

Andricus van der Westhuizen: Ineptitude of Cabinet trickles down to the public service at large

Chairperson, Acting Minister, Deputy Minister and Honourable Members,

Very few country's constitutions stipulate the principles that the public service should embody. Section 195(1) addresses the public service and the principles that it should honour. Our constitution demands that our public service be efficient and use its resources effectively. It emphasises accountability, and expects good human resources practices.

This government, however, as is so often the case, has been ignoring the principles stated in the Constitution. In November 2014, six months ago, the Auditor-General (A-G), Kimi Makwetu, released a report titled: *"Consolidated general report on the National and Provincial audit outcomes"*. As you may well be aware, the A-G is now auditing performance beyond the financial figures.

Honourable Chairperson,

One such measurement, deals with the quality of human resources management. Of the 54% of government departments and entities audited, the quality of human resources management was found to be concerning or in need of outside intervention. In stark contrast to the picture in the rest of the country, *all* the DA-run Western Cape provincial departments have met the requirements for human resources management controls.

It has been two months since the untimely death of the late Minister Collins Chabane on 15 March this year. But this week also marks two months in which this department has not known who will be succeeding the late Minister Chabane. This ineptness at Cabinet level is not good for the public service.

The filling of vacancies and stability at the senior levels in the Public Service remains another challenge. The Auditor-General found that 16% of the positions of accounting officers have been vacant for more than 6 months, and of those positions that have been filled, the average term in office has been less than three years.

A similar position was found regarding chief financial officers, except that the figures were even worse.

One third of the public entities were operating without chief financial officers. The vacancy rate for heads of supply chain management units is at 18%. The report found that many departments and entities are lacking in financial planning, record-keeping and financial reporting. Management seldom

takes effective disciplinary action against officials that permit unauthorised, irregular, or fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

No wonder then that, on average, only one in four government departments comply with key legislative requirements.

The Western Cape was found to be the best performing province by far, and is still improving. This was in stark contrast to national and provincial departments under control of the ANC, many of which were found to be regressing.

In Gauteng only half of the departments were found to be compliant and in Limpopo and the North West only one provincial department complied.

Honourable Chairperson,

It is clear that training in the legislation and regulations applicable to the public service is of the utmost importance. The preferred service provider for this should have been government's own training institution, now known as the National School of Government that is funded to the value of R138 million.

Parliamentary questions revealed the extent of its failures. Most large employers have induction programmes for newly recruited employees.

In July 2012 former Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu, signed an agreement with organised labour that linked pay progression for new entrants to the successful completion of a compulsory induction course. In an answer dated October last year, the then minister confirmed that only 44 public servants had completed the Compulsory Induction Programme during the first two years.

The total number of public servants trained by this institution has decreased by 40% over two years. And only 10% of the training offered by the National School of Government is on accredited programmes.

This government is failing in its constitutional obligation to invest in its staff, and to build capacity. And, while President Zuma has been trying to work out which splinter group in the ANC should be rewarded with the vacant cabinet post, South Africans are showing their growing discontent for the quality of public services.

I thank you.

Joe McGluwa: Cut the public sector wage bill and cut corruption in the public service

Honorable Chairperson,

The DA last scored Minister Mthethwa with an “F” which is for fail, during his tenure as Police Minister.

His appointment as the Minister of Arts and Culture was met with outrage by many in the arts and culture community.

I have to stress that the individual who will fill the late Minister Chabane’s shoes will have a lot of hay on his or her fork.

First on the list is Deputy Minister Ayanda Dlodlo who for the past year walks the talk with this Committee. This department is important and we need someone one like the late Minister Chabane to champion it.

Definitely not Minister Mthethwa, who is rarely seen in Parliament and, when he is, has an attitude that is always dismissive and borderline rude. He is sometimes notoriously poor in responding to parliamentary questions. His responses are sometimes vague, sometimes sarcastic, and at times he simply ignores questions.

Honourable Chairperson,

South Africa currently employs approximately 3.1 million public servants across the various state-owned companies. The South African taxpayer already forks out an astonishing R430 billion every year for a bloated and ineffective public service.

Due to the fact that our economy has failed to create jobs outside the public sector, government has had to borrow substantially more money to pay public sector employees.

The DA has proposed reducing the public sector wage bill by R4.3 billion through key interventions such as avoiding above inflation rate salary increases, cutting back on salaries to superfluous departments and linking salaries to performance.

Instead, government should be channelling revenue into the creation of an economic environment in which small business and entrepreneurs can thrive and in turn create the 11 million jobs the NDP envisions by 2030.

Finance Minister, Nhlanhla Nene’s plan to cut the escalating public sector wage bill saw him commit the state to a fiscal consolidation strategy in his February 2015 Budget Speech.

Honourable Chairperson,

Getting rid of the fraudsters in this department should be the first step for the new Minister in cutting the Public Wage bill and restoring integrity to the civil service.

In the 2014/2015 financial year, the Budget report estimate showed that approximately R219.7 million of the department’s R930 million allocations was spent on Administration – which is essentially the salaries of the department’s staff.

Our biggest headache is the suspension of civil servants costing the state just over R50 million for keeping 400 suspended civil servants at home because of delays in finalising their cases.

Director-General’s approximately earn R1.7 million and more a year to ensure our taxes go towards service delivery while senior managers approved bonuses for themselves even without having

undergone an assessment.

Stability implies efficiency: Not under President Zuma's administration.

The Public Service Commission's research on the National Anti-Corruption hotline found that where a Head of Department remains in the post for longer than 3 years performance improved.

A total of 261 788 calls had been registered on the National Anti-Corruption Hotline as at 30 October 2014 in relation to cases of alleged corruption. Of these calls, the Public Service Commission have generated 21 397 reports for possible investigation. There are still cases outstanding since 2005.

The major complaint during 2013/14 to the hotline was social grant fraud. A number of other allegations related to abuse of power by government, irregular appointments, allocation of RDP housing, procurement irregularities, and identity document fraud.

So what figures are we looking at for the 2013/14 year based on the cost of corruption allegations made to the hotlines. It cost this country R258.3 million, of which R191 million emanated from allegations at the provincial level.

Honourable Chairperson,

This latest wave of fake qualifications points to a deeply problematic disregard for the integrity of the civil service where 640 officials in the Department were found to have misrepresented their qualifications.

And when asked during a question by the DA whether Minister Mthethwa intended to name each of the officials and their various positions and what steps his department has taken to deal with them, his response was as follows:

"Measures have been instituted, which include investigations into the allegations of misrepresentations, outcomes of these investigations will clarify specific instances of misrepresentation and will also assist relevant Executive Authorities to institute disciplinary processes".

During the 2009/10 financial year, the Public Service Commission had conducted a study to evaluate the impact of the Policy and Procedure on incapacity leave and ill-health retirement on sick leave trends in the public service. This country has lost R27 billion on ill-health retirement leave.

The last evaluation by the PSC on sick leave days was done in 2011, and it was found that the highest amount of sick leave was taken by the Department of Labour. It had registered over 126 000 sick leave days taken, and the total cost was at about R50 million.

The PSC found that 182 senior officials did not disclose their properties and belongings whilst the submissions for disclosure forms by the due date for National Departments was 38% and 59% for Provincial Departments.

Chairperson, Let me take you back home to my Province in the North West where the Education Department is a complete mess. In the North West people get their suspension cases overturned and return to work only to find that the post is filled by somebody else.

This is completely unacceptable. The taxpayer cannot be made to bear the brunt for poor administration and litigation in many cases.

Chairperson, I can go on and on and on.

Cut the public wage bill, restore the dignity of civil service and ensure that corruption in the public service is dealt with, with the full might of the law.

Minister Mthethwa should redeem himself and in his capacity as acting Minister try and turn things around in this Department to ensure that the late Minister Chabane's standards and legacy is upheld.

I thank you.