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**THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE COMPONENT IN PUBLIC  
SECTOR REFORM AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN ERITREA:  
LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA**

**By**

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# THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE COMPONENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN ERITREA

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Eritrea, which metaphorically has been weakened socially and economically by a thirty-year war for independence, is progressing towards its healing. The continuing process of social and national emancipation, to which the citizens are all active partners, constitutes an evolving act of self-definition. The role of the government and its public service corps in this process of national transformation will be decisive. The challenge facing the government in this process is and continues to be the pressing need to accelerate the development of the human resource component in the process of public sector reform and the consequent transformation of public service delivery. This time, however, the challenge is not only in reforming the structure of the public sector, but also the transformation and renewal of the human resource component to ensure the delivery of effective, efficient, and quality public services. Acceleration of the development of the human resource component within the greater public sector reform process and the subsequent transformation of public service delivery is a must, not an option, because human resources are the core assets in resource mobilisation. In short, the real and opportunity costs of an ineffective and inefficient public service due to the structure of its human resource base is a luxury that Eritrea, with its other many and pressing development needs and priorities, can ill afford. More than ever before, time has come for the transformation of the Eritrean Public Service.

Transformation is described as a process whereby organizational direction is framed, the organization is revitalised and its people are



renewed. Transformation denotes a time when organisations leave the old culture and step into unexplored territory. Though the dynamics of success may eventually lead to elation, it is not much fun in the initial stages. There is reluctance and denial to break through; old values to discard and new ones to assimilate. This insecurity or fear of the uncertain future, partly and in most instances, emanates from crediting more attention to structural reform and change while neglecting the decisive role that the talent imbued in the human resource component can play in the reform process.

Over the years, there has been a growing body of literature and opinion in which the public sector has been criticised for poor service rendering. In order to actualise the policies of the government, and to ensure that the needs of the population are met in a sustainable way, the public service, as the administrative arm of the government, needs to be rationalised in line with the available resources and the needs to be met. This is the process referred to as public sector reform. In Eritrea, the bottleneck for public sector reform lies on the acute lack of well-trained personnel to handle the reform process itself, and to ensure that there is effective and efficient public service delivery after the reform process.

Thus, in the Eritrean case, the public sector reform process should begin by addressing the near absence of a well - trained human resource component in the public service coupled with concerns on the internal structures that should be developed and instituted to ensure that the public service operates optimally and meets its service provision obligations.

It should be noted that public sector reform, whether it is under the guise of "rationalisation," "downsizing," "right - sizing" or even "transformation," is a capital intensive and time-consuming process. It is not a dramatic or overnight phenomenon. This becomes more

apparent when one considers the inputs, in real and opportunity costs, that have to be invested to have a well-trained and efficient public service. However, there are no easy ways out if public sector reform is to be instituted especially where the overall aim is to improve public service delivery, there must be an investment in the development of an efficient human resource base in the public service. This study aims at assessing the decisive role of the human resource component in public sector reform, with special reference to Eritrea.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR THE STUDY**

In 1888, the present day Eritrea became an Italian colony, until 1941 when the British occupied it. In 1952 the United Nations resolved to establish it as an autonomous entity federated with Ethiopia as a compromise between Ethiopian claims for sovereignty over Eritrea, and Eritrean aspirations for independence. Ten years later, however, the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, decided to annex it, triggering a 30-years-long armed struggle. This struggle culminated in independence shortly after an alliance of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and a coalition of Ethiopian resistance movements defeated Haile Selassie's communist successor Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991.

In 1993, in a referendum supported by Ethiopia, the Eritrean people voted almost unanimously in favour of independence. Nonetheless, the two countries have hardly managed to become good neighbours, with Ethiopian access to the Eritrean ports of Massawa and Assab being cut - off and unequal trade being among the main obstacles to improved relations. In 1998 boarder disputes around the town of Badme erupted into open hostilities. This formally ended with a peace deal in June 2000, but not before leaving both sides with thousands of casualties.

Eritrea now faces the gigantic task of rebuilding after being ravaged by more than 30 years of war. Its infrastructure, buildings and fields lie destroyed. The first three years after independence were devoted to emergency relief operations, reconstruction and some rehabilitation and reintegration activities. In these three years, however, the government has concentrated its efforts at preparing the macroeconomic policy of the nation, as well as sectoral strategic development plans. Consequently, the civil service has undergone extensive restructuring both functionally as well as organisationally (Eritrean Human Resource Development Programme 1997: 2).

The results of these major re-organisational activities have enabled the government to come to terms with the gap between the available resources, especially the human resources that are required by the public service, the private sector and what can optimally be used for achievement of the stated macroeconomic and other social development objectives. Under a comprehensive public sector-strengthening programme, the government has implemented a number of measures to rationalise institutions and has completed the process of streamlining the public service by reducing staff positions by 34%, down to 18,500 from over 40,000. Efforts are also being made to address the shortage of skilled staff in key positions, and the University of Asmara has been mandated to support the effort to build human resource capacity in key technical and managerial areas in the public service (Eritrean Human Resource Development Programme 1997: 2).

While the need for educated and skilled manpower in this critical period of reconstruction and nation building cannot be over-emphasised, the parallel lack of these manpower requirements is a cause of major concern. The government has identified the urgent need for a comprehensive plan for human resource development as a

matter of priority and urgency. Within the national human resource development strategy the lack of qualified teachers at all levels and the absence of institutional capacity to produce them and therefore the inability to produce the required skilled manpower for the socio-economic development of the country has been identified as one of the most critical bottleneck to the national human resource development programme and one which needs to be tackled in the short term (Eritrean Human Resource Development Programme 1997: 2).

The fulfilment of this vision of the government depends on a rapid rate of development now and in the near future. To set the right course for and to kick-start a rapid and sustained development process requires a minimum critical mass of high level skills and knowledge that are now not available in Eritrea in sufficient quantity.

The reason for this research is to investigate the role of the human resource component in public sector reform in Eritrea, especially against the background that after almost 12 years of self rule, one cannot say, with the benefit of statistics or otherwise, that Eritrea has managed to establish an efficient public sector, more so, if this is to be measured against the quality of service delivery, the extent and development of government social service provision in the rural areas especially, the nature and extent of the human resources charged with the responsibility of service delivery. The other factor that backs this observation is the internal logistics within the public sector itself, like the absence of a clearly defined selection, recruitment and placement mechanisms within the public sector, which leads to having the wrong people doing the wrong things, the right people doing the wrong things, and the wrong people doing the right things.

This scenario leads to "wastage," and it not only affects the delivery of services. It is also a capital wasting exercise, which should be costing

the Eritrean taxpayer, in real terms and in terms of opportunity costs, money into billions of Nakfa (Eritrean Currency).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Eritrea is faced by many development challenges. Crucial to determining the outcomes of the attempts of the people of Eritrea to address these development challenges will be the decisive role that will be played by the public service, not only in service provision, but also in the areas of efficient resource allocation and utilisation, effective identification and prioritisation of development needs, and the ability to mobilise and utilise limited resources in a sea of unlimited needs.

However, after 12 years of self - rule, the Eritrean Public Service has got inherent structural weaknesses that may curtail its efficiency as the leading player in addressing Eritrean development challenges. If these structural weaknesses are not addressed, then the Eritrean Public Service will be one of the biggest obstacles to the attainment of sustainable development. These structural weaknesses rest on the human resource base of the Eritrean Public Service, and the various mechanisms used to control and utilise human resources. First, there is an acute lack of well-trained personnel to handle the challenges that a modern public service should address itself to. Secondly, there is a near absence of internal structures to ensure that the public service operates optimally and meets its service provision obligations. These internal structures range from selection, recruitment and placement procedures, processes and structures, job designs and descriptions, and wage structures.

It is observed that the absence of these internal structures does not only impact on efficiency in terms of the speed at which services are rendered, but it has a psychological effect of de-motivating an already

incompetent and overworked staff in the public service. In some instances, there may not even be enough competent staff to oversee the prerequisite for public sector reform process.

Thus, the problem that this research aims at addressing is to investigate the role of the human resource component in public sector reform and service delivery in the Eritrean Public Service.

#### **1.4 HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION**

The following hypothesis guides the research:

The success or failure of the public sector reform process and the subsequent improvement of public service delivery in Eritrea will be determined by the nature and level of development of the human resource component in the Eritrean Public Service.

#### **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to assess and evaluate the aggregate human resource capacity of the Eritrean Public Service. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To investigate and determine the role of the human resource component in the public sector reform process in Eritrea;
- to investigate and determine the role of the human resource component in public service delivery in Eritrea; and
- to propose mechanisms by means of which the human resource component in the Eritrean Public Service can be used optimally for the achievement of the public sector reform and service delivery objectives.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Various methods will be utilised in the study. These methods include the following:

- (a) interviews will be conducted with key persons in different departments (especially with persons in the Human Resource Development departments) and the Civil Personnel Administration (CPA);
- (b) literature study - different books, journals, legislation and magazines will be consulted which are relevant to assist the research topic; and
- (c) observation at the workplace.

## **1.7 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH**

Although there are many factors that affect the public sector reform process and public service delivery in Eritrea, this study does not make pretensions at addressing all of them. This study is purely a study on the role of the human resource component in the public sector reform process and service delivery in Eritrea.

## **1.8 LIST OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

- Human resources development
- Reform
- Service delivery
- Transformation

- Accountability
- Transparency
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Job description
- Job analysis
- Selection
- Recruitment
- Training and development
- Governance
- Policy making
- Legal framework
- Information and communication technology
- Performance management
- Labour association



## **2 PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM, SERVICE DELIVERY AND THE FUNCTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

To realize their goals, objectives and short-term targets, governments have to execute a variety of functions and deliver a variety of services. Because of technological development and ideological changes, government functions and services have undoubtedly changed and increased dramatically over the past decades. The experimentation with different kinds of ideologies over time has made the situation fluid, with the result that government functions and related services may differ from country to country depending on the ideological concept of the ruling party of what the government should do. The result is that currently one finds what can be categorized as order and protection objectives, social welfare objectives and economic welfare objectives. The attainment of these objectives is aimed at realizing the general goal of creating a high quality of life for each individual. It follows that governments all over the world have been charged with a variety of order and protection functions, social welfare functions and economic welfare functions (Van der Waldt *et al.* 1999: 19).

In recent years, countries have embarked on a thorough re-evaluation of the role, structure and functions of the state in general, and human resource management and development in particular. This has been in response to a number of factors, including the growing impact of global markets and competition, the trend towards "knowledge workers" multi-skilling and multi-tasking, and the growing pressure for equal opportunities in employment. In the process, a number of common themes in relation to human resource management and development have begun to emerge. These include an increasing emphasis on quality, performance, efficiency and cost-effectiveness; the introduction of new and more participative organizational structures; the introduction of more flexible staffing and recruitment

process; and the introduction of effective forms of career-pathing. Underlying these trends has been the growing awareness that "investing in people" is the most productive investment a country or organization can make (Special Programme of Assistance for Africa 1998: 1).

According to the Working Group on Public Sector Reform – a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) initiative working within the framework of the Special Program of Assistance for Africa (SPA), Public Sector Reform (PSR) is seen within the context of the changing role of the state. It is concerned with improving the capacity of public institutions to make policy and deliver services in an efficient, effective and accountable manner. Public Service Reform (PSR) includes a range of reform measures dealing with core management functions such as financial and fiscal reform, decentralization, enhancing accountability, legal and judicial reform and improving corporate regulatory frameworks. These processes should be backed by economic reform and adjustment, leadership and commitment, taking account of governance, and a well articulated program design that entails diagnosis and preparation, vision and strategy, sequencing and timeframe, a process approach, and an assessment of the strengths of core government functions with a view of restructuring and decentralization. Central to this reform process is the human resource component of the public service (Working Group on Public Sector Reform 1995: 1).

This research paper aims at justifying why public sector reform and improved service delivery is urgently required in Eritrea. In attempting to do so, the discussion centres on the human resource component of the public service as the engine of reform processes, especially the importance of strategic human resources planning to identify and address the availability and continuity of workforces, and the re-organization of the internal structures of the public service. On these

issues focus is given to concepts such as recruitment and selection procedures, processes and structures, job analysis and job descriptions, performance management, training, wage structures, and the importance of information and communication technology in enhancing improved service delivery.

## **2.1 THE CONCEPT AND ORIGIN OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY**

The concept of public service delivery is a comprehensive concept. It not only refers to an *end product* or result, but also is more of an umbrella term referring to the results of institutions, decisions and actions undertaken by institutions and people. In the context of governance, public service delivery is the result of the intentions and decisions of government and government institutions, and the actions undertaken and decisions made by people employed in government institutions. Van der Waldt *et al.* (1999: 22) state that ample proof exists that service delivery to citizens originated thousands of years before the birth of Christ. Because people were prepared to live in close proximity with others and to be subjected to a form of governing body, this gave rise to service delivery. Service delivery in this context also includes protection by an accepted governing body. In exchange for being governed and protected, citizens expect the governing body to maintain an orderly community (Hattingh 1986: 1). This agreement confirms the responsibility of the governing body to govern on behalf of the citizens of such communities and to protect their interests. This responsibility further implies that the governing body is responsible for service delivery to the community (Van der Waldt *et al.* 1999: 22).

The responsibility for service delivery denotes the delivery of some kind of collective or common services. Originally, services delivered were collective and basic, for example, defending the community and

members of the community against aggression and turmoil. As communities grew and became more sophisticated, so their needs for more and better services increased. It became increasingly difficult for some of their needs to be met. According to Van der Waldt *et al.* (1999: 24), this problem stemmed from the increased restrictions placed on growing communities with more needs to satisfy and from trying to maintain an orderly community. For example, the governing institution of a city with 10 million inhabitants does not deliver an energy source, that is, electricity. Instead, these citizens have to fetch wood daily to provide fuel for heat. Just how achievable would this be? What would happen if they ran out of wood? How would they cope if there were no refuse disposal? Therefore, one can say first, that governing institutions deliver services because citizens are unable to satisfy all their own needs, and second, that the activities of public administration and management are the logical consequences of the practice of service delivery from the earliest times (Van der Waldt *et al.* 1999: 24).

## **2.2 PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

It is important to observe that increasingly, literature in the public service, especially in developing countries point towards the need for public sector reform and improvement of service delivery. The motivation for this is varied. First, with the solutions to the development challenges facing these countries being as elusive as they have always been, there is recognition of the central role that an efficient and well-structured public service can play in development initiatives. This is because in many of these countries, the public sector remains the major mechanism of resource mobilization and allocation because of the absence of a developed private sector. Second, with much of the capital and recurrent expenditure in these countries being financed by multilateral grants and loans, there has

been an increasing concern of the efficiency of the public service in administering these funds so that they can meet the targeted objectives and improve the welfare of the greater population. No wonder the discourse on public sector reform has been created and is being implemented by the multilateral lending institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Development Program.

Moreover, the developments of the 1990s have shown what can be described as a double paradigm shift in the area of public service administration. Public sector reform has been one of these paradigms. The other paradigm has been the improvement of public service delivery. Several factors have driven the need for improvement of public service delivery. First, the need for accountability and transparency in governance has exerted pressures on governments to account for the tax that they collect from the population and other resources that they raise from other development partners and should be channelled to the improvement of the general welfare of the populations. In many instances, these services have been dismal or absent in many of these developing countries. Second, the democratic changes that swept through much of the developing countries in this period have left at their wake a more informed public. Now than in the past, the public needs to be given reasons why the government cannot meet its obligations to its citizens (<http://www.adb.org/wgpsr/pub.html> 1999).

In many Sub-Saharan countries, the ineffectiveness of the public service threatens almost all development efforts as well as basic public administration. Weaknesses in key central functions of government are particularly damaging since they can affect all government activity and the economy as a whole. The capacity to make and implement policy is often reduced, revenue goes uncollected, such resources as are available are not well used, and morale and motivation have ebbed

away. These are both effects of, and significant contributors to, poor economic performance. This has rightly been seen in a number of countries as producing a crisis of government administration. This crisis is doubly serious at a time when structural adjustment programs are requiring key central public service institutions to plan and manage fundamental transformations in the economy (<http://www.worldbank.org/afr/findings> 1996).

### **2.3 LIMITS OF EXISTING APPROACHES TO PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

Although the World Bank has financed a substantial portfolio dealing with different aspects of the public service riddle, there is still no agreed-upon conceptual framework, which could help translate that knowledge into effective operations to address the qualitative aspects, that is, more efficient and effective public service in Africa. Economic liberalization poses, in new terms, the problem of public service performance, insofar as "value-for-money" becomes the paramount criterion for evaluating performance. Therefore, in thinking about what can be done, primarily by African governments themselves, but assisted by donors, there is a fresh need for the new role of government to be more clearly defined in each country. Public service reform programs, an assessment of the extent of the need for new organizational structures and management systems is required and, as a separate issue, a strategy developed to change the whole culture of the public Service. If fundamental change in attitude and behaviour is required, for example in relation to decision-making or systems of delegation, simply changing organograms and procedures may have little impact (<http://www.worldbank.org/afr/findings> 1996).

Another important issue is the extent to which there is an availability of models of good practice, which are of general application, for re-orienting entire public administration systems. What works in the environment of developed countries cannot be literally transplanted into developing countries particularly, the Sub-Saharan Africa. There is a need for a clearer understanding of the implications of different cultural and political systems for public administration. This, however, does not mean to say that outside experience is not relevant to Africa. It simply suggests that one needs to ensure this experience is best adapted to the local/indigenous African environment by ensuring that the design and management of reforms are undertaken by nationals who are encouraged and assisted to fundamentally rethink the whole system (<http://www.worldbank.org/afr/findings> 1996).

Against this background, three crucial dimensions of public service reform deserve to be highlighted:

- Institutional environment;
- economic management; and
- pay/incentive systems as they affect performance.

In addressing the three sets of issues, it would be necessary to pay attention to the linkages among them. The study of the institutional environment of Public Service Reform (PSR) includes a clear statement of the vision and mission of the state (in its specific context), its functions, and its relationships with other public sector and non-state sector organizations (private enterprises, non-governmental organizations, professional and community associations). The economic management issues relate to the quality of core economic management functions (government budget and financial management, policy management and improved management information systems and procedures). The pay/incentive issues

(management of the public service) have direct impact on the quality of core economic functions as well as the provision/delivery of public services (<http://www.worldbank.org/afr/findings> 1996).

In this kind of scenario, the need for a study on the dynamics of public sector reform and public service delivery, with a special focus on the human resource component, which is admittedly the most important component, and in a country like Eritrea, which in the main is representative of much of Sub-Saharan Africa, cannot be overstated. The concept of human resource planning and its role in the reform processes of the public sector is discussed in the following section.

#### **2.4 HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING**

Although plant, equipment, and financial assets are resources required by any organizations, the people – the human resources – are particularly important. Human resources provide the creative spark in any organization. People design and produce goods and services, control quality, market the products, allocate financial resources, and set overall strategies and objectives for the organization. Without effective people, it is simply impossible for an organization to achieve its objectives (Milkovich *et al.* 1994: 3).

Human resource planning is essential in order to ensure that the human resources of an organization are capable of meeting its operational objectives. Human resource planning ensures that an organization:

- Obtains the quality and quantity of staff it requires;
- make the optimum use of human resources;



- is able to anticipate and manage surpluses and shortages of staff; and
- develops a multi-skilled, representative and flexible workforce, which enables the organization to adapt to a changing operational environment (White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service 1997: 26).

Human resource planning consists of three steps, namely:

- An assessment of the human resources, which will be required to deliver the operational objectives in the strategic plan of the organization;
- an assessment of the existing human resource capacity of the organization; and
- a plan for how the gap between existing human resource capacity and the future human resource requirement will be filled, within the financial resources available (White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service 1997: 26).

#### **2.4.1 Historical overview of human resource planning**

A long-standing problem with the term human resource planning or workforce planning is definitional. Simply put, it means different things to different people. There is no universally accepted definition of what workforce planning is or consensus on what activities should be associated with it. Organizations claiming that they do workforce planning appear to use a wide variety of methods to approach their own unique problems.

Although workforce planning seems to emulate a formalized strategy for response to current and anticipated problems, many of its definitions bear little resemblance to each other, either in terms of

substance or methodology. Shafritz *et al.* (2001: 147) define human resource planning as the process of analysing the needs of human resources of an organization under changing conditions and developing the activities necessary to satisfy these needs. Such a definition recognizes human resource planning as more than a simple personnel function – one that involves the entire management process.

Historically, workforce planning was, and of course still remains, an integral part of numerous public and private programs whose objective is to affect the labour market in order to improve the employment status and welfare of individuals. What exactly do human resource planning levels involve? Both are concerned with future demand aspects, that is, what the requirements for the future workforce will be. At the macro level this means projecting what skills will be in demand to service the economy. At the micro level, this entails projecting specific requirements for the workforce of the organization or what quantities and qualities of personnel will be needed to carry out organizational objectives. Both levels are concerned also with future supply aspects. At the macro level this means that projections must be made on what the national labour force will consist of in terms of future skills, both surpluses and deficits. At the micro level, the organization must forecast on what its future workforce will consist of as well as evaluate its competitive position in order to decide what quantities and qualities of personnel it can encourage to enter the organization as replacements (Shafritz *et al.* 2001: 160).

#### **2.4.2 Strategic human resources planning – future prospects**

Logic certainly suggests that human resource planning will become an even more significant decision-making process in the future. Its

significance bears fruit if workforce planning as a discipline continues to grow. As the workforce gets older, the demographic aspects to human resource planning will be important to a point. The numbers of retirees are significant, but as the workforce is dominated more by employees who think differently about what a career means and who expect to work for different organizations, retention, recruitment, and training may all take on very different meanings.

To be of value, human resource planning will have to develop in two directions: establishing new planning methodologies and broadcasting the scope of planning and strategy efforts. Some of these directions will likely include linking interactive functions of personnel management, considering individual reactions and preferences, charting new forms of organizations, work teams, and alliances, and developing new types of information. Finally, human resources planning techniques must be concerned with rapidly changing organizational structures and informational linkages. As computer technology and increased communications capabilities make possible more decentralized working environments, and as project teams, process teams, and telecommunicating become the norm, human resources planning may be applied in whole new areas. (Shafritz *et al.* 2001:164).

The process of public sector reform aimed at improving public service delivery also calls for the re-organization of the internal structures of the public service. These internal structures range from job analysis and designs, recruitment, selection and placement procedures, performance management, and wage structures. Effective human resource management in an organization cannot take place without proper human resource planning, of which job analysis is an important part.

## 2.5 JOB ANALYSIS

The basis of human resource planning is information about what work is being done or may need to be done, and this information comes from job analysis (Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 261).

According to De Cenzo & Robbins (in Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 262), job analysis is a technical procedure, which systematically explores the activities within a job. Job analysis is a process to identify and determine in detail the particular job duties and requirements and the relative importance of these duties for a given job. Job analysis is a process where judgments are made about data collected on a job.

An important concept of job analysis is that the analysis is conducted of the *job*, not the *person*. While job analysis data may be collected from incumbents through interviews or questionnaires, the product of the analysis is a description or specifications of the job, not a description of the person. According to Cushway (in Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 264), job analysis can be used for a number of purposes:

- *Human resource planning* ensures that the right number of employees, with the right skills, knowledge and experiences, are available in the right places at the right time in an organization.
- *Selection* can only take place if the job requirements have been clearly identified. With a job description and a job specification available it will be clear what qualifications, experience and personal attributes a potential candidate must possess.
- *Training and development inputs* based on a proper training-needs analysis can only take place once the job standards have been determined and the performance of the individual

has been measured against the set standards. With accurate job information available, discrepancies in individual performance can easily be detected.

- *Job redesign* requires job analysis. With organizations changing rapidly to realign themselves as a result of increased competition and other external forces, responsibilities and duties must often be allocated. This makes accurate job analysis information essential.
- *Performance management* cannot take place without proper job information. To measure job performance it is necessary to compare the performance of the incumbent with the standards set by the job. Without clear job objectives, proper performance management cannot take place.
- *Organizational restructuring* can only take place with accurate information about the various jobs available. Duplication of responsibilities can be eliminated to ensure smoother operations through better work flow processes.
- *Labour relation* may improve if every individual in an organization knows as far as possible what his/her responsibilities and reporting lines are. Job analysis helps to ensure that the chances of communication gaps are minimized.
- *Job evaluations and remuneration decisions* require job related information that stems from the job analysis process.

In the job analysis process the duties, responsibilities and accountabilities of a job are analysed. The information gathered from job analysis generates two outcomes – namely job descriptions and job specifications.

### **2.5.1 Job descriptions**

Job descriptions define the nature of the job content, the environment, and the conditions under which employment is carried out. A job description is a written statement of the content of the job, which is derived from the analysis of the job. It states what the jobholder does, how it is done, under what conditions it is done and why it is done (Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 268).

According to De Cenzo & Robbins (in Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 262), a well put together job description is one of the best investments an organization or hiring manager can make because it can be used in many ways including job evaluation, job design, reorganization, performance management, training, development and career planning. During selection, job descriptions put everyone involved in the process on the same footing by clearly describing, in practical terms, the key responsibilities of the actual position, reporting relationships and work environment. A complete and accurate job description can help defend the selection process from grievances and other legal actions, should they occur. However, by developing an accurate job description, these costly headaches are often completely avoided.

### **2.5.2 Job specifications**

According to De Cenzo & Robbins (in Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 269), Job specifications stipulate the minimum acceptable characteristics a jobholder must possess as a requisite to be able to perform the job. A job specification describes the attributes that an employee requires to carry out the job - that is, it identifies the knowledge, skills, level of education, experience, and abilities needed to do the job effectively.

Job specifications are used primarily to facilitate the recruitment and selection process. Without a job specification the characteristics of the ideal job incumbent are unknown and comparisons between job applicants cannot be made. In light of this, job analysis paves the way for making recruitment and selection decisions using fair and objective job based criteria.

## **2.6 EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

The first step in building an exceptional workforce is recruiting and selecting talented, motivated people. Recruitment and selection establishes the foundation for staffing organizations and is a key part of any human resource program (<http://hr.dop.wa.gov> 2003). Every organization, regardless of its size, product or service, must recruit and select applicants to fill positions. Most often, human resources administrators will actively recruit only as positions become vacant. However, employee recruitment and selection should be conducted in a systematic manner. The following section discusses employee recruitment and selection in detail.

### **2.6.1 Employee recruitment**

Cherrington (in Carrell *et al.* 2000:192) defines recruitment as the process of attracting potential job applicants from the available labour force. It is described as those activities in human resource management, which are undertaken in order to attract sufficient job candidates who have the necessary potential, competencies and traits to fill job needs and to assist the organization in achieving its objectives. By means of the recruitment process the organization aims to attract and to retain the interest of suitable applicants and to project a positive image of the organization to outsiders.

Recruitment approaches will have to change significantly to enable organizations to move into a new era of international competition. There are various problems with the traditional recruitment methods because they are past and present orientated. It must, however, be emphasized that if the human resource planning process has been executed properly the reactive approach to recruitment will be largely be eliminated. It is, however, important that recruiters maintain a strategic approach to recruitment, which implies that job descriptions and job specifications among other things, must be in line with the general strategic direction of the organization. According to Rothwel and Kazanas (in Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 308), the following strategic approach to recruitment can be adopted:

- Reconsider the purpose of the recruitment function to the context of the organizational strategy and human resource management strategy. What is it at present? What should it be in the future?
- What are the present strengths and weaknesses of the recruitment approaches of the organization? Can present strengths be built on? Can present weaknesses be rectified?
- What trends in the external and internal environments are likely to affect the recruitment function?
- What ranges of recruitment strategies are available?
- What choice of recruitment strategy is appropriate considering other human resource management practices and strategies?
- How is a new recruitment strategy implemented?
- What criteria should be used to evaluate recruitment?

Every organization must be able to attract a sufficient number of job candidates who have the abilities and aptitudes that will help the organization achieve its objectives. The most accurate and effective selection and retention activities are of little use unless the



recruitment process generates a sufficiently large pool of qualified applicants to select from and to replace those who leave.

### **2.6.2 Employee selection**

Whereas recruitment encourages individuals to seek employment, the purpose of the selection process is to identify and employ the best-qualified individuals for specific positions. According to Wayne (in Carrell *et al.* 2000: 180), Selection is the process of choosing from a group of applicants the individual best suited for a particular position. It is the process of trying to determine which individuals will best match particular jobs in the organizational context, taking into account individual differences, the requirements of the job and the internal and external environments of the organization. Essentially thus, selection is the prediction of future performance in terms of individual differences. Selection requires information about the job or work in question and also the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to do the job successfully. The selection process is discussed in detail in the following section.

#### **2.6.2.1 The selection process**

According to Williams (in Carrell *et al.* 2000: 201), the selection process pulls together organizational goals, job designs, and performance management and appraisals, as well as recruitment and selection. The first element in the selection process is the setting of organizational goals, which must include the general hiring policy of the organization. The second element, job design, involves determining what duties and responsibilities each job will entail. How motivating or repetitious each job becomes greatly affects the performance of employees on the job. The performance of employees will be affected by their ability and motivation. The job design will greatly affect both

of these factors. The third element involves the measurement of job success. The identification of successful employees will determine what kinds of employees to recruit and select in the future. The fourth element, job specification, which is derived from the job analysis, specifies what traits, skills and background an individual must have to qualify for the job. Finally, policy makers must determine which combination of interviews, tests or other selection devices to use in the selection process. The process usually begins by reviewing current applications gathered through the recruitment effort of the organization. Applicants who appear to be qualified for the position are then screened according to the minimum requirements, as determined by the job specifications. Further, selection has to be conducted within the framework provided for by legislation.

#### **2.6.2.2 Selection and the law**

In accordance with the implementation of the international Labour Relations Act, the selection process itself has become of critical importance to organizations of those countries that exercise this Act. Organizations that discriminate directly or indirectly against an applicant for employment will be regarded as having committed an unfair labour practice (Williams 1996: 27-30). It is important that applicants be treated equally. For this goal to succeed, the selection system must be applied uniformly to all applicants within a job category. To make a sound, accurate and clear view of the requirements for a specific job, for example, the knowledge, behaviour and motivation is necessary (Williams 1996: 27-30).

To work effectively and efficiently, the recruitment and selection process must be well managed. The process of public sector reform will require human resource staff and managers to gain and apply new knowledge and skills in the process of recruitment and selection.

Like any other human resource practice, recruitment and selection should be linked to successful accomplishment of the organizational mission. Recruitment and selection should be a flexible and streamlined process that meets the needs of today. It also should be a fair and open process that promotes fairness to employees, applicants, and the concept of merit. It should be efficient and provide good-value-for-money of the taxpayer (<http://hr.dop.wa.gov> 2003).

The recruitment and selection process must be in a position to effectively compete for talent by being swift, efficient, and effective. To address skills and talent gaps, it must link with processes to foster development of employees within the system where necessary. Central to this is performance management.

## **2.7 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The success of the Public Service in achieving its developmental goals depends primarily on the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees carry out their duties. Managing performance is therefore a key human resource management tool to ensure that employees know what is expected of them, managers know whether the employee's performance is achieving the required organizational objectives, poor performance is identified and improved, and good performance is recognized and rewarded. Performance management is therefore an integral part of an effective human resource management and development strategy. It is an ongoing process, in which the employee and employer, together, strive constantly to improve the individual performance of the employee and his or her contribution to the wider objectives of the organization. Since the performance of every employee contributes to the overall delivery of the objectives of the organization, it follows that the performance of every employee should be managed. The performance management procedures may vary from

one group or level of employees to another, depending on the nature of their work. For example, the procedures may include group assessments and peer reviews, as well as the more traditional annual written report (White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service 1997: 38-39). Performance management is guided by several principles. These principles are explained in detail in the following section.

### **2.7.1 Principles of performance management**

According to the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997: 38), Whatever chosen methods and procedures of performance management might be used, the following principles should be applied in devising performance management standards:

#### **2.7.1.1 Results orientation**

The performance of the employee should be assessed on the basis of a work plan covering a specified period, setting out clearly his or her responsibilities and the objectives to be achieved. These objectives should be expressed in terms of outputs to be delivered within a given timescale and should include personal development as well as operational objectives. The work plan should be mutually agreed between the employee and his or her manager. The assessment process should include both a written assessment completed at no less than yearly intervals, and regular discussions during this period to monitor progress and take remedial action where necessary.

### **2.7.1.2 Training and development**

The performance assessment process of the employee will help to identify strengths and weaknesses, and the interventions, which are needed to deal with these strengths and weaknesses, including the future training and needs of the employee, and other developmental interventions such as career counselling, coaching and mentoring.

### **2.7.1.3 Rewarding good performance**

It is important to recognize and reward employees who perform exceptionally well, and whose skills are particularly valued, in order to encourage them to maintain the high standard they have achieved and to encourage others to strive for improved performance. The most common way of achieving this is by awarding incremental increases in pay. The development of new remuneration systems within the public service will include provision for systematic pay increments based on performance.

### **2.7.1.4 Managing poor performance**

Where performance has not matched the requirements in the work plan, the assessment, both written and verbal, should be focused on identifying the reasons for this, and on reaching mutual agreement on the steps which need to be taken to effect improvement. Such steps may include interventions such as career counselling, coaching, mentoring, retraining, developmental opportunities, and re-deployment. If the desired improvement could not be effected, dismissals on grounds of inefficiency can be considered.

### **2.7.1.5 Openness, fairness and objectivity**

The employee should be given a copy of the written assessment, and be given the opportunity to comment on it. The employee has the right to appeal against an assessment that he or she believes to be unfair. The written assessment report of the manager should be reviewed by his or her own immediate manager in order to ensure that reporting standards are objective and uniform.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that performance management is a core component of human resource management, especially under the circumstances of public sector reform. Further, performance management becomes critical when the focus of public sector reform is geared towards efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. The increasing emphasis on performance management is due to the growing realisation of the decisive role that the human factor plays in productivity in organisations. However, it is important to note that performance is not a static concept. If high levels of performance have been attained in an organisation, there is need for continued reinforcement so that the high levels are maintained. If the performance levels are not satisfactory, there is need for interventions. These interventions are mainly in the form of training. The concept of training and its relation to performance management is discussed in the following section.

## **2.8 EMPLOYEE TRAINING**

According to De Cenzo and Robbins (1994: 255), training is a learning experience in that it seeks a relatively permanent change in an individual that will improve his or her ability to perform on the job. Milkovich *et al.* (1994: 490) also define training as a systematic process to foster the acquisition of skills, rules, concepts, or attitudes that result in an improved match between the employee characteristics employment requirement. Training can therefore be regarded as a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge, skills or

behaviour through learning experience, in order to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy the current and future needs of the organization. Training brings about behavioural changes required to meet the goals of management for the organization. It is thus a major management tool in developing the full effectiveness of the most important resource of the organization, its people.

Training is executed to ensure that a task is performed correctly and therefore the behavioural change brought about by training must be measurable in terms of the requirements of an organization. Consequently, training must be result-orientated, it must focus on enhancing those specific skills and abilities needed to perform the job, and it must be measurable and must make a real contribution to improving both goal achievement and the internal efficiency of an organization.

Erasmus and Van Dyk (1999: 312) state that training standards for a specific job are primarily derived from the job description or task requirements of a particular job. Training is, therefore, directed at improving the performance of an employee. Training is executed when current work standards are not maintained, and when this situation can be ascribed to a lack of knowledge and/or skills, and/or poor attitudes among individual employees or groups in an organization. Training is also presented as a result of technological innovation in an organization.

### **2.8.1 The concept of training**

Perhaps the most interesting management movement of the last century has been the effort to lead organizations to re-examine both

what investments are being made in human assets and how organizations can promote knowledge sharing within their own workforces. As it is clearly stipulated by Kroukamp (1998: 80) the ability of the public service to deliver and expand basic services will decide whether the country becomes a stable political economy driving development in Africa or remains a volatile country bedevilled by massive inadequacies in service delivery. The political leadership and management skills of its political office-bearers and the professionalism of its corps of civil servants will also be decisive. This, in turn, will depend on the quality and appropriateness of their training. This is pragmatic and sensible evidence, which justifies the importance and criticality of training for public servants in delivering public services. As a country becomes more engrossed in developing the capacity or the potential of its human resources, and as the day-to-day demands on public servants increase, the needs for proper training, retraining and development becomes more imperative in the public service (Hilliard *et al.* 1999: 5). According to Reynolds (1993: 70) the general tendencies associated with the African context, which highlights the need for training, are:

- A pre-occupation with control instead of rendering service;
- a pursuance of democratic ideals with demands for delegation, decentralization, consultation and participation, but a high degree of centralization;
- poor human resource management;
- an emphasis on certified qualifications at the expense of experience and proven ability;
- the politicising of public services to serve the politicians ; and
- the belief that training will cure everything, resulting in enormous expenditure, sometimes on unnecessary and irrelevant training.



The insights that can be drawn from the above discussion are that training is a crucial factor that has to be considered in all efforts aimed at public sector reform, especially within the African context. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that personnel acquire within the training context are fundamental in determining the pace and nature of public sector reform, and especially the nature of service delivery in the African context. This deduction also applies to the Eritrean situation. However, the methods that are used in the delivery of training are decisive in determining the ultimate outcome of the training process. The composite elements of the methods of training are discussed in detail in the following section.

### **2.8.2 Methods of training: The design issue**

The primary variables that organizations consider when implementing their training objectives are format that is, how often and how long training sessions should last. It is generally assumed that training programs with longer time intervals between the program segments will have more impact than those with segments that are bunched together. This is especially true for supervisory training, in which some form of behaviour modification is the ultimate objective. While there is a great variety of training formats, almost all would fall into one of the following general categories (Shafritz *et al.* 2001):

*Skills training or demonstration* – training to teach specific craft or equipment skills, either in-house or through an outside contractor, in which the employee receives initial or refresher instruction about specific processes or skills.

*Coaching or on-the-job training* – direct personal instruction, usually in the work setting, in which an “expert” oversees initial work efforts by a learner and provides corrective advice and continued monitoring of work output.

*Formal or informal lecture or classroom instruction* – a variety of classroom methods are available to organizations where they can assemble and instruct groups of employees or assist employees in obtaining instruction on their own at nearby academic institutions.

*Role-playing or “sensitivity/T-group” training* – a group of techniques has evolved from this concept of assembling small groups of employees to directly and openly approach problems of human behaviour and interpersonal relationships. Used as a major tool to developing more “sensitive” and aware managers or more emphatic or responsive employees, sensitivity training usually requires the services of a professional “facilitator” and relies heavily on the willingness of individuals to confront emotional and subjective aspects of their behaviour openly.

*Job rotation programs* – this technique can be established on a number of levels and is designed to provide employees with varying work tasks and assignments in order to increase employee experience.

*Special conferences and seminars* – these are special meetings of employees to discuss and exchange ideas about process, problems, and techniques.

*Modelling, simulation, and self-paced learning training* – a plethora of simulated real-life situations have been developed to provide individuals with various contrived experiences. Many “games” involve extensive applications for role-playing, which affords participants the opportunity to view, analyse, and practice behaviour patterns and related outcomes.

According to Kroukamp (1998: 84-85) training objectives in the public administration should be directly linked to the needs of the community in order to determine and deliver an efficient, needs-directed and cost-effective public service. This implies that public officials should:

- Be well informed about the particular needs structure of the community in order to develop a better understanding of the community they are serving, as well as a capacity to respond to these needs;
- have a ready knowledge of particular environmental determinants, for example forms of government, economic framework (national/international), cultural values, social circumstances and political trends;
- be well acquainted with government structures and policy procedures to maintain these structures; and
- be able to keep the government machinery going in an effective and efficient manner.

The public official should also be able to anticipate change and be an agent for change, implementing and managing meaningful change. In this sense, training should play a predominant role. In this regard, the following questions should be posed:

### **Is training the solution?**

A fundamental objective of training is the elimination or amelioration of performance problems. However, not all performance problems call for training. Performance deficits can have several causes, many of which are beyond the control of the worker and cannot, therefore, be affected by training (Rummler 1972: 10). For example, unclear or conflicting requests, morale problems, and poor quality materials cannot be improved by training. Before choosing training as the solution, managers should carefully analyse the situation to determine whether training is the appropriate response.

### **Are the goals clear and realistic?**

To be successful, a training program must have clearly stated and realistic goals, which both guide the content of the program and determine the criteria by which its effectiveness will be judged. For example, management cannot realistically expect one training session to make everyone a computer expert. Such an expectation would guarantee failure because the goal is unattainable. Unless the goals are clearly articulated before training programs are set up, the organization is liable to find itself training employees for the wrong reasons and to the wrong ends (Kroukamp 1998: 87).

### **Is training a good investment?**

Training can be quite expensive. In addition to the cost of delivering the training program, there are costs associated with analysing and evaluating its effectiveness. In some cases, training may be appropriate but not cost-effective. Before beginning a training program, managers must weigh the cost of the current problem against the cost of training to eliminate it. It could be that the training cure is more costly than the performance ailment – in which case alternatives to training must be considered (Kroukamp 1998: 87).

### **Will training work?**

Designing effective training programs remains as much an art as a science, because no single type of training has proved most effective overall. Beyond the type of training and its content, a number of contextual issues can determine the effectiveness of any training program. For example, an organizational culture, which supports change, learning, and improvement, can be a more important determinant of the effectiveness of a training program than any aspect of the program itself. Participants who view training solely as a day

away from work are unlikely to benefit much from the experience. Furthermore, if the managers of the participants do not endorse the content and purpose of the training, there is little likelihood that the training program will have any positive influence on work processes (Kroukamp 1998: 87).

Finally, training will not work unless it is related to organizational goals. A well designed training program flows from the strategic goals of the organization; a poorly designed one has no relevance to – or even worse, is at cross-purposes to – those goals. It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that training is linked to organizational goals (Galagan 1992: 27). Taking into consideration the extent, complexity and changing nature of public issues and the consequent challenges facing public managers, management training and development is of most importance. Intensive training programs should be established to ensure that managers remain well informed (Van der Waldt *et al.* 1997: 394). However, these training programs should not only follow traditional training approaches, but should focus more on integrating the traditional and new approaches that will address the training needs of all eligible employees.

Issues of wages and compensatory programs should also be incorporated for public sector reform and service delivery to be successful.

## **2.9 WAGE AND COMPENSATORY POLICY**

The government influences pay both directly through laws and regulations and indirectly through its socio-economic policies. For example, monetary policies of governments directly affect demand for goods and services, and subsequently the demand of employers for employees. These actions create economic forces that affect pay. The government more directly affects compensation through wage controls

and guidelines, which limit increases in compensation for certain workers at certain times, and laws that regulate wage rates, hours of work, prevent discrimination, and require certain benefits (Milkovich *et al.* 1994: 536).

Although many African countries have taken important steps toward restructuring their public services by downsizing them, less progress has been made in revamping pay and promotion policies. Cost-cutting measures need to be accompanied by bold reforms to improve quality. Before 1985, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa had seen their nominal wage bills expand. This was due, in large part, to a rapid increase in public service employment—in some countries, the number of public servants rose by as much as 10 percent a year. This expansion reflected the high degree of government intervention in the economy as well as the need to educate and provide health care to growing populations. Additionally, the state often guaranteed public service jobs for graduates of institutions of higher education. Public service employment was also a reward for political patronage (Lienert 1998).

The rapid expansion of employment had been facilitated by reducing salaries, especially those at the higher end of the pay scale. Overstaffing and low salaries had adverse consequences, including poor staff morale and a decline in work effort, difficulties in recruiting and retaining technical and professional staff, non-transparent forms of remuneration, especially non-wage benefits in cash or in kind; and strong incentives to accept bribes. Additionally, the nominal wage bill increasingly contributed to growing fiscal deficits in many African countries. Its increase relative to non-wage expenditures also had unfortunate results—teachers and health workers often lacked the materials they needed to do their jobs, roads were no longer maintained, law enforcement officers did not have vehicles (Lienert 1998).

Proposed reform goals and strategies were undertaken to correct weaknesses. In implementing these reforms, governments sought to downsize the public service to make it more affordable and to bring it into line with a new scaled-down role for government in economic activities; provide public servants with appropriate incentives, skills, and motivation; and enhance management and accountability. Initially, governments concentrated on "first-generation" reforms—those contributing primarily to macroeconomic stabilization. These focused on quantitative adjustments to the wage bill, particularly by reducing staff or redeploying them to priority sectors. A first, relatively painless step was to remove "ghost" workers from the payroll. Governments also sought alternatives for delivery of public services, such as subcontracting them to the private sector. Given the high level of government expenditure relative to tax revenues, many countries opted to reduce real wages further. Although cutting costs by squeezing real wages contributes to macroeconomic stability, beyond a certain point it becomes counterproductive. If public sector wages continue to be eroded in comparison with private sector salaries, skilled staff members leave the civil service and those who remain become demoralized, and moonlighting, absenteeism, and corruption increase. To address these problems, countries are now attempting to attain a more appropriate balance between quantitative and qualitative adjustments. "Second-generation" reforms include the following:

- Restructuring remuneration so as to narrow differentials with the private sector;
- changing promotion and personnel management policies so that merit and initiative are rewarded;
- reassessing the mix of wage and non-wage spending, particularly in priority sectors; and
- providing training to upgrade skills.

The multiple objectives of first- and second-generation reforms can give rise to conflicts. For example, when it comes to restructuring salaries, governments that have large fiscal deficits and lack the political commitment (which usually means laying off staff) often have no alternative but to reduce real wages further. However, this runs counter to the need to increase real salaries in order to stem the outflow of skilled public servants to better-paid nongovernmental jobs. Hence, there is a need for bold and comprehensive reforms, with prioritised goals. Salaries still need to be restructured comprehensively to enhance transparency and improve the ability of governments to recruit and retain skilled staff. In restructuring salaries, although a number of changes are needed, fiscal realities will dictate the pace of progress. Further reforms include the following:

- Replacing automatic "in-grade" salary increases and promotions that are based solely on seniority by policies that reward the most competent staff members (whatever their ages) and penalize poor performers; and
- systematically monitoring public/private salary differentials for jobs that require the same skills and experience, and reducing and eventually eliminating wage gaps for comparable jobs (Lienert 1998).

According to Jitendra (1997), most progress to date has been in quantitative adjustment, often to the detriment of public service quality. The need for further fiscal adjustment could be one guideline to use in deciding whether or not to make further cuts in the nominal wage bill. If, for example, the wage bill of a country still exceeds, say, 40 percent of budgetary revenue, the focus on containing costs will probably need to continue, although attention should also be paid to improving the structure of remuneration. However, if a country has a relatively low wage bill/revenue ratio, the focus might be on increasing



salaries for skilled professionals, especially if these salaries are much lower than those for comparable positions in the private sector.

Indeed, in many countries there is an urgent need to increase remuneration for professional, technical, and managerial positions. This would not only stem the outflow of good performers but also reduce corruption, since low salaries are highly correlated with public service corruption. Reforms also need to address non-wage factors that encourage corruption, such as the lack of explicit performance standards, highly subjective recruitment and promotion procedures, and failure to apply administrative sanctions, for example, in instances where workers are not present in the workplace for the required number of hours. More generally, reforms are needed to improve public service management (Jitendra 1998).

Assistance from donors should continue to be essential for designing and financing comprehensive reform strategies. This includes advice on merit-based compensation and promotion policies, modified civil service regulations, and reforms of public service pension systems. The ultimate success of public service reforms will depend, however, on the political willingness to implement wide-ranging reform policies with the emphasis on inclusion and a participatory approach.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that wage and compensatory policies are important in determining the pace of public sector reform, especially when they are used as a means to motivate the human resource component in the public sector to meet performance standards. However, there is a growing realisation that the human resource component has to be complimented by other interventions if the pace of public sector reform has to be maintained and objectives achieved. Some of the interventions that can be used to compliment the human resource component are the deployment and optimal use of information and communication technologies in the

public sector. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 2001 Human Development Report has observed people all over the world have high hopes that these new technologies will lead to healthier lives, greater social freedoms, increased knowledge and more productive livelihoods (UNDP 2001: 1). The role of information and communication technologies in enhancing public service delivery is considered in the next section.

## **2.10 ENHANCING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Generally, developed and developing countries live in exciting challenging times. The green-field scenario in which countries can plan and implement using contemporary technology gives societies the chance to leap decades of iterative evolution to support a reformed administration and a more informed and better-served public. The ultimate objective is to provide access to government services when it is needed, where it is needed, and how it is needed. Taken in a national context, a nation has the opportunity to redress the predicament it experienced as the industrial age passed by. Yet there is the threat of a menacing widening development gap. Much depends on the expertise of politicians and policy-makers in harnessing society's new tools. At the same time, there is an increasing rate of obsolescence and renewal of technology and its software components, coupled with pressures to meet heightened aspirations and global competitiveness (Sant 1997).

As governments embark on upgrading their information and communication technology (ICT), a new and often unsustainable financial burden is being introduced into the national budget to keep technologies current as well as reasonably standard and consistent.

Many countries have to reconcile this investment with the harsh competing realities of sub-standard public services. The financial payback resulting from information and communication technology often trails the relevant investment by several years and is frequently not managed and dissipates in the wash of time. Clearly, alternatives to central budget provisioning such as public-private-sector partnerships have to evolve as the need for more investment in information and communication technology emerges. The issue of sustainability has another dimension, which is that of adequate human resourcing and the procurement of capability. There comes a point in development where the rate of progress and sustainability becomes very much dependent on the supply and quality of appropriate skills in the market both public sector as well as private. This issue needs to be addressed in a wider context within a country's national ICT strategy. The public service needs to develop and retain core competencies at least a capability to manage development. It needs also to recognize, however, that large central departments may now be an anachronism that, as the economic environment improves, it becomes harder to retain scarce resources within the public service and that the fast pace of technological innovation requires that managers judiciously procure and manage skills from the market. In this way, the public service can leverage the development of an indigenous ICT capability (Sant 1997).

The importance of registering a payback on investment merges the need to uphold value for money. The return on investments must often be qualitative. This is important because at the end government accounting and public accountability are measured and judged in money terms that are the stark reality. Governments will have gone a long way if, at the outset, they look at technology not as the end in itself, but as an instrument enabling the re-engineering of government and its processes. Otherwise, the new systems threaten to become simply one more layer on the thickening crust of legislation,

regulations and procedures that increasingly obscures the underlying principle of government, that is, to serve the public effectively and expeditiously. This re-engineering requires bold decisions on the part of politicians and policy-makers. Areas of influence may have to be relinquished. Entire functions may be redeployed and trust in other agencies is required. It also requires ownership of technology-driven change by non-technical persons with clear accountability - not just for a technically successful system, but more significantly, for the benefits, payback and savings that were meant to result. All too often, these are swept under the carpet and no one is held accountable. Expenditure in information and communication technology will progressively consume a greater proportion of the national budget of a country. It is imperative to strike an overall balance between rate of investment and rate of return. It is relatively easy to develop new systems. By contrast, it is a painfully slow matter to change the management culture, work ethics and motivation in the public service to do justice to the new technology tools and their attendant substantial investments. In the end, it is the human and cultural factors that play a determining role in how far and how fast progress is achieved. As technical catalysts on the development stage, it is important to do well to recognize the context within which everyone labours and to accept that the meaning of development and delivery must include the widest connotations of change-management and human issues. A system is not delivered and a job is not done until management down the line pro-actively exploits its full potential (Sant 1997).

As policy-makers and actors in the effective application of Information and Communication Technologies, governments are facing new responsibilities driven by the technology push. There is a growing need to address the real world of human interactions. At the end of the line is a member of the public. Managers therefore need to update their awareness of how the new technologies may be exploited. These

innovative developments transcend departmental and ministry boundaries and indeed can open up government to direct public interaction and public information for the further cultivation of democratisation (Sant 1997).

The next rubric presents the current Eritrean situation in light of the aforementioned theoretical concepts and principles that are discussed and elaborated in this rubric.

### **3 PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM, SERVICE DELIVERY, AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN ERITREA**

The public service is the machinery that governments rely on to design, formulate and implement policies, strategies and programs, and to discharge all routine government functions. Good government is usually synonymous with an efficient and effective public service. Such a service promotes, through the political leadership, an enabling environment for the social, political and economic development of the country. Therefore, the prevailing weaknesses in the institutions and economies of African countries, as is the case for other developing countries, are to a significant extent a reflection of the weaknesses in their public service institutions. The current reality of the Eritrean Public Service is no exception. The problems that characterize the poor state of public service systems in African regions include: excessively high levels of government employment especially of unskilled personnel, low and inequitable compensation levels for the civil servants, non-transparent and patronizing basis for appointments and promotions, ineffective training programs, emphasis on bureaucratic procedures and practices, excessively centralized decision making, low budgetary allocations to operations and maintenance expenditures and a generally poor work environment.

However, scarcity of financial, technical and managerial resources severely constrain the ability of governments of developing countries to sustain a comprehensive Public Service Reform Program. Furthermore, even when the financial, technical and managerial resources are in place, the challenges of the complexities and sensitivities of some of the public service reform processes (such as downsizing and pay reform) remain challenging. Another common

challenge is ensuring effective sequencing of implementation activities in order to ensure efficiency and sustainability.

It is submitted that because the range of administrative problems, and the economic and political urgency of solving these problems, African governments need a strategic framework for public service reform. This should be based on a vision of the role of the state, and take into account leadership, commitment, governance, economic reforms, sequencing, ministerial restructuring, decentralization, downsizing, pay and incentives, capacity building, service delivery, aid mechanisms, and change management processes. Because of the enormity and political sensitivity of the task, and the severe limitations on capacity to manage reform, such a framework takes time to fully implement in most countries.

The purpose of public service reform is to improve the effectiveness and performance of the public service and to ensure its affordability and sustainability over time. The ultimate goal is to raise the quality of public services delivered to the population and to enhance the capacity to carry out core government functions. This is essential to promote sustained economic and social development. Public service reform programs generally seek to improve both core functions, for example revenue generation, financial management, personnel management, policy formulation as well as sector specific policy, management and organization. Both aspects need to be covered in a coordinated manner.

This section of the research centres on discussing the current realities of the Eritrean Public Sector posture towards the delivery of public goods and services. In discussing this, focus will be on the way human resources are managed and the institutional weaknesses for effective and efficient service delivery.

### **3.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE ERITREAN PUBLIC SECTOR**

Through out its history Eritrea had been under successive colonialism. It was a colony of Italy (1889-1941), a military administrative mandate of Great Britain (1941-1951), a federal state with Ethiopia (1952-1962), an annexed region of the Ethiopian Empire (1962-1991), and a fully independent state since 1991.

Eritrea, emerging from a long and devastating war, is struggling to succeed in the creation of a democratic and economically self-sufficient state without the burden of crushing debt or donor dependency. This challenge will likely be as difficult as its war for independence. In its quest to rebuild, Eritrea is met with human and institutional deficits that impair virtually everything it hopes to accomplish. The colonial legacy of severely underdeveloped human resources lies in Eritrea. Since the annexation of Eritrea by the Ethiopian empire, and most markedly during the "Dergue" regime in Ethiopia, the personnel administration suffered from lack of funding attention from central authorities (Profile Eritrea 1993: 6). From management and economic standpoint, the country was decapitated. The current weaknesses and problems of the public service are also underpinned by administrative centralization, the lack of planned and rational management of human resources, the failure to apply meritocracy in the recruitment and selection of public servants, inadequate and irrelevant academic and professional training for national manpower, and lack of clearly scaled wage and compensatory structures.

After independence, the government of Eritrea established several departments with specific functions and powers (Legal Notice No. 4/1993). However, the establishment of ministries, commissions, and departments was not enough. That is, structural and operational



change was necessary to transform the public sector to provide efficient and effective services to the public. These structural and operational changes are being undertaken through public sector reform efforts in Eritrea.

### **3.2 THE PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM EFFORTS IN ERITREA**

Generally, "reform" is a buzzword that, for the most part, has lost its meaning. The modern definition of reform is that of subtle repression, or engineered change. The idea of reform became popular in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s to denote a change that was seen as a break with the past. The process of creating an effective and efficient Public Service in Eritrea has been ongoing since independence in 1991. In 1995/96, the government of Eritrea has undertaken initiatives for Public Service Reform. The overall objective of the reform process was to build an efficient and effective public sector that is accessible and capable of serving the needs of the public. The building of a modern state, which is able to ensure the transition from centralized management to democratic and participatory management involving the various agents of society in decision-making processes, demands a professional and capable public service. In accomplishing this objective, the initiative was to create an efficient and effective public service that is characterized by customer orientation, transparency, accountability, courtesy, responsiveness, and decentralization with optimal flexibility and facility (Bahta & Isack 2000: 2).

To meet these challenges, a task force was established in 1995/96 to study the internal structures of each ministry, on the basis of functional review, to determine what staff would be needed based on the new structure. The process of downsizing started right after the completion of the functional review. About 10,000 staff members (of

the total 30,000) were retrenched, mostly messengers, cleaners and secretaries below executive level, and other clerical staff. Retrenchments have also been carried out in parastatals and the Municipality of Asmara. Unlike other downsizing programs in Africa, this was not voluntary. The retrenched were paid six months pay plus any pension entitlement. Salary increments were granted to those who remained, in most cases double the pre-existed salary. The Eritrean experience with downsizing was unusual in Africa because the process was not deeply studied with phases and the speed of action, which took less than a year. It is worth noting that the government decided to reduce the number of people employed in the public sector from 30,000 to 20,000, in 1995/96. The effectiveness of the downsizing process was not fruitful because after the war many unqualified former freedom fighters were employed in key areas of the public administration. The objective of the downsizing process was to streamline the public service for the provision of effective and responsive services to the public (UNDP Re-conceptualising Governance 1997: 8). However, the public service reform effort in Eritrea has to take into account the current realities of public administration in Eritrea if it has to succeed.

### **3.3 CURRENT REALITIES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN ERITREA**

Good governance depends in part on a public service that is efficient and responsive, and improving public-sector management for the success of policy reforms. Sound macro-economic and decentralized governmental frameworks depend on an effective public service. The ability of Eritrea to implement policy reforms is seriously constrained by the lack of capacity of skilled personnel in the public sector. The essential management problem is that there is a significant gap between the existing skills in the public service and what is needed in

the Eritrean public-sector. Human resources capacity deficits impair virtually all development challenges. The long civil war prevented the education and training of personnel for the public service. The shortcomings are apparent in financial, personnel, and technical management. There is a performance gap in the way bureaucrats plan, budget, program, organize, staff, implement, control, monitor, and evaluate basic bureaucratic procedures. In addition, there are gaps in the capacity to develop targeted and sustainable policies in most sectors as well as the capacity to carry out simple clerical and computer-based activities at middle and lower levels of public administration. Most of the new entrants into the public service are ex-fighters, recognized by their contributions on the battlefield but lacking adequate education and modern management skills required to function effectively and efficiently in the public sector. The question is, to what extent the public administration apparatus has the capacity to live up to the ambitions of management. The responsibility of ensuring that the government meets this demand rests, on a large extent on its public service excellence. To meet this demand, the public service on its part needs to have the capacity to address this imbalance, in terms of not only material resources but also more importantly by having the right human resources base. This human resource base should have the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to address the current and emerging challenges (UNDP Re-conceptualising Governance 1997).

To ensure that the public service is equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes, it can be submitted that, there is a need for strategic human resources management planning which encompasses the broad elements of job analysis, recruitment and selection, training and development, and more importantly, wage structures and incentives. Each of these elements is discussed in details in the following sections.

### **3.4 STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN THE ERITREAN PUBLIC SECTOR**

Strategic planning is a process in which organizations define their mission (the reason of their existence), establish goals that are consistent with their missions, and environmental realities, and pursue their goals strategically and proactively.

According to Bahta and Isack (2000: 4), in the Eritrean Public Service, the strategic planning begins with high-ranking officials (ministers and directors general, including human resource managers), establishing organizational goals, and the strategies (as stated in the Blue Paper of Macro Policy) for achieving organizational goals. After organizational goals and strategies have been established, the strategic planning process moves to lower level of the organization. Line managers and personnel officers meet to forecast human resource needs and plan how to obtain and develop them, evaluate the level of employee morale, and assess work performance. In the areas of human resources management, the primary objective is to ensure that human resource policies, programs and practices are systematically linked to the strategic needs of the organization.

Despite the apparent benefits of linking human resources management with strategic needs of the organization, strategic planning has been constrained by lack of time, lack of clearly defined vision and mission statements, lack of professional skills, knowledge and attitudes, and commitment from high level management. It has been also derailed by political pressures and by the changing environment (internally and externally) (Bahta and Isack 2000: 4-5).

The following elements are crucial in strategic public human resource management in Eritrea.

### **3.5 JOB ANALYSIS IN THE ERITREAN PUBLIC SECTOR**

One of the ultimate objectives of the human resources management in Eritrea is to provide a satisfying and rewarding career structure, which is comparable to the private sector. The concept of continuous improvement is accepted as a basic business philosophy in every country around the world. This philosophy has encouraged countries to rethink the fundamental principles that underlie the design of jobs and the way they are carried out. Whether it is called job analysis, job review, or job classification, the systematic process of compiling a description of the work to be done, the skills needed, the training and experience required for various jobs, and a forecast of the future direction of the organization, is essential in making intelligent decisions in the workforce. Job analysis is a process to identify and determine in detail the particular job duties for a given job. That is, the analysis is conducted on the job, not the person (De Cenzo and Robbins in Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 262).

Job description, on the other hand, is a written description of the traits and tasks that the individual needs to do the job. Job description is a key element that demands cognisance before even employee recruitment and selection. Job description avoids the ambiguities that can be encountered by the public service from the recruitment and selection of unqualified personnel. Job description should be backed up by proper job evaluation and follow up for deficit corrections. Generally, almost all organizations conduct job analysis and design job descriptions (De Cenzo and Robbins in Swanepoel *et al.* 2000: 268). The problem with most job descriptions in the Eritrean Public Service is lack of clarity and flexibility to cope with the pace of

the changing environment. Moreover, many job descriptions are out of date because of changes on the jobs even if the job title has not changed. Job descriptions were being provided by the Civil Personnel Administration (CPA) in the Eritrean Public Service before each government institution was given the authority to design its own job description through its respective ministry (Interview with Mr. Ghirmay Ghebremeskel, Director of the CPA).

### **3.6 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESSES IN ERITREA**

Recruitment and selection are the core organizational elements, which need prior attention for successful attainment of organization objectives. Organizational strategic planning should incorporate these key elements with the ultimate objective of developing policies and practices for recruitment, selection, and promotion that are fair and transparent in the placement of the right person in the right place at the right time. The rationale is to introduce transparent, fair, and merit based recruitment, selection, and promotion systems in the public service.

Recruitment channels include both external (advertisement through the mass media) and internal recruitment to attract a pool of candidates. Successful applicants depending on the type of their qualities related to specific jobs are selected through structured interviews, written exams and practical testing. In the Eritrean Public Sector, there are assessment centres especially for secretarial jobs. According to the Eritrean Civil Personnel Administration (ECPA), studies are also underway to develop professional selection processes using assessment centre techniques, which include presentations, group discussions and psychometric testing. Recruitment is also carried out through departments such as the Labour Office and Civil Personnel Administration (CPA) (Bahta and Isack 2000: 6). However,

the recruitment and selection process in Eritrea is not without challenges. These challenges are discussed in the next section.

### **3.6.1 Challenges in recruitment and selection in the Eritrean public sector**

The challenges facing the Eritrean public sector in the process of recruitment and selection are many and varied. They range from the recruitment and selection of unqualified individuals, which is characterized by the lack of correlation between the specific job and the appointed individuals. This in turn leads to the placement of the wrong person in the right place and the right person in the wrong place. Selection on merit is fundamental to ensuring that the Public Service recruits and promotes people of the highest calibre. The aim is to ensure that the person selected is, of the available applicants, the person best suited for the position, on the basis of his or her skills, experience, abilities, personal attributes, future potential as well as the need to achieve a representative and a diverse workforce in the public service. In addition to this, there is no legislative framework or policy document, which clearly governs and binds recruitment and selection procedures in the public service. Furthermore, there is no any working code of conduct, which guides and holds public servants accountable and responsible should they commit any discriminatory act in the process of recruitment and selection. Finally, the public attitude to fairness and societal values (human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms) are fundamental issues that need to be considered. The responsibility of ensuring that these values are upheld rests on the government. To ensure that these values are reflected in its actions, the government in turn depends on its public managers.

Despite the challenges encountered in the recruitment and selection processes within the Eritrean public sector, some of the interventions that have been deployed to deal with challenges have been training and development of human resources. The next section addresses the issue of training and human resource development in the Eritrean public sector.

### **3.7 TRAINING AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ERITREAN PUBLIC SECTOR**

Training objectives in public administration should be directly linked to the needs of the community in order to determine and deliver an efficient, needs-directed and cost-effective public service.

The government of Eritrea believes that its people are the potential resources, which it can depend upon. The government has recognized that the Eritrea public service will not advance without skilled workforce. Focus has been given to the training and development of public servants with an ultimate objective of:

- Establishing of the public service as a " learning" organization within which the continuous development of individuals is seen as a key for change agent;
- identifying activities other than training that enhance individual knowledge and development; and
- developing training policies, programs, and plans which are properly funded (Bahta and Isack 2000: 11).

After independence, the Eritrean government inherited about 30,000 workforces from the Ethiopian regime. Most of the workers were not competent enough to run the public and non-public organizations. In



September 1992, the Provisional Government of Eritrea requested UNDP and Management Development Program to assist in examining the public sector management program. In January 1993, the group published its report entitled Public Sector Management Program for Eritrea - A Diagnostic. The study identified lack of skills in public policy formulation; management and evaluation; public sector management; human resources planning development and management; project planning, formulation, implementation and evaluation; computer skills appropriate to the needs of departments; technical, vocational and agricultural support; and facilities, equipments and materials to support all types of training (Andrews 2001).

In April 1994, the government organized training needs assessment study for the public sector management and identified training gaps (institutional training gaps), developed training programs to close the training gaps, proposed the establishment of the Eritrean Institute of Management (EIM) to administer the training programs, and established an inter-ministerial steering committee to coordinate training efforts to improve the quality of its public servants with modern management techniques. The long-term objective of this program is to contribute to improved organizational performance and productivity of each ministry, public managers, commissions and authorities, and the private sector in line with the objectives of the National Development Plan and the Development Strategy of the Macro-Policy of the government (Andrews 2001).

The Eritrean Institute of Management (EIM) in Embatkalla is basically an in-service training centre for public servants. Most of the training was done through the Institute of Training in an attempt to address the backlog in the training of public servants through the provision of purposeful, systematic, coordinated and effective courses and seminars based on specific needs. Unfortunately, this addressed a

narrowly defined band of needs, with particular emphasis on management, who are predominantly ex-combatants. The lack of government service training policy and programs (in terms of legislation and human factors reality) has led to fragmented and uncoordinated approach to training within all government sectors. Training is conducted on an *ad hoc* basis and focuses on basic management procedures, relationships, techniques and courses related to specific job functions. Insufficient attention is therefore paid to career advancement and performance evaluation (UNDP 2001).

The Constitution of the State of Eritrea was ratified, although not yet enacted, on May 24, 1997. It made ambitious promises as set out in the Preamble to the Constitution that states, *inter alia*: “the recognition, protection and securing of the rights and freedoms of citizens, human dignity, equality will guarantee a balanced development; lay down the groundwork for satisfying the material and spiritual needs of citizens; usher in a democratic order that is responsive to the needs and interests of citizens, guarantees their participation and brings about economic development, social progress and harmony” (see Preamble of the Constitution of the State of Eritrea 1997). The other concern of the Constitution worth considering in the present discussion is chapter 2 (Article 9, Section 1 and 2) of the Constitution. It states that:

- (1) Eritrea shall have an efficient, effective, and accountable public service; and
- (2) all administrative institutions shall be free from corruption, discrimination, and delay in the delivery of services.

To ensure that these promises are fulfilled and be workable on the ground, the government must come up with sustainable policies and programs in line with the ideas set out in the Constitution.

There is a view that access to decent public service is the expectation of the public. Taking into consideration the extent, complexity and changing nature of public issues and the consequent challenges facing public managers, management training and development are extremely important. Intensive training programs should be established to ensure that public managers and employees remain well informed. However, these training programs should not only follow traditional training approaches, but should focus more on integrating the traditional and new approaches that will address the current realities in Eritrea. The current reality reveals that the Eritrean Public Sector is filled with unqualified workforce lacking the necessary skills, knowledge, and aptitude to deal with the desired reform process. To ensure that the public service is equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes, there is a need for training, retraining and development of the current Personnel and Projects management (UNDP 2001: 79). One of the objectives that training in the Eritrean public sector should meet is to ensure that there is employment equity in the public sector and to ensure that elements of discrimination are eliminated. These concepts are discussed in the following sections.

### **3.8 EMPLOYMENT EQUITY IN THE ERITREAN PUBLIC SECTOR**

The principle that "all persons are equal under the law" is enshrined in the Eritrean National Constitution. Accordingly, "no person may be discriminated against on account of race, ethnic origin, language, colour, gender, religion, disability, age, political view, socio-economic status, or other improper factors" (the Constitution of the State of Eritrea Art.14 (2)). In the realm of labour, Transitional Labour Code of Eritrea (TLCE) does not have detailed provisions in respect of the right to equality of opportunity and treatment in employment and occupation. Nevertheless, Art. 96/7/TLCE provides that it shall be an

unfair labour practice for an employer to discriminate on grounds of "race, tribe, religion or sex". It is important to keep in the forefront the principles that provide crucial protection for employees from arbitrary and discriminatory treatment, and protections to the public to minimize patronage, promote fairness, and create a professional and stable workforce.

### **3.9 DISCRIMINATION IN THE ERITREAN PUBLIC SECTOR – THE EX-COMBATANT – CIVILIAN DICHOTOMY**

That Eritrea has gone through a protracted war of attrition against a former Ethiopian regime is common knowledge. A large portion of the fighters who foiled the then mammoth Ethiopian army during the three-decade warfare presently find themselves employed in the civil sector and other public undertakings.

Consultations of the writer reveal that there is a "considerable disparity" in the wage compensatory system of the country in respect of the monthly earning of ex-combatants and the rest of the workforce both in the civil service and government owned enterprises. This disparity is characterized as a "blatant discrimination" on the premise that the wage scaling system currently in use in Eritrea gives an undue preferential treatment to ex-combatants. On the other hand, a senior official from the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare who conceded the alleged disparity in the earnings of ex-combatants and civilian workers of comparable qualifications remarked "this was not an intentional exercise on the part of the government to pursue a policy of discrimination among its citizens" (interview with Mr. Yohannes Haile). The officer further reasoned that the former fighters who had to lose so much to actualise the Eritrean liberation deserve to be compensated. In this connection, the director of Civil Personnel Administration (CPA) revealed that the present system of wages in the

public sector was meant to serve for a period of time not exceeding six months and added that it has persistently been made the subject of criticism and debate since its adoption.

As per the first provision of the Discrimination (Occupation and Employment) Convention, any distinction, exclusion or preference made on any of the prohibited grounds constitutes discrimination for purposes of the Convention and is hence proscribed. It appears difficult, however, to contend, based on the data at hand, that the present disparity in wages constitutes discrimination on the basis of "political opinion" which is one of the disallowed grounds. It should be born in mind that the majority of Eritreans are members of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), which is the ruling party of the day. Besides, the Convention in question does not preclude discrimination for justifiable reasons designed to provide "special protection or assistance" to special categories of workers who deserve the same (Art.5 (2) of Convention No.111). Yet, it is wise to assess the problem at hand taking account of some additional facts, which offer a better picture of the situation in the country.

It merits to be noted that the Government of Eritrea has promulgated a Proclamation to determine the extent and scope of compensation of ex-fighters in 1993 (Proclamation No.46/1993). Accordingly, every ex-fighter is entitled to compensatory pay of \$30 for each month of service in the armed struggle. As per Article 3/3 of the said Proclamation, the compensation, which is determined in accordance thereof "shall be taken as the debt of the State of Eritrea and shall be implemented in accordance with upcoming legislation. Nevertheless, (the debt) shall count legal interest as of the date of the promulgation of this Proclamation". Over and above this compensatory dues, it is claimed that the bulk of "key position" in the public service as well as the nationalized undertakings are presently occupied by ex-combatants and that they tend to get preferential treatment in terms

of the acquisition of land, licenses and other benefits. A clear manifestation of this is the decision of the government according to which ex-fighters in the public service were allowed to import tax-free automobiles. Although it is difficult to venture into conclusions in the absence of a thorough situational analysis on demobilized fighters, the continuity of the present wage differentials between ex-combatants and the rest of the workforce in the public sector should hinge on whether or not the former still deserve "special protection and assistance" in terms of the Art.5/2/ of Convention No. 111. Should the answer be affirmative, there is a reasonable possibility that the instant wage fixing machinery for the public sector to be potentially at variance with said instrument.

The discrimination controversy in the public service emanates from the immediate needs to redress the current wage and compensatory imbalances or disparities between the ex-combatants and the rest of the workforce. These controversies are significantly attributed to the delays in the promulgation of various laws (the Constitution and other relevant legislations), inadequate financial management systems and procedures, and controlling mechanisms in public sector management.

One of the mechanisms that can be deployed in the Eritrean public sector to ensure equity, guard against discrimination and heal the social schisms that have resulted from the ex-combatants - civilian dichotomy, is the decentralisation of the public sector for service excellence. This concept is discussed in detail below.

### **3.10 DECENTRALISATION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

General core aspects of decentralization in the public service incorporate fairness, equity, accessibility, transparency, accountability, participation, and professionalism. The ultimate objective of decentralization is to achieve optimum efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services through flexible management of human and material resources. According to the Decentralization Proclamation No. 86 for the Establishment of Regional administration (PERA 1996), Eritrea is a unitary state divided into units of local government. This initiative was aimed at the transfer of operational authority and responsibility to regional administrations and public enterprises with specific statutory provisions. The statutory provisions for the local government discussed in the section below.

#### **3.10.1 Statutory provisions for local government**

The principle of local government is provided for in the Constitution of Eritrea ratified in May 1997. Article 1(5) of the Constitution states that: "Eritrea is a unitary state divided into units of local government. The powers and duties of these units shall be determined by law". The law in question was actually promulgated before the adoption of the Constitution. The Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) enacted Proclamation No. 86 for the Establishment of Regional Administrations (PERA) in 1996. Briefly, PERA provided for the creation of six Zobas (or regions) in the country made up of sub-Zobas and these sub-Zobas in turn made up of Kebabis (villages). These regions were carved out of the ten pre-existing provinces "inherited" from the former Ethiopian administration. "Legislative" or "representative" bodies were provided for at the Zoba and Kebabi

(village) levels. There are elected Baitos (regional assemblies) for the Zobas and Megaba'ayas for the Kebabis (villages). Megaba'ayas are not representative bodies, but are made up of all adult residents in their respective villages/areas. For each level of local government, PERA provides for an "executive" body, regional administrations, sub-regional administrations, and village/area administrations. There are also provisions for town administrations, which can be broadly conceptualised as sub-regions, with the singular difference to rural sub-regions being that towns are expected to have Baitos with functions identical to those of regional Baitos.

In addition, PERA includes provisions for the allocation of powers and duties between central and local government. Broadly, central government is to retain specific powers and duties over sectors such as defence and national security, foreign and international affairs, economic policy, higher education, justice, citizenship issues and major communication infrastructure. For other sectors, central government is to retain common powers and duties such as policy formulation, research, and technical assistance to regions. According to the provisions of PERA (1996) regional administrations have the responsibilities (among others) to execute administrative, social service, and development programs, to prepare and implement regional development plans and budgets, and to prepare and allocate regional recurrent budgets.

A close reading of the provisions of the Proclamation reveals a number of inconsistencies and areas of ambiguity, *inter alia*:

- The unclear role and limited powers of the elected Baitos at Zoba level, particularly with regard to planning and budgeting in the regions, and their apparent subordination to the de-concentrated Zoba administration;



- the apparent duplication of programming and planning functions by both the Baitos and the Zoba administration;
- the lack of any representative bodies at sub-Zoba or Kebabi levels and the impracticality of the Megabaaya as an institutional mechanism for ensuring popular participation;
- the shortness (12 months) of Baito terms (although this is expected to be modified to four years once the National Constitution is implemented);
- the accountability of Baitos to their constituents appears to be in contradiction with their duty to report to the Ministry of Local Government (MLG);
- the problems inherent in the dual supervision arrangements for Zoba and sub-Zoba line department staff; and
- the lack of clear provisions for fiscal decentralization.

Such inconsistencies and ambiguities are made more problematic by the fact that no detailed follow up directives, regulatory frameworks, procedures, systems and guidelines spelling out the methods of implementation by Zobas and sub-Zobas, and relations with central government have been drawn up or promulgated by the MLG. The absence of such directives has almost certainly made the implementation of the Proclamation extremely difficult. In more general terms, the formal provisions of the Proclamation are for "decentralization with consultation" rather than for devolution. In consequence, formal accountability mechanisms are still essentially upward and the full potential benefits of decentralization (greater service delivery, effectiveness and responsiveness through greater local input and downward accountability, local monitoring of line department performance, horizontal integration of local departmental planning and service delivery activities) are not likely to be fully realized (UNDP 1999).

### 3.10.2 Regional and Local Government in Practice

The six regions established by PERA are now well-established administrative units, as are the sub-Zobas and the Keبابis. Only a few empirical studies of local government administration and management in Eritrea have been carried out since PERA, all of them within the framework of the second phase of the Public Sector Management Program funded by UNDP. These recent studies have examined management issues in five urban municipalities (Asmara, Keren, Massawa, Ghindae, and Mendefera), as well as management in Zoba Ma'ekel (the region in and around Asmara). The study of financial management systems in the municipalities, carried out in 1999, highlights (UNDP 1999):

- The lack of an overall inter-governmental fiscal transfer structure and policy, identifying respective central and local tax and expenditure assignments and mechanisms to offset "fiscal gaps" at local level;
- specific problems of urban revenue mobilization due to unclear assignment of local tax sources, weak registration, valuation procedures, collection mechanisms, inadequate service-specific cost recovery, lack of trained personnel, and guidelines; and
- problems in the urban budgeting process - lack of public involvement, inadequate inter-departmental integration, and weak execution and control.

The report on Zoba Ma'ekel (commissioned in 2000 and which was intended to contribute towards establishing Total Quality Management for the region) raises many similar issues in the wider Zoba context. **Some of the conclusions of the report were that (UNDP 2000):**

- The regional Baito was a weak institutional actor due to the weak and unclear role assigned to Baitos within PERA (noted above), its lack of a secretariat and staff resources, and the limited involvement of the Baito in planning, budgeting, and oversight of budget implementation;
- planning and budgeting processes were weak due to the departmental fragmentation of procedures, and a narrowly focused budget committee;
- financial controls were weak due to the lack of budget discipline, internal control and audit procedures; and
- there is a regulatory void in the absence of procedures and guidelines laying out how Zoba business is to be conducted.

A major recommendation of PSMP is to establish a broad-based Zoba Budget Committee under the Chief Executive, with both department heads and Baito representatives as members, to be supported by a Budget Unit.

### **3.10.3 Sectoral decentralisation**

While the provisions of PERA concerning the allocation of responsibilities and powers between central government line ministries and decentralized authorities are relatively clear, they still remain not fully implemented. Many line ministries are still a long way from having shed their operational functions and restricting themselves to sectoral policy, regulation, technical claws, and research. Operational planning and budgeting remain largely sectoral rather than regional or sub-regional - in focus. The Ministry of Agriculture, for example, continues to manage the implementation of "National" Programs (both donor- and government funded), even though many of them involve coordination of activities at the Zoba level (UNDP 1999:33). A recent World Bank Review (2001: 15) of the agriculture sector also notes that budgeting responsibilities remain

with the central authorities. Much the same kind of comments can be made about the decentralization process in most other sectors.

There is little doubt that much remains to be done before regional and local government in Eritrea will exercise significant control over developmental, planning and budgeting activities. It is also clear that there is a continued need for "tinkering" with the existing institutional arrangements in order to increase downward accountability and transparency within local government.

It is important to note that the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) is well aware of general governance problems and constraints. The Common Country Assessment (CCA), undertaken by the UN system in Eritrea during 2000 in close consultation with government and other partners, examined governance in Eritrea and identified a number of key issues including: delays in the devolution of power; human resource constraints in the public sector; lack of awareness and appropriate mechanisms for the implementation of fundamental rights and freedoms; inadequate systems, procedures and controlling mechanisms in public sector management; persistent gender inequalities; delays in the promulgation of various laws; rigidity of internal structures; and backlog of unmet needs (UN 2000).

It is deduced that the decentralization of the public sector for the provision of efficient and responsive public service should aim at providing an institutional framework to devise and implement national, sectoral and workplace strategies, and to develop and improve the skills of the workforce. To integrate these strategies with the national development objectives, comprehensive policy initiatives are called for which focus on the shift from a centrally controlled and process-driven public service to outcome-focused services. To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the significance of information technology should not be underestimated.

### **3.11 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE ERITREAN PUBLIC SECTOR**

Information and communication technology provides public sector managers and decision makers with complete, accurate, timely and relevant information to deliver services, manage performance and personnel, and to enhance effective communication within and outside the organization. Moreover, it ensures secured storage and efficient retrieval of information and necessary documentation.

The Government of the State of Eritrea has established the Eritrean Information System Agency (EISA) to assist in the computerization of the operations of government. Although some government agencies operations have already been computerized, its scope and range of meeting the current and future needs of the public is limited (Bahta and Isack 2000: 8). It is submitted that lack of effective and efficient information and communication technology results in delays to undertake accurate and quality decisions on the right time. Communication between and among government departments is constrained due to lack of networking. Networking is an effective management tool in the public sector for effective communication and efficient service delivery. In this kind of scenario, investing in information technology becomes inevitable. It is evident that, in the short-term, investing in information technology is expensive. It demands skilled staff and professional competence for its excellence. It poses huge cost of training and skills development, dismantling the old culture and adopting change, and managing resistance to change. The question to be addressed is "what is the cost of investing and the cost of not investing in information technology for delivering improved public services". Even though the cost and pain it causes is huge, investing in information technology is not an option but a must for the

public service to be globally competitive. Thus, focus should be centred on the long-term return it generates. To be able to integrate information and communication technologies into the public sector reform processes in Eritrea, a performance management environment will have to be created.

### **3.12 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE ERITREAN PUBLIC SECTOR**

The success of the public sector in achieving its developmental objectives depends primarily on the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees carry out their duties. Managing performance is therefore a key human resource management tool to ensure that: employees know what is expected of them, managers know whether the performance of an employee is achieving the required organizational objectives, poor performance is identified and improved, and good performance is recognized and rewarded. The pressing challenge of the Eritrean Public Service is the absence of clearly and skilfully stated performance standards to managing performance. This is because performance management success is not the design of the system or the link of performance with pay, but the skill of the managers who operate it. Since the performance of every employee contributes to the overall achievement of the objectives of the organization, it follows that the performance of every employee should be managed (White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service 1997: 39).

It is evident from the preceding discussion that the current reality of the Eritrean public service faces many and varied challenges from both institutional and human resource capacity. These factors put extra pressures on the public service to deliver goods and services to the citizens. The magnitude of these pressures is enormous and the government has to rely on its public service corps to overcome these

pressures. Due to the new circumstances on the dynamic environment, traditional methods towards strategic human resources management, particularly the training and development of public managers cannot adequately prepare public managers and employees to meet the upcoming challenges before them. It merits to be noted that the Constitution of Eritrea states that the Public Service of Eritrea shall have an efficient, effective, and accountable administrative institutions dedicated to serve the people of Eritrea. It also further states that all administrative institutions shall be free from corruption, discrimination and delay in the delivery of efficient and equitable public services. What is therefore needed is a paradigm shift from a traditional human and material management to modern administrative competence guided by an overarching vision and mission for the reform not to fall between the idea and reality.

Further, it is worth posing the question whether Eritrea can learn lessons from elsewhere. The following section of the research presents the South African experience in public sector reform and service transformation which is believed to be a noble lesson to the Eritrean public sector.

#### **4 LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND SERVICE TRANSFORMATION EXPERIENCE**

The year 1994 marked a watershed in the history of South Africa. It ushered not only a new democratic order, but paved the way for revolutionary changes in the public service. During the years 1994 to 1998 extensive change was evident in South Africa and nowhere in the country was this change more dramatically felt than in the public service. The pressure for change in the public service was to a large extent self-propelled by the new democratic government, and also came vociferously from citizens, many of whom had voted for the first time in 1994, and had expectations of improved life conditions. Against this backdrop, South Africa faced many challenges and massive expectations. Among these are the needs to reduce poverty, redress historical imbalances, create employment, economic growth, create peace and stability, and develop investor confidence. In order for these to be realized, it needed a disciplined, honest, productive and integrated public service committed to the process of reform.

The reform of the public service had of necessity to focus on legislative as well as administrative reform. The legislative reform agenda had its roots in the principles drawn from the Interim Constitution of 1993, and the Constitution of 1996. Administrative reform focused on replacing the rule bound, command and control legacy of the apartheid regime with one that focused on reorienting public servants to serve the public in a customer focused way.

It is impossible to transform government and therefore the state without transforming the public service. The new era of true democracy ushered in a paradigm shift as reflected in the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) and later the White



Paper on Transforming the Public Service 1995 (WTPPS) and the Constitution of 1996. The RDP put in place a policy framework, which underpins the transformation of the South African society, while the Constitution 1996 brought into focus the principles that should inform the broader transformation process.

This research paper aims at justifying why such an approach is urgently required, as a lesson, for the Public Sector Reform and Service Delivery in Eritrea in terms of institutional and human factors reality. In attempting to do so, the discussion will centre on new legislative realities in the Republic. The concept "legislation" in this discussion is taken as an inclusive concept, which encompasses processes and documents ranging from Green Papers to Acts of Parliament (Venter 2001:53). Specifically, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), the Public Service Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994), the South African Qualifications Act, 1995 (Act 58 of 1995), the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995), the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998), and the Labour Relations Amendment Act, 1998 (Act 127 of 1998). The discussion also considers the various White Papers that have been formulated by the government and have an implication on the nature and conduct of the public service. In this regard, the White Papers that are discussed are: the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997), the White Paper on Public Service Training and Education (1997), and the White Paper on Human Resource Management for the Public Service (1997). Ultimately, proceeding from the insights drawn from the presentation of these legislations and various documents, this paper concludes by suggestions, which can be learned by the Eritrean Public Service as a lesson.

#### **4.1 THE NEW SOUTH AFRICAN REALITY IN TERMS OF LEGISLATION TOWARDS PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND TRANSFORMING SERVICE DELIVERY**

The new South African reality in terms of legislation towards public sector reform and service transformation derives from and is deeply rooted in the Constitution. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) reaffirms South Africa as a Constitutional and Republic state. The Constitution is the highest and most important law in the land. No other law or government action can supersede the provisions of the Constitution. However, in this research paper, other legislation apart from the Constitution will be discussed (as indicated above), in the confidence that it further promotes and entrenches the provisions of the Constitution. The discussion below begins by highlighting the value of constitutional supremacy under which state operations are guided and managed.

##### **4.1.1 The principle of "constitutional supremacy"**

South Africa operates under the premises of the principle of "Constitutional Supremacy". This concept has wide-ranging effects on the conduct of government and consequently, the public service. Under constitutional supremacy, the Constitution is the highest law, and all laws, actions and bodies exercising government power are subject to the Constitution. Parliamentary sovereignty does not apply and any law of Parliament or any action by another organ of state is unconstitutional if it is inconsistent with the Constitution. The courts have the power to declare such laws or actions invalid (Venter 2001: 89). In South Africa, the result of the adoption of the principle of constitutional supremacy was immediate and far-reaching. The

Constitution has become the yardstick for all government actions (Venter 2001: 90). The implication of this development is that no government action can contradict the provisions of the Constitution. This principle has implications on how public managers should behave themselves, because the Constitution binds a sitting government to various obligations.

#### **4.1.2 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) is the highest law in the Republic. The Constitution reflects the collective will of the South African people. In an event of coming to power, the government, and by implication its public service take an oath of affirmation to respect, protect and uphold the provisions of the Constitution. Thus, it is upon the government and its public service corps to live up to the constitutionally established norms and not the citizenry to forego the rights and privileges enshrined in the Constitution because of government or public service negligence, and/or failure.

One of the most exciting challenges that faced the South African government after the 1994 and 1999 elections is to enhance the process of transformation of public service delivery (Kroukamp 2002: 2). Government has identified the following priority areas for the transformation process: rationalization and restructuring to ensure a unified, integrated and leaner public service; institution building and management; representative and affirmative action; transforming service delivery to meet basic needs; democratisation of the state; human resource development; improving employment conditions and labour relations; the promotion of a professional service ethos; and information technology.

Government is committed to transforming the State from “an instrument of discrimination, control and domination, to an enabling agency, which serves and empowers all the people of the country in a fully accountable and transparent way”. In order to give effect to the transformation process, the government has adopted the following vision:

To continually improve the lives of the people of South Africa by a transformed public service which is representative, coherent, transparent, efficient, effective, accountable and responsive to the needs of all. This vision is reflected in the White Paper on Transforming the Public Service released in November 1995. This White Paper was a coherent guide that informed, managed and drove the transformation process. The goals set out in the Paper are further entrenched in the Constitution of 1996. Chapter 10 of the Constitution concerns itself with Public Administration and sets out the following basic values and principles governing public administration:

195. (1) Public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution, including the following principles:

- a) A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained;
- b) efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted;
- c) public administration must be development-oriented;
- d) services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- e) people’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making;

- f) public administration must be accountable;
- g) transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information;
- h) good human-resource management and career development practices, to maximize human potential, must be cultivated; and
- i) public Administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

(2) The above principles apply to:

- a) Administration in every sphere of government;
- b) organs of state; and
- c) public enterprises.

(3) National legislation must ensure the promotion of the values and principles listed in subsection (1).

(4) The appointment in public administration of a number of persons on policy considerations is not precluded, but national legislation must regulate these appointments in the public service.

(5) Legislation regulating public administration may differentiate between different sectors, administrations or institutions.

(6) The nature and functions of different sectors, administrations or institutions of public administration are relevant factors to be taken into account in legislation regulating public administration.

#### Public Service Commission

196. (1) There is a single Public Service Commission for the Republic.

(2) The Commission is independent and must be impartial, and must exercise its powers and perform its functions without fear, favour or prejudice in the interest of the maintenance of effective and efficient public administration and a high standard of professional ethics in

the public service. The Commission must be regulated by national legislation.

(3) Other organs of state, through legislative and other measures, must assist and protect the Commission to ensure the independence, impartiality, dignity and effectiveness of the Commission. No person or organ of state may interfere with the functioning of the Commission.

(4) The powers and functions of the Commission are:

- a) To promote the values and principles set out in section 195, throughout the public service;
- b) to investigate, monitor and evaluate the organization and administration, and the personnel practices, of the public service;
- c) to propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the public service;
- d) to give directions aimed at ensuring that personnel procedures relating to recruitment, transfers, promotions and dismissals comply with the values and principles set out in section 195;
- e) to report in respect of its activities and the performance of its functions, including any finding it may make and directions and advice it may give, and to provide an evaluation of the extent to which the values and principles set out in section 195 are complied with; and

Either of its own accord or on receipt of any complaint:

- To investigate and evaluate the application of personnel and public administration practices, and to report to the relevant executive authority and legislature;
- to investigate grievances of employees in the public service concerning official acts or omissions, and recommend appropriate remedies;

- to monitor and investigate adherence to applicable procedures in the public service; and
- to advise national and provincial organs of state regarding personnel practices in the public service, including those relating to the recruitment, appointment, transfer, discharge and other aspects of the careers of employees in the public service.

(5) The Commission is accountable to the National Assembly.

(6) The Commission must report at least once a year in terms of subsection (4)(e), to the National Assembly; and in respect of its activities in a province, to the legislature of that province.

(7) The Commission has the following 14 commissioners appointed by the President:

- a) Five commissioners approved by the National Assembly in accordance with subsection (8)(a); and
- b) one commissioner for each province nominated by the Premier of the province in accordance with subsection (8)(b).

(8) A commissioner appointed in terms of subsection (7)(a) must be:

- a) Recommended by a committee of the National Assembly that is proportionally composed of members of all parties represented in the Assembly; and
- b) approved by the Assembly by a resolution adopted with a supporting vote of a majority of its members.

A commissioner nominated by the Premier of a province must be:

- Recommended by a committee of the provincial legislature that is proportionally composed of members of all parties represented in the legislature; and
- approved by the legislature by a resolution adopted with a supporting vote of a majority of its members.

(9) An Act of Parliament must regulate the procedure for the appointment of commissioners.

(10) A commissioner is appointed for a term of five years, which is renewable for one additional term only, and must be a woman or a man who is:

- a) A South African citizen; and
- b) a fit and proper person with knowledge of, or experience in, administration, management or the provision of public services.

(11) A commissioner may be removed from office only on:

- a) The ground of misconduct, incapacity or incompetence;
- b) a finding to that effect by a committee of the National Assembly or, in the case of a commissioner nominated by the Premier of a province, by a committee of the legislature of that province; and
- c) the adoption by the Assembly or the provincial legislature concerned, of a resolution with a supporting vote of a majority of its members calling for the commissioner's removal from office.

(12) The President must remove the relevant commissioner from office upon:

- a) The adoption by the Assembly of a resolution calling for that commissioner's removal; or
- b) written notification by the Premier that the provincial legislature has adopted a resolution calling for that commissioner's removal.

(13) Commissioners referred to in subsection (7)(b) may exercise the powers and perform the functions of the Commission in their provinces as prescribed by national legislation.

Public Service



197. (1) Within public administration there is a public service for the Republic, which must function, and be structured, in terms of national legislation, and which must loyally execute the lawful policies of the government-of-the-day.

(2) The terms and conditions of employment in the public service must be regulated by national legislation. Employees are entitled to a fair pension as regulated by national legislation.

(3) No employee of the public service may be favoured or prejudiced only because that person supports a particular political party or cause.

(4) Provincial governments are responsible for the recruitment, appointment, promotion, transfer and dismissal of members of the public service in their administrations within a framework of uniform norms and standards applying to the public service.

It can be deduced from the above discussion that one of the strong aspects of the South African public sector is that its guiding principles and values are ingrained in the Constitution. In this way, the public sector exists to facilitate the realisation of the values of the South African society, *inter alia*: human dignity, achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. The lessons that can be learnt from the South African experience is that the government of Eritrea has to facilitate the development of a culture where the public service is run as per constitutional principles. However, it is also important to develop supplementary legislation and policies to serve as guidelines for the management of the public sector. In the following sections, various White Papers are considered, (as a supplementary policy to the constitutional principles) and the insights drawn related to the Eritrean public sector.

#### 4.2 White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997)

A Legislative Reform Program forms an integral part of the broader transformation process currently taking place in the country. The Constitution 1996 defines new powers and functions to the different organs of the public service and administration system in the country. However, there were problems with the Public Service Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994) that gave executive powers to the Public Service Commission. This was in conflict with the contemporary trends and with the provisions of the Interim Constitution 1993. There was a Constitutional imperative for the Minister of the Public Service and Administration to assume responsibility for formulating and executing policy. The Minister, as an elected figure, is accountable for policies to Parliament and to the public. Therefore, in 1996, the executive functions were transferred from the Public Service Commission to the Minister. This ushered in the second phase of the legislative reform program. This phase has culminated in the enactment of the Public Service Amendment Act, 1997 (Act 47 of 1997). In terms of the Act, powers and functions of different public service organs have been reorganized.

Administrative reform has taken place in two phases. The first phase was intensely focused on putting in place new policies that would radically transform the public service and further guide the actualisation of the objectives set out in the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service. The White Paper on the Transformation of Service Delivery, popularly known as the "*Batho Pele*" Principles, sets a broad framework for the enhancement of public service delivery in South Africa. It derives from the ~~constitutional provisions, especially the provisions of the Bill of Rights~~ and Public Administration discussed earlier. It notes that access to decent public service is no longer a privilege to be enjoyed by a few, it

is now the legitimate expectation of all citizens, especially those previously disadvantaged. To actualise this expectation, many new policies have been gazetted focusing on the following: changing the way services are delivered, human resource practices that empower individuals, performance management, affirmative action, training and education, revising labour relations and a new salary grading system (Malasingh 1998).

The "Batho Pele" (People First) initiative of 1997 is about building a public service capable of meeting the challenges of improving delivery of public services to the citizens of South Africa. Thus the "Batho Pele" initiative is premised on the fact that a transformed public service will be judged by one criterion alone: "the degree to which it succeeds in effectively delivering services which meet the basic needs of all South Africans". In advocating "*Batho Pele*", the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery requires national and provincial departments to identify:

- A mission statement for service delivery, together with service guarantees;
- the services to be provided, to which groups, and at which service charges; in line with the RDP priorities, the principle of affordability, and the principle of redirecting resources to areas and groups previously under-resourced;
- service standards, defined outputs and targets, and performance indicators, benchmarked against comparable international standards;
- monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and structures designed to measure progress and introduce corrective action, where appropriate;
- plans for staffing, human resource development and organisations capacity building, tailored to service delivery needs;

- the redirection of human and other resources from administrative tasks to service provision, particularly for disadvantaged groups and areas;
- financial plans that link budgets directly to service needs and personnel plans;
- potential partnerships with the private sector, NGO's and community organizations to provide more effective forms of service delivery;
- the development particularly through training, of a culture of customer care and of approaches to service delivery that are sensitive to issues of race, gender and disability; and
- plans for the introduction of continuous quality improvement techniques, in line with total quality management approach.

“Batho Pele” is meant to “put pressure on systems, procedures, attitudes and behaviour with the public service and reorient them in the customer’s favour, an approach, which puts the people first. It involves creating a framework for the delivery of public services, which treats citizens more like customers and enables them to hold public servants to account for the service they receive.” It calls for a shift away from bureaucratic systems, processes and attitudes, towards a new way of working which puts the needs of the public first and more responsive to the needs of the public. Furthermore, in order to ensure that service delivery is continuously improved, the “Batho Pele” initiative requires that national and provincial departments outline their short, medium and long-term goals for service provision. They are also required to provide regular reports for the delivery of improved service to their national and provincial legislatures on their achievements (White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery 1997).

The “Batho Pele” is underpinned by eight nationally set principles, which are couched in broad terms to enable all public service

departments to apply them within their unique circumstances. The principles are:

1. Consultation: Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered.
2. Service Standards: Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.
3. Access: All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled.
4. Courtesy: Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.
5. Information: Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.
6. Openness and Transparency: Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge.
7. Redress: If promised standard of service not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.
8. Value-for-Money: Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value-for-money.

#### **4.3 White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997)**

The White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service opens by observing that the post-1994 public service faces enormous challenges, both in terms of its own transformation, and in

terms of the transformation of the services, which it provides to the people of South Africa. It notes that these challenges are being tackled through a comprehensive program of policy initiatives underpinned by progressive legislative changes. The initiatives are to achieve a fundamental shift from a centrally controlled, process-driven public service to a service which:

- Is representative of all the people of South Africa;
- treats all public servants as a valuable resources;
- is focused on service delivery outcomes;
- assigns managerial responsibility for results, and for the resources consumed in producing them, to the lowest practicable level;
- holds public servants accountable for their actions, and
- conducts its business professionally, transparently and ethically.

The White Paper further underlines that people are the most valuable assets of the public service and managing human resources effectively and strategically must be the cornerstone of the wider transformation of the public service. Managing people in the South African Public Service has traditionally been seen as an administrative task undertaken by a specialist group of personnel functionaries applying centrally devised regulations and prescripts. The White Paper on Human Resource Management sets out a policy framework, which will accomplish the shift from personnel administration to human resources management. Deriving from the values set out in Chapter 10 of the Constitution discussed earlier, one of the purposes of the White Paper is to ensure the creation of a genuine culture of diversity within the Public Service and create a South African Public Service that is representative of the South African people. It observes that though previous barriers have been removed, there is still a long way to go in creating a genuine culture of diversity within the Public

Service. One way of addressing this and other inadequacies is the transformation of the human resource management practices that were designed in a different era for different purposes. The White Paper sets the following as its vision, mission, and values (White Paper on Human Resource Management for the Public Service 1997: 16).

Vision:

Human resource management in the Public Service will result in diverse competent and well-managed workforce; capable of and committed to delivering high quality services to the people of South Africa.

Mission:

Human resource management in the Public Service should become a model of excellence, in which service to society stems from individual commitment instead of compulsion. The management of people should be regarded as a significant task for those who have been charged with the responsibility and should be conducted in professional manner.

Values:

The values that guide human resource management in the public service are fairness, equity, accessibility, transparency, accountability, participation, and professionalism.

The White Paper states that turning into reality the vision of a diverse, competent, and well-managed workforce, capable of and committed to delivering high quality services to the people of south Africa, will require something close to a managerial revolution within the Public Service. Central to this revolution will be a shift from administering

personnel to managing people. Core to this concept are some central principles that the White Paper advocates for. These are (White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service 1997: 22):

Decentralization: human resource management should be managed in a decentralized manner. This can mean:

- *Devolution*: the shift of final responsibility and accountability from the centre to the periphery, namely from the centre to the executing authority.

- *Delegation*: assigning of functions, powers and authority to a lower level.

*Efficiency*: human resource management must aim to minimize waste and maximize value.

*Effectiveness*: human resource management must be outcomes-based.

*Flexibility*: human resource management will be flexible and creative, taking into account both the operational needs of the organization and the needs of the employees.

*Diversity*: while observing the primary objective of human resource management, employees will be managed in an environment that accommodates and values their culture.

*Service standards*: human resource management units will set standards for the level of service they will provide to their customers.

The implication of these principles when applied to the management of human resources is significant. It means that organizational structures need to be far more closely aligned to the strategic service delivery goals of the organization, and have to be flexible enough to adjust, as these goals change in line with the changing needs and priorities of the public and of government policy. Flowing from this, employees have to become multi-skilled, and their skills need to be continuously updated to keep pace with new policy demands, economical and efficient working processes such as those offered by



information technology should be promoted. Multi-skilling and continuous development should provide for greater job-enrichment for many employees (White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service 1997: 22).

Delegating responsibility for results and resources requires all public service managers, at every level, to develop skills which have hitherto been required only of a few, such as setting objective measurement and financial management. Above all, since human resources comprise the major component of their resources, public service managers, irrespective of position, have to be skilled in managing people. Human resource management will therefore no longer be the sole responsibility of personnel practitioners, but rather will become a core competency for all public service managers. The shift of responsibility for human resource management to line managers has important implications for human resource practitioners, who have a vital role to play in providing line managers with professional advice and guidance, and for ensuring that human resource systems and procedures are focused on the organization's strategic objectives. The need for new skills also applies when one considers the other principles that underpin human resource management for the public service outlined above. To ensure the development of these skills, what is needed is a new approach to the training and development of public managers and the human resources base so that they can cope with the new demands that the new environment that they find themselves operating in places upon them (White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service 1997: 22).

#### 4.4 White Paper on Public Service Training and Education (1997)

The principal aim of the White Paper on Public Service Training and Education 1997 (WPPSTE) is to establish a clear vision and policy framework to guide the introduction and implementation of new policies, procedures and legislation aimed at transforming public service training and education into a dynamic, needs-based and proactive instrument, capable of playing an integral and strategic part in the processes of building a new public service for a new and democratic society in South Africa.

The new public sector education and training policy is guided by the following vision (White Paper on Public Service Training and Education 1997: 5):

“The development of a dedicated, productive and people-centred public service staffed by public servants whose performance is maximized and whose potential is fully developed via the comprehensive provision of appropriate and adequate training and education at all levels”.

In striving for the above vision, the policy will seek to achieve the following mission:

“The creation of a coordinated framework for ensuring the provision of **appropriate and adequate public service training and education** that will meet the current and future needs of public servants and contribute positively to the realization of the vision” (White Paper on Public Service Training and Education 1997: 5).

The values and principles that underlie the above vision and mission include (White Paper on Public Service Training and Education 1997: 5):

Equality of access by all personnel at all levels to meaningful training opportunities; empowerment of previously disadvantaged and marginalized groups; democratic, non-racist and non-sexist policies, practices and values; lifelong learning, particularly through the National Qualification Framework (NQF); effective career paths for all public servants; broad participation and involvement by all relevant stakeholders; mutual understanding and respect, and tolerance for diversity; quality and cost-effectiveness in human resource utilization; efficiency, effectiveness and a professional service ethos; and flexibility and decentralization within national norms and standards. The anticipated outcome will be a new system of public service training and education that will be:

- Strategically linked to broader processes of transformation, institution building and human resources development within the public service;
- strategically linked to the NQF and South African Qualification Act (SAQA) frameworks, as well as to the Department of Labour proposals for a new Skills Development Strategy;
- strategically planned and effectively resourced;
- based on the elevation of the importance and status of training and trainers;
- effectively organized, coordinated and accredited in ways which promote quality, accountability and cost-effectiveness;
- **flexible and decentralized within national norms and standards;**
- based on broad participation and involvement by all relevant stakeholders;

- capable of promoting uniform outcomes through a multiplicity of accredited providers;
- capable of promoting access by all personnel to meaningful training and education opportunities;
- capable of promoting the empowerment of previously disadvantaged groups;
- capable of facilitating the development of effective career paths for all public servants;
- demand-led, needs-based and competency-based; and
- capable of promoting positive learning outcomes which add value to individual and organizational capacity.

The core problem that the White Paper seeks to address, comprises three related elements (White Paper on Public Service Training and Education 1997: 5):

- The fragmented and uncoordinated approach to training and education across the public service resulting in the absence of resources and accountability for ensuring that public servants are empowered and developed to take on the challenges they face;
- the lack of a strategic, needs-based, outcome-based and competency-based approach to Public Service Training and Education (PSTE), directly related to the developmental needs of the public service as outlined in the RDP, the WPTPS and other related policy documents; and
- the inappropriate nature of the training and education that is provided by many in-service and external providers.

It is not possible, in a research paper of this scope, to cover all the aspects outlined in the White Paper on Public Service Training and Education, but it is important to note that it makes the government policy position on the training and education of human resources. It is

a policy document that decisively points towards the need to develop new approaches towards the training and development of human resources and sets out a framework within which this should occur.

The foregoing three sections, serve to underscore the importance of policy formulation in the process of public sector reform in South Africa. The South African public sector reform process has been undertaken within an environment whereby the government has formulated policy to create the context for the reform process and also to provide the guidelines for the reform process. If the Eritrean public sector reform is to succeed by any measure, the constitutional provisions on the public sector will have to be supplemented by a comprehensive policy framework. The Eritrean public sector can draw lessons from the framework formulated in South Africa through the adoption of various White Papers. Apart from the White Papers, there are several Acts of Parliament that provide the legislative framework for public sector reform in South Africa. These acts are discussed below.

#### **4.5 Acts of Parliament**

The Acts that are considered under this section are: the Public Service Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994), the South African Qualifications Act, 1998 (Act 58 of 1998), the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995), the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998), and the Labour Relations Amendment Act, 1998 (Act 127 of 1998).

##### **4.5.1 The Public Service Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994)**

The Public Service Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994) provides a broad framework within which the South African Public Service should operate. It also sets up the South African Management and Development Institute and Training Fund, to facilitate the training

and development of public managers in the Republic. It also sets out the parameters that should be followed in the appointment of public servants. Considering the historical circumstances of South Africa, the Act demands responsibilities on the public service in terms of rationalization in lines of race and gender and in the effective utilization of resources. To meet these demands, public managers need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes. This calls for new approaches in training and development of public managers to support the new order.

#### **4.5.2 The South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act 58 of 1995)**

The South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act 58 of 1995) provides for the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and for the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The specific objectives of the National Qualifications Framework are to:

- a) Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- b) facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
- c) enhance the quality of education and training;
- d) accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and thereby
- e) contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

The Act also sets out to ensure that accreditation of educational and training institutions is streamlined and to ensure that the standards and registered qualifications of education and training in South Africa are internationally comparable (section 5 (b) (iv)). It can be said that

the impact of this legislation to the training and development of public managers in South Africa is the ensuring that the standards of education and training offered were harmonized and this would ultimately ensure the increase in efficiency because all public managers exposed to training would have gone through the same kind of training.

#### **4.5.3 The Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995)**

The Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995), transformed labour legislation in South Africa by creating a single Labour Relations Act for the public and private Sectors. Prior to this Act, each sector had its own labour legislation. This old system complicated collective bargaining in the public service. Another problem with the old system was the high degree of centralization of negotiations. Although each department and provincial administration had its own bargaining chamber, the issues, which they could discuss, were very limited. The result was that most of the minor issues were taken to the central bargaining chamber and this hampered negotiations on fundamental issues. Many of the problems raised above were addressed in the establishment of a Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Chamber (PSCBC), which included the education and police sectors into the Central Bargaining. The main feature of the PSCBC is that it deals with all matters regulated by uniform rules, norms and standards that apply across the public service. This means that salaries and conditions of service, which up to then were negotiated separately in three different chambers, are dealt within a single forum. It is envisaged that the PSCBC, to a large extent, focuses on framework agreements. The Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995) covers broad issues relating to labour relations in the Republic. The purpose of the Act is to advance economic development, social justice, labour peace and the decentralization of the workforce by fulfilling the primary objectives of the Act. These are:

- a) To give effect to and regulate the fundamental rights conferred by section 27 of the Constitution;
- b) to give effect to the obligations incurred by the Republic as a member state of the International Labour Organization (ILO);
- c) to provide a framework within which employees and their trade unions, employers and employer's organizations-
  - (i) collectively bargain to determine wages, terms and conditions of employment and other matters of mutual interest; and
  - (ii) formulate industrial policy.
- d) to promote human rights as defined in section 27 of the Constitution.

The aim of the Act is to respond to the new labour realities that have been created by the South African transition. It therefore sets new standards within which labour relations should be conducted.

#### **4.5.4 The Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998)**

The Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998) aims at providing an institutional framework to devise and implement national, sector and workplace strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce; to integrate those strategies within the National Qualification Framework contemplated in the South African Qualification Act, 1998 (Act 58 of 1998); to provide for leaderships that lead to recognized occupational qualifications; to provide for financing of skills development by means of a levy-financing scheme and a National Skills Fund (the Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 (Act 9 of 1999)); to provide for and regulate employment services. Section 2 of the Act provides the purposes and objectives of the Act, and sets the new environment under which the skills development in the Republic should occur.



The observation that was made with regard to the White Papers also applies in the case of Acts of Parliament. If the Eritrean public sector reform is to succeed by any measure, the constitutional provisions on the public sector will have to be supplemented by a comprehensive legislative framework. The Eritrean public sector can draw lessons from the legislative framework formulated in South Africa through the adoption of various Acts of Parliament. However, all these efforts at public sector reform, whether policy or legislative, and whether in South Africa or Eritrea will have to be supported by a comprehensive monitoring system. This concept is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.6 MONITORING PROGRESS**

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) works in conjunction with the Public Service Commission to ensure that the progress of departments in implementing "Batho Pele" is systematically monitored. The DPSA also evaluates the overall effectiveness of the Batho Pele initiatives and submits regular reports to Parliament (White Paper on Transforming Public Service 1995).

From the preceding discussions, there can be possibilities that Eritrea can learn some lessons from the South African experience in public sector reform and public service transformation. These lessons include:

- (a) The need to formulate a comprehensive policy framework to support the public sector reform process;
- (b) the need to develop a comprehensive legislative framework to support the public sector reform process;
- (c) the public sector reform process needs to be reinforced through a comprehensive programme of public sector human resource

development. This can be achieved through training and development;

- (d) there is need for sectoral co-ordination in the entire public sector reform process. This is crucial so as to avoid duplicity of efforts and to ensure that there is minimum waste, either of human resources or capital resources;
- (e) the public sector reform process is an expensive process, both in terms of financial, human and temporal resources. There is need to ensure that the reform process is factored into the budgetary and development planning policies of a country; and
- (f) there is a need for constant monitoring of the reform process.

The next rubric of the research attempts to conclude and to recommend some important focal points to enhance public sector reform and improve service delivery in Eritrea by drawing some relevant lessons from the experience of the South African Public Sector, which can be applied in the Eritrean public sector.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Eritrea, which metaphorically has been weakened socially and economically by a thirty-year war for independence, is progressing towards its healing. This time, however, the challenge is not only in reforming the structure of the public sector, but also the transformation and renewal of the human resource component to ensure the delivery of effective, efficient, and quality public services.

Transformation is described as a process whereby organizational direction is framed, the organization is revitalised and its people are renewed. Transformation denotes a time when organisations leave the old culture and step into unexplored territory. Over the years, there has been a growing body of literature and opinion in which the public sector has been criticised for poor service rendering. In order to actualise the policies of the government, and to ensure that the needs of the population are met in a sustainable way, the public service, as the administrative arm of the government, needs to be rationalised in line with the available resources and the needs to be met. This is the process referred to as public sector reform. In Eritrea, the bottleneck for public sector reform lies on the acute lack of well-trained personnel to handle the reform process itself, and to ensure that there is effective and efficient public service delivery after the reform process.

Human resources management in the Eritrean public sector has been hampered by successive colonial rules. Revitalization of the public administration started after the independence in 1991. Thereafter, initiatives for public sector reform were undertaken in 1995/96. The motivation was to build a smaller, effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable public sector where few people are paid more to produce better. The reform process, however, has been constrained by lack of

skilled human capital, poor financial management systems, downsizing and rightsizing strategies, inequitable employment and recruitment practices, placement of unqualified personnel in key administrative areas, poor performance management and appraisal systems, incomparable pay and incentive schemes, and incompetent management techniques to mobilize the available scarce resources. Furthermore, the public sector has been increasingly constrained by lack of policies with clearly stated vision and mission, and lack of legislative frameworks and its provisions, which are fundamental to supplement and strengthen the implementation of national policies and the attainment of national sustainable development objectives. The results of these major re-organisational activities have enabled the government to come to terms with the gap between the available resources, especially the human resources that are required by the public sector, the private sector and what can optimally be used for achievement of the stated macroeconomic and other social development objectives.

To realize their goals, objectives and short-term targets, governments have to execute a variety of functions and deliver a variety of services. Because of technological development and ideological changes, government functions and services have undoubtedly changed and increased dramatically over the past decades. In recent years, countries have embarked on a thorough re-evaluation of the role, structure and functions of the state in general, and human resource management and development in particular. This has been in response to a number of factors, including the growing impact of global markets and competition, the trend towards "knowledge workers" multi-skilling and multi-tasking, and the growing pressure for equal opportunities in employment. In attempting to do so, the discussion has been centred on the human resource component of the public service as the engine of reform processes, especially the importance of strategic human resources planning to identify and

address the availability and continuity of workforces, and the re-organization of the internal structures of the public service. On these issues focus has been given to concepts such as recruitment and selection procedures, processes and structures, job analysis, performance management, training, wage structures, and the importance of information and communication technology in enhancing improved service delivery.

Human resources provide the creative spark in any organisation. Human resource planning is essential in order to ensure that the human resources of an organisation are capable of meeting its operational objectives. To be of value, human resource planning will have to develop in two directions: establishing new planning methodologies, and broadcasting the scope of planning and strategy efforts. The basis of human resource planning is information about what work is being done or may need to be done, and this information comes from job analysis.

Job analysis is a technical procedure, which systematically explores the activities within a job. Job analysis is a process to identify and determine in detail the particular job duties and requirements and the relative importance of these duties for a given job. Job analysis is a process where judgments are made about data collected on a job. Job analysis incorporates job descriptions and job specifications. In light of this, job analysis paves the way for making employee recruitment and selection decisions using fair and objective job based criteria.

The first step in building an exceptional workforce is recruiting and selecting talented, motivated people. Recruitment and selection establish the foundation for staffing organizations and is a key part of any human resource program. Recruitment is defined as the process of attracting potential job applicants from the available labour force. It is described as those activities in human resource management,

which are undertaken in order to attract sufficient job candidates who have the necessary potential, competencies and traits to fill job needs and to assist the organization in achieving its objectives. Recruitment approaches will have to change significantly to enable organizations to move into a new era of international competition. Whereas recruitment encourages individuals to seek employment, the purpose of the selection process is to identify and employ the best-qualified individuals for specific positions. Selection is the process of choosing from a group of applicants the individual best suited for a particular position. The recruitment and selection process must be in a position to effectively compete for talent by being swift, efficient, and effective. To address skills and talent gaps, it must link with processes to foster development of employees within the system where necessary. Central to this is performance management.

The success of the Public Service in achieving its developmental goals depends primarily on the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees carry out their duties. Performance Management is therefore a key human resource management tool to ensure that employees know what is expected of them, managers know whether the employee's performance is achieving the required organizational objectives, poor performance is identified and improved, and good performance is recognized and rewarded. It is important to note that performance is not a static concept. If high levels of performance have been attained in an organisation, there is need for continued reinforcement so that the high levels are maintained. If the performance levels are not satisfactory, there is need for interventions. These interventions are mainly in the form of training.

Training is regarded as a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge, skills or behaviour through learning experience, in order to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the

individual and to satisfy the current and future needs of the organization. Training is executed to ensure that a task is performed correctly and therefore the behavioural change brought about by training must be measurable in terms of the requirements of an organization. Issues of wages and compensatory programs should also be incorporated for public sector reform and service delivery to be successful.

Wage and compensatory policies are important in determining the pace of public sector reform, especially when they are used as a means to motivate the human resource component in the public sector to meet performance standards. However, there is a growing realisation that the human resource component has to be complimented by other interventions if the pace of public sector reform has to be maintained and objectives achieved. Some of the interventions that can be used to compliment the human resource component are the deployment and optimal use of information and communication technologies in the public sector. People all over the world have high hopes that these new technologies will lead to healthier lives, greater social freedoms, increased knowledge and more productive livelihoods. The ultimate objective is to provide access to government services when it is needed, where it is needed, and how it is needed.

The foregoing internal and external organisational elements have been discussed in light of public sector reform and effective and efficient service delivery taking in to account the current realities in the Eritrean public sector. Eritrean Public Sector has got inherent structural weaknesses that may curtail its efficiency as the leading player in addressing Eritrean development challenges. If these structural weaknesses are not addressed, then the Eritrean Public Service will be one of the biggest obstacles to the attainment of sustainable development.

Finally, efforts have been made to cite some important lessons from the South African public sector reform and service transformation experiences that are believed to be of crucial importance. One of the strong aspects of the South African public sector is that its guiding principles and values are ingrained in the Constitution. In this way, the public sector exists to facilitate the realisation of the values of the South African society, *inter alia*: human dignity, achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. The lessons that can be learnt from the South African experience is that the government of Eritrea has to facilitate the development of a culture where the public service is run as per constitutional principles. However, it is also important to develop supplementary legislation and policies to serve as guidelines for the management of the public sector.

In the Eritrean case, therefore, the public sector reform process should begin by addressing the near absence of a well-trained human resource base in the public service, coupled with concerns on the internal structures that should be developed and instituted to ensure that the public service operates optimally and meets its service provision obligations. It should be noted that public sector reform, whether it is under the guise of "rationalization", "downsizing", or even "transformation", is a capital intensive and time-consuming process. It is not a dramatic or overnight phenomenon. This becomes apparent when one considers the inputs, in real and opportunity costs, that have to be invested to have a well-trained and efficient public service. However, there are no easy ways out if public sector reform is to be instituted especially where the overall aim is to improve public service delivery. The hypothesis that "the success or failure of the public sector reform process and the subsequent improvement of public service delivery in Eritrea will be determined by the nature and level of development of the human resource component in the Eritrean Public



Service” proposes the need for adequate investment in the development of an efficient human resource base in the Eritrean Public Service. This will lead to an upswing in the morale and motivation of public servants, which will furthermore impact on their attitudes and productivity, as well as the attraction and the legitimacy of public service.

## **5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the following key points are believed to contribute positive results on the Eritrean public sector. Pretensions are not made to develop a model for reform and service improvement but only proposes what the researcher, after an assessment of the Public Sector that defines the present Eritrean reality, considers as core elements of new management principles which are crucial to achieve the aforementioned objectives. These are:

### **(a) Effective human resources management**

The focus of this research paper primarily centres on the Role of Human Resources in Public Sector Reform and Service Delivery in Eritrea. Adam Smith (1776) noted that the basis of national wealth is the skill, dexterity and competence of the people. Harbison (1973) also, pointed out that “human resources constitute ultimately the bases for the wealth of nations”. According to Harbison (1973) capital and natural resources are “passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development”. Thus a country that is unable to develop skills and knowledge of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. A **World Bank assessment of 100 countries in the World Development Report (1995)** revealed that physical capital on average accounted for

16% of total wealth, natural capital 20% while human capital accounted for 64% of national wealth.

In this globalised world, growth in the knowledge-driven economy is dependent on a labour force that is healthy and well endowed with knowledge and skills. In NEPAD, it is believed that despite the progress made in education and health in Africa in the last half decade, both the quantity and quality of human capital are grossly insufficient to meet the challenges of development envisaged under NEPAD. UNECA Economic Report (2000) states "Africa is yet to produce the critical mass of skilled and highly trained workers capable of initiating and sustaining a dynamic development path. The capacity of Africa to generate knowledge and participate in the knowledge society has continued to decline". UNESCO (1998) studies show the continent's research and development expenditure in 1994 to be only \$4.2 billion or 0.9% of the world total. Its share of scientific publications in 1995 was less than 1.5% while the share of Sub-Saharan Africa was 0.2% in European patents.

In realization of this state of human capital development in Africa in general and the need for public sector reform and efficient service delivery in Eritrea in particular, human resource development with the vision of producing highly motivated public servants empowered to serve the public should be a major strategic priority in Eritrea. There must be a clearly articulated human resource development policy (legislation) and strategy geared to the implementation of the reforms that are required. This policy and strategy should focus on behavioural and cultural change, performance improvement, improving and developing the skills base and expertise within the public service to allow employees to meet overall objectives (training and development), and improving the commitment and motivation of staff. Lifelong learning is a necessary characteristic of a professional public service. Central to this objective is a commitment to becoming a

learning organization. This is vital if the public service is to meet the changing needs of citizens in the knowledge age. Furthermore, there should be an environment that enables and encourages employees at all levels to learn and share learning by using a wide range of tools and processes. Employees should not only be supported in developing the skills needed for the job, but also in developing their career potential to the full. This will provide a framework for comprehensive reform strategy by addressing all the main constraints in an integrated way and sets specific objectives with targets/benchmarks against which progress can be judged. These should be linked to desired final outcomes such as improved service delivery; meeting the needs of the public and the size, structure and cost of the public service. The strategy also needs to be realistic and has to reflect the available implementation capacity. There should be analysis of core human resource processes and procedures to ensure that all the key elements supporting more efficient human resource management are present in all organizations. The processes should support the strategies outlined and enhance the management of performance and development of public servants throughout their career.

Eritrea can draw lessons from the South African experience in terms of legislations governing human resources practices in the public sector. These pieces of legislations range from Acts of Parliament; the Public Service Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994), the South African Qualification Act, 1995 (Act 58 of 1995), the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995), the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998), and the Labour Relations Amendment Act, 1998 (Act 127 of 1998), to the White Papers (the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Sector 1997 and the White Paper on Public Service Training and Education 1997). As it is mentioned in the previous section of this paper, the central objective of these pieces of legislations is to empower the human base with multi-skills, knowledge, and attitudes to improve their performance in the public service.

**(b) Good governance**

Governance is the exercise of power in the economic, political, and administrative management resources of a country. Governance comprises the traditions and processes that determine how power is shared and exercised, how decisions are made and how authority responds on issues of public concern. Elements of good governance are:

- Openness: processes and information, which allow the public to see how institutions work and function to ensure that information is accessible, appropriately packaged and widely disseminated to the public.
- Justice: equal access to justice, health care, education, livelihood, a clean and healthy environment and other services, regardless of colour, gender, race, creed, political affiliation, socio-economic group or sexual orientation.
- Inclusiveness: all individuals, and groups including the elderly, the disabled and the poor.
- Accountability: acting responsibly in the discharge of duties and daily activities.
- Facilitation: provide a stable environment, which facilitates investment and trade as a basis of economic growth, environmental sustainability and development (Cabinet Office Jamaica 2002: 11).

Governance should be vision oriented in which all citizens enjoy quality life in a society that is just, inclusive, open, and in which authorities are accountable. The Eritrean public sector should be governed in compliance with the Constitution of the State of Eritrea enshrined in Chapter 2 Article 11 (1) and (2) which states:

(1) The Civil Service of Eritrea shall have efficient, effective and accountable administrative institutions dedicated to the service of the people.

(2) All administrative institutions shall be free from corruption, discrimination and delay in the delivery of efficient and equitable public services.

Furthermore; in order to achieve good governance in the Eritrean public sector, strategic objectives should be set for the creation of a knowledge society, which is fundamental to informed decision making by facilitating access to information through all available media, and for establishing participatory and coordinated mechanisms that promote the demand for responsive and effective public policies by improving the policy cycle and decision making process.

**(c) Legislative framework**

A legal framework must support the modern management of the public service. It must contain the provisions, which allow managers to manage the resources available to them and be accountable. The Eritrean public sector is constrained by the lack of clearly defined legal provisions binding public sector operations. Under constitutional supremacy, the Constitution is the highest and most important law and all laws, actions and bodies exercising government power are subject to the constitution. In the unimplemented Constitution, Eritrea operates under the premises of the principles of "constitutional supremacy". This concept has wide-ranging effects on the conduct of government and consequently, the public service. Thus, the enforcement (provision) of the Constitution and public law is no more an option but the privileged expectation of the People of Eritrea in general and the public Sector in particular so as to ensure that the principle of constitutional supremacy is safeguarded at all times. The

Constitution is the master law, which serves as a guideline to government actions and the citizens in a country. Other legislations apart from the Constitution, which are relevant to each sector, should be provided in the confidence that they further promote and entrench the provisions of the Constitution.

The South African experience is a good lesson. In South Africa the Constitution has become the yardstick for all government action (Venter 2001: 90). The implication of this development is that no government action can contradict the provisions of the Constitution. This principle has implications on how public managers should conduct themselves, because the Constitution binds the government to various obligations. The public and private sectors operate under different legislations, which entrench the provisions of the Constitution. These legislations, as discussed in the previous section, encompass processes and documents ranging from White Papers to Acts of Parliament (Venter 2001: 53).

However, Constitutional and legislative provisions should be a means not an end in themselves. A reform program cannot be driven without a strong lead from the very centre of government. Therefore, Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU) should be established to provide leadership, coordination, and cohesion to the implementation and monitoring of the reform initiatives. The mission of the PSRU will be to drive forward the implementation of the plan for modernizing government, improving the quality, coherence and responsiveness of public services and for promoting a strong and professionally well managed public sector, capable of enabling and facilitating the achievement of national objectives.

**(d) Vision and mission-oriented policy-making**

One of the main functions of the public sector is to evaluate policy options and to provide Ministers with advice about the policies of government. Without sound and objective advice Ministers are unable to assess the extent to which sustainable national development is being achieved. The provision of that advice however takes place within a clearly defined framework of the functions of the government. The new role of government is one that will concentrate more on facilitating, regulating, and monitoring.

Modern policy-making should be evidence based to support policy decisions and their sustainability both in terms of cost and relevance over time. The Eritrean Public Sector is constrained by the lack of clearly stated vision and mission-oriented policy-making to improving service delivery and achieving national sustainable development objectives. Competent public service focused on economic and social development is achieved through public participation in public policy making. This means operating a political system in which all people are able to participate in and influence government policy and practice. This is clearly enshrined in the unexecuted Constitution of the State of Eritrea. Chapter 2 Article 8 (2) of the Constitution states that: "The State shall work to bring about a balanced and sustainable development throughout the country, and shall use all available means to enable all citizens to improve their livelihood in a sustainable manner, through their participation".

Social, economic, and environmental problems and solutions are all linked. With better knowledge and understanding of the interconnections among issues and policies the public sector should produce effective and integrated policies. Policy-making must be improved such that it will be:

- Results oriented and forward looking: outcomes should be defined;
- outward looking: Eritrean and international experience should be drawn on;
- innovative, flexible, and creative: established processes should be challenged;
- evidence based: timely and accurate information should inform policy decisions;
- inclusive: those affected and disadvantaged should be consulted;
- joined up: sectoral policies should be integrated and coordinated to achieve national sustainable development;
- reviewed: monitoring the impact of policies should be a regular future;
- evaluated: evaluating policies with a view to making them more effective should become standard practice; and
- instructive: policy-making should be a learning experience about what works and what does not (Cabinet Office Jamaica 2002: 4).

**(e) Freedom and protection of labour associations**

The International Labour Organization (ILO), Article 2 of Convention 1948 (87), authorizes workers and employers to enjoy the freedom of association and protection. This article states, “workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization”. The Government of Eritrea has recently ratified this convention though its provisions are not yet enforced. It is important to note that chapter 3 article 19 (5) of the Constitution of Eritrea states “all persons shall have the right to assemble and to demonstrate peaceably together with others”. However, its provisions



are not so far enacted. Moreover, there are no specific legislative frameworks governing labour relations in the public service. Therefore, legislative frameworks should be in place to promote work place democracy and to enhance productivity. The South African Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995) can be a good lesson to the Eritrean public sector. The Act covers broad issues relating labour relations in the Republic. The purpose of this Act is to advance economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the work place, to give effect to and regulate the fundamental rights conferred by section 27 of the Constitution, and ultimately to give effect to the obligations incurred by the Republic as a member state of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

**(f) Effective information and communication technology (ICT)**

Information and communication technology is revolutionizing the life style of people including the way they work, communicate and learn. The information age offers huge scope for organizing government activities in innovative and better ways, and for making life easier for the public by providing services in integrated, imaginative and more convenient forms like single gateways, the internet and digital television.

As part of public sector reform, the Eritrean public service should spearhead the use of information and communication technology to allow public servants to manage in a more innovative, integrated, and coordinated manner, measure efficiency and improve the planning processes of government. The introduction of information and communication technology is to ensure that the public sector has modern technology available to make well-informed, accurate, timely and accessible quality decisions. This entails not only introducing computerized systems to analyse information, but also putting in place the performance reporting systems to ensure that relevant information

reaches to them. Information and communication technology assists in providing the public with greater access to government information, and progressively, more direct service delivery.

**(g) Sound performance management systems**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of public services is improved through the measurement and management of the performance of public organizations and public servants. Rational and reasonable performance management techniques are called for in the Eritrean Public Sector with a vision of developing a public sector with a performance culture, client focused and results oriented, which constantly seeks ways to improve the delivery of public services. Key element to realizing this vision is involving public servants in supporting their organizations to achieve their goals and objectives, and designing and implementing performance management systems that will:

- Support the delivery of services in a more effective and efficient manner;
- involve employees in the decision-making process;
- reward high performance and achievement;
- be transparent and hold employees accountable for their actions; and
- improve staff motivation.

The South African performance management practices (the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service 1997: 42) can be a noble lesson for Eritrea.

A strong and professionally functioning public sector holds a country together. It is the bridge between political representation of national aspirations and individual needs on the one hand, and the life

experiences of all citizens on the other. It translates visions and needs into policy, policy into programs and objectives, objectives into goals, goals into action, and action into results that should matter to people and meet the needs of the country. The challenge is on how to reform in order to establish a professional public sector that can support the achievement of national goals. This means getting back to core business and transforming both public sector organizations and the working practices of the public servants that need to run them. The rationale is to get to a smaller public sector where fewer people are paid more to produce better. Reform is a serious challenge but international experiences show that it can be done.

Considering the kind of social, political and economic crises and tensions that Eritrea is experiencing to the moment (2003), the realisation of the recommendations offered in this study can be expected to be anything but difficult. However, efforts should be made to initiate the realisation of these recommendations because the future of the State of Eritrea rests on the way public sector reforms are conducted.

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