

Keynote address by Commissioner R.K Sizani, Chairperson of The Public Service Commission (PSC)

Conference theme: *A decade of debating public administration and management issues in an era of multiple challenges and constraints*

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Programme Director, and Director of the School of Public Management and Administration at the University of Pretoria, Prof Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu,

Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria, Prof Elsabé Loots,

Fellow public administration scholars and practitioners,
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Introduction

1. I am honoured and humbled to be given the opportunity to represent the Public Service Commission at the **10TH International SPMA Conference**. The participation of the Public Service Commission in public administration debates is very critical, given the Commission's mandate.
2. Section 196 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa¹ mandates the Commission to, amongst others: promote the **democratic values and principles** that govern public administration that are outlined in Section 195²; investigate, monitor and evaluate the organisation and administration, and the personnel practices of the Public Service; propose measures to ensure the effective and efficient performance of the public service; and advice national and provincial organs of state.
3. The existence of the School of Public Management and Administration, alongside several other schools and departments of public management and administration in other universities, serves as testimony for the role and

¹ Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

² Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

importance of public administration to the South African state. I would like to commend the University for supporting and guiding the School of Public Management and Administration to reposition itself within the public administration field.

4. I also want to congratulate the School of Public Management and Administration for continuously keeping the public administration debate alive and relevant, judging by the different conference themes over the past ten years and I hope some of the proceedings of these conferences have found their place in relevant publications. As a reminder to the patrons of the conference and teaser for new participants: some of the previous themes include the following: *Leadership and Governance - bridging opportunity and challenge (2008)*; *Relevance of Public Administration in the developmental state (2009)*; *Developmental Statism - issues of intent and legitimacy (2013)*; *Professionalising the public service - commitment, competence, cohesion (2015)*; and *Social cohesion, service delivery and national identity challenges facing the South African developmental state (2016)*. Your choice of these themes is an indication of the importance of the National Development plan and its developmental state focus as a vehicle for socio-economic development in South Africa.
5. My task is to give a key note address, in line with the 10th conference theme, entitled: *A decade of debating public administration and management issues in an era of multiple challenges and constraints*. As a keynote speaker, unlike my fellow public administration scholars and practitioners who will present later in this conference, I am at liberty to be critical and constructive and to ask many questions and demand answers from the participants. This role creates the opportunity for me to be self-critical, self-justifying, agreeable and controversial, because that is what is required to elevate the *decade-old* or *century-old* public administration debate.
6. In my inputs, I will reflect on the role and importance of public administration debate and will also try to propose mechanisms that will advance the role and impact of public administration in South Africa today and in the future.

Understanding public administration

7. Programme Director, allow me to reflect on few definitions, or rather explanations, of public administration without undermining other definitions and explanations.
8. The argument amongst scholars on whether public administration is an art, science or even craft has remained from the beginning of public administration to this day. Dwight Waldo³, a distinguished author in this field, views public administration as both an “**art and science** of management as applied to the affairs of state.” This is in contrast to other scholars and practitioners who view the field as an art because of its accommodation of feelings while science is characterised by precision and predictability, scientific laws, techniques and data. I, as a leader of a knowledge-based institution that provides advice based on systematic knowledge that is derived from experience and the need to understand relationships and influence outcomes, would argue that public administration is an art, science and craft.
9. Public administration as a system and practice is concerned with the administration of the machinery of government across all levels or spheres, inclusive of institutions such as departments, state entities and statutory bodies. It is not just concerned with policy implementation in the form of programmes, but it is also about the elaboration of (*political*) policy intensions into laws and regulations, the organisation of government, and the facilitation of interactions between government, business, interest groups and society in general.
10. As early as 1887 when President Wilson proposed that “**administration as a field of business must be removed from the hurry and strife of politics**”, there was recognition that “the role of the study of administration is to produce competent administrators who will not just serve as passive instruments of power but vanguards of public interest, and to promote a type of governance responsive to the needs of the public and reflective of the people’s will.”⁴ Our own National Development Plan has highlighted the political-administration interface as a key feature of public administration that needs attention.

³ Cited in: Pillay, P. 2016. The relationship between public administration and good governance: The case of South Africa. African Journal of Public Affairs.

⁴ Jison, J.R. 2014. The dichotomy of politics and public administration: Lessons from the perennial debate. <https://www.iapss.org/wp/2014/06/30/the-dichotomy-of-politics-and-public-administration-lessons-from-the-perennial-debate/>

11. The United Nation's Division for Public Economics and Public Administration⁵ correctly points out that public administration

“represents the authority system for government in action, which is the product of political dynamics. The public administration is instrumental in its operation, and is expected to carry out politically determined goals and values. Above all, public administration is part of the web of governance, deriving its form and substance from public policy. Thus, the most important attribute of public administration is its place in the political system.”

12. In the introductory chapter to the book entitled, *The SAGE Handbook of Public Administration*⁶, Peters and Pierre advance the view that public administration is concerned with the process of “governing society, no matter what form that governance may take.” The authors further argue that public administration is at the intersection of theory and practice, which is characterised by fierce debates and most certainly unnecessary bickering between academics and practitioners. The observation made by the authors is that:

“Practitioners see academics as hopelessly wound up in theoretical debates that had little or nothing to do with actually making a program[me] run successfully. Academics, on the other hand, see practitioners as hopelessly mired in ‘manhole counting’ and incapable of seeing the larger issues that affect their practice.”

13. As a law scholar and practitioner, and also a public administration practitioner, I wonder whether the bickering about peripheral issues and self-defeating negative perceptions about academics or practitioners have been put to rest for good, if public administration is to make the difference expected of it.
14. However, we can all agree with Peters and Pierre and many others who came before us several decades ago that as a discipline with its own literature, public

⁵ United Nations, *Rethinking Public Administration: An overview*. 1998. Division for Public Economics and Public Administration, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <http://www.unpan.org/Portals/0/60yrhistory/documents/Publications/Rethinking%20public%20administration.pdf>

⁶ Peters, B.G. & Pierre, J. 2012. Introduction: The Role of Public Administration in Governing. *The Sage Handbook of Public Administration*.

administration is eclectic because it is influenced by and borrows from various other disciplines, mainly political science and law, philosophy, sociology, economics, industrial and organisational psychology, anthropology and business management.

15. Without doubt, these explanations demonstrate that public administration - as a field of study (discipline), practice and system – is complex, dynamic and embedded in varied socio-economic and political contexts. Most importantly, it has an effect on all of us, civil society, private sector and the general public. The rise or fall of public administration does not only affect people who are trained in public administration or scholars, it affects everybody who is involved in the machinery of government. Having said this, I am tempted to say the title of public administration practitioner applies to everybody who is involved in public administration as a career, irrespective of the discipline studied or areas of specialisation. This is the reason why I referred to myself earlier as a public administration practitioner.
16. *So, why is public administration - as a discipline, practice and system - viewed with suspicion, scepticism and mistrust, especially by those outside it?*
17. Programme Director, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to take the long route to answering this question, whilst I reflect on another question.

Why the debate on public administration and management matters?

18. In developing, post-conflict and post-independence countries or countries entering the industrial age, a strong public administration is essential for consolidating and stabilising the country towards a common and shared vision⁷, hence public administration represents the authority of government in action. Simply put, public administration - as a system comprising of institutions, policies and people - is “an instrument of political control in the hands of any government.”⁸

⁷ United Nations, Rethinking Public Administration: An overview. 1998. Division for Public Economics and Public Administration, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <http://www.unpan.org/Portals/0/60yrhistory/documents/Publications/Rethinking%20public%20administration.pdf>

⁸ Marais, D. 1993. In Maphunye, K.J. 2005. Re-politicizing the bureaucracy to solve apartheid's inequalities? The political-administrative interface in South Africa. *Journal of Public Administration*, Vol 40.

19. The UN's 2005 Report noted the critical role of public administration in development and stressed that:

“No matter how organised and constitutional a government is, it would not get very far in the absence of a public administration system capable of translating its broad political intentions, enforcing its laws and delivering services needed by the people. Without a professionally competent public administration, the state cannot count on making those things happen which it wants to see happen or on pre-empting undesirable developments”.⁹

20. In response to country specific challenges and progress, and the forces of globalisation, public administration cannot remain static, it must evolve and **proactively** so. While there is no discipline and practice that is capable of predicting the future with absolute certainty, public administration scholars and practitioners in South Africa should avoid engaging in reactive and *sterile debates*¹⁰ that are isolated from the reality of the socio-economic, political and technological environment within which it is currently operating and the future environment it is likely to operate in. The report of the UN's Secretary General¹¹ also echoed similar sentiments by stating that:

“... in addition to economic growth and poverty alleviation concerns, public administration revitalization must of necessity include the competence to read early warning signals and institute the necessary proactive measures.”

21. What I am asking for from public administration scholars and practitioners is responsiveness to the current environment and pro-activeness towards the future environment. And this is not impossible. According to Mc Lennan¹², the push for a new public administration theory and practice in South Africa was

⁹ Cited in: Adei, S. 2008. Enhancing the Performance of the Public Service in a Developmental State. African Association for Public Administration and Management, 30TH AAPAM Annual Roundtable Conference, Accra, Ghana, 6th – 10th October 2008. Theme: Enhancing the Performance of the Public Service in a Developmental State.

¹⁰ Cited in: Adei, S. 2008. Enhancing the Performance of the Public Service in a Developmental State. African Association for Public Administration and Management, 30TH AAPAM Annual Roundtable Conference, Accra, Ghana, 6th – 10th October 2008. Theme: Enhancing the Performance of the Public Service in a Developmental State.

¹¹ United Nations. 2005. Public administration and development: Report of the Secretary-General. Sixtieth session of the UN General Assembly, Report of the Economic and Social Council.

¹²Mc Lennan. Undated. The Academic/Practitioner Interface in Public Administration in South Africa: The Early Years – 1990 to 2000,

<http://www.dpsa.gov.za/dpsa2g/documents/networks/4thConversation/Background%20Paper%20A%20McLennan.pdf>

driven by academics and people within the liberation movements, ANC in particular, from the 1980s. The body of knowledge generated during this period to the early 1990s played a critical role in shaping the South African public administration debate.

22. Accordingly, between 1990 and 2000, public administration debate in South Africa evolved in response to the changing socio-political context and ultimately shaped the framework for public administration in a democratic state. It seems the responsiveness and dynamism of public administration fizzled out shortly afterwards due to, amongst others, unhealthy competition between academics and practitioners on the ownership of knowledge production, reduced funding from the private sector and overseas development agencies (ODA) for research and information sharing networks, competition for students among institutions of higher learning, and the rise and competition for consultancy jobs from government.
23. Clearly, there is a need for honest reflection by academics and practitioners on this state of affairs. Pointing fingers at each other will not achieve any results, but will simply open public administration to parochial criticism and cynicism by the public and scholars from other disciplines. This partly responds to my earlier question on why public administration is viewed with scepticism. In the short to medium term, such negativity will not only undermine schools and departments of public administration and management in South Africa, but will also militate against the National Development Plan's proposal of making the *public service and local government administration careers of choice*.
24. Ladies and gentlemen, the call to make public administration responsive to the rapidly changing environment is probably easier said than done. But, if we can commit to this expedition, I am certain the public administration discourse and debate will be better positioned to influence future policies and practices through forward-looking public administration theories and models.
25. Programme Director, I am certain that we are all familiar with South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP), Vision 2030¹³, as illustrated by the

¹³ The Republic of South Africa. 2012. The National Development Plan: Vision 2030.

conference's previous themes. One of the critical success factors of the NDP is the existence of a developmental state that is capable of tackling the root causes of poverty, unemployment and inequality across all spheres government. The NDP states that:

“A developmental state needs to be capable, but a capable state does not materialise by decree, nor can it be legislated or waved into existence by declarations. It has to be built, brick by brick, institution by institution, and sustained and rejuvenated over time. It requires leadership, sound policies, skilled managers and workers, clear lines of accountability, appropriate systems, and consistent and fair application of rules.”

26. The NDP further states that:

“To achieve the aspiration of a capable and developmental state, the country needs to enhance Parliament's oversight role, stabilise the political administrative interface, professionalise the public service, upgrade skills and improve coordination. It also needs a more pragmatic and proactive approach to managing the intergovernmental system to ensure a better fit between responsibility and capacity. Equally, the state needs to **be prepared to experiment, to learn from experience** and to **adopt diverse approaches** to reach common objectives.”

27. I stand to be corrected and educated by our esteemed scholars and practitioners, but I am of the firm view that the key sections of the NDP I have just read speak to the core of a dynamic *pubic administration* that should underpin a country that is evolving from its undesirable past to a democratic state that is so eloquently articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa¹⁴, from the Preamble, the Bill of Rights to the end of all its Chapters.

28. I hope the spirit of the Constitution¹⁵ and the NDP-Vision 2030¹⁶, amongst others, demonstrates clearly that public administration - as a system, discipline and practice - has a critical role to play in ensuring the realisation of a capable and developmental state in South Africa. The question is how?

¹⁴ Republic of South Africa. 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

¹⁵ Republic of South Africa. 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

¹⁶ Republic of South Africa. 2012. The National Development Plan: 2030.

29. Before I touch on some of the contributions that should be driven through public administration, I would like to return to the **question** I posed earlier, which is, why is public administration - as a discipline, practice and system - viewed with suspicion, scepticism and mistrust – given its complexity, dynamism and embeddedness in socio-economic and political contexts?
30. A quick response to this question is that because government is an important institution in a state, and public administration is the vehicle through which government operates. Therefore, government’s “failure” or its inability to meet or adapt to the needs of the people is “equivalent” to failure by the entire public administration apparatus, that is, the institutions, policies, programmes and employees across all levels.
31. Programme Director, in all honesty and fairness, when things go right with public administration, many stakeholders who are involved with some aspect of public administration as scholars, practitioners, executives and oversight bodies attribute such success to their actions. Therefore, when government and public administration ‘fail’, public administration scholars and practitioners, including the executive and to some degree the legislature, are all directly or indirectly implicated and responsible for such a state of affairs.
32. I am not saying specific groups of people should not be held accountable, but I am saying the success of a complex and dynamic public administration machinery, [in an era of multiple challenges and constraints](#), is dependent on the complementary efforts and dedication of all key stakeholders. If one or several of the stakeholders do not play their part, the machinery of government will not function, people will lose confidence in the ability of government to deliver basic services and address other emerging needs, and the public and other interest groups would be tempted to ‘**help themselves**’ in a good or bad way. If not properly managed and coordinated by the various public administration stakeholders, the self-help environment has the potential to degenerate into lawlessness and anarchy.
33. I now return to the question of what contributions should be driven through public administration towards the realisation of a capable and developmental state in South Africa.

Curriculum design, training and development

34. Given the autonomy of institutions of higher learning, it is not clear if there is a common understanding of government's critical priorities that should be addressed through curriculum design for public administration students. If such common understanding exists, can one assume that the curriculum is *fairly aligned* across different institutions? If there is no common understanding and the curricula is not aligned, then it would be important for academics and senior government practitioners to discuss this in a structured manner. Isolated discussions with individual institutions will not yield the desired results, but has the potential to entrench unhealthy competition for students, especially the already employed practitioners who seek to further their studies.
35. The PSC has highlighted the importance of curriculum alignment previously. In its discussion document, "Building a Capable, Career-Oriented and Professional Public Service to Underpin a Capable and Developmental State in South Africa"¹⁷, the PSC made the following observations:
- "Research points to the fact that many public servants have tertiary qualifications. However, the extent to which pre-service education and training qualifications prepare people for the public sector work environment is questionable given that higher education institutions provide generic and high-level academically oriented programmes."
36. In response to this challenge, the PSC (2016) makes, amongst others, the following recommendations:
- The National School of Government (NSG) should work closely with Higher Education and Training Institutions (HETIs) and Further Education and Training Institutions / Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges (FETIs/TVETs) to influence their pre-service training and development programmes.

¹⁷ Public Service Commission. 2016. Building a Capable, Career-Oriented and Professional Public Service to Underpin a Capable and Developmental State in South Africa: Discussion Document.
<http://www.psc.gov.za/documents/reports/2016/PSC%20for%20web%20format.pdf>

- The implementation of the Compulsory Induction Programme (CIP) for all newly- recruited employees should be fast-tracked, and should target all levels, from junior entry positions to senior management. This should be done by strengthening partnerships with HETIs, FETIs/TVETs, provincial academies and other public institutions.
37. The rapidly changing context within which public administration operates, coupled with the changing role of the state demonstrate that public administration curriculum should, now more than ever, draw its theories and models from disciplines such as politics, law, sociology and economics in order to be relevant and impactful. (The importance of contract management in the public sector is understood by public administrators and yet very little is provided by tertiary institutions that prepares public administrators for contract management in the public sector.)
38. Ladies and gentlemen, up to this far, I have made an argument to justify the importance of public administration, but, it is essential to note that the importance of public administration is not automatic. It must be earned through its rigour, relevance and impact. For this to happen - if I can borrow from the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (1998) - "public administration needs to modify its style and substances"¹⁸ by being innovative and responsive to emerging contextual factors.

Public administration and governance

39. It is impossible to think or talk about public administration without, consciously or subconsciously, reflecting on governance. In fact, the key elements of governance, as perceived by each person, institution or nation, have almost become the yardstick for 'judging' or 'evaluating' the performance of government.
40. Notwithstanding the observations made, it is common knowledge that there is no universally agreed definition of governance and its key elements vary from institution to institution and country to country, depending on the prevailing

¹⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 1998. Rethinking Public Administration: An overview. <http://www.unpan.org/Portals/0/60yrhistory/documents/Publications/Rethinking%20public%20administration.pdf>

contextual factors.¹⁹ The United Nations Development Programme (1997)²⁰, views governance as:

“the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority inherent in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels amid a wide variety of mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences”

41. For some writers and in other countries, governance emphasis is put on ethics, accountability and transparency, whereas in other instances emphasis is on government legitimacy, democracy, ethics, rule of law and transparency.²¹ It is not surprising why ethics features in most definitions. Chapman (2000), in his publication on *Ethics in the Public Service for the New Millennium*, concludes that “an unethical and parasitic administration is the worst form of failure, especially in a government that aspires to be democratic and legitimate.”²²
42. In the South African public sector, which is inclusive of the public service and local government - the key elements of governance include, amongst others, the rule of law, accountability, transparency, participation, inclusiveness, responsiveness, and effectiveness and efficiency.²³ In addition, many public administration scholars and practitioners, some of whom are present today, have published papers about some of the key aspects of governance and the role of good governance in public administration.
43. These key elements of governance are addressed in our Constitution, legislation such as the Public Service Act (PSA) (1994)²⁴, Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (1999)²⁵, Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (2009)²⁶,

¹⁹ Pillay, P. 2016. The relationship between public administration and good governance: The case of South Africa. African Journal of Public Affairs.

²⁰ Cited in, Pillay, P. 2016. The relationship between public administration and good governance: The case of South Africa. African Journal of Public Affairs.

²¹ Pillay, P. 2016. The relationship between public administration and good governance: The case of South Africa. African Journal of Public Affairs.

²² Cited in: Peters, B.G. & Pierre, J. 2012. Introduction: The Role of Public Administration in Governing. The Sage Handbook of Public Administration.

²³ DPSA. Undated. Public Sector Integrity Management Framework.

<http://www.dpsa.gov.za/dpsa2g/documents/misc/Integrity%20Management%20Framework.pdf>

²⁴ Republic of South Africa. 1994. Public Service Act.

²⁵ Republic of South Africa. 1999. Public Finance Management Act

²⁶ Republic of South Africa. 2009. Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act.

Protected Disclosures Act²⁷, and various frameworks and programmes such as the Code of Conduct for Public Servants²⁸, the Financial Disclosure Framework²⁹, the National Anti-Corruption Hotline³⁰, National Anti-corruption Forum and Public Service Charter. It is important to note that some of the mentioned legislation, frameworks and programmes are applicable to public sector institutions, the private sector and civil society in general.

44. I also believe that the schools and departments of public administration and management have included compulsory and elective courses on key aspects of governance in their under graduate and post graduate programmes.
45. Programme Director, the main problem affecting South Africa is that implementation is uneven, as demonstrated by a number of challenges reported in the media about governance failures in some municipalities, national and provincial departments, and state entities. Some of the governance failures are attributed to practitioners, as in officials, while others are attributed to political principals. This is not unique to South Africa. According to the United Nations (1998), “[when political leaders subvert political and administrative processes to enhance their image and stay in power, the role and influence of public administration in society are also corrupted.](#)”³¹
46. The importance of governance is also emphasized in the *ANC Strategy and Tactics: Discussion Document (2017)* as follows:

[“The ANC faces declining fortunes. Internal squabbles, money politics, corruption and poor performance in government all conspire to undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of the broader public. Some progressive formations and individuals who historically have been part of](#)

²⁷ Republic of South Africa. Protected Disclosures Act.

²⁸ Republic of South Africa. 2001. Public Service Act (Code of Conduct).

²⁹ The Financial Disclosure Framework used by the Public Service Commission is applied to all members of senior managers in the South African Public Service as a mechanism for disclosing financial interest and a mechanism to reduce conflict of interest.

³⁰ The National Anti-Corruption Hotline is a telephone line created to enable Public Servants and Citizens to report suspected cases of corruption and maladministration.

³¹ United Nations, Rethinking Public Administration: An overview. 1998. Division for Public Economics and Public Administration, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <http://www.unpan.org/Portals/0/60yrhistory/documents/Publications/Rethinking%20public%20administration.pdf>

the broad front of forces for change are challenging the movement on important current issues, particularly corruption.”

“The sense of hope in broader society is dissipating. Social cohesion seems to be withering. Rampant selfish interest, in broader society and within the liberation movement, are the stock-in-trade. More and more, an impression of reliance on security agencies is taking root. Instead of being the centre of transformative and ethical rectitude, increasingly the ANC and the government it leads have occasionally to be directed from elsewhere – in the manner of ‘lawfare’ – to do right. The moral suasion that the ANC has wielded to lead society is waning; and the electorate is starting more effectively to assert its negative judgement.”

47. The reason why I am particularly highlighting concerns about implementation challenges and governance failures is because of the ‘*silence*’ of public administration scholars in particular, and *practitioners with caution*³², with respect to the following:
- a. Lack of implementation evidence of programmes such as the Code of Conduct, Public Service Charter and other integrity promotion programmes and the implications thereof on the role of public administration in the future; and
 - b. Lack of comment on the impact of governance failures associated with state entities such as SASSA, Eskom and SAA on the integrity of public administration, considering that these institutions are mandated to perform public functions on behalf of the shareholder - government. *It seems comments on such matters are often made by political science, economics and other scholars.*
48. Why is this the case? Is it because public administration scholars and practitioners who are not in the employ of government have chosen to limit their role to research and teaching? Or is it because public administration scholars want to play it safe, due to perceptions that frank and open discussion will shut the doors for collaboration with government in one way or another? *But I guess the unique situation of public administration practitioners who are employed by*

³² The caution is mainly informed by the fact that practitioners who are employed in government should work within clear parameters to avoid breaches of contract in instances where confidential employer information could be compromised.

government needs to be thought through properly because of the need to work within clear parameters to avoid breaches of contract and possible misuse of confidential employer information.

49. If anything else, the silence will simply create the opportunity for scholars and independent practitioners from other disciplines to ‘*crowd out*’ the relevance of public administration on critical issues of public interest. A case in point would be the recently published report titled “Betrayal of a promise”³³ (May 2017). This important research by scholars from UCT, UJ, Wits and Stellenbosch Universities exclude public administration practitioners in and outside the employment of government.
50. In the medium to long term, the ‘self-imposed’ limited role or the *safe-road-to-travel* will **reduce** people’s perceptions of public administration to ‘basic administration 101’, but not a ***science and art*** that is applied to the complex and dynamic affairs of the state.
51. Ladies and gentlemen, I am not asking public administration scholars and practitioners to ‘*make noise or become unruly like delinquents*’, and I am not ignoring the important contributions made through publications and information sharing networks such as this conference, all I am trying to say is that teaching, research and publications are not enough – **there is space for spontaneity and rapid responses to issues**. And if we do not claim that space, those who are agile, fearless and proactive will occupy it.

Other areas of contribution

52. There are many other areas of public administration that scholars and practitioners can contribute to through engagements, research and rapid responses to pronouncements. These include:
 - a. The political administrative interface and high turnover rate of HODs and other senior managers;

³³ PARI. State Capacity Research Project. Betrayal of a promise – How South Africa is being stolen, May 2017. <http://pari.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Betrayal-of-the-Promise-25052017.pdf>

- b. Rapid changes to the organisation of administration, especially the creation of new ministries, departments and other institutions;
- c. The implications of South Africa's continued reliance on the New Public Management paradigm, whose impact has been questioned from as early as the 1990s³⁴,
- d. Exploration of new paradigms and their implications on public administration in South Africa, considering that there is growing interest on the 'Public Value Paradigm' and possibly other emerging paradigms.^{35 36} Even beyond public value, explore the move away from bureaucratic service delivery to delivery through partnerships with the civil society organisations such as NGOs, CBOs³⁷ and Community Trusts; and
- e. Debate on the nature and implications on public administration and management of power relations between the governing party, and organised business, organised labour³⁸ and civil society organisations³⁹, particularly in the current socio-economic and political context.

Conclusion and way forward

53. Programme Director, as I proceed to conclude my speech and in hindsight, I think everything I have said: good or bad; tedious or inspiring, agreeable or controversial, also applies to me and my colleagues from the Public Service Commission. Why? Because we are public administration practitioners with an oversight mandate over a critical part of public administration, the public service, which comprises of more than 150 national and provincial departments, plus government components, that are listed in schedules one (1) to three (3) of the Public Service Act.

³⁴ O'Flynn, J. 2007. From New Public Management to Public Value: Paradigmatic Change and Managerial Implications. The Australian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 66

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ Williams, I & Shearer, H. 2011. Appraising Public Value, Past, Present and Future. Public Administration, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

³⁷ Nicholson, S. Undated. The Role of Civil Society Organisations in Service Delivery: The Jamaican Experience. <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan026999.pdf>

³⁸ Webster, E. 2007. Trade Unions and Political Parties in Africa: New Alliances, Strategies and Partnerships. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/04961.pdf>

³⁹ Weideman, M. 2015. The changing status of Civil Society Organisations in South Africa, 1994 to 2014. https://www.nelsonmandela.org/uploads/files/The_changing_status_of_Civil_Society_Organisations_in_SA_M_Weideman.pdf

54. In addition, the PSC is also mandated by the Constitution to promote the constitutional values and principles and to report on an annual basis on the implementation thereof throughout the public service. The Constitution, while providing the legal basis for how government and public administration should be organized and governed, also envisioned a public administration that would be capable, professional, accountable, ethical and responsive to the needs of citizens⁴⁰. The institutionalisation and implementation of these principles by all organs of the state and across the three spheres of government is of paramount importance to the PSC.
55. And it is not only the PSC emphasizing the importance of these values and principles in public administration. The OECD in its document on the Principles of Public Administration, points out that “*a well-functioning public administration requires a professional civil service, efficient procedures for policy and legislative development, well-defined accountability arrangements between institutions and citizens as well as among institutions, ability of the administration to efficiently deliver services to citizens and businesses, and a sound public financial management system*”⁴¹. And all these are key dimensions of the constitutional values and principles.
56. So, the question is, what more can the Public Service Commission do, in collaboration with public administration scholars and other practitioners, to take the public administration debate forward?
57. In response to this question, I am keen for the Public Service Commission to collaborate with public administration scholars and other practitioners to explore, design and implement the following:
- Joint research initiatives whose findings will influence the current discourse and shape the public administration paradigm in the medium to long term;
 - Engage in dialogue about current and future critical public administration issues emanating from various pockets of excellence, persistent challenges, the impact of unforeseen events such as the Fees-Must-Fall

⁴⁰ Republic of South Africa. The interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 200 of 1993.

⁴¹ OECD. Principles of Public Administration.

campaign, developments from other public administrations around the world, and the implications of rapid economic, social, political and technological changes;

- Joint publications; and
- Rapid responses to emerging issues.

58. In addition, the PSC should enter into discourse with scholars and practitioners on how to implement these values and principles in public administration and management. We need to ensure that public administration practices do not militate against the spirit of the values and principles. Therefore, I strongly advocate for the inclusion of these values and principles in our debate at this Conference.
59. In conclusion, I would like to encourage everyone to strengthen the debate even if at times it might seem like the content of the debate is falling on deaf ears. The truth is, whether one is aware or unaware, someone is watching, listening and taking cognisance. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the **absence** of reflection and critical debate in any form – verbal (through engagements) or written (through publications), and instantaneous or gradual - will institutionalise the adoption of ineffective, reactionary and crisis management strategies to public administration and management challenges.
60. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, **debate** is critical to the advancement of public administration as a system, discipline and practice.

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, I THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY!