mandates for public service leadership and management. This framework highlights the importance of leadership development to ensure that the objectives of the developmental state are achieved through “public leaders... that... demonstrate high ethical standards and shared values to perform well by doing the right things, at the right time, in the right way...” (Fraser-Moleketi, 2007).

Leadership and management development in South Africa currently follows the dominant international approaches in the discipline and practice. Leadership and management development in South Africa is handled in different ways in universities and government. Many of the new programmes stress the need to move beyond the generic approach to one that is both mission and customer driven. According to McLennan and Seale (2010), more functional training has been replaced by a focus on team building and strategic management. There is also a growing commitment to develop partnerships for development. In this context, leadership development strategies move away from the more academic courses towards shorter or more applied courses that emphasise coaching, mentoring, relationship-building and problem-solving strategies.

The critical question is what leadership skills are needed for management in the South African public service. According to Smit and Cronje (2003), the skills that management need in the public service in order to perform the functions of general management as efficiently as possible, can be divided into three main categories: (1) Conceptual skills refer to the mental ability to view the operation of the organisation and all its parts holistically. Such skills involve the manager’s thinking and planning abilities, as well as his or her ability to think strategically; (2) Interpersonal skills refer to the ability to work with people. A manager should therefore be able to communicate, understand people’s behaviour, resolve conflict and motivate groups and individuals; (3) Technical skills entail the ability to use the knowledge or techniques of a specific discipline in order to attain goals. A case in point would be knowledge of accountancy or engineering technical skills that can be used to perform a task. A lower-level manager in particular requires sound knowledge of the technical activities he or she has to supervise. However, the time spent on technical activities decreases with an individual’s progress up the managerial ladder. A recent approach to defining a manager’s job and the competencies to do the job focuses on what the manager has to be able to do in the workplace, as opposed to what he or she needs to know or simply the skills required to do the job.

The South African public service has introduced a system whereby management should have demonstrated managerial and leadership competence by means of core management competencies (CMCs). It focuses on 11 areas, which are outlined in Table 1 (Republic of South Africa, 2002). According to Smit and Cronje (2003), a competency refers to “the relevant knowledge, skills and value orientation that is required to do the job of a manager”. A manager is considered competent if they can apply these skills in a work situation.

Table 1

*Core Management Competencies (CMCs) for the South African Public Service*

Criteria	Description
Strategic capability and leadership	Provides a vision, sets the direction for the organization and inspires others to deliver the organizational mandate
Programme and project management	Plans, manages, monitors and evaluates specific activities in order to deliver the desired outputs and outcomes
Financial management	Compiles and manages budgets, controls cash flow, institutes risk management and administers tender procurement processes in accordance with generally recognized financial practices in order to ensure the achievement of strategic organizational objectives
Change management	Initiates, supports and champions organizational transformation and change in order to successfully implement new initiatives and deliver on service delivery commitments
Knowledge management	Obtains, analyses and promotes the generation and sharing of knowledge and learning in order to enhance the collective knowledge of the organization
Service delivery innovation	Champions new ways of delivering services that contribute to the improvement of organizational processes in order to achieve organizational goals
Problem solving and analysis	Systematically identifies, analyses and resolves existing and anticipated problems in order to reach optimum solutions in a timely manner
People management and empowerment	Manages and encourages people, optimizes their outputs and effectively manages relationships in order to achieve organizational goals
Client orientation and customer focus	Willing and able to deliver services effectively and efficiently in order to put the spirit of customer service (Batho Pele) into practice
Communication	Exchange information and ideas in a clear and concise manner appropriate for the audience in order to explain, persuade, convince and influence others to achieve the desired outcomes
Honesty and integrity	Displays and builds the highest standards of ethical and moral conduct in order to promote confidence and trust in the Public Service

*Note.* Source: Republic of South Africa, 2002, in Schwella & Rossouw, 2005.

In light of the above-mentioned, the public service sets generic standards of competence for management levels, based on an analysis of the management functions, and focusing on what effective managers should be able to do. For each area of competence, there is a related set of specific standards that define effectiveness in that area. The manager is expected to be task-oriented, work focused and highly interested in the task at hand. Managers are expected to exhibit a high degree of motivation, energy and personal drive (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, & McGrath, 1990). The competencies needed are personal productivity and motivation, motivating others and time and stress management. The predominant focus is on control and maintaining stability and continuity in the institution. The external focus is on adapting to continuous changes in the environment. People are a valuable asset only if they contribute significantly to goal attainment. In addition, interpersonal skills such as effective communication and honesty and integrity are emphasised. Managers should also foster collective effort, build cohesion and morale and manage interpersonal conflict. They are required to listen and be empathetic and sensitive to the needs of others. When managers work in groups, the competencies needed are team building, participative decision making and conflict management (Schwella & Rossouw, 2005).

It is probably true to say that public managers are currently experiencing more pressure than in the past in the South African public service (Zuma, 2010). There are also numerous changes in the public service in terms of new

technologies, legislation, corruption, diversity and a shortage of skilled staff (Naidoo, 2009). Managers are therefore required to keep abreast of any changes in the public service, which demands additional skills. Despite the development of different management skills and competencies frameworks for the South African public service, public managers also require multiple leadership skills to deal with complex situations in government.

Training programmes should therefore train managers in a variety of leadership skills for improving performance. At the highest levels of the public service (Director-General, Deputy Director-General and Chief Director), the professional skills required are qualitatively different from those required at the lower levels. At the lower levels, skills and experience relate to the specific responsibilities of each line department. At the higher levels, technical skills and competencies are needed in particular, for the formulation of policy, the development and management of strategic vision and plans, the management of human and other resources, the coordination of policies across government, handling public relations and the media. Along with the necessary technical and administrative skills, people skills are also essential. Another practical task that the public service needs to tackle is the development of managers in the key competencies, *inter alia*, of team building, participative decision making and conflict management.

Leadership training should focus on building competencies in managers so that they have the ability to inspire, communicate and operationalise their visions (Naidoo, 2004). The South African public service should have an adequate understanding of information technology and the importance of training and development opportunities for their managers to enable them to modernise communications and increase the involvement of staff and clients in the work of their institutions. The current demands on the public service indicate that managers should build their capacity and enhance their leadership skills to enable them to execute their tasks and responsibilities with care and authority. They should understand their tasks and prepare themselves properly to manage their departments effectively.

It is also essential for managers to develop their skills for policy implementation for improving service delivery (Naidoo, 2005). They should be able to set direction by guiding and facilitating different strategies and approaches. In accordance with the new public administration model in South Africa, managers need to move towards entrepreneurial government by emphasising performance and collaboration and commitment towards service delivery.

Managers in the public service should be trained to cultivate their capacity for strategic thinking (Naidoo, 2006). They should develop strategic perspectives for their departments about its direction and share that foundational perspective with all employees in their departments. In addition, managers should focus on a few vital issues at a time and devise strategic initiatives to resolve them. They should create an internal capacity to carry out initiatives, structure opportunities for broad participation in developing them and seek external support for the implementation of such initiatives. They require training to set up ways to exert strategic control over how the department performs on new initiatives to measure what goes on inside the department, evaluate the impact on customers and stakeholders as strategic initiatives are implemented, and let these signals guide them in learning how to render effective services.

Training and development in the South African public service should be multicultural. Management studies clearly show that cultural differences influence expectations and assumptions about management, and management philosophies typically operate in harmony with the cultures in which they function (Naidoo, 2005). Prior to 1994, the dominant management practices were Eurocentric, but an increase in the diversity in the managerial and leadership ranks of the South African public service has given rise for the need for an

Afrocentric approach to management (Naidoo, 2009). This situation requires curricula that should be relevant to the South African public service environment. Research indicates the direction management training and development should be taken, with greater emphasis on interpersonal and intercultural skills (Smit & Cronje, 2003). In examining the specific traits required for managers, it is vital for the public service to focus its training on the understanding of the cultural, spiritual, social and personal dimensions of leadership. Management should also be trained to serve the public with respect, concern, courtesy and responsiveness, recognising that service to the public goes beyond service to oneself. They should strive for personal professional excellence and encourage the professional development of those associated with and seeking to enter into the public service, and affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government.

There is a need to strengthen, develop and train managers in the public service. It is necessary to strengthen the current frameworks and interventions to ensure the acquisition of the necessary skills and competencies for public servants, particularly for management in leadership positions in the public service. An increased investment in human resources is therefore necessary. A strong skills base for managers should be evident across the entire public service. The incumbents of leadership posts have the responsibility to transfer these skills to the management cadre and public servants below them. Leadership and management development should therefore remain a priority for the South African public service.

In this regard, Miller (2005) suggested that regional schools of governance could be established to each province to train and educate public managers. Managers from various departments should be recruited for regional schools of governance where they are trained in the field of public administration, public management, leadership and public policy. The curriculum for the schools of governance should be developed with the Public Service Training Institute and in line with requirements of South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). It should be noted that some schools of repute already exist in South Africa, such as the School of Public Administration and Management of the University of Pretoria and the School of Government at the University of Western Cape.

Another very important source of managerial competence that is often overlooked is practical experience. According to Smit and Cronje (2003), there is no doubt that a natural aptitude for management, self-motivation and ambition plays a decisive role in the development of leadership and managerial competence. Most managers in the public service have advanced to their present positions from other jobs. Through experience, and by facing and meeting a variety of managerial challenges, the individual develops insights that cannot be learnt from training alone. Efficient managers therefore learn their skills from a combination of training, development and experience. Becoming a successful leader in management therefore requires a blend of both formal and informal training and practice.

The above discussion on the different skills and competencies that managers require in the South African public service should be understood against the background of the specific environment within which the manager works.

### **Significance of an Integrated Leadership Approach**

Perhaps the first comment to make is how dynamic the approach is for the South African public service. The most obvious implication is the staggering complexity of the role of leadership in the South African public service. Another lesson is that the transactional competencies of management, while crucial for such complex organisations, are simply not sufficient alone. The other conclusion to be drawn is that drawing on one approach

or model of leadership does not solely encapsulate this complexity. Conventional wisdom in the field of public administration research suggests that it is impossible for managers to adopt a single leadership approach that effectively serves multiple, complex and mutually exclusive goals in a volatile and highly demanding public sector environment. Empirical accounts of public institutions continually identify a combination of managerial and transformational leadership as crucial explanations for improved service delivery.

Perhaps of even greater importance is the nature of leadership as perceived by western countries versus these South African perspectives. Typically, the western models place an overwhelming emphasis on charisma and day-to-day operational management. In contrast, an integrated leadership approach emphasizes the role of the leader, which is fundamentally about engaging others as partners in developing and achieving the shared vision and enabling them to lead. It is also about creating an empowering environment for creative thinking and challenging assumptions about how public services should be delivered. The integrated approach is also about much closer sensitivity to the needs of a range of internal and external stakeholders, inside and outside the public service. It is about connectedness and inclusiveness. It undoubtedly presents a more appropriate approach to leadership, and contrasts rather starkly with the more "heroic" western models. The valuing of diversity and inclusion is critical in the South African public service. The approach attempts to build on local (African) culture together with effective strategic leadership. Although this approach is directly applicable to South Africa, it need not be restricted to the African continent, but could be applied in any society with culturally diverse organisations.

### **Conclusion**

This article explored the state of leadership in the South African public service. A number of leadership challenges were identified in the public service which range from the lack of effective skills to the implementation of inadequate leadership approach. This adversely impacts service delivery in the South African public service. The article then stated the critical need for the adoption of an appropriate leadership approach for the South African public service. It is evident that leaders in the South African public service have been predominantly trained in managerial leadership. However, the research suggests that many leaders are not effective in translating government policy into tangible outcomes. A leadership approach was suggested by the study for the South African public service context. This encompasses an effective strategic leadership approach which embraces both managerial and transformational leadership approaches. The integrated approach highlighted the fact that managers in the public service should be developed to become multi-skilled, in order to maintain their departments and improve their performance, adapting themselves to the complexities in the public service and the inherently more difficult task of managing their respective departments. The aim of literature review was to utilise more than one leadership approach in the South African public service in order to achieve the highest possible levels of performance. This could make a contribution to promoting effective service delivery in the South African public service.

In conclusion, it is evident that many studies in South Africa have concentrated on leadership within the context of western societies. Managerial leadership was directly imported into the South African public service, without taking cognisance of the complex and dynamic nature of the public service. Situational variables are not taken into account, such as the local South African context. It is recommended that further research should be conducted on leadership within the local context. Research could also be directed towards approaches to African leadership and its relevance to the South African public service. Models could be devised that are

appropriate for the local South African context and narratives. This leadership approach could then be tested to determine its effectiveness in the South African public service. It is hoped that this article will trigger discussion amongst leaders, academics, researchers and practitioners about how one could improve service delivery in the South African public service.

## References

- Annan, K. (2009). *Indonesia can demonstrate the leadership needed in today's multipolar world*. Retrieved March 18, 2010, from <http://kofiannanfoundation.org/newsroom/press/2010/03/indonesia-can-demonstrate-leadership-needed-todays-multipolar-world>
- Annan, K. (2009). *Global crisis hits Africa twice*. Retrieved March 18, 2010, from <http://www.allafrica.com/stories/200903270155.html>
- Barrington, T. J. (1984). Leadership and the public service. *The Furrow*, 35(5), 283-294.
- Berkley, G. B., & Rouse, J. (2004). *The craft of public administration* (p. 224). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Cronje, H., & Willem, P. (2010). *A collaborative leadership process for sustainable development* (pp. 4-7). South Africa: Africa Leadership Development Initiative Lecture.
- Denhardt, R. B., & Denhardt, J. V. (2000). The new public service: Serving rather than steering. *Public Administration Review*, 60(6), 549-559.
- Denhardt, R. B., & Grubbs, J. W. (2003). *Public administration: An action orientation* (p. 36). United States: Thomson and Wadsworth.
- Eliassen, K. A., & Sitter, N. (2008). *Understanding public management* (p. 154). London: Sage Publications.
- Fraser-Moleketi, G. (2007, September 13). Keynote address for the public service and administration. *Senior Management Service Conference*. Poschefstroom University, South Africa.
- Frederickson, H. G. (2005). *Public administration with an attitude*. United States of America: American Society for Public Administration.
- Freedman, M., & Tregoe, B. B. (2003). *The art and discipline of strategic leadership* (pp. 18, 86). United States of America: McGraw-Hill.
- Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2000). Leadership in the shaping and implementation of collaboration agendas: How things happen in a (not quite) joined-up world. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(6), 1159-1175.
- Ingraham, P. C. (2009a). Leadership in the unglued organisation. In J. A. Raffel, P. Leisink & A. E. Middlebrooks (Eds.), *Public service leadership: International challenges and perspectives*. United States of America: Edward Elgar.
- Ingraham, P. C. (2009b). Public service leadership: Opportunities for clarity and coherence. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 36, 362-374.
- Mail & Guardian. (2010, March 18). *Mantashe calls ANC leaders to order*. Retrieved from <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-03-14-mantashe-calls-anc-leaders-to-order>
- Malan, F., & Smit, B. (2001). *Ethics and leadership in business and politics* (p. 45). South Africa: Juta.
- Marion, R. M. (2001). Leadership in complex organizations. *Leadership Quarterly*, 12, 389-418.
- McLennan, A., & Seale, O. (2010, March 15-19). An integrated leadership development approach. *Annual Winelands Conference*. Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- Miller, K. (2005). *Public sector reform: Governance in South Africa* (pp. 123-124). United Kingdom: Glasgow Caledonian University.
- Moynihan, D. P., & Ingraham, P. W. (2004). Integrative leadership in the public service: A model of performance-information use. *Administration and Society*, 36(4), 427-453.
- Naidoo, G. (2004). Leadership and governance for a sustainable public service: The case for selected South African public service organizations (Unpublished dissertation, University of Pretoria, South Africa, 2004).
- Naidoo, G. (2005, October). A transformative leadership and governance framework to improve public service delivery in South Africa. *Journal of Public Administration*, 102-177.
- Naidoo, G. (2006). Development of senior leadership in the South African public service for accelerated service delivery. *Journal of Public Administration*, 255-266.
- Naidoo, G. (2009). Strengthening senior management skills in the South African public service: A rationale for strategic leadership. *Journal of Public Administration*, 44(1), 3-15.

- Naidoo, G. (2010). *Leadership and good governance in public administration: A critical need for transformative African leadership and good governance for adoption by the South African public service* (pp. 137-387). USA: VDM Verlag Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG.
- Obama, B. (2009). *Obama speech to Congress focuses on economy*. Retrieved March 18, 2010, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/24/sotn.obama.transcript/>
- Ott, J. S., & Russell, E. W. (2001). *Introduction to public administration: A book of readings* (p. 397). New York: Longman Publishers.
- Quinn, R. E., Faerman, S. R., Thompson, P. M., & McGrath, M. R. (1990). *Becoming a master manager: A competency framework* (p. 54). New York: John Wiley.
- Republic of South Africa. (1996). *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Republic of South Africa. (2002). *Core management competencies for the public service*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Rotberg, R. I. (2003). Strengthening African leadership: There is another way. *Foreign Affairs*, 83(4), 14-18.
- Rowe, G. W. (2001). Creating wealth in organizations: The role of strategic leadership. *Academy of Management Review*, 15(1), 80-90.
- Schacter, M. (2000). Evaluation capacity development. Sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons from experience in supporting sound governance (ECD working paper series No. 7, World Bank Operation Evaluations Department, 2000).
- Schwella, E., & Rossouw, A. (2005). Competencies for senior management service in the South African public service: An evaluative assessment. *Journal of Public Administration*, 40(4), 2-12.
- Smit, P. J., & de Cronje, G. J. (2003). *Management principles: A contemporary edition for Africa* (pp. 17-22). Cape Town: McGraw-Hill Publishers.
- Sullivan, H., Downe, J., Entwistle, T., & Sweeting, D. (2006). The three challenges of community leadership. *Local Government Studies*, 32(4), 489-508.
- Vanmullen, K., & Hondeghem, A. (2009). Leadership diversity in an ageing workforce. In J. A. Raffel, P. Leisink, & A. E. Middlebrooks (Eds.), *Public service leadership: International challenges and perspectives* (p. 257). United States of America: Edward Elgar.
- Van Wart, M. (2003). Public-sector leadership theory: An assessment. *Public Administration Review*, 63(2), 214-228.
- Van Zyl, E. (2009). Leadership traits. In E. Van Zyl (Ed.), *Leadership in the African context* (p. 112). Cape Town: Juta.
- Zuma, J. Z. (2010). *The state of the nation address*. Retrieved March 18, 2010, from <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2009/09060310551001.htm>