

Lived Experiences, Observations and Lessons: Bongiwe Njobe

PSC Thought Leadership Webinar| 30/January/2025



The ask....

- As part of the process of professionalising the public service the PSC Thought Leadership Webinar theme: “Balancing the scales of leadership and management in the public sector to build a weaverbird culture- the bureaucratic intricacies”
- The PSC have invited former director generals share their experiences, lessons on managing the leading change at the institutional/organisational, inter-organisational and intersectoral levels as well as building a cohesive, diverse, resilient and impactful public sector management and leadership capability.
- More about the AFDG - <https://afdg.org.za/about-us/>

My approach



I will start by building up a picture of what the situation was at the time I became Director General



Focusing on the key stages in the policy development process I will share a few examples that will hopefully give some insights into the political/administrative, organisational, sectoral and intergovernmental challenges that arose



I will then provide some reflections on my own approach to the PFMA, PSA and building organisational culture



I will conclude by sharing some key take-outs

The context was different

- 1995 – I joined the department as Chief Director – Natural Resource Management and Conservation – and EXCO
- There were multiple political parties – and Land and Agriculture were two separate ministries
- 1997 – One Ministry of Land Affairs and Agriculture – two departments
- Deracialisation of the sector was key
- Constitutional dispensation - concurrent responsibility for Agriculture complicated thing
- Economic policy emphasized industrialisation at the expense of rural development and agriculture initially
- No social media – using email started in my time

Agenda Setting

- **Land Reform or Agrarian Reform** - a question of different policy positions resulting in mis-alignment when the Ministries were merged
 - Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development vs Broadening Access to Agriculture Thrust;
 - Agricultural Credit Board vs Land Bank
- **Mainstreaming Gender** – in a male dominated, conservative operating environment
 - The experience of policy research – stalled to create a culture of understanding the imperatives

Policy Design and Formulation

- **The Agricultural Sector Plan** – working with multiple stakeholders – achieved a shared vision, goals and key commitments -
 - until the Minister(s) changed.
 - Subsequent reiterations of the plan with same objectives with the same stakeholders – demonstrated lack of continuity by public officials and opportunism from stakeholders – ineffective use of resources
- **Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP):** differential interpretation and roll out at the provincial level – varied impacts
- **Land Care, Working for Water** and Public Works? Shifted the conservation emphasis to job creation and some unintended consequences

Decision Making

- Principles of how far does one go in the consultative processes – when it comes to cross sector policy –
 - **Integrated Food and Nutrition Security Framework**
 - **Food Control Agency**
- When the DG and the Minister are not in agreement –
 - Try to develop alternative scenarios to achieve a desired outcome
 - Go back to the law and document your professional and considered view. Draw heavily on the PSA and PFMA (**The appointment of advisors**)

Policy Practice and Implementation



**Deregulation of the Agricultural Marketing Act –
unintended consequences for the transformation of
the sector**



The demise of the agricultural colleges:

The impact of accommodating the provincialisation and the concurrent responsibility for agriculture (Elsenburg, Cedara, Glen)

The recommendations of the 2002 “Restructuring of Higher Education Commission” (Glen,

Policy Evaluation and Assessing Impacts



In the design of policy and programmes – outputs, outcomes and proxy indicators should be clarified at the onset – from the perspective of every stakeholder

The role of M&E in government is critical however should not be complicated.

The Commercialisation of Goats Initiative - different outcomes.

Reflections – The PFMA and the PSA

- The critical role of a competent CFO, and independent Internal Audit Function
 - The challenge when the problem is within the SMS – the role of DPSA and PSC is key (**the case of a truant HR Manager**)
- Distinguishing between strategic human capital development and HR hygiene within government
 - Transitioning arrangements in NDA
 - Simplify, streamline and automate routine activities
 - Allow for and encourage thinking environments – capacity to debate (**Haiti**)

Reflections: Organisational Culture

- Constitutional Provisions (section 195) encapsulate the vision for the country; the Public Service Code of Conduct and the Batho Pele Framework give effect to the vision.
- Building such a culture is complex and requires steep learning,
- a comprehensive approach to the shared values, strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills;
- consistency in leadership behaviours;
- the right leadership and key first followers;
- My personal journey was steep – over two and a half years and ended with the leadership team (SMS) walking on coals together.

Video Insert: Ted Talk – Derek Sivers – How to start a movement..

Key Take Outs

- Its about Building Trust - and **Trust is earned** through ensuring the consistency of delivery, performance and accountability of the public sector
- Consistent and clear communication is necessary with all stakeholders
- The laws are there to support good governance – **know your laws**, prescripts and regulations
- Be the “nut leader” and lead by example – consistently acknowledge and **recognise desired behaviours** by your “First Followers” visibly
- Insights from working in the private sector
- Inspire yourself and others through continuous self-development and engagement

Discussion

