

Implementation Challenges Related To Public Management Principles In The South African Public Service

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to investigate the difficulties that the public service in South Africa faces, with a particular emphasis on the accountability component of good governance. What issues in the public sector prevent the efficient application of accountability principles in the South African context is the question posed. The study uses qualitative desktop analysis of publicly available secondary data to obtain answers. The document analysis was used to analyse the data which was obtained by reviewing official reports. The article's conclusions include the extent of corruption and misconduct that consistently call for the implementation of good governance principles in ministries and departments, as well as the lack of political will to improve openness and accountability in the processes. To name a few, there are also insufficient human resources to ensure responsibility in the hiring and selection of individuals who share normative values. Interventions such as anti-corruption laws and institutional and legislative frameworks are in place to curb wrongdoing and improve accountability. To improve accountability in South African public service ministries and departments, the article suggests an analytical framework known as the Good Governance Framework for Public Service. Its goals are to increase professionalism, public trust, and ethical culture.

Key words: Accountability, good governance, public service, qualitative, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996) in its Chapter 10 emphasises on the public administration and highlights its values and principles that should guide the public service in its everyday's dealings discussed in this section.

The Chapter states there are significant democratic ideas and principles which are incorporated in the Constitution, which must guide public administration. These include that promoting and upholding a high standard of professional ethics is essential. This principle is relevant considering the levels of corruption and misconduct getting exposed in various government departments and public entities and are recorded in public domain. It is emphasised that resources must be used effectively, economically, and efficiently. There are many municipalities that are facing challenges with both over-spending and under-spending on financial resources. This requires the public service to assess the skills gap in their domains. It is further stressed that the focus of public administration must be on development. The services need to be offered in a manner that provides growth and are sustainable in development.

Accordingly, services must also be rendered in an unbiased, equitable, fair and impartial manner. There should not be any discrimination in the form of race, gender and ethnicity. Every citizen has a right to receive services on an equal basis. People's needs must be met to accomplish this goal, and public participation in policymaking must be promoted. That is the reason, citizen participation is considered as a cornerstone of democracy and is an unavoidable aspect of policymaking processes in South Africa. Such participation allows citizens to raise their voices and concerns and provide feedback on policymaking processes. It also demands and enhances accountability and transparency that are two very important principles in the formulation and execution of policymaking processes. It is emphasised in the supreme document that is the Constitution of South Africa, that accountability needs to be maintained for public administration to be effective in delivering its mandated responsibilities.

The public deserves to receive information that is timely relevant, accurate, and is easily available to promote transparency. These principles enhance good governance in public service. Additionally, it curbs corruption and misconduct that are the challenges to sustain good governance and linked to the first principle of maintaining ethics in the workplace. Chapter ten also highlights that it is essential to build effective career development and human resource management practices to maximise human potential.

For public administration's hiring and personnel management practices to be broadly representative of the South African populace, they must be based on ability, impartiality, justice, and the need to address historical injustices. This requires public service to abide by legislative frameworks related to Public Service Acts and Regulations. It also demands that to meet with the demands of changing environment of delivery services (e-government, fourth industrial revolution) talent management practices must be in place to appoint personnel with required skills and competencies.

The study collects data using a qualitative methodology. One situated activity that places the observer in the world is qualitative research. It is comprised of a series of tangible, interpretative practices that bring the world into view. These actions change the world. At this stage, a naturalistic, interpretive perspective on the world is part of qualitative research (Parkinson & Drislane, 2011:69; cited in Donchev, Todorova & Milev, 2014: 121). Any research that employs data that does not provide ordinal values is considered qualitative. In a nutshell, qualitative research entails gathering and utilising sounds, images, or text. In addition to the various characteristics of hypothetical and epistemological systems, it permits the incorporation of various data collecting and analysis techniques (Koma, 2010:115). Document review was used to collect the data. The term document research approach describes the examination of documents that provide details about the situation or occurrence being studied. It is employed in the social, public, and digital spheres to examine, classify, and analyse tangible sources, most frequently written texts. Compared to surveys, in-depth interviews, and other observation-based techniques like ethnography, this research method is successful and occasionally even more economical (McMillan, 2004:34). The information was analysed using document analysis. According to Roth (2005a; also refer to Roth, 2005b) one sort of qualitative research is document analysis, which involves systematically analysing documentary information to find answers to specific study questions. Using documents in triangulation helps to prevent bias by allowing them to explain or elaborate on findings from many data sources, as well as confirm or refute them (Roth, 2005a; also refer to Roth, 2005b).

The article utilises consequentialist ethics as a theoretical framework for the study. The normative ethics theory of consequentialist ethics aims to address the moral dilemmas of right and wrong as well as how to determine these things. The predicted result of an action determines whether or not it should be done, according to consequentialist theory. It is morally right to do so if the anticipated outcome is positive; nevertheless, it is

wrong if it is not (Nwadiugwe, 2015:2; Maile, 2022: 41). Two forms of consequentialism that have the power to influence viewpoints are act consequentialism and rule consequentialism. Rule consequentialism demands strong morals to achieve the best result, while act consequentialism requires the moral decision-maker to move from situation to situation to determine what constitutes the greatest benefit to society without any guidelines other than that it is the action that produces the greatest benefit (Schafer-Landau, 2013 cited in Aylor, 2015:3 and Maile, 2022:41-42).

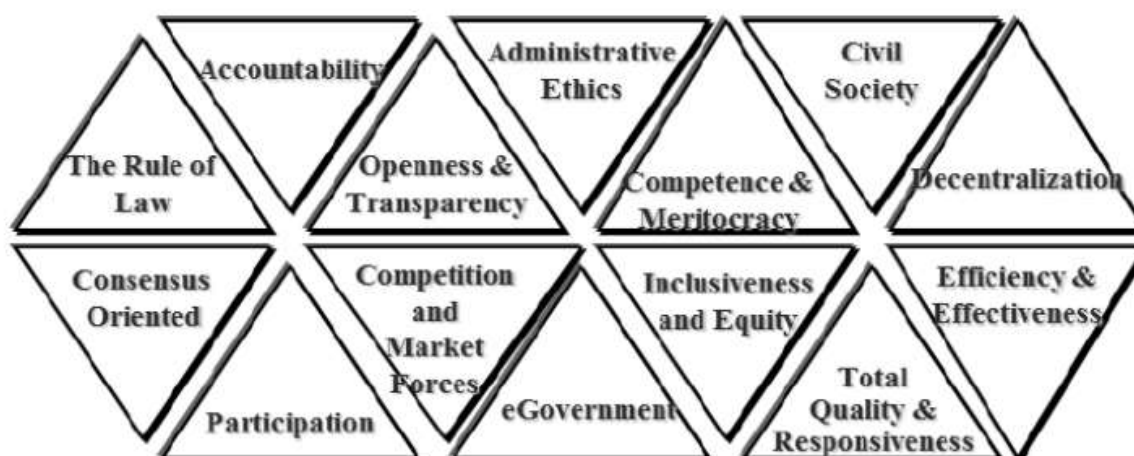
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section delves into the public administration principles in the public service. Some of the significant ones are discussed in this section.

Good governance, as emphasised by United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, 2005:1; Kemp, 2020:1), is a subset of governance in which issues and public resources are handled effectively, efficiently, and in response to pressing societal demands. Transparency, accountability, and public participation are essential components of successful democratic systems of government.

According to Vyas-Doorgapersad and Aktan (2017:7; also refer to Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2025a), good governance has several key traits, such as participatory, consensus-driven, accountable, open, moral, meritocratic, responsive, quality-focused, egalitarian and inclusive, decentralised, and compliant with the law. The components of this definition are illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: Components of good governance



Source: Vyas-Doorgapersad and Aktan, 2017:7; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2025a.

According to Mutambanengwe (2015:29; Kemp, 2020:1), assessing the quality of governance helps stakeholders explain why a system is not producing the desired results and aims. An institution's efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and inclusion are all improved by good governance.

According to Khotami (2017), accountability is a type of liability that refers to who, what, and what is accountable. It is understood as the duty of the trust holder to provide accountability, presenting and reporting all his responsibilities to the party that provides the trust and has the power to hold such accountability. The public and the relevant agencies are the ultimate decision-makers for the government, the commercial sector, and community organisations. The sort of organisation involved determines the liability form. In essence, accountability plays a crucial part in fostering strong governance practices, which in turn boost public trust in the effectiveness of government. Government officials are answerable to the public, non-governmental groups, the media, and numerous other stakeholders in addition to higher authorities in the institutional chain of command, according to the notion of accountability (Khotami 2017).

Good governance is also linked to ethics. According to King III Report, effective leadership is fundamental to good government, and among a leader's primary duties are strategy definition, direction, and the establishment of moral standards and values inside an organisation (PriceWaterhouseCoopers [PwC], 2009:2; Mothabi, 2022:55). For government agencies to be perceived as being run in accordance with good governance for the benefit of citizens, moral behaviour has become essential (Masegare, 2016:7; Mothabi, 2022:55-56). Therefore, a review of corporate governance, as well as the execution of management policies, strategies, structures, processes, and procedures, must involve both formal and informal actors to bring about change and innovation in the public sector. Fulfilling these basic responsibilities therefore calls for constant and consistent observation, analysis, and assessment of final outcomes (Masegare, 2016:7; Mothabi 2022: 55-56). This is relevant to maintaining moral behaviour while adhering to good governance standards in the public service sector. According to Vyas-Doorgapersad (2007: 299, in Maile & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022:80), the most effective anti-corruption actions take place in a monitored, moral setting. Establishing ethics-based management procedures and policies to support good governance in organisations—in this case, all public service ministries and departments—will help achieve this.

Furthermore, an organisation's beliefs, objectives, and duties are outlined in its code of ethics, which is a crucial part of organisational ethics management since it guides programmes, policies, and business choices (Singh, 2017:138, Maile, 2022:26). Business codes of ethics come in a variety of forms. Guidelines for behaviour and sanctions for infractions are established by the compliance-based code of ethics. Professionals must abide by a code of loyalty, which calls on them to defend their clients' interests, in addition to a code of ethics, which is mandated by law (Hayes, 2021:1; Maile, 2022:26). According to Singh (2017:140; Maile 2022:26), strategic decision-making, a favorable company reputation, legal concerns, loyalty building, staff retention, and a positive work environment are all advantages of having a code of ethics in place.

According to Raga and Taylor (2005: 22; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Ababio, 2010: 425; Thonzhe & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2017: 143; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022:17), the public sector is always evolving in response to new leadership, external factors, and sociopolitical developments, just as human behavior. Using ethical standards of conduct or passing numerous laws alone will not be sufficient for the government and society to encourage and enforce moral behaviour. Micro-ethic paradigms are frequently intertwined with social mindsets. Moral principles and norms tend to be misinterpreted by people, yet they only pertain to their relationships and the systems in which they operate. In addition to encouraging moral behaviour, South Africa requires an organisational culture that establishes and defends right and wrong behavior both inside the institution and on an individual basis.

In addition, Raga and Taylor (2005) evaluate the ethics of the public sector in the twentieth century with the ethical standards of the public sector in the twenty-first century, see Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Public Sector Ethics

Twentieth Century Ethics	Twenty-First Century Ethics
Determinants-ruling elites	Determinants-authentic discourse among all who will be affected
Common ethical code-belief in final solutions	Constantly managing codes-on the basis of continuous authentic discourse
Support guaranteed through coercion	Support guaranteed through consensus

Dissenters subject to punitive measures	Dissenters not subject to punitive measures
Western (colonial) ethics	Ethics based on anthropological and sociological pluralism
Corporate accountability (amounts to non-accountability)	Personal accountability
Exercise of personal morality shifted and discouraged	Exercise of personal morality encouraged
Exercise of personal discretion discouraged	Exercise of discretion encouraged
Public interest nebulous, determined by government elites	Public interests disparate but relatively distinct, determined with all involved (authentic discourse), constantly redefined

Source: Sardar, in Clapper, 1999, p. 149; in Raga and Taylor, 2005:23.

According to Pillay and Mantzaris (2019:29; Dhlamini, 2025:42), due to a number of problems, including a lack of funding or other resources, mistrust within the community, a lack of communication and feedback, factionalism, and manipulation, legally based public participation initiatives throughout South Africa have been shown to be ineffective in strengthening shared planning, decision-making, and service delivery targets being implemented. Nonetheless, these situations may present opportunities for impacted communities, including interactive engagement, cooperation, and synergy in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of service delivery goals carried out by all parties involved (Pillay & Mantzaris, 2019:29; Dhlamini, 2025:42).

However, despite understanding the components of good governance, the public service in South Africa is facing challenges to implement and/or abide to the public administration principles, discussed below.

CHALLENGES RELATED TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PRINCIPLES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

This section delves into the challenges confronting the public service in the context of public administration principles in South Africa. These are discussed below.

The Ethics Institute had conducted the poll in collaboration with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG), and the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) (The Ethics Institute, 2024:1). 7156 people in total took part in the survey. Of the responders, 25% are from the National Government, 56% are from the Provinces, and 20% are from the Local Governments (The Ethics Institute, 2024:1) refer to Graph 1.

Graph 1: The Public Sector Ethics Survey 2024: Over the Years; Across the Spheres



Source: The Ethics Institute, 2024:2.

The field of public finance governance in the South African government adversely impacts the delivery of public goods and services, marked by graft, unauthorised spending, and improper handling of public resources. The South African Auditor General Report (2021) indicated that severe fiscal circumstances are prevalent in the primary service delivery organisations (health, education, and public works), which impairs their ability to serve people in general effectively. The government departments represented 90% of total unapproved spending, with deficits amounting to R15.65 billion (Auditor General [AG], 2021). The AG goes on to document that five provincial health departments reported deficits amounting to R6.2 billion (Auditor General, 2021). In this regard, Thusi and Selepe (2023b: 246) argue that South Africa is a country characterised by a significant population and rich natural resources. Nevertheless, the effective utilisation of these resources has been hindered by factors including increasing corruption, significant incompetence, and anti-government policies.

Kimi Makwetu, at that time serving as auditor general, disclosed that the local government audit findings for the 2018/19 financial year indicated an overall decrease in auditing findings compared to the previous fiscal year. He presented a critical assessment of the management of municipality funds, describing it as being conducted in ways that are antithetical to the prescripts and recognised accounting procedures (Dlamini & Weir-Smith, 2022). In an investigation by the Public Protector, the former minister of agriculture was found wanting as the investigation exposed the concerning purported misconduct by her and her department regarding the allocation of a R800 million contract, which revealed indications of conspiratorial tendering and/or bid manipulation, the Minister engaged in unethical behaviour and attempted to exert influence (Munzhedzi, 2016). The ineptitude in the allocation of financial resources in South Africa is predominantly sustained by those holding positions of power. The total financial detriment resulting from these significant inaccuracies was approximated at R3.9 billion, with R1.6 billion attributed to municipalities that had invested in VBS Mutual Bank (Auditor General, 2022: 7).

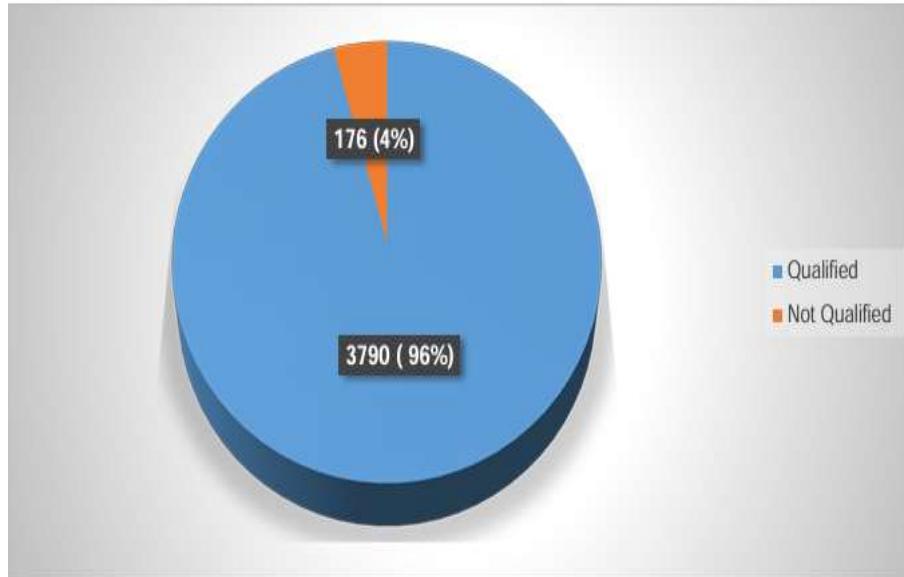
The South African governmental sector lacks a development-oriented focus due to a dearth of skills, the departure of qualified personnel resulting from unfavourable working conditions, and inefficient performance of staff attributed to inadequate service provision and insufficient skills and expertise among personnel. The South African public sector exhibits a professionalisation issue, indicating that significant progress is needed before it can be regarded as a job market that emphasises growth and development. The Auditor General of South Africa (2022; also refer

to Eastern Cape document- MFMA 2020-21 Consolidated General Report on Local Government Audit Outcomes, 2021) reported that local governments allocated R154 million to consultants in the 2020-21 fiscal year and R663 million over the preceding five years. The main justification offered was a deficiency in skills, despite municipalities generally being fully capacitated.

Socio-economic development in South Africa is hindered by a myriad of factors that continue to stifle efforts towards a developmental state. Nirmala and Kapesa (2024: 134) argue that the focus on development issues is also hampered by recurring social demonstrations, instability, and protests frequently occur in South Africa, typically motivated by complaints concerning joblessness, failures in the provision of services, inequality, and various socio-economic issues. Protests frequently exhibit violence and destruction, necessitating efficient communication, involvement of the public, and responsive governance. Social unrest and protests in South Africa have a considerable effect on public administration, frequently revealing systemic deficiencies in service delivery and governance. Regular protests, motivated by issues such as unemployment and inequality, indicate significant dissatisfaction among citizens concerning the government's failure to effectively address critical socio-economic challenges (Hyslop, 2019; in Nirmala & Kapesa, 2024). Violent protests interrupt everyday activities and strain the resources of the government, redirecting attention and funding from essential services.

The challenges impeding the provision of services within South Africa's public sector include ineffective human resource management, insufficient procurement processes, unqualified public employees, a deficiency in accountability, substandard human resource practices, and a notable absence of ethical leadership (refer to Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2017). The Ministry of Public Service and Administration reported that over 25% of senior government officials were unqualified at the start of 2022 (Google Search-Internet Source, 2025a). Of the 37 national departments, 176 SMS members lack the qualifications necessary for their posts (Public Service Commission [PSC], 2024:19), as seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: National SMS members who qualified in terms of the 2015 DPSA* Directive



*DPSA stands for Department of Public Service and Administration
Source: Public Service Commission (PSC), 2024:19.

The South African public sector cannot be deemed development-focused if essential roles vital to public service delivery are occupied by individuals lacking the necessary qualifications and competencies.

The audit findings, along with instances of legislative violations, indicate the condition of financial and administrative oversight within the public sector. This situation led to substantial financial losses for certain populations and considerable detriment when authorities failed to meet their obligations in delivering public services (Auditor General, 2022). Failure to comply with regulations may lead to substandard service delivery, undermining the principles of impartiality, fairness, and equity. The performance and funding of local governments may suffer due to insufficient accountability and transparency. Lancaster (2018) identifies several factors contributing to service delivery demonstrations, including injustice in society, inadequate service provision to marginalised populations in urban and rural areas, corruption, unemployment, poverty, and poor governance and leadership, in the context of South Africa's current situation. Service delivery in South Africa is characterised by a lack of impartiality, fairness, and equality, as evidenced by ongoing complaints from marginalised populations regarding insufficient service provision. Mokhomole, Khosa and Olutola (2022) identify several key factors contributing to service delivery protests and related offenses in the Tshwane region of South Africa, including poverty, unemployment, widespread public employee corruption, nepotism, inadequate governance, misuse of state funds, political

infighting and interference, public mistrust of politicians and office holders, and the decline of local government. These factors represent a subset of those contributing to service delivery protests. Note that such protests are witnessed in other regions as well demanding better services, ethical leadership, and regained public trust in government processes. The Auditor General of South Africa (2022) asserts that inadequate budget and performance management in key service delivery departments results in citizens being deprived of essential services that could enhance their quality of life. Service delivery poses a significant challenge for South Africans, especially due to insufficient resources to satisfy the increasing demand for services resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thusi and Selepe (2023a) indicated that South Africa is categorised as a nation in transition, with its population increasingly dependent on services provided by the government. Developing economies exhibit diminished economic prospects, resulting in heightened poverty, joblessness, and disparities in society. This is similarly evident in South Africa, where a significant portion of the population experiences underprivilege and unemployment, alongside prevalent socio-economic disparity. This renders impartial, fair, equitable, and unbiased service provision increasingly essential in South Africa.

Molepo, Maleka, and Khalo (2020:345) assert that the involvement of all community groups in public affairs is crucial for the provision of essential services and the improvement of effective governance. According to Matloga, Mahole and Nekhavhambe (2024: 4) challenges emerge when local governments and other government agencies neglect to engage the public in issues that impact them. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, along with other legislative measures, promotes public engagement in local government matters via diverse policy efforts. Zondi (2015:81) indicates that the present condition of government departments in South Africa exhibits numerous challenges concerning service delivery, despite the existence of effective regulations that encourages public participation and service provision. Zondi (2015:82) demonstrates how several environmental variables, including cultural, social, political, technological, and economic factors, influence service delivery in South Africa.

Mabizela and Matsiliza (2020: 5) assert that government departments are tasked with the obligation to provide effective and efficient delivery of fundamental services to communities, including water, power, housing, and adequate sanitation. Nevertheless, there exists an inequitable allocation of

fundamental services between rural and urban regions, with urban areas receiving superior services compared to their rural counterparts (Shongwe & Meyer, 2023: 138). Studies have referenced, analysed, and questioned the capability of government entities, which is essential for service delivery in local communities. Numerous towns nationwide possess insufficient capacity to deliver vital services to their citizens. The present condition of local governance in rural regions indicates that most rural municipalities continue to experience deficiencies in basic service provision (Shongwe & Meyer, 2023: 138).

Despite South Africa's citizen engagement structure and democratic innovations aimed at enhancing public involvement in governance, significant barriers to effective public participation persist. According to Umoh (2022: 16), factors contributing to the issue encompass constrained governmental resources, insufficient citizen interest and expertise, ineffective legislative communication, inadequacies in constitutional innovation platforms, a lack of feedback from Members of Parliament, and a disconnect between citizen engagement and their contributions to policy decisions (Gumede, 2021; Kabinges, 2021; Moses, 2018; in Umoh, 2022). This leads to insufficient follow-up on public concerns and the absence of feedback mechanisms that hinder public engagement.

Another barrier to public participation is the socio-economic status of citizens, particularly among disadvantaged groups often marginalised in the policymaking process. Disparities exist in the levels of resources and education among individuals participating in public engagement, particularly when comparing well-resourced individuals to those from under-resourced backgrounds. Individuals with ample resources can engage through formal channels to provide oral submissions or attend meetings, a possibility not afforded to those with limited resources (Eckerd & Heidelberg, 2020; Umoh, 2022:22). While public participation frameworks may comply with legal mandates for inclusion, the contributions tend to be uneven and superficial. This indicates that power imbalances often serve as obstacles to public participation for individuals who are affluent, more educated, well-connected, or who gain from the existing system (Eckerd & Heidelberg, 2020: 135; Umoh, 2022:22). Income disparity, socio-economic position, and education are significant predictors of participation rates, and the responsibilities assigned to participants, owing to their relationship with social capital and resource availability (Van Holm, 2019: 136; Umoh, 2022:22).

Constrained accessibility to the media impedes certain communities from acquiring information regarding the activities of

Parliament (Umoh, 2022: 22). People living in rural areas require information regarding their entitlements and any recent legislation that may impact them. Being able to get to resources, including the internet, remains limited. Public participation in parliamentary activities and policymaking is publicised in the *Sunday Times*, *The Mail*, and *The Guardian*. However, individuals lacking literacy skills in economically disadvantaged communities do not engage with newspapers. Marginalised citizens face restricted opportunities for oral submissions in Parliament, relying on civil society organisations for representation, which have inherent limitations (Umoh, 2022: 22).

Accountability and oversight constitute legitimate obligations across every tier of government in the Republic of South Africa, as outlined in the 1996 Constitution. Every single department of government possesses a fundamental responsibility to provide public services (Thusi & Selepe, 2023b: 246). The extent of responsibility and the provision of public services are linked to the competencies of a specific domain. Accountability refers to the necessity of exposing, explaining, and defending conduct (Munzhedzi, 2016). Research indicates that major obstacles regarding accountability in the South African public sector encompass a lack of openness, interference from politicians, weak accountability mechanisms, insufficient institutional capacity, ineffective systems for measuring performance, constrained citizen engagement, pervasive corruption, and insufficient consequence management for misconduct. These factors collectively impede effective service delivery and diminish public trust in government institutions (World Bank, 2011: 3).

The Department of Public Service and Administration (2023; also refers to Google Search Internet Source, 2025b) documents that Chapter 4 of the Senior Management Service manual mandates that all its members must establish Performance Agreements (PAs) by no later than May 31st each year. These PAs shall pertain to a certain fiscal period and will undergo a yearly evaluation. Recently appointed members of the Senior Management Service (SMS) must finalise their Performance Appraisals (PAs) within the initial three months of their appointment. To attain accountability in the Public Service, Executive Authorities (EAs) and Heads of Departments (HoDs) must overtly endorse performance management systems and guarantee their implementation throughout the Senior Management Service (SMS) members (PSC, 2018). The national average level of compliance for the signing of Performance Agreements by SMS members rose from 89% in 2020/21 to 91% in 2021/22. Instances of failure to comply were attributed to conflicts between supervisors and subordinates, late nominations to positions, and suspensions (PSC, 2023: 9).

In the governmental field, the management of human resources, referred to as 'human capital', has raised significant concerns. This concept posits that the effectiveness of public service is contingent upon its capacity to maintain proper administration, deliver amenities for citizens, and design and implement initiatives for development (Thusi & Selepe, 2023b: 246). The qualities of skills, performance, integrity, and best practices are essential in personnel administration within the public sector. These encompass recruitment, career advancement, performance evaluation, and investment in continuous development for employees (Thusi & Selepe, 2023b: 246). The evaluation of personnel practices requires consideration of their purpose and adherence to labour laws and people administration standards. This principle encompasses various ethical dilemmas within the South African public sector, including corruption, nepotism, favouritism, post-employment issues, bribery, conflicts of interest, improper use of insider information, and the misuse of confidential information for personal gain (Puiu, 2015).

To improve human resources in the governmental sector, it is essential to promote merit-based employment and the necessity for suitable qualifications, competencies, and skills. Thusi and Selepe (2023b: 246) contend that in South Africa, the interplay between politics and administration may undermine the practice of effective human resource management. The African National Congress (ANC) established the cadre deployment policy in 1996. This strategy argues for the deployment of party stewards, which complicates the professionalisation of human resources in the public sector. Consequently, the approach will be applied laterally, primarily focusing on the administrative counterparts (Thusi & Selepe, 2023b: 247). Unethical behaviours, including bribery and nepotism, undermine professional human resource management, where equitable and just processes are frequently overshadowed by political influence in public sector institutions. According to the Public Service Commission (PSC) report (Google Search-Internet Source, 2025c) the advancement of equitable and effective labour relations in work environments is a fundamental component of human resource management. Considering the significance of human resource management, which is crucial for good public administration and service delivery, it is imperative that grievances are managed effectively. To ensure the department meets its objective, 80% of concerns must be resolved within 30 days of receiving all pertinent documentation (PSC, 2021). A significant concern is also the extensive employment of consultants by agencies of the government to tackle essential competency areas. The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has

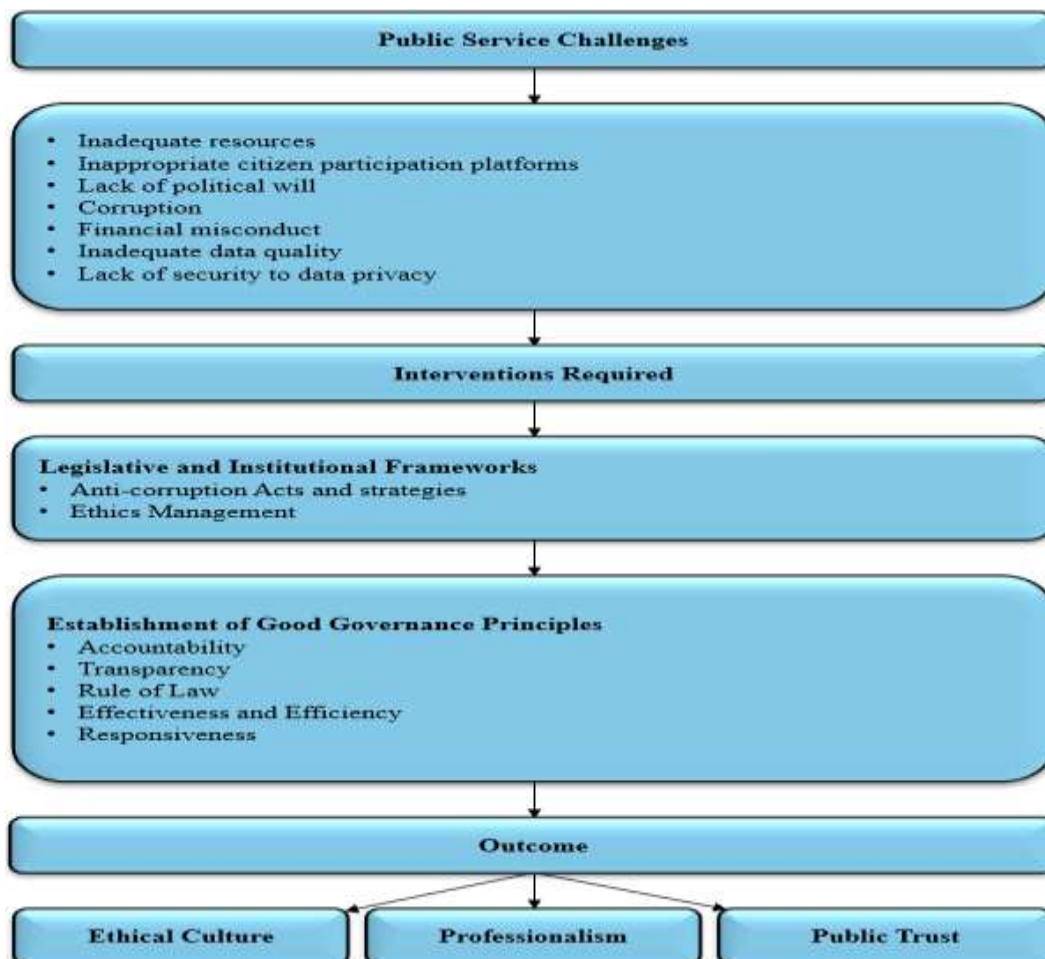
spent R692 million in allocated money on experts (National Treasury, 2022).

Research (Kock & Burk, 2008; Chokoe, 2024; Munzhedzi, 2017) indicates that significant obstacles to Human Resources Management (HRM) and professional growth in the South African public sector encompass: elevated unemployment rates, a deficiency of skilled labour, historical disparities in educational accessibility, partisanship, stringent budget limitations, bureaucratic processes, inadequate systems for performance management, and a convoluted framework of affirmative action guidelines; all of which can severely impede effective talent acquisition, retention, and development within the public service.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the article proposes an analytical framework called Good Governance Framework for Public Service, figure 3.

Figure 3: Good Governance Framework for Public Service



Source: Author's illustration based on secondary sources, 2025

The illustration shows that the public service faces several issues that need immediate attention and remedial action. These include, to name a few, a lack of resources, including inadequate personnel capacity, talent management, and skills, as well as weak technology understanding and infrastructure. These resources are necessary to guarantee that reference checks are carried out carefully, background checks on applicants are carried out in-depth, and human resources staff are prepared to review applications without any troubling materials. To ensure that moral behaviour and actions at work are improved, these measures are important when considering candidates for positions.

It should be noted that factors towards this goal include a review of pertinent and related laws as well as other best practices, which provide the basis for the development of the governance framework (Masegare 2019:159; Mothabi 2022:68). An organisation may become dysfunctional because of unethical actions that negatively affect efficacy and efficiency. Even though it is commonly known that the public sector has sufficient laws, rules, and regulations in place to guarantee that ethics are upheld, noncompliance is nevertheless very common, from hiring to the application of supply chain management techniques (Public Service Commission [PSC] 2011, in Fiscal and Financial Commission [FFC] 2020:155; Mothabi 2022:68). There is an awareness that unethical behavior causes issues, and the governance factors have been assessed and taken into consideration. One possible explanation is the failure to adhere to ethical frameworks.

It is equally important to keep in mind that both internal and external customers must be connected to the emphasis on resource improvement. To improve accountability in the public sector, it is imperative that citizens participate in policymaking and decision-making processes. This system can only improve openness and require strategic portfolio holders to follow accountability standards when individuals are given sufficient outlets to speak their opinions, voice concerns, and provide feedback.

Additionally, public education and reminders are essential for reporting corrupt behaviour and preventing politicians from engaging in unethical activities (Doig & Riley 1998:54; Dhlamini 2025:42). Making an appeal to groups that value democracy has helped to define the citizen as a competent person with a constitutional relationship with the state, which is becoming more and more important in discussions and actions related to anti-corruption. According to the World Bank, individuals are "important in restricting corruption" and anti-corruption

programmes are clearly linked to people or members of society at large (Verdenicci & Hough 2015:24; Dhlamini 2-25:42).

It is essential that the public service agencies have political will to adopt good governance concepts. Public service department employees must be aware of the concepts of good governance to maintain accountability and prevent maladministration. The politicians who oversee the ministries can play a significant role and serve as an example by upholding the normative standards of public administration, which will guarantee that there is no wrongdoing in the public service sector. One can therefore lessen financial wrongdoing and corruption. Additionally, public employees must adhere to institutional and regulatory frameworks for ethics management. By participating in ethics workshops, this can be accomplished.

Be cognizant that the way stakeholders engage with the government to affect the results of public policy is known as good governance. Government, business, non-profit, and community sector players participate in a process of discussing, deciding, and providing high-quality public services through an institutional structure in some kind of partnership (Massey & Johnston-Miller 2016:665; Kemp 2020:30). Ogundiya (2015:203; Kemp 2020:30) states that the term governance describes how governments use their authority to manage and allocate the nation's social and financial resources. The way this allocation is made determines whether governance is good or bad. Ogundiya (2015:203; Kemp 2020:30) further stated that it is necessary to bear in mind that effective governance is impossible unless management is wary of the possibility and reality of bad governance. The political ethic that aims to confront and displace the reality of poor governance is the standard of good governance.

The aforementioned recommendations align with Parker's (2017:1; Maile 2022:33) assertion that the following components are the most fundamental and immediate advantages of good governance, which emphasises the advantages of putting a solid governance plan into practice in organisations. These include:

- “Processes that are efficient because they are repeatable and consistent.
- With good governance as an input at all levels, output drawn from culture will be attained.
- Good governance and reputation result in quality products, which lead to good business performance.
- Every company has shortfalls that can be avoided by minimising market impact and, in many cases, containing the risk internally.

- Financial sustainability and good governance reduce the risk of safety, legal, performance and warranty concerns, all of which can significantly impact an organisation and its stakeholders. Customers, directors, employees, suppliers, shareholders, and even entire communities may be among the stakeholders and interested parties” (Parker 2017:1; Maile 2022:33).

It is quite likely that strong government standards can be formed and maintained when all the previously mentioned factors are considered. The result will be public service that demonstrates professionalism and an ethical culture, which will eventually win over the people's trust.

The article also promotes the formation of organisational ethical management (OEM) in the public sector. The reasoning is that OEM enables firms to govern and guide workplace ethics. These programs must develop instructional and ethical standards, as well as decision-making procedures. Employees must grasp these principles, and those who practice ethical management must be vigilant in monitoring and assessing employee morale. The first phase in the ethics management process is to create a set of important concepts that outline the organisation's ethical charter (Hamid & Nezhad, 2014: 9956; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022:22; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2025b). Considering the views of Vyas-Doorgapersad and Simmonds (2011), Thonzhe and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2017: 146; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2025b) suggest that these principles, when paired with morals and values, serve as the foundation for accountable and responsible behaviour at all levels of government. Using philosophical tools that use a normative approach helps public managers and policymakers think clearly and be committed. By taking these steps, the public service may be able to fight corruption and misconduct and create an atmosphere of good governance that is marked by accountability, transparency, honesty, effectiveness, and efficiency.

It should be mentioned that South Africa is not the only country seeing a shift in emphasis towards an ethical society. Instead, this local change is a component of a worldwide realisation that an organisation's long-term and successful ethical behavior depends on its ethical culture (Rossouw 2021:2; Mothabi 2022:28). This understanding is reflected in the following assertion by Rossouw (2021:2; Mothabi 2022:28) stating that International examples of the focus on corporate ethical culture (2016) include the Salz Review (2013) on the business practices of Barclays Bank, the G30 report on Banking Conduct and Culture (2013), and the UK Financial Reporting Council's guidance titled Corporate Culture and the Role of Boards (2016).

The desktop analysis of the secondary data is the only part of the study. The subject of corruption and wrongdoing is delicate, and interviewing public personnel about it is a challenging assignment. It is extremely difficult to obtain ethical approval from public service departments to conduct employment interviews. The magnitude of wrongdoing, the safeguards in place, and the degree of implementation of those measures to maintain good governance may all be evaluated in future studies based on desktop analysis of data, in which a small number of public service departments may be selected.

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