

TRANSFORM, PERFORM... OR JUST CONFORM?
EVALUATING SA PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM INITIATIVES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Johan was born in Walvis Bay and spent most of his youth in Swellendam, where he matriculated in 1976. He then studied architecture at Free State University, and also met Naomi, now his wife for 25 years, during his stay in Bloemfontein. Hanlie (23) and Johan (18) are the other members of the family.

Prior to his present occupation, he worked in the public sector, starting as an architect in 1982 at the then Department of Community Development in Pretoria. He subsequently moved to Cape Town, where he was employed by the Department of Local Government, Housing and Agriculture in the House of Representatives, during which time he was portfolio manager of more than 200 school building projects. During the final two years of his public sector career, Johan managed various housing projects, including some of the largest projects then in Southern Africa. Johan is still a professional architect registered with the South African Council of Architects and is a member of the South African Institute of Architects. He has undertaken various research projects on issues of appropriate management of development and public finance, and was the primary author of the 2003 Policy on the Management of Provincial Property for the Provincial Government of the Western Cape.

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INTRODUCTION

During the April 2004 national and provincial election campaigns and subsequently during the March 2006 municipal elections, questions about what has been achieved for society since 1994 increased in frequency and urgency. The – for many South Africans – expected, but as yet evasive outcome of societal utopia invariably turns the questions towards the appropriateness of public governance and then, in the machine room of the ship of state, public service management as an independent variable of appropriate public governance. The political transformation not only elevated South Africa from its villainous and globally isolated apartheid status to that of a model constitutional democracy, but also exposed it to the world of public service management reforms. Volumes of exemplary review papers, green papers, white papers, laws and other forms of policy expression give testimony to the very comprehensive work done by experts from all over the world, drawing on global best practices to ensure that the latest thinking gives guidance to political executives and managers on how to manage the new South African society. The purpose of this paper is to reach an understanding of the status of public management reforms and their appropriateness for supporting good public governance. This purpose is served by defining the concepts “good governance” and “management reforms”, by evaluating the status of both in South Africa, and by demarcating the shortcomings in ensuring good public governance in South Africa.

PUBLIC GOVERNANCE PHILOSOPHY

This section serves to explain and provide a specific interpretation of public governance as dependent variable of management reforms, namely the “style of interaction between a government and the society that it governs” (Olowu, 2002: 5; Cloete, 2005; and World Bank, 1994). Webster’s (1979) defines governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development” (see also Olowu, 2002: 5), and Hyden and Court (2002: 19) define governance as “the formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions”. As such, the approach in this paper is to distinguish between *governance* as defined here and the technical capacities of *management*, which represents the “self-conscious, skilled deployment of legal, financial,

material and human assets to produce concrete results” (Moore, 1995: 194; see also Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 12 and Hyden and Court, 2002: 15).

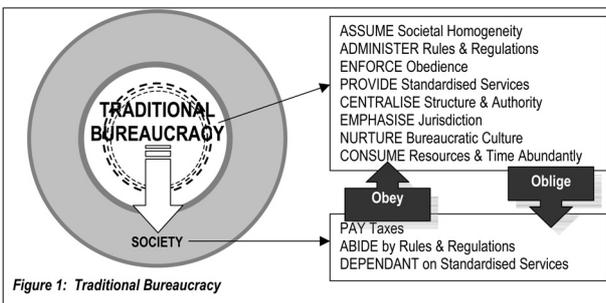
It stands to reason that societal differences make governance highly context specific, but enough has been written about the governance philosophies underpinning Traditional Bureaucracy, New Public Management and Good Governance to be able to classify style of governance, regardless of the particular context.

In terms of Traditional Bureaucracy as already conceptualised by Max Weber (1947), it makes perfect sense that reform initiatives should establish a powerful and trustworthy administration to uphold an orderly society and provide services to that society. It represents a well-oiled machine consisting of infallible systems and structures and fixed spheres of authority and competence, where the weaknesses of the ant-like workers serving society does not affect the system, because the role of each worker is too well demarcated and practised for mistakes to be made, or for mistakes to have too severe an impact. In this regard Cloete (1988: 1) compared “administration” with the fuel and lubrication in the machine of a car. He defined administration as the comprehensive composition of activities that can be grouped according to the functions or processes fulfilled by them. The governance philosophy is very much that of state as powerful provider, with managers serving the state operating within well-demarcated boundaries of authority.

However, in this same powerful machine is embedded its shortcomings. People are involved. The apparent ant-like workers are easily susceptible to the temptations of power and therefore energise the machine not to serve society, but rather to serve the machine to grow bigger and push the “ants” up higher and higher, creating hierarchical pyramids with proportions undreamed of by even the slyest of villains who ever set up money-making pyramid schemes. As the “ants” go higher and gain more power, they also become more protective of their territories and consequently build stronger boundaries around these territories, which in turn break up workflow into vertically isolated units. And these bureaucratic pyramid hierarchies are fed by more and more people entering at the bottom, as well as by more and more money weaned from society. Society, in turn, is prevented from resisting or competing by more regulation, until all that remains are docile masses totally dependent on the machine for their existence. The result of the so-called value-neutral and just intentions of the system is unresponsiveness to the

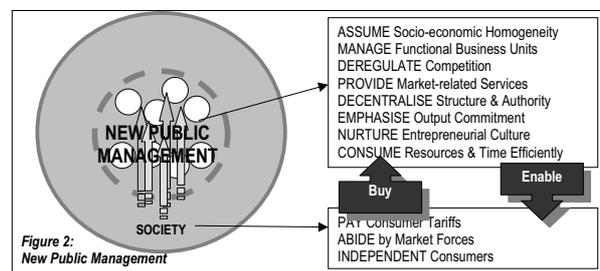
diverse needs of society, embedded in the not-so-neutral bureaucratic culture.

Figure 1 illustrates the characteristics and weaknesses of Traditional Bureaucracy, which was the ideal breeding ground for a “bloody” paradigm revolution. The revolution came by the name of New Public Management (NPM). For the protagonists of NPM, the problem is that *huge traditional bureaucratic monster machine, so kill the monster or cut it down to size!* This vision of governance was the philosophy behind Thatcher’s 1979 election manifesto, “rolling back the state” and it informed the New Zealand reforms in the eighties (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 135). Osborne and Gaebler’s *Reinventing Government* became the trusted handbook (1992). If not entirely privatised or commercialised, market-type systems, delegated authority and financial accountability enable managers to manage business units entrepreneurially and competitively, like Formula 1 race drivers in fine-tuned machines competing against other fine-tuned machines to deliver the best output. And if the drivers are not good enough, their contracts are terminated. The governance philosophy is that the state is a rather invisible enabler and power is exercised through market mechanisms. Managers are expected to use their discretion and entrepreneurial skills in order to remain competitive.



However, in these same lean machines are embedded their shortcomings. Formula 1 race drivers are at the centre of each race and they will do anything possible and legitimate to perform better than others, even attempting to prevent others from passing them on the track. And the spectators are kept at a safe distance after having paid their exorbitant entry fees. NPM assumes that highly competent professional managers are in control of their business units. They go about the delivery of their public services competitively, and play the numbers game, even potentially at the expense of “honesty and fair dealing and of security and resilience”

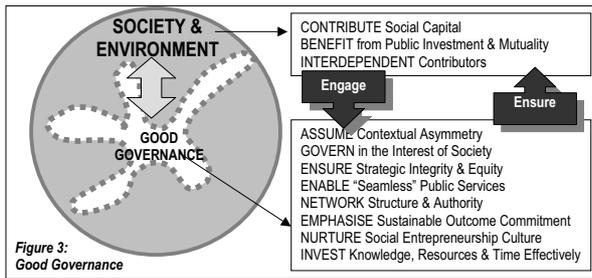
(Hood, quoted by Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 62), because their contracts depend on it. They deliver what counts, not necessarily what works best for society in the long run. They focus intently on their required output and this fragmentises services due to lack of an integrated vision to which each service must contribute. Their citizen customers are considered to be independent individuals with the right to choose, and the ability to pay for these choices, thereby marginalising those who cannot pay. Finally, even though members of society are treated as customers, they are still kept at a safe distance, because their interference may just slow down or even threaten the momentum of delivery. Figure 2 alludes to this reality.



Good Governance¹ (Cloete, 2005; Hyden and Court, 2002: 27) as governance philosophy is about ensuring that appropriate public services are delivered and society is developed in a context-sensitive manner, and that this delivery and development and their long-term impacts are sustainable, thereby providing real investment in society, the environment and the economy. The ensuring state and management integrity gain dominance over the providing and enabling state and management authority and discretion. Services and their delivery processes, as well as the partnering and competitive arrangements surrounding them, are aligned with strategic vision. In addition, amidst malpractices of global economic competition and increasing demands for “one-world” sustainability (Lichtman, 2003: 6), the style of interaction between government and the society it governs cannot be defined or public value added in a particular setting with no concern for the rest of the world. Figure 3 summarises the characteristics and intent of a Good Governance philosophy.

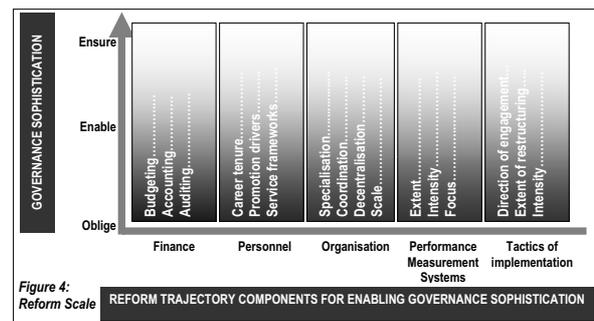
Asian Development Bank (2005) and Fuhr (2000: 65) acknowledge accountability, predictability, participation and transparency as key features, while Hyden and Court (2002: 27) add fairness, decency and efficiency. These features deserve further attention.

1. The term “Good Governance” is used in the literature in a normative and utilitarian sense (Cloete, 2005) and has come to be generally used as governance paradigm, but it remains unfortunate, because what comes after “good” can only be “better” and “best”! And also, does it imply that everything that came before “good” must have been “bad”? Dwivedi (2002: 49) refers to “humane” governance as governance geared towards universal human development. “Progressive Governance” may be a valid alternative to “Good Governance”.



- Accountability refers to holding governments responsible for their actions as undertaken through the combination of democratic, hierarchical, market and managerial accountability systems and micro-level organisational arrangements. It implies authority and capacity to deliver appropriately.
- Predictability refers to the legal framework that must ensure stability in order to allow for rational assessment of risks and costs relating to behaviour and transactions (Fuhr, 2000: 66).
- Fairness refers to the degree to which rules apply equally to everyone in society regardless of status (Hyden and Court, 2002: 27).
- Efficiency refers to the degree to which rules facilitate speedy and timely decision-making (Hyden and Court, 2002: 27).
- Participation acknowledges that people (individuals and groups) are at the heart of delivery and development. They are not only the ultimate beneficiaries, but also the agents. It means that they need to have access to the institutions that promote delivery and development. Participation is essential for improved performance and sustainability of policies, programmes, and projects, as well as enhanced capacity and skills of stakeholders. It further requires that the delivery structures and systems are flexible enough to offer stakeholders the opportunity to improve the design and implementation such policies, programmes and projects (Asian Development Bank, 2005).
- Transparency refers to the availability of information to the general public and clarity about government rules, regulations and decisions. It therefore complements and reinforces predictability. Transparency implies provision for access to information, but also actively strengthening the right to information through the development of means to gain access to information and even a degree of legal enforceability on the provision of information. For similar reasons broadly restrictive laws that deny information must provide for independent review of claims that such denial is justified in the greater public interest (Asian Development Bank, 2005).

These features are interdependent and together contribute towards strategic integrity. According to Hyden and Court (2002: 27), the assumption is that the more governance is undertaken according to these features, the better it is. Therefore, to altogether reject Traditional Bureaucracy and New Public Management as “bad governance” would do an injustice to the many applications that achieved what they were intended to achieve. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004: 62), for instance, criticised the “Osborne and Gaebler story” [and rejection of Traditional Bureaucracy] as “misleadingly neat and over-simple”. They based their criticism on the reality that Traditional Bureaucracy could not in fact be encapsulated in one administrative regime, because there were several. Many such regimes did not fit the image of Traditional Bureaucracy anyway, and their rejection ignored or underplayed the positives of continuity, honesty and high commitment to equity in dealing with the public. Similarly, to reject the wealth of NPM applications would be to turn a blind eye to the many service improvements attained.



Instead, the three philosophies are treated here as situated on a continuum of sophistication, as illustrated in the vertical axis of Figure 4. It is proposed that Progressive Governance features represent a level of sophistication where service activities are not only structured, executed and supported competitively, but also comprehensively aligned with and measured against a particular and widely shared strategic vision for society. The progression from Traditional Bureaucracy, through New Public Management, towards Public Governance is therefore identified as a scale for measuring the level of governance sophistication.

TRAJECTORIES OF MANAGEMENT REFORM

Hyden and Court (2002: 25) indicate that the measurement of governance poses challenges not encountered in the economic or social development fields, because of the difficulties in finding and agreeing on appropriate indicators. They nevertheless identified thirty indicators within six governance dimensions, based on the gover-

nance features referred to in the previous section. Cloete (2005) discusses various other international frameworks for measuring governance. However, the premise of this paper is to assume that governance sophistication is also (but not exclusively) dependent on the level of sophistication of the more technical public sector management components. If, for example, good governance is based on transparency through an informed society, relevant and appropriate information as a resource to inform society needs to be generated by means of management systems and processes. Inversely, the absence of appropriate management systems and processes will impede governance sophistication. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004: 6) claim that management reform is a means to an end, or multiple ends mostly related to better performance, but also that the results of reform include aspects of outcomes and impacts associated with Good Governance (2004: 117, 182). The five management components that may enable higher levels of governance sophistication as indicated on the horizontal axis of Figure 4 are derived from Pollitt and Bouckaert's (2004: 65) reform trajectories. The components deserve some brief explanation.

Finance

Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004:66) subdivided the finance component into budgeting (and financial management), accounting and auditing. The lowest level of reform is characterised by budgeting as incremental adjustment of input-oriented annual financial allocations and financial management by finance specialists, with at the most (if at all) publication of financial performance information. Accounting is cash-based, while auditing is financial and compliance oriented only. A second level of reform – which is claimed here to enable better management – is characterised by alignment of spending with the economic cycle through frame budgeting, changing the budget format to be more performance sensitive and linked to strategic planning. Accounting changes to double book-keeping systems, whereby each unit is ring fenced as a separate business entity and – in some instances – capital assets are acknowledged as resource. Auditing is expanded to include elements for performance and evaluation. Super budgeting - which entails integration of systems of planning, operational management and performance measurement – and financial management by all middle managers indicate a third level of reforms. Such reforms also include changing the timing, structure and procedure of budgeting and the role and involvement of budget actors. Accrual accounting that focuses on extended costing and providing performance-related information as well as institutionalised financial, compli-

nance and performance auditing, in the national audit office and with matching changes in internal audit services, complete these most comprehensive reform initiatives.

Personnel

Personnel management reforms, again in accordance with Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004: 74), take place in the areas of career tenure, promotion drivers and service frameworks. The approach in this paper to treat reform trends as levels of sophistication is more open to challenge here, because global reform comparisons may not support the characteristics of each level. Nevertheless, the point of departure accepted for this paper is a protected career, hierarchical structures with promotion the result of seniority, and a unified civil service. The second level of sophistication, with its strong emphasis on “letting the managers manage”, brings about less secure careers and larger inflows and outflows of staff by means of appointment by short- to medium-term performance-related contracts. Promotion comes from track records of achievement and generally greater decentralisation causes discarding of a unified service framework. In general, the second level of reform is characterised by a “de-privileged” civil service, which is treated similarly to the way private sector employees are treated (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 78). The third level of sophistication is (arguably) characterised by a unified career public service, but with some loosening of personnel rigidities to promote results-oriented styles of personnel management that will retain and reward initiative and service improvement in the interest of society, rather than merely in the interest of short-term and narrowly focused sector achievements.

Organisation

Organisational trajectories of reform are categorised in terms of specialisation, coordination, (de)centralisation and scale (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 81), the lowest level of sophistication being either high levels of specialisation or highly consolidated bureaucracies, hierarchical coordination (from the top), high levels of political and administrative centralisation and large scale. The second level of sophistication is characterised by high levels of specialisation in single-purpose organisations / enterprises, market and network forms of coordination, high levels of decentralisation and small scale. The third level of sophistication is arguably characterised by fewer specialised agencies and even fewer departments, greater efforts for coordination through one-stop service arrangements and specific high-level coordinating mechanisms, forms of tighter central control and a departure from the “small is beautiful” philosophy.

Performance measurement systems

Performance measurement systems are categorised in terms of extent, intensity and focus (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 90). The lowest level of sophistication is characterised by very limited, low intensity and input-oriented performance measurement. The second level is characterised by more extensive and intense application of performance measurement, but with the focus still on output-oriented measurement. The third level is characterised by extensive and intense use of performance measurement systems, but with deliberate mechanisms to measure outcomes and not only outputs.

Tactics of implementation

Finally, tactics of implementation refers to the direction of engagement, the extent of restructuring and the intensity of such restructuring (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 94). This dimension is the most difficult to categorise in levels of sophistication, because it is most influenced by the reform “topography” of a country, but it is nevertheless argued that the lowest-level tactics are characterised by a top-down, but low in extent and intensity (maintaining the *status quo* as far as possible) approach. The second level is characterised by being top-down, extensive (creating many new organisations and structures) and intense (dramatic changes widely implemented), while the third level of sophistication follows a “top-down, guided bottom-up”, less extensive and less intense (more consultative and delicate) approach. The reasoning behind the selection of tactics in the third category is that these reforms tend to be the result of either a backtracking from the somewhat harsh NPM types of “reinventing government” reforms, or taking it slowly and carefully so as not to destroy what works in the first place.

In conclusion to this section, it is not denied that the levels of sophistication identified above may be somewhat too generic to fit any particular reform case, or may represent a simplistic and even naïve selection of typologies for measuring component characteristics, but this is generally true of any model. It may also be contentious to treat the enabling reform components as independent variable, with governance philosophy as dependent variable. It is, however, not argued here that the presence of higher levels of sophistication of enabling components will inevitably cause more sophisticated governance, but rather that the absence of component sophistication will impede the application of a more sophisticated governance philosophy. The value of this proposed model therefore lies in its ability to be used as tool for analysing and isolating real-life management impediments to attaining sophisticated governance levels, as will be done in the next section with South African reforms.

SOUTH AFRICAN REFORM TRAJECTORIES

As relative latecomer in the “reform game” as a result of its *apartheid* isolation, South Africa has a lot of catching up to do, but has the opportunity of being able to select best practices upon which to mould its own reforms. The enabling components of reform as explored on the theoretical model in the previous section are described here.

Finance

“Frame budgeting” in the form of the South African Medium Term Expenditure Framework and formula-based division of revenue between provinces were introduced from 1995 onward and, with the introduction of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999 as amended by Act 29 of 1999), a performance-oriented approach was adopted, where the focus was shifted from inputs and rules to outputs and responsibilities. All the elements of “super budgeting” are contained in this Act, its regulations and the sophisticated National Treasury instructions and guidelines subsequently published. With the promulgation of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) these reforms were also introduced in the municipal sphere of government. This has far-reaching implications for all public sector operations. One such implication is that it is now required from accounting officers to do life-cycle costing of programme alternatives and include indirect and externality costs in their costing of new programmes (National Treasury, 2001: 15). Accrual accounting was also introduced, but implementation is slow and incomplete at the time of writing. Since 1990 external auditing by the Office of the Auditor General complies with the Generally Accepted Governmental Audit Standards of the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. A comprehensive auditing approach is followed, providing for regularity and performance auditing as distinct activities by separate units, but deliberately executed concurrently. In addition, forensic auditing has received recognition as an additional specialised type of audit. Internal auditing and control are the responsibility of the accounting officers of departments.

These financial reforms indicate a level of sophistication not different from any other “third-level” reforms elsewhere in the world. They should therefore also, in terms of the hypothesis implied in Section 2, enable a good governance philosophy and its expected desired results.

Personnel management

Personnel management reforms are also following the typical international approaches, where the traditional

secured and protected life-long career appointments have made way for typical “second-level” performance-related five-year contracts, at least for the top five levels of management at this stage. Seniority, public sector experience and qualifications are making room for a new generation of relatively young managers who are more flexible and responsive to the dynamic demands of the new society. However, in line with “third-level” reforms, the Public Service Commission (PSC) of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) remains the central personnel authority that determines posts, post levels and salary notches. Municipalities have so far enjoyed full discretion with regards to personnel management affairs, but ongoing reforms are indicating that they will also be brought under the realm of the PSC. However, in spite of this centralised personnel management control, wider discretion for rewarding good performance and greater responsibility with accelerated ascent up the notches and responsibility-related remuneration is delegated and decentralised to the various heads of departments and institutions.

These provisions have the potential to encourage and reward better performance, but personnel management reforms are also extensively affected by the need to change the composition of the public sector to reflect that of society. The White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Sector (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1998) expresses the view that the Public Service cannot be an efficient and effective instrument for equitable service delivery as long as it maintains unfair discrimination based on race, gender and disability. It therefore accepted Affirmative Action “as the additional corrective steps which must be taken in order that those who have been historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination are able to derive full benefit from an equitable employment environment”. The goal – in addition to, and sometimes in practice understood to be superseding the more universal multiple ends of reform – was “to speed up the creation of a representative and equitable Public Service and to build an environment that supports and enables those who have been historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination to fulfil their maximum potential within it so that the Public Service may derive the maximum benefit of their diverse skills and talents to improve service delivery” (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1998).²

It is argued that both the manifestation of “third-level” personnel management reforms and the more unique provision to ensure employment equity are enabling good governance, provided that the provision for employment equity is applied hand-in-hand with a knowledge-retention strategy.

Organisation

The South African reforms so far reveal mixed practices regarding the organisation trajectory. A large number of Major Public Entities, Other National and Provincial Public Entities, as well as National and Provincial Government Business Enterprises are listed in Schedules 2 and 3 of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999, and specialised departments such as Public Works are visible manifestations of extensive specialisation, but a number of turf battles are currently raging in this regard. Interestingly, financial management reforms provide fuel for these battles. For example, the shift towards accrual accounting with the requirement for balance sheets and the required inclusion of indirect costs in budgeting are used as motivation for why line departments such as Education and Health should be the custodians of the properties they use. Conversely, the specialised Public Works departments argue that they have the property-related expertise, not only to manage individual properties well, but also to use properties purposefully and in an integrated manner to address “income” poverty by creating business and job opportunities along the full property supply chain, and also to address “asset” poverty by purposefully – and in conjunction with municipalities and other civil society role-players – creating public assets in previously neglected areas (Department of Public Works, 1997 and Province of the Western Cape: Department of Transport and Public Works, 2003: 10). Neither of the two camps, however, has been keen to accept internal charges as a mechanism to ensure optimal use of properties and good management of properties. It is nevertheless evident that National Treasury is keen to “undo” the large number of independent public entities, because of the lack of accountability and relatively poor performance of these manifestations of “level-two” sophistication.

Greater coordination is encapsulated in a variety of policy expressions. In this regard, even the Constitution, 1996 has a Chapter on Cooperative Government, partly motivated by the need to undo past wrongs. The following further provisions were enacted for promoting coordination and integration between the three spheres of government:

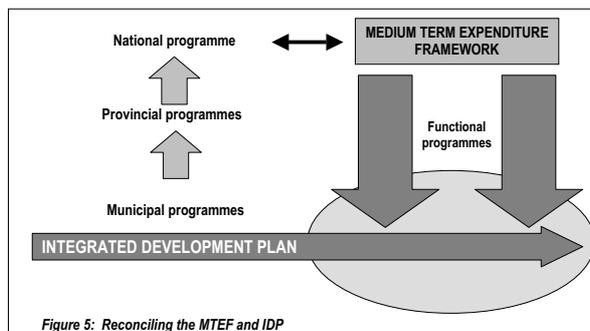
- The Presidential Coordinating Committee, comprising the President, the Minister for Provincial and Local Government, and the nine Premiers;
- Ministerial clusters, Directors-General clusters and the Forum of South African Directors-General, which promote programme integration at national and provincial level;

2. In December 2001, 85% of public servants were “PDI” (Previously Disadvantaged Individuals), compared with the population profile of 90%. In the management echelon, 66% were “PDI” (Government Communications (GCIS), 2003).

- Ministerial forums (or MinMecs) between responsible line-function Ministers at national level and their respective counterparts at provincial government level, which normally meet on a quarterly basis. These forums are supported by technical committees;
- A number of intergovernmental forums that facilitate cooperative government and intergovernmental relations.

But perhaps the most significant potential instrument for coordination currently unfolding is the requirement that municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) should not only ensure coordinated delivery of the various local services, but should also inform Provincial IDPs and prioritisation in National Departments (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 1998). Figure 5 illustrates that IDPs provide the mechanism to supplement the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) with its top-down and functionally-isolated nature by introducing a bottom-up process of coordination and integration. National Treasury stated this explicitly in their Framework and Templates for the Preparation of Strategic Plans by Provincial Departments for the 2004 Budget (National Treasury, 2003):

Another challenge is to ensure that the provincial department's plans are formulated within the top-down framework set by national and provincial position statements or plans, as well as the bottom-up information coming from district offices, and the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) developed by local government.



3. On 19 March 1998 the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature appointed two Administrators, in terms of Section 139, to take over the administration of the Butterworth Transitional Local Council. Some two weeks later the MEC for Local Government and Housing of the province applied to the NCOP for approval of its intervention in Butterworth, and this approval was given on 20 April 1998. This intervention was approved on the basis that it was necessary to meet and maintain essential national minimum standards of municipal service delivery. The Administrators were sanctioned to assume control of the executive and functional responsibilities in the areas of the provision of services, financial management and all administrative procedures.

In October 1998 the municipality brought an action against the NCOP in the High Court on the basis of the nature of the intervention. The Court resolved that the intervention should be brought to an end and that the provincial government and the municipality should draft terms of reference for a new intervention. It appears that the matter was resolved between the parties, as no application for further intervention was referred to the NCOP.

Interventions have also taken place in Warrenton (Northern Cape), Ogies (Northern Cape), Tweeling (Free State), Stilfontein (North West), Wedela (North West), Noupoot (Northern Cape) and Viljoenskroon (Free State) (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 1999). In all the cases, except for the situation in Ogies (where the councillors failed to meet), the intervention could be ascribed to the financial situation, which led to the collapse of the provision of basic services to the communities (NCOP, 2003).

Decentralisation in South Africa is realised in the extent to which there is a steady movement to delegate as much as possible of the actual service delivery responsibilities of government to municipalities after the previous 843 municipalities have been consolidated into 284 stronger municipalities. The Constitution is very clear on the strong focus on decentralised service delivery at municipal level in South Africa. However, as Pollit and Bouckaert (2004:87) explained, centralisation is still part of the scene, *inter alia* in the form of central control and oversight. Section 154 of the Constitution, 1996 states:

The national government and provincial governments by legislative and other measures, must support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities to manage their own affairs, to exercise their powers and to perform their duties.

Section 139 of the Constitution provides that,

When a municipality cannot or does not fulfil an executive obligation in terms of legislation, the relevant provincial executive may intervene by taking any appropriate steps to ensure fulfilment of that obligation.

The steps referred to include the issuing of directives setting out the extent of the failure and stating the steps to be taken to meet those obligations. Where appropriate, these could include the assumption of the responsibilities of the municipality to ensure, amongst other things, that established standards of service delivery are met. The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) is required, in terms of Section 139, to review this intervention regularly, which is not a permanent situation and which needs to be terminated once the objectives have been achieved. (NCOP, 2003).³

The National Treasury also has been authorised by the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 to intervene when a Province cannot fulfil its obligations, or to withhold funds (Sections 100 and 216 of the Constitution, 1996 and Section 6 of the Public Finance Management

Act, 1999), and to make regulations (Section 76 of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999) that are considered to be part of the Act. This provides National Treasury with significant authority, considering that Section 3(3) determines that the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 prevails over all other legislation, except the Constitution.

Finally in this subsection, a few words about size or scale: although *downsizing* has been an often expressed objective in the South African public sector during the first “wave” of reforms, Resolution No. 7 of 2002 (Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council, 2002) has provided a framework for the transformation and restructuring of the public service whereby the departmental strategic plan should determine the organisational structure and human resource plan – *rightsizing* has therefore become the operative word. However, in the process of rightsizing, i.e. in deciding which employees have to be placed in defined posts, affirmative action, employment equity targets and plans to redress under-representation had to be provided. Employees in excess of the human resource plan then had to be redeployed, where possible, or be granted a severance package. As a result of the exercise, 24 000 people were declared redundant, while simultaneously there were 15 000 vacancies identified for highly skilled and professional people. Government has decided to retrain and redeploy these 24 000 people, rather than to retrench them, partly confirming the above statement, that – at least in the overall numbers – the size of the public sector may increase rather than shrink (IFR, 2003a). In fact, during Africa Public Service Day television debates on 23 June 2005, one matter of reasonable consensus amongst participants was that “the state has made a comeback” and that the size of the civil service will have to be increased in certain areas to enhance service delivery (DSTV, Channel 58, 23 June 2005).

As with the other trajectory components, the organisation component has clear “third-level” reform characteristics.

Performance measurement systems

New Public Management (NPM) did not introduce the application of performance measurement systems in government, but certainly led to its more intensive application to inform specific decisions, to benchmark, to determine budget allocations and to give information for decision-making on career development and promotion. The external use of performance measurement to inform legislatures, taxpayers, service users and other stakeholders has also grown as a result of NPM. However, one of the dilemmas of the use of performance measurement systems is that the focus would be on the measurement of the more easily measurable out-

puts to the detriment of measuring important and sometimes decisive but more difficult to measure outputs and outcomes (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 92).

According to Cloete *et al.* (2003), the South African government has introduced an explicit performance-based governance system, coordinated by the Department of Public Service and Administration. However, it is perhaps the National Treasury guidelines that provide the most concrete framework and templates for the application of performance measurement. In the *Framework and Templates for the Preparation of Strategic Plans by Provincial Departments for the 2004 Budget* (National Treasury, 2003) the integration of services by various spheres and units of government and the integration of planning, budgeting, performance measurement and individual performance contracts are promoted:

The template (see Section Two) that accompanies this document seeks to reconcile the reporting requirements of the PFMA and associated Treasury Regulations, the PSA regulations, and the requirements of the National Treasury for strategic plans.

The critical challenge facing all departments is to ensure that strategic planning is developed and synchronised with the entire planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting framework that the PFMA seeks to put in place.

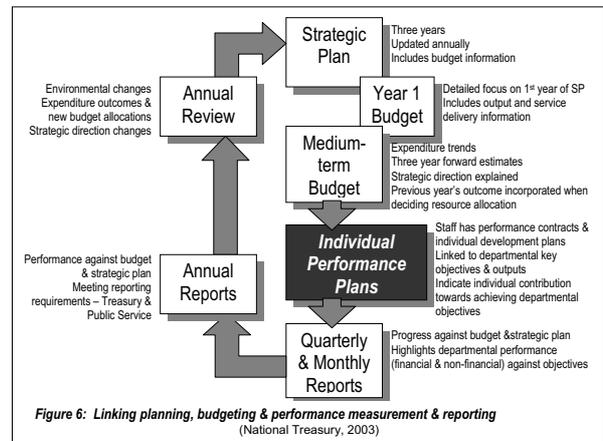


Figure 6 illustrates how strategic plans, budgets and performance measurement and reporting fit together. The strategic plan should contain a hierarchy from strategic goals to strategic objectives to measurable objectives. Strategic goals and strategic objectives focus on service delivery, management/organisation, financial management and training and learning (National Treasury 2003). Although the Balanced Scorecard is not mentioned by name, these four perspectives are comparable with the customer, internal business process, finance, and learning and growth perspectives of Kaplan and Norton (1996, 2001).

Finally to performance measurement in South

African government, measurement of attempts to correct the legacies of apartheid may still “fall between the cracks” (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 91) of such measurement. National Treasury (2003) acknowledges that from the feedback received on their previous emphasis on the cost, quantity, quality and timeliness aspects of measurable objectives, it would be better to allow departments to identify their own objectives.

Cloete *et al.* (2003) acknowledge that the performance measuring requirements and frameworks are set, but little has come of actual measurement in practice. However, from 2002 such measurement has been taking place in all national and provincial departments and in many of the bigger municipalities as well. It is still true that there is an absence of widespread utilisation of the results of such measurement for the purposes they were intended to achieve, especially for external uses as identified by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004:90). The performance measurement reform-related initiatives nevertheless show characteristics of “third-level” reforms and should therefore enable Good Governance.

Tactics of implementation

It is understandable that the “first wave” of reforms in South Africa were strongly top down – guided by “national projects” such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) Policy implementations. These reforms were also extensive and intense – *inter alia* setting up nine new provincial governments in place of the previous four provinces, consolidating 843 economically highly unequal municipalities into 284 supposedly sustainable ones and dismantling the numerous apartheid legislative, executive and administrative systems, self-governing areas and independent states and assigning their functions, systems and resources to the three new spheres of government. In 1994 President Mbeki announced “Project Consolidate” (Mbeki, 2004) aimed at improving municipal service delivery and, as this project is unfolding in the provinces, it shows elements of being top-down, guided bottom-up, involving a wide variety of stakeholders and meticulously exploring the impediments to service delivery. In this and other similar projects, “third-level” sophistication is visible (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2004).

In conclusion to this section, which explored the South African reform trajectory components, it can be claimed that there is evidence of “third-level” sophistication in all the components of the trajectory. The question, however, is whether this sophistication is present because of access to the best reform experts the world can offer and the South African reform trajectory just shows all the signs of conforming to what “is sup-

posed to happen”, or whether these reforms have indeed successfully dealt with impediments preventing, and created the sound platform for enabling, Good Governance. This question will be explored in the next section.

GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: TO TRANSFORM AND PERFORM

Manifestations of governance sophistication in South Africa will be identified in this section, given that reforms have elevated public management to the level where it should support Good Governance, as was found in Section 4. This will be done by analysing governance context, strategic leadership intent and the tactical governance content.

Governance context

One reason for placing Traditional Bureaucracy, New Public Management and Good Governance on a continuum of sophistication is because it is much less routine and more complex and challenging to adhere to the very context specific Good Governance requirements than to run government like a business, which again is more complex and challenging than placing a lid on society as with Traditional Bureaucracy. The extent to which context sensitivity is reflected in governance will therefore indicate its sophistication.

When South Africans entered the period of political transformation on 2 February 1990 the person and charismatic leadership of one of the most highly respected people on earth, Nelson Mandela, became the strongest unifying force in the country. In his election victory speech on 2 May 1994 he urged all South Africans to go back to their jobs in the morning:

For we must, together and without delay, begin to build a better life for all South Africans. This means creating jobs, building houses, providing education and bringing peace and security for all.

The *Better Life for All* slogan was initially the ANC election slogan and remains to this day an often-used government slogan and vision for the nation. Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, referred to this in his 2002/03 Budget Speech:

That [solidarity] was already part of us when we stepped back from the precipice – oppressor and oppressed – and began the long journey toward a better life for all. This is the solidarity of which I speak. This is our legacy. We know that the society to which we aspire – compassionate, democratic, egalitarian – will not come about by belief alone. It is a society we seek to create.

It therefore encapsulates, from a domestic perspective, context sensitivity for Good Governance. But added to the notions of development and equity amidst a history of marginalisation, it must be remembered that marginalisation also has a strong supra-state connotation. For many years South Africa was isolated from the rest of Africa and mostly from the rest of the world as well. This isolation worsened the plight of the poor. It also prevented the largest economy in Africa⁴ from contributing to regional development and prevented the creation of a sufficiently strong regional grouping whereby the undermining tendencies of globalisation could be countered (Burger, 2001: 63).

However, with apartheid politically conquered, alleged bad governance practices in Africa, global terrorism and global inequalities still remain to inform the governance context. The manifestations of bad governance in Africa, such as Zimbabwe is currently accused of, and the evil plots of global terrorists do nothing to highlight global inequalities, but rather tend to draw attention away from it, or distort the global picture, because of the emotions involved.

Where colonialism and apartheid prevented a large percentage of South Africans from competing for the benefits of economic development, global trade inequalities still now impede many developing economies from competing for the benefits of world economic development (Todaro, 1994: 514; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 28). Barriers such as subsidisation of products by developed countries, together with pressures on developing countries to abolish import controls and open up their economies to international commerce (Todaro, 1994: 465) may for ever marginalise Africa. In fact, the initial (July 2005) haze of mass media-driven global amazement at the generosity of G8 leaders in cancelling multilateral debts in the poorest countries in Africa is slowly drifting away to reveal some of the stark realities behind that generosity: The leaders of the world still equate good governance with liberalisation of economies and trade in developing countries, whereby European and American products, made competitive by decades of subsidisation, support and protection can flood the developing markets and destroy local industries (Dixon in *Green Left Weekly*, July 6, 2005).

The absolute global inequality is illustrated by the amounts at stake. The OECD subsidised farm exports by US\$350 billion, compared to the US\$22 billion aid to Africa.⁵ It is estimated that trade liberalisation lost Africa US\$272 billion in the last 20 years, roughly the same amount as received in aid during that time, but that aid is accompanied by the ever-deteriorating capac-

ity of Africa to compete in Africa. Aid further distorts development; it does not remedy the destruction caused by first world economic expediency (Dixon in *Green Left Weekly*, July 6, 2005).

Since its political transformation 12 years ago, South Africa has been playing an increasingly prominent role in the region and in other supra-state alliances, especially in voicing the interests of developing countries in international forums. This role as emerging regional leader has an implication for governance in South Africa. Whereas *A Better Life for All* was the expressed ideal of the first President of the South African democracy, the *African Renaissance* is the vision of current president, Thabo Mbeki. He conceptualised this vision at the United Nations University on 9 April 1998, while he was still Deputy-President, and has subsequently given effect to it through his prominent role in the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) on 23 October 2001, the adoption of the African Union Act on 11 July 2000, its coming into force on 26 May 2001, and the formal launch of the African Union (AU) on 9 July 2002, the inauguration of the Pan-African Parliament on 18 March 2004, and its contentious move to South Africa, as decided on 7 July 2004. In addition, the establishment of Peace and Security Council peer review mechanisms further demonstrates visionary leadership. Contained in the African Renaissance vision are conditions of peace, stability, prosperity and intellectual creativity. President Mbeki, more than anybody else, promoted the understanding that South African prosperity is impossible without African development.

The first potential implication of such a more regional focus is that it may draw resources away from domestic objectives to regional objectives, which means that savings in domestic spending become a more pronounced domestic reason for reform. South African Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, announced increased spending on regional development as follows in his 2003/04 budget speech:

South Africa remains at the forefront of multilateral initiatives aimed at promoting a more equitable international order and ensuring a better future for Africa's people. The 2003 Budget accommodates a phased expansion of missions in African countries, funding for the African Union and the NEPAD secretariat and increased contributions to regional development through the African Renaissance Fund administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

From 1997 to 2005 the provision for Foreign Affairs has increased by approximately 21%, if the effect of inflation

4. South Africa currently has the 17th largest economy in the world and by far the largest in Africa, accounting for 29% of Africa's GDP.

5. The well-known comparison remains shocking, namely that every European cow is subsidised by an amount three times more than what each person of 50% of Africa's population must survive on.

is discounted first. Over time the establishment of regional administrative structures, the increased spending on regional interaction, continued involvement in regional peace-keeping endeavours and other costs will result in further increases of this provision.

A second potential implication is that such regionalism changes the “topography”, i.e. the politico-administrative systems of the region. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004:58) applied their typical key features affecting reform to the European Commission. This not only served to highlight the uniqueness of such a regional topography, but also that the establishment of a regional government structure may be the cause for further domestic reform. For example, Mughan and Patterson (1999:334) have concluded that there is a resurgence in the importance of “upper” houses of Parliament as a result of the establishment of structures such as the European Union. The same may hold true for the South African National Council of Provinces, with the advance of the African Union and a Pan African Parliament. But then, as part of redefining such an organ of state, the various spheres and units of government and their right of existence need deliberation.

Thirdly, once the *omega* of the regional structure is established, member countries will need to redefine their desired reform results in terms of domestic operations, processes and systems of delivery and development. It is therefore clear that, resulting from the serious intentions of leaders to make the AU an effective reality, the concomitant and subsequent public management reform implications may be significant. The governance context therefore is highly dynamic and demands high levels of sophistication, as opposed to the unsophisticated governance philosophy of Traditional Bureaucracy, which is claimed to be appropriate for situations of high stability (Moore, 1995: 210).

Strategic leadership intent

We must, constrained by and yet regardless of the accumulated effect of our historical burdens, seize the time to define for ourselves what we want to make of our shared destiny.

These powerful words, spoken by President Mandela at the first opening of parliament speech on 24 May 1994, were quoted by President Thabo Mbeki, in his State of the Nation address on 3 February 2006. President Mbeki went on to commit government and the nation to “accelerate our advance towards the realisation of the important goal of a better life for all”. This he did motivated by the clear indications that “South Africa has entered its Age of Hope”. These are strong pronouncements of continued leadership intent, providing not only South Africans, but in fact citizens of the world, with hope and inspiration. In similar fashion, South African Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, introduced

his 2000/01 budget speech with the following quotation from *A Way of Being Free*, by Ben Okri, famous Nigerian poet and author:

They tell me that nature is the survival of the fittest. And yet look how many wondrous gold and yellow fishes prosper amongst the silent stones of the ocean beds, while sharks eternally prowling the waters in their impossible dreams of oceanic domination and while whales become extinct; look how many does and antelopes, ants and fleas, birds of aquamarine plumage, birds that have mastered Chinua Achebe’s art of flying without perching, how many butterflies and iguanas thrive, while elephants turn into endangered species, and while even lions growl in their dwindling solitude... Nature and history are not just about the survival of the fittest, but also about the survival of the wisest, the most adaptive and the most aware.

Manuel then continued his submission on how he intended spending hard-earned South African tax rands in his own rather poetic manner:

Our history implores us to use our freedoms to light the path to a more humane, more caring society. It demands that we lift our sights far into the horizon. That we use our voices to proclaim our freedoms. Our history teaches us courage and resilience. That we embrace the challenges. That we be strong. That we be confident. That we be humble. That we be patient.

It demands that we overcome fear and embrace the power of transformation. That we grasp the complexity of each other and of the world that we live in. That we see beyond the illusions and the truths we create for ourselves. If we see only the beauty of the yellow and gold fish and the fierce jaw of the shark, we will not believe that they swim in the same waters. But they can and they do and they thrive. We need to accept that reality to understand why.

It is the ability to understand, to change, to adapt, to experience suffering and to learn from it, to see beyond the illusion of power that determines success. Our history demands that we show the world that the butterfly does not have to die so that the elephant is saved. That the shark and the yellow fish can thrive in the same water.

With these words Manuel captured a wealth of Good Governance notions, *inter alia* that competitiveness in the arena of public service not only stems from strength, but also from wisdom, adaptability and awareness. Manuel further implies an orientation towards a longer-term approach for creating a more humane, caring society and that our personal traits should simulta-

neously reflect courage, resilience, confidence, humility, patience, energy, insight, adaptability, perseverance, learning, wisdom, comradeship, concern and leadership. But how is this then reflected in governance content? So far in the paper it has been argued that both the management environment (the “bottom”) and leadership intent (“the top”) are conducive to Good Governance.

Tactics to give Good Governance content

In spite of comprehensive management reforms and leadership intent there are various indicators that service delivery and development is not experienced by all as good enough. Since 2005, various protest actions in South Africa have shown that communities are not satisfied. In spite of the evidence provided in “Towards a Ten Year Review” that the “first wave” of South African governance energy served to transform and integrate (Policy Coordination and Advisory Services, The Presidency, 2003), the Review also identified serious weaknesses, as stated in the final summary (Policy Coordination and Advisory Services, The Presidency, 2003):

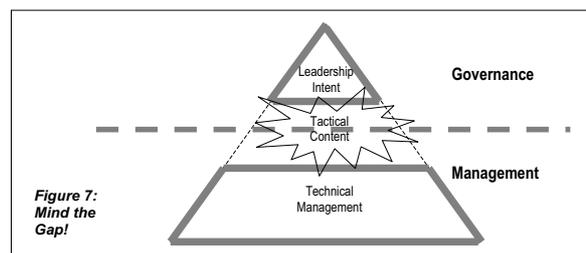
There are weaknesses in those areas that are least dependent on direct government action, at the coalface of interaction with the public and in the supervision and management of implementation. The advances made in the First Decade by far supersede the weaknesses. Yet, if all indicators were to continue along the same trajectory, especially in respect of the dynamic of economic inclusion and exclusion, we could soon reach a point where the negatives start to overwhelm the positives. This could precipitate a vicious cycle of decline in all spheres. Required are both focus and decisiveness on the part of government, the will to weigh trade-offs and make choices, as well as strategies to inspire all of society to proceed along a new trail. If decisive action is taken on a number of focused areas, the confluence of possibilities is such that the country would enter a road of faster economic growth and job creation, faster and more efficient provision of quality services, increased social cohesion and reduction of the paradigm of exclusion prevalent among sections of society.

The weaknesses referred to here indicate what the section heading refers to as appropriate or inappropriate tactical content of Good Governance. This entails much more than just extending the provision of sufficient indispensable services and amenities to all. It requires transforming society by deliberate interference with public and private operations. This raises the potential

for conflict amongst contending groups, when interfering extensively in the dealings of civil society, because all policy actions have negative results/ costs which must be borne by somebody.

This kind of involvement in civil society at best carries a hefty bill and, if not dealt with appropriately, threatens to destroy society through social upheaval and economic collapse, such as the land reform process in Zimbabwe, which has left that country economically destroyed, with greater poverty than ever before (80% of the population is unemployed and the inflation rate is fluctuating around 400%). The inappropriateness in the tactics employed can be directly traced to the absence of the features of Good Governance, such as lack of, or perceived lack of predictability, fairness, efficiency, participation⁶ and transparency.

The seriousness of these deficiencies is that they are situated on the level of senior public officials, whose careers are quite freely interchangeable with executive careers. Their positions, seniority and influence serve to neutralise the reforms made in the technical management components. The sophisticated technical management reforms are without effect as long as an organisational culture of poor tactical content is maintained, as illustrated by Figure 7.



Quite often lack of delivery is ascribed to poor capacity in the fields of technical skills such as project management and financial management,⁷ but even the extended application of these worthy management skills within government operations will not correct service delivery shortcomings as long as the tactical governance gap between leadership intent and managed operations remains.

Whereas leadership intent is concerned with what to achieve, tactical governance is concerned with the set-up on how to serve the vision and achieve strategic objectives. This “set-up” has to do with institutional arrangements, localities, networks and alliances, and then also the long-term multi-activity endeavours (programmes) derived from policy objectives and choices.

Unfortunately, because programmes function in on-

6. Good Governance manifestations are visibly absent in some of the tactics employed in delivery. The multimillion rand N2 Housing Initiative currently (2005/6) being executed in the City of Cape Town was, for example, widely criticised as one such project, especially because it was planned without engaging society.

7. See President Mbeki’s plans in this regard as spelled out in his 2006 State of the Nation Address.

going organisations, they are also vulnerable to the weaknesses of those organisations. This is probably the main deficiency causing delivery failures and threatening sustainable delivery as concluded in “Towards a Ten Year Review” (Policy Coordination and Advisory Services, The Presidency, 2003) above. According to Brinkerhoff (1991: 8), programmes in many developing countries suffer from the weaknesses of the organisations they belong to and, although individual projects associated with those programmes may be organised for success, their purpose may fail or be short lived as a result.

Apart from organisational shortcomings, tactical failures are also caused by the wrong perception about what constitutes a programme. Programmes are often perceived as standard and functional, for example, a vaccination programme or a housing programme, and in that perception it is then assigned to a functional department such as the Department of Health or the Department of Housing. This causes functional isolation and lack of strategic integrity.

The danger in announcing accelerated investments and the need for developing technical capacity to deliver on these investments (Mbeki, 2006) is that it retains an engineering-type, make-and-deliver focused – therefore replicable and routine - approach, while it should be designed and implemented, resources aligned and capacity developed in terms of policy and strategy type and a focus on societal change – which is highly customised and non-routine, as is illustrated by Figure 8 (derived from HMSO, 2003). The kind of capacity development needed must therefore also be purpose designed for their functioning, which relates to the ability to consider the trade-offs between all active projects and operations, and to prioritise these initiatives and their activities in terms of the largest payoff to the strategic objectives. All ongoing initiatives must be controlled, accelerated and reassessed, and resources reassigned in terms of progress and changes in external factors. This allows for improved overall tactical performance even though it may be to the detriment of individual projects. The content of such capacity development is the topic for another paper.

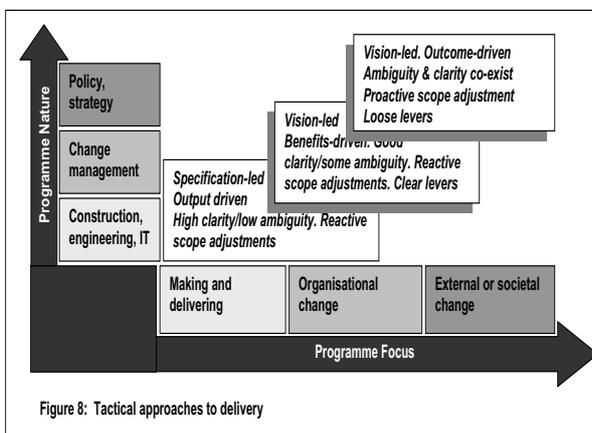


Figure 8: Tactical approaches to delivery

CONCLUSIONS

The public Good Governance philosophy assumes that public services are delivered and society is developed in a context-sensitive manner, and that this delivery and development and their long-term positive impacts are sustainable, thereby providing real investment in society, the environment and the economy. Good Governance processes will be characterised by high levels of accountability, predictability, participation, fairness, transparency and efficiency. However, Good Governance is dependent on appropriate public management support. Reforms in the technical public management components, as described by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004: 66), have already established a very sound platform that would enable the application of Good Governance principles or at least should have demolished the impediments to Good Governance.

In assessing the extent to which Good Governance has been applied in South Africa, a distinction was made between strategic leadership intent and tactical content. South African leaders have shown real wisdom in their visions for transforming society amidst the historical and current global realities and, in doing so, have assumed responsibility for also contributing to transforming the continent and even global relations. However, the governance-related shortcomings still visible after twelve years of reform and transformation indicate that the tactics of implementation suffer from deficiencies that require serious attention in spite of achievements that are overwhelmingly remarkable and give hope for the future. In the words of President Thabo Mbeki (1998):

The conviction therefore that our past tells us that the time for Africa’s Renaissance has come, is fundamental to the very conceptualisation of this Renaissance and the answer to the question: Whence this confidence? Unless we are able to answer the question “Who were we?” we will not be able to answer the question “What shall we be?” This complex exercise, which can be stated in simple terms, links the past to the future and speaks to the interconnection between an empowering process of restoration and the consequences or the response to the acquisition of that newly restored power to create something new.

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