

# DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPITAL CAPACITY FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of human capital capacity as an indispensable strategy for promoting adequate public service delivery in South Africa. South Africans, experiencing a worsening situation of inadequate service delivery and have strongly demonstrated their despondency or hopelessness behaviour (and a desire for change). Currently, there is a devastating macro-climate of corruption and unenforced allegations of evident poor service delivery, which perceptibly appear to be associated with the decline or failure of positive human capital capacity development, the lack of best practice of social values, and ineffective implementation of policies, rules, and regulations that are expected to guide the delivery of adequate public services to all South Africans. In addition, poor ethics in public affairs has led to the lack of effectiveness and performance in public administration, resulting in South Africans losing confidence in the leadership. This paper advocates the best practice of capacity development programmes in the public sector as a key approach to dynamically pushing institutional capacity development toward adequate public service delivery in South Africa. It discusses the transformational and transactional factors that necessitate the best practice of capacity development programmes at the different levels of institutional capacity. It suggests the development of positive human capital capacity, the best practice of social values and efficient implementation of policies, rules, and regulations in order to promote effective performance of public administration, which is essential for the delivery of adequate public services to all South Africans.

**Keywords:** Capacity development programmes, positive human capital capacity development, governance, public service delivery.

## Introduction

Capacity development programmes can be considered a key approach to developing scarce skills, since capacity development is key to the long-term success and sustainable provision of public services. However, the shortage of technical skills and skills waste in particular, and the lack of effective performance, and poor leadership at different levels of national and local government in general, are common key challenges affecting public service delivery. In addition, a macro-climate of corruption and lack of policies guiding best practices are amongst the key factors causing poor services delivery in most government departments. Unfortunately, African black people are the most affected by the deficit of leadership behavioural capacity.

The PESTIE model (Smit 2016) and theories relating to capacity development programmes, human capital capacity development (Kikasu 2021) and public administration (Williams 2016) were explored and examined to address and establish factors causing the shortage of technical skills and skills waste, as well as the lack effectiveness and performance, and poor leadership capacity in different institutional levels. These theories were applied toward determining the human capital barriers to effective public services, with the intention of overcoming the lack of adequate public service delivery. Theories aligned to capacity development programmes were explored to identify an approach towards rebuilding and developing a holistic positive human capital capacity approach. Accordingly, in this paper, discussions involve the background to capacity development programmes best practice in the workplace, developing positive human capital capacity for effectiveness in public administration, including the promotion of adequate public service delivery.

Lastly, this paper displays findings and recommendations linked to the best practice of capacity development programmes in the workplace; the development of positive human capital capacity in the public sector; the effectiveness in public administration; and adequate services delivery in the country.

### **Background to the best practice of capacity development programmes in the public sector**

The best practice of capacity development programmes refers to the process by which individual, groups, organisations, institutions, and societies increase their abilities to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives; to understand and deal with their development needs in a broader context and in a sustainable manner (Lund University 2021). The key reason for using the concept best practice of capacity development programmes, is that it aligns with the meaning of capacity development as a concept that may take different significances or denotations, because initially, it has been used as a catchphrase (slogan/unspecific) rather than as a concept, theory, or idea (term) for critical or rigorous development work (World Health Organization 2021). However, the key messages for specific usage of best practice of capacity development programmes are often aligned to organisational, individuals or systems well-defined objectives or priorities.

When and where appropriately applied, organisations or institutions have seen the best practice of capacity development programmes as an integrating force that brings together a large number of stakeholders who believe that human capital capacity development is an important factor for the overall development of problem-solving (Drábek 2017). Therefore, many development practitioners believe that socio-economic developmental activities require the best practice of capacity development programmes, which can trigger some sort of human capital ability, competence, or aptitude development. This implies that the development process that necessitates capacity development programmes best practice consists of national, provincial, and local governments' ability/capability improvement in creating an adequate and satisfactory human capital environment.

Therefore, globally, in order to ensure the best practice of capacity development programmes in well-identified areas or socio-economic sectors, four distinctive perspectives or approaches are suggested: organisational, institutional, systems and participatory capacities (USAID 2017). Only two of the four approaches are examined in this paper (institutional and participatory capacities).

Accordingly, capacity development has relied upon various strategies, which consisted of making better use of existing capacity by improving networking or changes in institutional/organisational incentive systems. The inducement for the better use of capacity development programmes was to provide space for innovation and creative use of capacities, creating new capacities (policies) toward eliminating old or inappropriate capacity such as bodies, which have proven to be ineffective or have lost their legitimacy, and strengthening existing capacity bodies, which constitute important strategies for the best practice of capacity development programmes, effectiveness in public administration and efficiency in adequate services delivery. This paper intends to focus and discuss the institutional and participatory capacities development, with an interest in developing positive human capital capacity toward the improvement and sustainability of public service delivery in South Africa.

However, the contemporary requirements for the best practice of capacity development programmes in the workplace, whether in the public or private sectors, is based on the aspiration, desperate need or demand for positive human capital capacity, which are expected to promote institutional and societal change or transformation (Manuti 2017). The best practice of institutional capacity consists of effectively and profitably utilising individual or collective skills, abilities, and resources to address issues of values, attitudes, motivations, and conditions in order to support the process of sustainable socio-economic transformation (including adequate services delivery), (Manuti, 2017). In addition, capacity development best practice involves the appropriate use of approaches, strategies, and methodologies to address specific or complex problems affecting individuals, organisations and communities. Additionally, human capital capacity strengthening, organisational/institutional performance and competitiveness, as well as sustainable socio-economic transformation are the most contemporary targeted objectives of the best practice of capacity development programmes (Drábek 2017).

Accordingly, developing positive human capital capacity could be an effective approach toward socio-economic transformation and sustainability, as well as ensuring efficient and adequate public service delivery. Thus, positive human capital capacity development refers to the spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human capital performance that enable social, economic, and political institutions to function, and remain functional over time (Kwame 2017). It also refers to the rebuilding and development of public sector employees, who are able without fear and intimidation of any kind, to accurately guarantee the best practice of the rule of law and fulfil the mandate of adequate public service delivery to all South Africans. Furthermore, positive human capital capacity development refers to employees who are required to address transparently and efficiently the

adverse situations obstructing/disrupting the process of delivering public services and to inspire competitiveness, effectiveness, and performance in the management of public and private affairs. Therefore, the best practice of social values such as integrity, accountability, trustworthiness, honesty, empathy, loyalty, and solidarity in the workplace must be deliberated upon and challenged (in the public or private sectors).

Unfortunately, these social values, as well as policies, rules and regulations, are not fully applied in order to support actions that lead to the effective and efficient delivery of public services in the country. Consequently, the best practice of capacity development programmes is strongly, effectively, and intensely needed to rebuild and develop positive human capital capacity for societal wellbeing and transformation.

### **Institutional capacity development toward adequate public service delivery in South Africa**

Institutional capacity development programmes, as well as the best practice of the rule of law, are mostly emphasised as a desperate requirement for change, especially those who are unemployed and live in extreme conditions of poverty. The provision of adequate public services is also lacking especially in rural areas. Therefore, an approach to solving institutional inability to render adequate services delivery may consist of developing positive human capital capacity, through the best practice of capacity development programmes. Capacity development programmes in the public sector must guarantee the best practice of policies, legal and regulatory adjustments and fulfil the mandate of adequate public service delivery to all South Africans.

The lack of best practice of policies, legal and regulatory changes is unfortunately amongst the factors that are contributing to human capital capacity decay (lack of social values best practice in the public sector), which is fueling institutional deterioration/incapability regarding adequate public service delivery in the country. Therefore, in order to promote positive human capital capacity development and adequate public service delivery in the country, human capital capacity strengthening (behavioural, functional and technical skills development) remains an on-going process, by which people and systems operating within dynamic contexts are required to enhance their abilities; based on the best practice of capacity development programmes in the workplace, as well as the best practice of policies, legal and regulatory adjustments in order to develop and implement strategies in pursuit of institutional objectives for increased performance in a sustainable way (Drábek 2017).

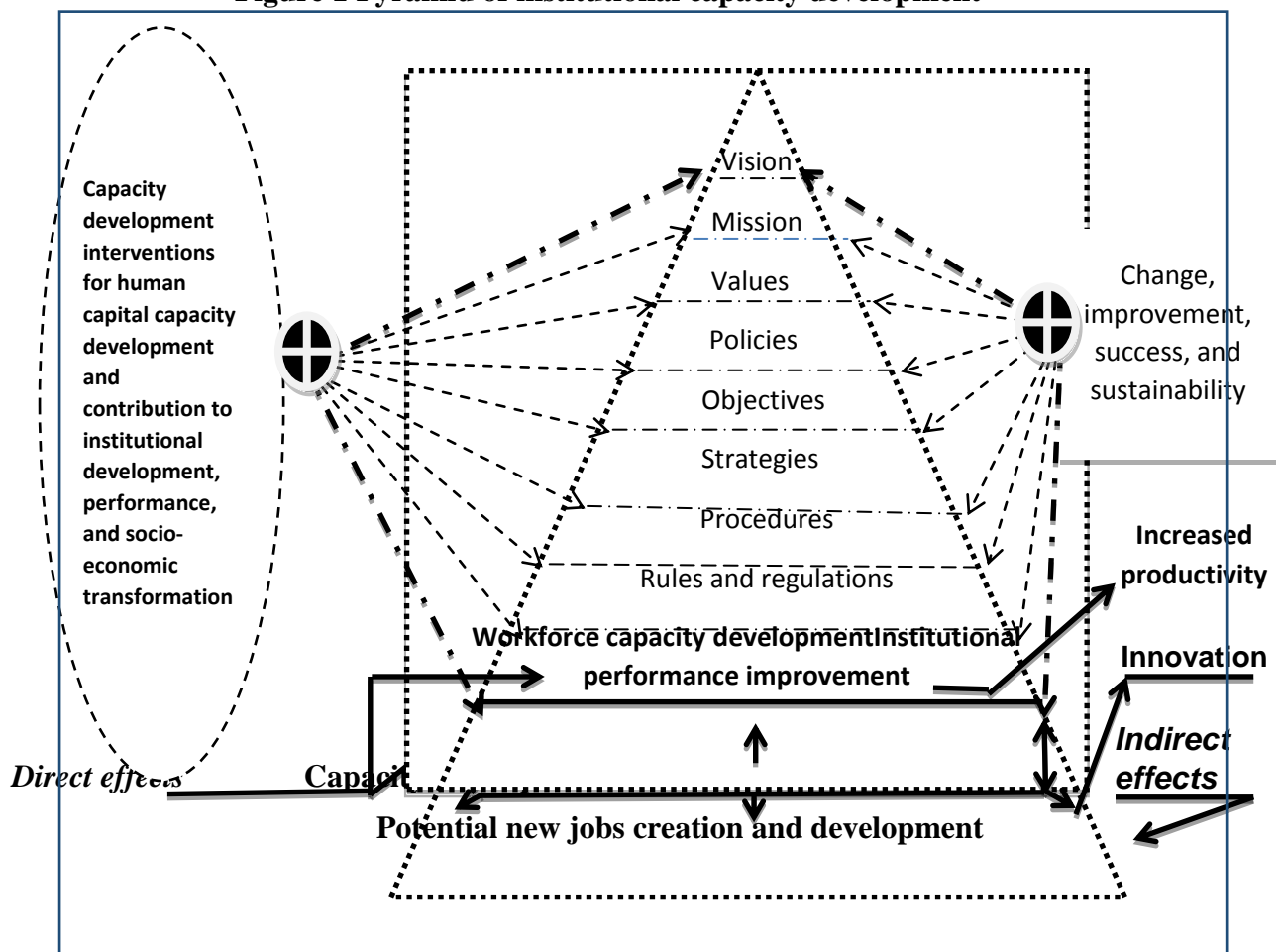
The best practice of capacity development programmes within an institution is based on principles that consist of achieving institutional aims and objectives, driven by an agenda of developing institutional capacities, long-term investments, and an integration of activities at various levels to address complex problems (Lund University 2021). National and local governments in any country worldwide are expected to be playing an important role that consists of providing adequate public services to communities. Therefore, enabling institutional capacity, developing positive human capital capacity, and developing productive/creative legal frameworks are a sine qua non condition in providing for adequate

public services within the country. Cultivating institutional capacity best practice could facilitate the functioning and performance of national and local governments for adequate public service delivery (Kwame 2017). This level of capacity may not be easy to grasp tangibly, but it is central to the understanding of capacity issues.

Institutional capacity at all levels (national and local governments) determines the rules of the game for interaction between and amongst organisations and communities. Therefore, the best practice of capacity development programmes at the institutional level includes changes, improvement and the best practice of policies, legislation, power relations and social norms, all of which govern the mandates, priorities, modes of operation and civic engagement across different sectors of society.

Figure 1 illustrates potential areas in which institutional changes are expected to happen in order to ensure adequate public service delivery. Accordingly, measures or interventions for change are required to improve institutional vision, objectives, values, policies, strategies, and interests for adequate public services delivery in the country.

**Figure 1 Pyramid of institutional capacity development**



**Induced effects: possible change and improvement of dependent organisations, institutions, and agencies at all levels and in all socio-economic sectors.**

**Source:** Self-generated by researchers

Figure 1 demonstrates the possible direct, indirect, and induced impacts that the best practice of capacity development programmes could generate for developing positive human capital capacity and transforming national and local governments capacities toward adequate public service delivery. Most importantly, it indicates institutional factors that require capacity development interventions in order to influence institutional competitiveness, effectiveness, performance and development. It also highlights that the best practice of capacity development programmes can assist in efficiently achieving the institutional vision, mission, values, policies, objectives, and strategies for adequate public service delivery, as well as keeping or supporting a competitive, innovative, and creative culture within working communities, whether in public or private institutions.

### **Transformational and transactional factors that necessitate the best practice of capacity development programmes at the different levels of institutional capacity**

Earlier it was argued that elements of the institutional environment, which require the best practice of capacity development programmes include making and improving legal and regulatory changes; create a supporting environment for organisations, institutions, and agencies at all levels and in all socio-economic sectors are an imperative to enhance capacities for adequate public service delivery. Furthermore, it was indicated in Figure 1 that changes and improvements at different levels of institutional capacity, including vision, mission and strategy, leadership and culture are referred to as the transformational factors that necessitate the best practice of capacity development programmes (Burke 2014). However, the improvement of these factors may require the entire institutional system to enforce and produce sustainable change at different levels of national and local governments. Consequently, the potential or prospective impact from institutional change may result in transformation with tangible effects on public administration competitiveness, effectiveness, and performance, as well as on adequate public service delivery amongst communities.

- **Transformational factors that necessitate the best practice of capacity development programmes at different levels of institutional capacity**

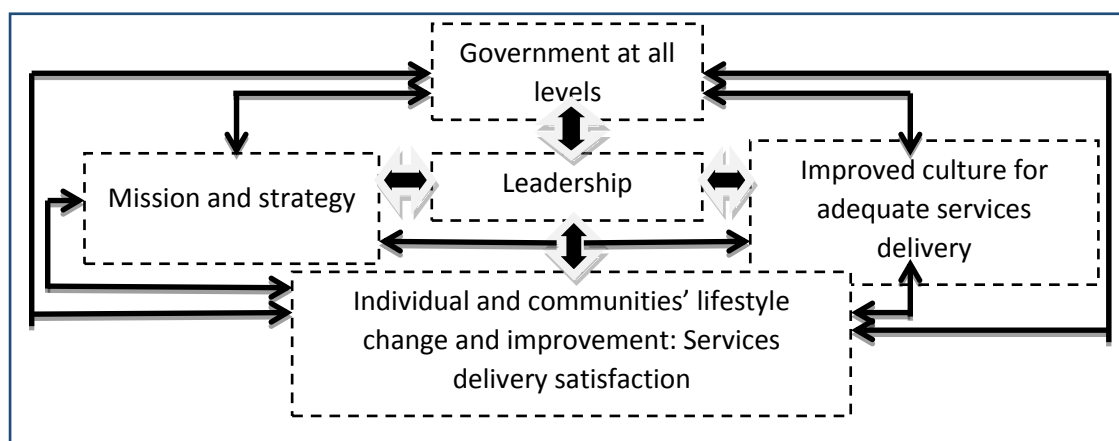
Capacity development programmes best practice in different levels of institutional capacity could generate tangible change through improving national and local governments capacities or performance in terms of leadership's vision, mission and strategy, and culture development towards ensuring adequate services delivery. Thomas (2015) indicated that the vision provides a valued (offers a gainful, productive, and advantageous way) direction for designing, implementing, and assessing institutional/organisational changes. However, capacity development programmes' role for institutional change implicates primarily leadership (government at all levels) capacity development because the vision for public administration effectiveness and performance and for adequate services delivery is considered as a key element in most leadership frameworks. Institutions/organisations and/or



leaders at all levels are therefore responsible for the effectiveness of quality services delivery and for the desired future. But developing a vision is heavily driven by peoples' values and preferences for what government at all levels should look like and how it should function (Thomas 2015). Furthermore, envisioned the future represents peoples' ideals or dreams of what they would like the government to look like or become.

Capacity development programmes best practice at all levels of government are required to empower people (officials), with the kind of skills or knowledge that can help them to manage preventively and effectively any detrimental effects that may affect performance or adequacy in services delivery. Considering the discussion above, Figure 2 displays transformational factors that necessitate the best practice of capacity development programmes for institutional transformation and adequate services delivery.

**Figure 2 Transformational factors that require the best practice of capacity development programmes for institutional performance and adequacy in public service delivery**



**Source:** Adapted from Burke (2014)

Figure 2 denotes the transformational factors (Leadership, government's vision, mission and strategies at all levels: making and improving legal and regulatory changes to create a supporting environment for organisations, institutions, and agencies at all levels and in all socio-economic sectors in order to enhance their capacities for adequate services delivery) that require the best practice of capacity development programmes for change, performance, and sustainable adequate services delivery, which must continually take place within the country. Firstly, the government or leadership in public administration can influence performance in services delivery in many ways: through guiding people behaviour and satisfaction from making and improving legal and regulatory changes; to create a supporting environment for organisations, institutions, and agencies at all levels and in all socio-economic sectors in order to enhance their capacities for adequate services delivery;

regulating marketplace conditions (the extent of competition for commercial organisations); political circumstances; government regulations; world financial and economic conditions; and changing technology (Smit, 2016 and Burke, 2014).

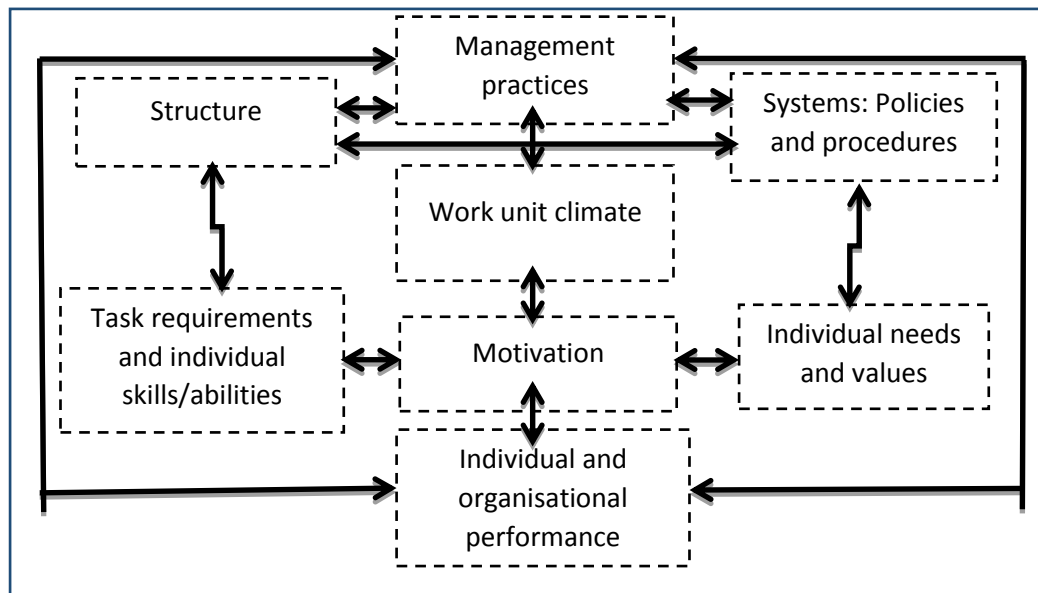
- **Transactional factors that necessitate the best practice of capacity development programmes at different levels of institutional capacity**

Transactional factors that necessitate the best practice of capacity development programmes involve developing positive human capital capacity toward guaranteeing public administration effectiveness and adequate public service delivery. Therefore, enabling human resource capacity development (individual level) is a process that consists of equipping individuals with the understanding; skills; and access to information, knowledge and training that empowers them to participate and perform effectively in any task which facilitates effective and efficient public service delivery (Burke 2014). At this individual level, the best practice of capacity development programmes refers to the skills, experience and knowledge that are vested in people and the ways in which such capacity may be used to deliver quality public services. Each person is endowed with mixed capacities that allows them to perform, whether at home, at work or in society. Some of these are acquired through formal training and education, while others through learning-by doing and experience (Buss 2010). Such capacities must be harnessed and developed so that individuals may perform above mediocre standards in the interest of delivering public services.

However, there is a complex interdependency between the four levels of capacity development (organisational, institutional, systems and participatory capacities). The framework conditions or enabling environment set at an institutional level influences the behaviour of organisations, systems, and individuals by means of the incentives it creates. Furthermore, organisations can be viewed as open systems that are constantly interacting with elements in their context, which can either stimulate capacity development or act as disincentives for capacity development (Buss 2010). Therefore, the development of capacities of individuals, as well as the possibilities to apply newly acquired skills depends not only on self-motivation and drive, but also to a large extent on the incentives created at the institutional level. In addition, the institutional mission, strategy, leadership, and culture are often influenced by legal and regulatory changes, from which organisational capacity development interventions become a requirement for change. This has implications for organisational and individual abilities, capacities, and skills development (Burke 2014). However, organisational change for example requires that there must be congruence between the requirements of one's job, role and responsibilities and the knowledge, skills, and abilities (competence or talent) of the individual holding the job (Burke 2014). Additionally, factors that require capacity development interventions referring to transactional factors (Burke 2014) are highlighted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3 Transactional factors that require the best practice of capacity development programmes for institutional development**



**Source:** Adapted from Burke (2014)

Figure 3 shows the transactional factors that necessitate the best practice of capacity development interventions for institutional/organisational development. For example, capacity development interventions on structural change refers to the arrangement and improvement of organisational functions and operational units that signify levels of responsibility, decision-making, authority and lines of the organisation's mission, goals, and strategy (Burke 2014). Therefore, Burke (2014) explicitly indicated that the best practice of capacity development programmes can have direct, indirect, and induced effects on management practices in addressing change that could improve organisational strategies; employee behaviour, competencies, or skills; and organisational support systems; which involves policies and procedures that are designed to help; and support employees with their jobs and role responsibilities. Furthermore, the best practice of capacity development programmes can also enhance the climate of collective perceptions of employees within the same work unit. These perceptions include aspects such as how well employees are managed; how they feel their performance is recognised; how involved they are in decision-making; whether they believe they are managed according to standards that are challenging and fair; how much support they receive from fellow work unit members; and how effectively they work with other units in the organisation (Buss 2010). According to Burke (2014), the direct, indirect, and induced effects of capacity development interventions for institutional/organisational performance and development can be understood as follows: The direct effects of the best practice of capacity development programmes involve expectations to support job performance and creation through three channels:

- Firstly, the institution/organisation will proceed to develop the capacities of the existing workforce and recruits and employs qualified people directly to run the structure of the organisation (direct effects);
- Secondly, the institution/organisation can improve local systems of the services such as transportation, distribution, and marketing, which also can improve and create massive employment (indirect effect); and
- Thirdly, the whole institutional system improvement and development strategy could influence development among different reliant organisations or businesses, which probably will have to improve the quality of their products or services and possibly create new employment. Therefore, direct, and indirect employees will spend their wages in supporting small business development (induced effects).

In light of the aforementioned, the best practice of capacity development programme scan contribute to solving issues aligned to skills waste, shortage or ineffective (unproductive) human capital in the public sector. On the contrary, the lack of capacity development best practice could result in both sustained negative human capital capacity or human capital capacity decay, which are fundamental factors underlying widespread human capital capacity deficiency which fuels poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Kwame 2017). Additional effects related to the lack of positive human capacity development can include low productivity; a lack of competitiveness; and weak initiatives in terms of creativity and innovation. Indeed, the best practice of capacity development programmes towards positive human capacity development and adequate services delivery are sine qua non components of individual and social development, as well as of social cohesion, nation-building, and the progress of all societies for radical socio-economic transformation. Thus, capacity development programmes best practice is therefore a process of transformation from the inside, based on organisational or institutionally determined priorities, policies, and desired results (Buss 2010). It encompasses areas where new capacities must be introduced, and the building and development of positive human capital capacity (innovative capacity) must be soundly supported.

### **Consequences of inaction**

The lack of capacity development programmes best practice in the workplace (public or private sectors) could affect the political, economic, and social domain in terms of decision-making. The lack of awareness and ability to address the critical requirements for rebuilding and developing positive human capital capacity may retard the promotion of best practice of procedures (mostly in terms of administrative integrity and moral ethics); and legal and regulatory adjustments, which guarantee the fulfillment of mandates for adequate public service delivery to all South Africans.

This suggests that institutional effectiveness and performance are dependent not only on functional, behavioural and technical skills development; but also, importantly on the development of positive human capital capacity, which is expected to drive or encourage the

best practice of social values that include administrative integrity, moral ethics, transparency, and accountability in the workplace. Insufficient efforts or resources toward promoting the best practice of capacity development programmes in the public sector could affect initiatives for positive human capital capacity development, and consequently fuel the deplorable mal-practice of mal-administration in the public sector. In addition, the lack of best practice of capacity development programmes in the public sector could lead to more socio-economic challenges (inequality, poverty, unemployment, poor services delivery, stimulate massive protests due to community lack of satisfaction, crime, corruption), which may negatively affect human capacity development. Therefore, social values, attributes, or constituents of the dimensions of positive human capital capacity should be sufficiently emphasised when campaigning against factors mitigating the effective and efficient delivery of public services. Various reasons may justify the need for positive human capital capacity development. The best execution of the rule of law, policies, programmes and strategic plans are mostly observed and well fulfilled by people who are honorably, ethically, and uprightly exercising self-awareness for public interest. It requires innovative and democratic leaders and employees to practice social values (integrity and moral ethics, transparency, accountability, trustworthiness, honesty, empathy, loyalty, solidarity, sincerity, charity, courtesy, kindness, justice) which benefit public service delivery (Williams 2016; Smit 2011).

Moreover, the lack of appropriate mechanisms in terms of associating positive human capital capacity development in developmental programmes is a critical factor affecting public service delivery, especially in Africa (Williams 2016; Smit 2011). Therefore, in the absence of best practice of capacity development to promote the development of positive human capital capacity, there is greater potential for exposure to malpractices and poor governance because positive human capital capacity does not exist or is weak to ensure the implementation of best practices regarding policies, legal and regulatory adjustments that support good governance.

As it can be observed all over Africa, one of the major afflictions facing governments is the lack of positive human capital capacity development in the continent. The most prevalent are the lack of innovation, creativity, competitiveness, and appropriate political leadership style, which unfortunately contributes to institutional instability and weak human capital capacity. Thus, in order to promote positive human capital capacity development aligned to quality public service delivery, human capital capacity strengthening (behavioural, functional and technical skills development) must remain an on-going process, by which people and systems operating within dynamic contexts are required to enhance their abilities; based on the best practice of capacity development programmes, as well as on the best practice of policies, legal and regulatory adjustments in order to develop and implement strategies in pursuit of institutional objectives for increased performance in a sustainable way (Kwame 2017). Thus, capacity development programmes may be associated with the following in an endeavour to promote quality public service delivery (World Health Organisation 2021):

- Improving evidence concerning institutional capacity for evidence-informed policy processes regarding adequate public service delivery in the country.
- Developing or improving a conceptual framework for evidence-informed policy-making, which must include functions such as research priority-setting; knowledge generation and dissemination; filtering and amplification of evidence; and policy-making. This framework may help to develop and evaluate strategies toward enhancing (or releasing) capacity for adequate public service delivery.
- Improving a systems approach for capacity strengthening. While existing capacity strengthening initiatives for adequate services delivery are increasingly recognizing the importance of institutional and systems approaches, these dimensions will require even greater focus.
- Capacity development initiatives for adequate public service delivery must also focus on the production of evidence, rather than on capacity to use evidence in policy processes. This latter dimension requires greater consideration.
- There must be improved monitoring and evaluation of capacity development strategies and greater investment in assessing whether the strategies employed for adequate services delivery are effective.
- There is a need for South Africa to analyze and understand the current status of national policy-making systems and their use of evidence, and to develop and support strategies at the national and local levels to strengthen capacity for adequate public service delivery.

## Conclusion

The discussion focused on the development of positive human capital capacity as an indispensable strategy to promote competitiveness, effectiveness, and performance in the administration of public affairs and to facilitate adequate public service delivery in South Africa. In addition, the lack of social values and poor performance in the public sector (poor public administration), are part of a devastating macro-climate leading to poor public service delivery. Therefore, the best practice of capacity development programmes is demonstrated to be an indispensable tool for developing positive human capital capacity, and to promote the best practice of policies, legal and regulatory adjustments in order to develop and implement strategies in pursuit of institutional/organisational objectives for increased performance in a sustainable way.

Positive human capital capacity development has to promote a spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human capital performance that enable social, economic, and political institutions to function, and remain functional over time. Moreover, positive human capital capacity development must address transparently and efficiently the

adverse situations obstructing/disrupting the delivery of adequate public services and facilitate competitiveness, effectiveness, and performance in the management of public affairs for effective and efficient public service delivery.

Efforts and resources expended towards addressing the improvement/promotion of adequate public service delivery as well as the triple challenge (poverty, unemployment, and inequality) will be in vain if left out of capacity development programmes best practice and positive human capital capacity development. This implies that amongst various existing approaches that can be applied in order to promote radical change in how things can be done whether in the public or private sectors, the best practice of capacity development programmes in the workplace seems to be one of the most indispensable tools that can facilitate adequate and effective public service delivery.

Ultimately, strong support for the development of positive human capital capacity through awareness creation can contribute to the process of rebuilding and developing competitiveness, effectiveness, and performance in the management of public affairs. If the development of positive human capital capacity will not be taken into consideration, then there will be little expectation for change in terms of transformation in the delivery of adequate public services. Consequently, public leaders who fail to address the critical requirements for rebuilding and developing positive human capital capacity, may not be able to fulfill the mandate of providing effective and efficient services to all South Africans.

Thus, it can be advocated that institutional competitiveness, effectiveness and performance can stand as a fundamental key to promoting adequate public service delivery. But, strengthening institutional capacity depends on the development, improvement, and best practice of policies, procedures, legal and regulatory adjustments; through promoting functional, behavioural and technical skills development; as well as the development of positive human capital capacity, which is expected to trigger and drive the best practice of social values in the workplace. As such, the best practice of capacity development programmes in the workplace can stimulate or boost the process of developing positive human capital capacity and contribute to the improvement and sustainability of public service delivery in South Africa.

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