
4 ASSESSING RACIAL REDRESS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Vinothan Naidoo

Efforts to make South Africa's public service more representative were propelled by the introduction of a non-racial democracy in 1994. The racial profile of South Africa's public service was integral to sustaining the policy of apartheid, which was designed to promote a segregated and unequal system of social, economic and political relations between legally defined race groups.¹ Van den Berghe (cited in Marger 1994: 402) interestingly referred to apartheid South Africa as a *Herrenvolk* democracy, defined paradoxically as a 'state that provides most democratic features of political rule to whites while ruling blacks dictatorially'. More specifically, the creation of geographically separate and administratively distinct homeland territories to house South Africa's black African population represented the pinnacle of a race-based system of public administration designed to strategically regulate the representation of the country's black population in the public service relative to its white population.²

South Africa's system of public administration has undergone significant changes in its racial composition since 1994. These changes have resulted from the coming into force of legislative and policy provisions designed to distance the country from its apartheid past, by specifically promoting the notion of 'employment equity'. The passing of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) (No. 55 of 1998) gave legal backing to this process, and held a twofold purpose: the first was to promote equity in the workplace by eliminating 'unfair discrimination', recognising historical disparities in employment and occupational representation of black people as a result of the apartheid policy and other discriminatory laws and practices. The second purpose aimed to actively achieve this equity by implementing 'affirmative action' to redress imbalances in racial representation, which entailed promoting the employment of persons from the black population (section 15.1). In addition

to the Act a number of policies specific to public administration have been drafted to guide the implementation of affirmative action.

Departing from the twofold purpose of employment equity, the aim of this chapter is to review measures specifically created to promote and achieve racial redress in the South African public service, and to take stock of the outcomes. This aim will be pursued by firstly giving a historical background to the issue of racial redress in the public service. The chapter will then cover the legislative and policy instruments created to promote racial redress. This will be followed by a review of the state of race and gender representation in the public service, employing secondary and primary statistical data, the latter of which includes recent (that is, 2006) data available from the government's personnel and salary information system (PERSAL).³ The final section will consider the relationship between racial redress and government capacity.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF RACIAL REDRESS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Before providing some historical background for understanding racial redress in the public service, some basic information on its size and structure is necessary. South Africa's post-apartheid public service is overwhelmingly comprised of persons employed in national government departments and 9 provincial administrations, according to the Public Service Act (No. 103 of 1994). Data published by the Public Service Commission (PSC) in 2006 on the total size of the public service indicated that it numbered 1 078 236 employees (PSC 2006a: 69). This represented 6.4 per cent of the country's economically active population, estimated at 16 726 000 persons by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA 2006: iv, xviii).

The total number of public servants is spread across 40 national structures, 29 of which represent departments presided over at ministerial level; and 9 provincial government administrations (PSC 2006a). Employees of local government administrations are not defined as part of the public service, and are constituted and structured according to separate pieces of legislation.

Prior to 1994 South Africa's policy of apartheid entrenched a system of legal discrimination based on race. This was most intensively developed in the case of the African segment of the black population, who, even though most lived and worked in so called 'white areas', were assigned to geographically separate

territories that were supposed to attain independence from a white-led South Africa proper at some future time.⁴ The systematic nature of the system was marked by inequalities in levels of political and administrative status attached to each of the four defined race groups. For instance, although South Africa's 1984 Constitution provided some measure of political representation for the country's coloured and Indian/Asian communities, overriding authority remained in the hands of a whites-only elected House of Assembly.

The apartheid policy also had significant effects on the structure of public administration in the country. The PSC reported, for example, that prior to the country's political unification in 1994, there were as many as 11 public services, each with its own legislation, structures, systems and personnel composition (PSC 1995: 5–6).⁵ This principally comprised public administrations serving the RSA, and 10 other administrative structures attached to the geographic areas designated to house the country's African population. This included the 4 so-called TBVC states (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei), which were considered 'independent', and 6 other non-independent 'self-governing territories'. In the same report, the PSC indicated that prior to the country's first democratic election the public service constituted 172 departmental structures and just over 1.2 million personnel shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Public service organisation and employment, 1993

	Number of departments/ administrations*	Number of personnel
Public service of the RSA	38	750 000
TBVC states (independent African homeland territories)	76	210 000
Self-governing territories (non- independent African homeland territories)	62	270 000
Total	172	1 230 000

Note

* Includes provincial administrations.

Source: PSC (1995: 9)

Any doubt as to the extent of the apartheid policy's influence over the structure of public administration was countered with Pierre Hugo's reference to a comment by the chairperson of the Commission for Administration,

the apartheid-period predecessor to the present PSC, who acknowledged that the ‘whole structure [of public administration] is imbued with the apartheid policy – it has become a way of life’ (cited in Hugo 1990: 111–112). The consequences of the chairperson’s observation can in essence be seen in the pre-1994 staffing profile of the public service, as illustrated in Table 4.2.

The figures in Table 4.2 show that Africans actually constituted the largest racial segment of public servants prior to the introduction of a non-racial democracy. The comparatively larger representation of Africans takes on a different character however when the distribution of their representation is tallied. Table 4.2 is qualified, for example, by the fact that 40 per cent of the total number of African public servants resided in the administrations of self-governing states, which were economically dependent and politically subservient to South Africa in 1989.⁶ The data also shows the extent to which Africans were more marginally represented amongst the majority of occupational classes, including the security services, whilst comprising 83 per cent of public servants classified as ‘labourers’.

Table 4.2: Racial composition of central government, provincial administrations and self-governing ‘states’, 1989⁷

	Labourers	Educators	Nursing personnel	Service personnel (SADF, SAP, Prisons)	Other (520 occupational classes)	Total
White	1 050	68 657	25 881	84 533 ^b	121 980 ^b	302 101
Coloured	35 237	37 743	15 082	13 469	18 119	119 650
Indian/ Asian	2 065	12 655	5 992	3 722	7 077	31 511
African	190 353 ^a	128 528	43 685	47 340	49 377	459 283 ^c

Notes

- a This amounts to 83 per cent of all labourers employed in the public service.
- b 68 per cent were employed in security services and other general and own affairs occupational categories.
- c 40 per cent were employed in the public services of the self-governing states.

Source: Calculations based on data reproduced by Hugo & Stack (1992: 54–55), taken from the Commission for Administration Annual Report, 1989

Senior occupational categories (that is, management) by income band were also dominated by white people, with the top 8 income categories averaging nearly 89 per cent white occupation, with a high of 100 per cent at the highest band down to a low of 75 per cent at the second highest band. Total employment across the top 8 income bands overall saw nearly 81 per cent white representation (Hugo & Stack 1992: 56). This situation was essentially confirmed in Guy Martin's analysis, which estimated that before 1994 more than 94 per cent of senior posts in the public service were occupied by white people (Martin 1999: 631).

Hugo added elsewhere that the scope for Africans occupying managerial positions was largely limited to homeland bureaucracies or those institutions dealing exclusively with government decreed 'own affairs' (Hugo 1990; 1989). The distribution of African public servants prior to the establishment of a non-racial democratic state would appear therefore to coincide with a deliberate attempt to control their distribution, which also corresponded with the prevailing logic of apartheid. In other words, the numbers would appear to be consistent with the chairperson of the Commission for Administration's earlier description.

The previous section introduced the circumstances which influenced the macrostructure and personnel composition of the public service prior to South Africa's transition to a non-racial democracy in 1994. The next section will pick up the story after 1994 by giving an overview of the legal and policy provisions that came into effect to address racial imbalances in the composition of the public service.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND BEHIND RACIAL REDRESS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Redressing the representation of black people in the public service after 1994 was primarily driven by the outcomes engendered by the apartheid policy, which ensured that the central public service was strategically dominated by representatives of South Africa's white population. In keeping with the reconciliatory tone of South Africa's political transition, the country's first democratic Constitution, the interim Constitution (Act No. 200 of 1993), protected the employment of persons employed in the public service before the coming into effect of the Act (See Clause 236, Chapter 15). These were

termed the 'Sunset Clauses', characterised as a 'power-sharing' mechanism negotiated between the apartheid-governing National Party and the African National Congress (Cameron 2004). These two political parties would jointly constitute a Government of National Unity (GNU) following South Africa's first democratic elections in April 1994. Although essentially granting job protection to white public servants, the 'Sunset Clauses' were by definition not indefinite and, in terms of the interim constitution, could be subject to future repeal or amendment of legislation. In this regard the maintenance of the status quo would soon come to coexist with the drafting of policy calling for major changes to be effected in the demographic profile of the public service.

The first major policy pronouncement signalling changes in the racial profile of the public service was expressed in section 5.2 of the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which later became the 1994 White Paper on the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The RDP White Paper made specific mention of a need to promote 'affirmative action'. This was, however, presented in a broader administrative context marked by a need to re-evaluate the public service's functional priorities and review the rules governing personnel placement and salary recognition. Reference to affirmative action within the context of the public service's internal personnel arrangements indicates that the GNU and ANC in particular, acknowledged early on that any programme of affirmative action would need to be accompanied by a review of essential administrative infrastructure, which, in any event, would be needed to support the changes in policy content and priorities brought about by the post-apartheid transition.

A year after the publication of the RDP White Paper, another White Paper began to set more tangible expectations for affirmative action. The 1995 White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS) identified the goal of creating a 'genuinely' representative public administration, where this was defined according to an administrative system that reflected the major characteristics of South African demography (section 2.2.(a)). The goal of achieving 'genuine' representation was further qualified by the enactment of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) a year later, which included amongst nine values and principles underpinning public administration, that of a public service which was broadly representative

of the South African people, and which necessitated a 'need to redress the imbalances of the past'.

The implications of a 'genuinely representative' public service, coupled with a public service that was 'broadly representative of the South African people', were given concrete form elsewhere in the 1995 WPTPS (section 10.6), which set racial, gender and disability targets for the public service. These are illustrated in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3: Demographic targets for the public service at management level

Category	Target
Percentage of black people at management level* by 1999	50%
Percentage of women new management (middle and senior) recruits by 1999	30%
Percentage of people with disabilities by 2005	2%

Note

* At director or equivalent, and higher ranks.

Source: DPSA (1995)

The targets were directed at three levels of representation: the first called for an increase in the representation of black people at management level. The second called for an increase in the representation of women in management⁸. The third target called for an increase in the number of persons with disabilities in the public service as a whole.

Seeking an increase in the number of black people in the management echelons of the public service was to a large extent expected, taking into account the almost complete dominance of white public servants in the influential senior occupational categories, illustrated earlier by Hugo and Stack. Vincent Maphai (1992) also observed early on that South Africa's political transition bequeathed a perception that certain quarters of the state, such as the military, security forces and the civil service, were strongly partisan, and preserved a great deal of power and patronage. He added that the top echelons of public administration represented a major political power bloc, leading him to speculate that the key arena for affirmative action was likely to be the senior decision-making ranks of the public service, in which white people had historically enjoyed complete dominance. On this score, it

was reported that before the political transition the ANC proposed that the top 1500 posts in the public service, starting from director level, should reflect the composition of the population as a whole, which, in a consolidated geopolitical entity, was of course overwhelmingly black, and African in particular (cited in Hugo 1992: 58).⁹

Three years after the tabling of the WPTPS, the White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (DPSA 1998) essentially pulled together these earlier policy pronouncements on the issue. Of particular interest was how this document tried to link the need for affirmative action with notions of acceptability, reflecting concerns about how the public service would be viewed by the population if its demographic profile in a unified non-racial state did not translate into significant changes in the representation of black people. Section ii of the White Paper argued for example that achieving a broadly representative public administration was a key to restoring 'legitimacy' and 'credibility' in the eyes of the majority of South Africans (who were black and African).

The notion of drawing on the racial diversity of South Africa's population, introduced in the 1995 WPTPS, was also given further expression in the White Paper on Affirmative Action by the argument that individuals who were historically marginalised might be better placed to administer services to constituencies that were also marginalised in this way. This was based on the rationale of recruiting individuals who possessed the linguistic ability to communicate with South Africa's diverse population groups (particularly the various African linguistic groups), coupled with the recruitment of individuals who could be said to possess an 'in-depth' understanding of the needs of populations who were previously discriminated against (DPSA 1998 : section 2.5). Section 3.3.1 of the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service offered a similar point (DPSA 1997a).¹⁰ The publication of the White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (DPSA 1998) occurred in the same year as the signing of the EEA, which gave legislative backing to erstwhile policy positions arguing for the racial profile of the public service to be actively transformed.

In general, the introduction of policy calling for significant changes in the representation of black people in the public service was communicated as an issue of service delivery efficacy in a non-racial democracy, whilst

being broadly underpinned by more sentimental notions of credibility and legitimacy. The actual process of introducing affirmative action into the public service did not however, at least in policy terms, appear to abandon the initial concern as expressed in the RDP White Paper that affirmative action needed to proceed alongside the review and reform of personnel practices and functional priorities in the public service. The implications of ignoring this relationship were in fact expressed in the White Paper on a New Employment Policy for the Public Service (DPSA 1997b), which observed that a central goal of public service employment policy was creating a genuinely representative service that reflected the major characteristics of South African demography, 'without eroding efficiency and competence' (section 2.2 (a)). Assessments of efficiency and competency relied on more than just the complexion of human resources to capture broader questions about the structure and management of a new employment regime and its relationship with new functional priorities and reformed organisations. Before probing this relationship further, the next section will first need to review the outcome of racial redress in the public service.

RACIAL REDRESS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

This section reviews relevant statistical data on the state of race and gender representation in the South African public service, including calculations based on recent employment data contained in the government's personnel and salary information system (PERSAL) system. The review will begin by using the employment figures documented earlier by Hugo and Stack as a baseline around 1989 and working towards the present period. The review of race and gender will cover both aggregate and disaggregated levels referring to, *inter alia*, total employment, employment by occupational category, and employment by sphere of government (national versus provincial). A statistical review such as this will provide a material indication of the enforcement of legislative and policy provisions calling for racial redress in the public service.

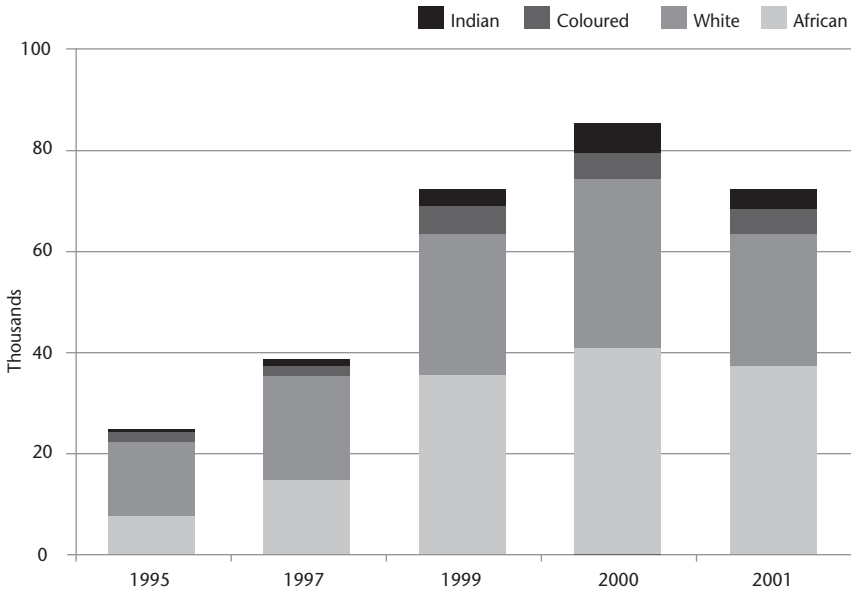
REPRESENTATION BY RACE

As illustrated in the figures referenced earlier by Hugo and Stack, aggregate employment by race showed that black people constituted 59 per cent of the

total public service, taking 1989 as an example and excluding employment in the self-governing territories. The more significant issue for the incoming ANC-led government was however the occupational distribution of black public servants which saw their significant under-representation in the majority of occupational categories, including the security services, whilst excluding educators and nursing personnel; as well as the almost complete absence of black people amongst the senior occupational levels. With reference to these senior levels, if distribution by population representation was the yardstick, which it explicitly became after 1994, then asymmetrical representation was the practice during apartheid, where population figures for South Africa as a whole in 1989 indicated that the country was 75.2 per cent African, 13.6 per cent white, 8.6 per cent coloured, and 2.6 per cent Asian/Indian (SAIRR 1990: 35).

Having noted this, any attempt to change the racial composition of the public service was not likely to be carried out in a vacuum; in his description of the policy reform framework facing public administration in South Africa Paseka Ncholo indicated that 'representativeness and affirmative action' was one of nine priority areas, which included 'institution building and management... transformation of service delivery to meet basic needs...[and] improvement of employment conditions and labour relations' (Ncholo 2000: 89). This recalls the RDP White Paper's discussion of affirmative action in a broader context entailing a review of functional priorities, personnel placement and remuneration practices.

With this in mind, reviewing the effects of post-1994 policy calling for changes in the racial profile of the public service could begin with Thompson and Woolard's (2002) assessment of employment equity between 1995 and 2001. The aim of the researchers was to assess the outcome of efforts to institute affirmative action in the public service by using data captured in PERSAL. Overall, the researchers were able to show a rise in the aggregate number of black public servants at management level in the period under review. Figure 4.1, reproduced from Thompson and Woolard's study, interestingly shows that the number of white managers also rose during this period, which together with the number of black managers indicated that the total number of public servants at management level increased substantially from around 24 000 in 1995 to over 70 000 by 2001.

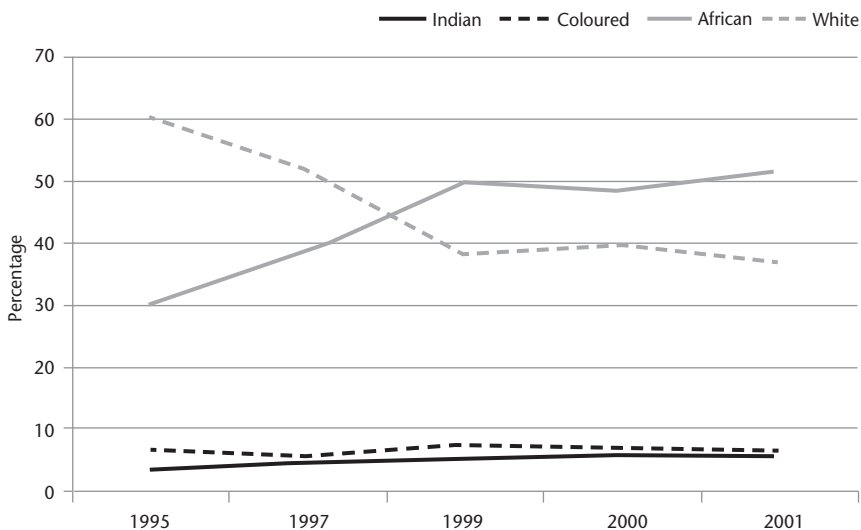
Figure 4.1: Racial breakdown of managers in the public service, 1995–2001

Source: Thompson & Woolard (2002: 5)

Referring to this situation, Thompson and Woolard indicated that ‘although the managerial level numbers are taken from the PERSAL database (level 13 and above), it does indicate some change in the level descriptors during this period and not a mass employment drive by the public service’ (2002: 5). This was elsewhere confirmed by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA 1996), which reported that the salary grading system for the public service was significantly rationalised beginning in 1996, which, together with Southall’s (2004: 533) observation that total employment in the public service actually decreased between 1994 and 2001 by a figure of 124 959 persons, indicates that the rationalisation process produced changes in the definition of a public service manager. Of more immediate interest, though, was the comparative increase in the number of black public servant managers, and Africans in particular, coupled with a reduction in the comparative representation of white managers. This is illustrated in Figure 4.2; the picture conveyed in this figure must be situated in a context where, as Hugo noted earlier, there were already populations of white and black public

servant managers prior to 1994, where these groups generally co-existed in separate administrative systems. The unification of this disparate system of public administration after 1994, which resulted in a merging of managerial and non-managerial personnel, saw marked gains for black and, in particular, African managers and would-be managers.

Figure 4.2: Public servant managers at all levels, by race, as percentage of total managers, 1995–2001



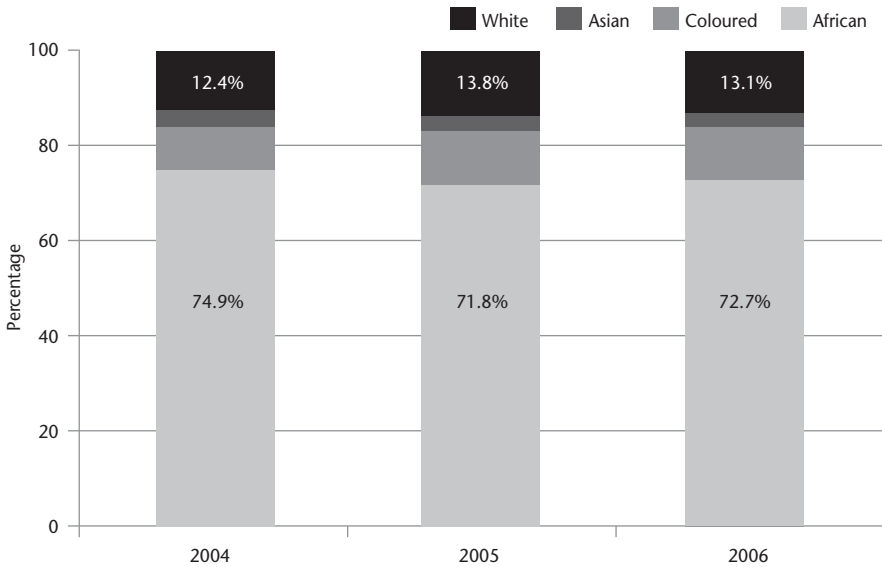
Source: Calculated from data in Thompson & Woolard (2002: 5)

Figure 4.2 also indicates that the policy objective of achieving a 50 per cent representation of black public servants at management level was reached by its target date of 1999, driven exclusively by the African segment of this grouping. The Public Service Commission (2006b: viii) reported that the 50 per cent target figure for black managers had been revised upwards to 75 per cent in 2005.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the racial composition of the public service as a whole and shows that by 2004 the goal of a public service reflecting the major characteristics of South African demography, as intended by policy, seems

to have generally taken place, if compared with overall population statistics. For example, South African census data showed that by 2001 the African segment of the population stood at 79 per cent, the white population at 9.6 per cent, the coloured population at 8.9 per cent and the Indian/Asian segment at 2.5 per cent (Stats SA 2003: 10). By 2004, African representation in the public service was estimated at 74.9 per cent, with white representation standing at 12.4 per cent. These proportions remained generally consistent between 2004 and 2006.

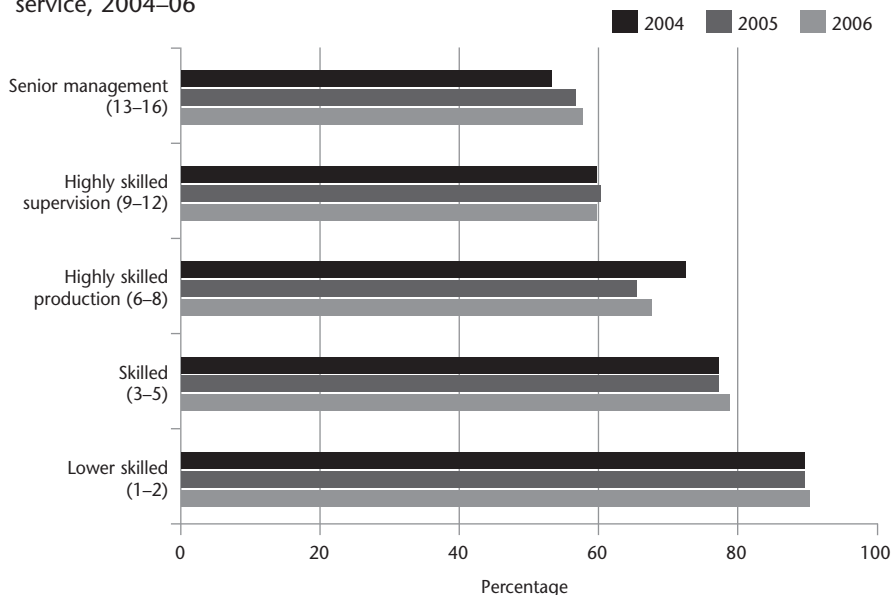
Figure 4.3: Aggregate racial composition of the public service, 2004–06



Source: Own calculations based on PERSAL data (excludes Department of Defence and Secretariat for Safety and Security)

Another perspective on racial representation in the public service across a wider grouping of occupational levels shows that African representation *within* these categories remains highest at the lower-skilled end of the scale, and decreases towards the higher-level bands (see Figure 4.4). This recalls Hugo’s earlier observation about the considerable representation of Africans at lower levels of the public service prior to 1994.

Figure 4.4: Africans as a percentage of occupational categories in the public service, 2004–06

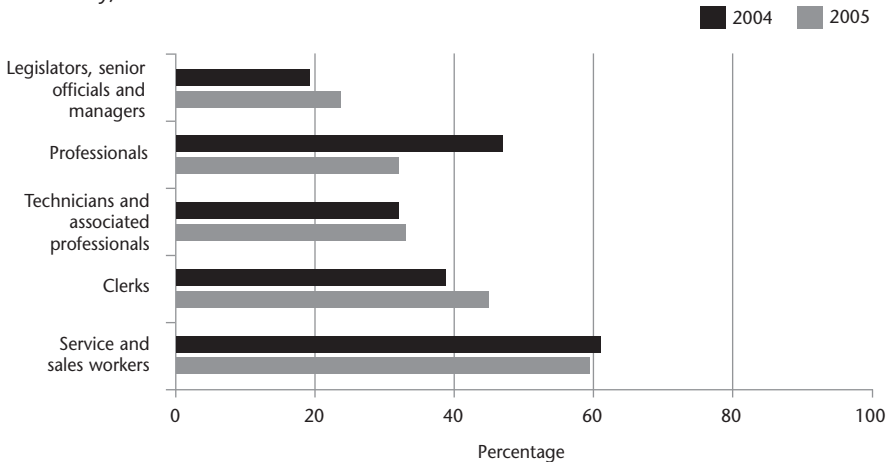


Source: Own calculations based on PERSAL data (excludes Department of Defence and Secretariat for Safety and Security)

This is generally consistent with the picture in the wider economy, as illustrated in reports of the Commission for Employment Equity, a South African statutory body. The occupational categories referred to by the Commission between 2004 and 2005 could generally be compared with that of the public service, allowing for an indicative impression of racial representation across occupational categories.

Figure 4.5 shows that African representation as a percentage of occupational bands tends to be highest in service/sales roles and declines towards the higher-skilled end of the scale. Having said this, in terms of their representation within occupational categories, African representation in the public service exceeds this group’s composition in the wider economy, and particularly when taken as a percentage representation of higher-skilled occupational categories.

Figure 4.5: Africans as a percentage of occupational categories in the wider economy, 2004–05



Note

The definition of occupational categories in the CEE's 2006–07 report changed and did not allow for same comparison.

Source: Own calculations based on data contained in reports by the CEE (2004–05; 2005–06)

REPRESENTATION BY GENDER

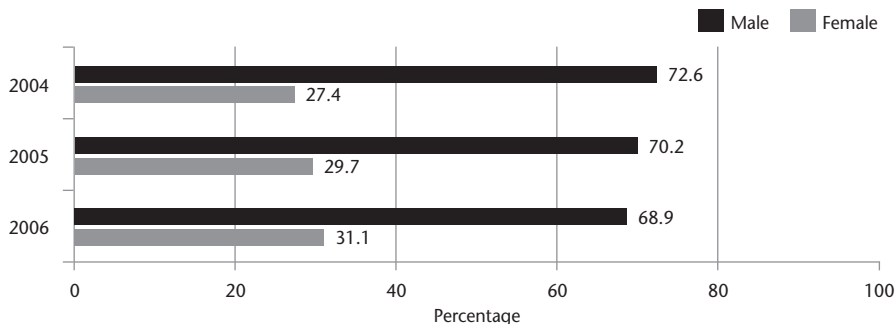
The significance of gender representation in the public service, and within the context of racial redress, follows from a number of observations showing that prior to 1994 the representation of women was strikingly low, particularly at senior occupational levels. This has been pointed out by a number of contributors researching affirmative action in the public service and representative bureaucracy (Cameron 2004; Martin 1999; Naff & Uys 2005). Cameron (2004: 16) in particular observed that women constituted only 7.94 per cent of public service managers in 1995, a figure which had more than trebled by 2004. This still contrasted sharply with the gender composition of the country as whole, which the 2001 Census calculated at 52 per cent women and 48 per cent men (Stats SA 2003: 8).

A closer look at the current status of gender representation in the public service (Figures 4.6 and 4.7) indicates that gender imbalances have not been reduced at the same pace at which racial imbalances have shifted. Having said

this, the representation of women at middle management level had well and truly cleared the 30 per cent target mark by 2004, whilst taking an additional two years to reach this milestone at the senior management ranks.

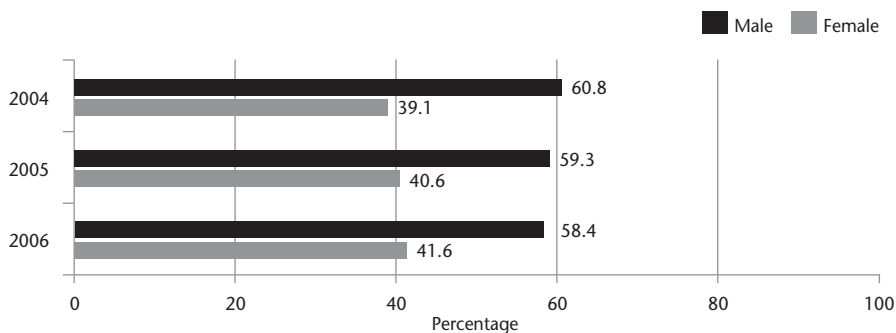
Figure 4.7 in particular shows that the gap between women and men in middle management (levels 9–12) is less unequal, where in 2006 women represented 41 per cent of ‘highly skilled supervision’ employees. The gender situation at middle management level paints a more sanguine outlook for the future, where, all things being equal, the percentage share of women occupying senior management posts should improve if departments are able to successfully retain and career-path female middle managers to higher levels.

Figure 4.6: Senior management in the public service by gender, 2004–06



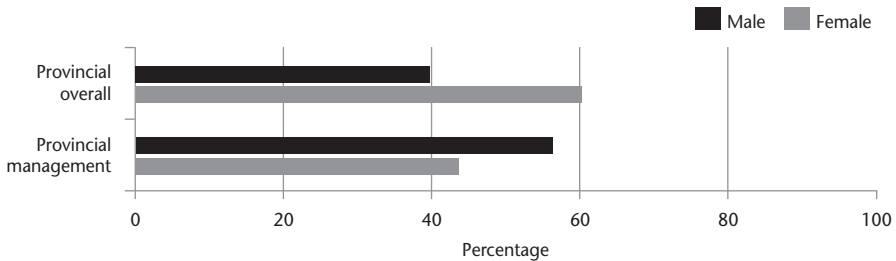
Source: Own calculations based on PERSAL data (excludes Department of Defence and Secretariat for Safety and Security)

Figure 4.7: Middle management in the public service by gender, 2004–06



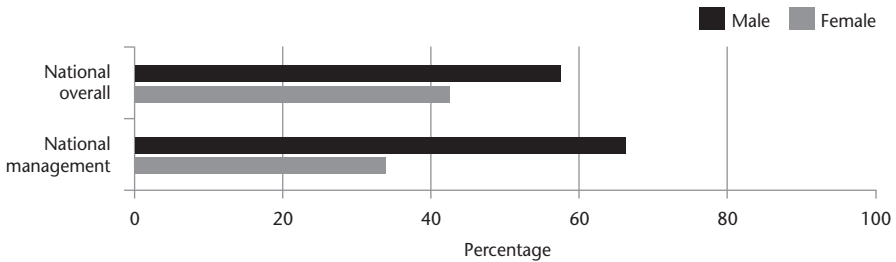
Source: Own calculations based on PERSAL data (excludes Department of Defence and Secretariat for Safety and Security)

Figure 4.8: Gender representation in provincial government, 2006



Source: Own calculations based on PERSAL data (excludes Department of Defence and Secretariat for Safety and Security)

Figure 4.9: Gender representation in national government, 2006



Source: Own calculations based on PERSAL data (excludes Department of Defence and Secretariat for Safety and Security)

In the course of analysing PERSAL data, calculations elsewhere revealed that despite the real prospects for future gains in the representation of women in senior management, gender imbalances remain evident at the upper echelons of the public service. This is acutely visible in Figure 4.8, which shows that despite the preponderance of women as a percentage of total provincial government employ, their numbers have not translated into gains at the management level (middle and senior, levels 9–16).

Figure 4.9 indicates that although the representation of women in national departments is not as inconsistent as it is in provincial departments, women’s share of management is as high as ten percentage points below their allotment of provincial management positions, where men occupy two-thirds of the management positions in national departments. It may be significant to

note, whilst reflecting on this differentiation, that national government is constitutionally invested with greater policy and administrative authority than provincial government in South Africa.

This section has provided an overview of the status of race and gender representation in the public service between 1995 and 2006. It has generally shown that targeted objectives for changing the racial representation of the public service, especially at management levels, were achieved relatively quickly, whilst gender imbalances have taken longer to be redressed. As stated earlier, a conclusive assessment of the outcome of measures like affirmative action to rectify imbalances in race and gender representation cannot happen in isolation because affirmative action is intertwined with broader reform issues including changes in the functional prioritisation of the public service and the overall management of its human resources. The next (and final) section of this chapter will consider this relationship.

REDRESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

Relating the effects of affirmative action with the functional and employment circumstances of the public service often intersects with the issue of 'capacity', which most South Africans would anecdotally acknowledge is often discussed in informal conversations involving the issue of race. The association between race and the capacity of the public service has also been alluded to in the literature, where questions have been raised about whether, driven by a need to meet and maintain racial targets, racial redress has had an adverse impact on the ability of the public service to respond to new priority areas. John Luiz has, for example, speculated that 'the government's policy of affirmative action may have a double-edged effect. Whilst representativeness may indeed enhance the legitimacy of the bureaucracy, it will not necessarily promote capacity and autonomy' (Luiz 2002: 608).

Luiz added that: 'Whilst improving the representativeness of the bureaucracy is vital, it cannot be undertaken at the expense of capacity' (Luiz 2002: 608). The implication in Luiz's argument is that seeking racial representation, depending on how this is carried out, could yield adverse consequences for administrative capacity. Whilst this cannot be judged as deviating from the tone of policy such as the WPTPS, which acknowledged that affirmative action programmes may require the supply of intensive training support, it remains

to be shown whether the circumstances created by broader public service reform might cause the rigid adherence to racial redress measures to have a harmful effect on capacity? The next section will suggest that the conditions accompanying the functional re-organisation and re-prioritisation of state institutions, including current human resource management problems being experienced by the state sector, militates against a rigid adherence to measures designed to regulate staffing in the public service, which would include affirmative action.

FUNCTIONAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

This section firstly suggests that it would be challenging to, in the first instance, establish a causal relationship between the outcomes of racial redress and the capacity of the public service, given the significant increase in the scale of the public service's delivery mandate brought about by South Africa's political transition. Robert Cameron for example wrote that:

The apartheid state [pre-1994 Republic of South Africa] existed primarily to provide services to its White constituency. The post-apartheid state is trying to provide quality services to all of its constituents which entails increasing its target group from four to 44 million. This in turn requires a far more capacitated public service. The public sector is struggling to adapt to this gargantuan challenge. (Cameron 2004: 21)

The consequences of a significant increase in the scale of the public service's delivery mandate can also be seen in the functional changes in the organisational mandates of government departments. This can be seen by comparing the national departments and provincial administrations represented in Schedule 1 of the apartheid-period Public Service Act (No. 111 of 1984), with its post-apartheid successor, the Public Service Act (No. 103 of 1994). The comparison provides an indicative illustration of the functional changes experienced by the public service in the course of South Africa's transition to democracy. The comparison uses Schedule 1 listings at the time of the passage of the Acts, and does not incorporate changes to departments which took place after the acts came into being. The comparison is illustrated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Comparison of apartheid-period and post-apartheid public service departments and administration

1984	1994
Dept of Agriculture	Dept of Agriculture
	Dept of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology <i>(Later split into the Dept of Arts and Culture and the Dept of Science and Technology)</i>
Dept of Constitutional Development and Planning	Dept of Constitutional Development <i>(Changed its name to Dept of Provincial and Local Government)</i>
	Dept of Correctional Services
Dept of National Education	Dept of Education
Dept of Environment Affairs	Dept of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
Dept of Finance	Dept of Finance
Dept of Foreign Affairs	Dept of Foreign Affairs
Dept of Health and Welfare	Dept of Health and Welfare <i>(Later split into the Dept of Health and the Dept of Social Development)</i>
Dept of Internal Affairs	Dept of Home Affairs
	Dept of Housing
Dept of Manpower	Dept of Labour
	Dept of Land Affairs
Dept of Mineral and Energy Affairs	Dept of Minerals and Energy
National Intelligence Service	Dept of National Intelligence Services
	Dept of Public Works
	Dept of Sport and Recreation
	Dept of State Expenditure <i>(Later merged with the Dept of Finance to form the National Treasury)</i>
Dept of Industries and Commerce	Dept of Trade and Industry
Dept of Transport	Dept of Transport
	Dept of Water Affairs and Forestry
South African Defence Force	National Defence Force
Office of the Prime Minister	Office of the President

1984	1994
Office of the Commission for Administration	Office of the Public Service Commission
South African Police	South African Police Service
4 provincial administrations	9 provincial administrations

Source: Public Service Act No. 111 of 1984, Schedule 1; Public Service Act No. 103 of 1994, Schedule 1

Table 4.4 shows that at least seven new national departments were present in the post-apartheid Act.¹¹ It also shows at least three cases of intra-departmental restructuring after 1994: the creation of a single Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology and its subsequent split into two departments (in 2002); the merging of the Department of State Expenditure with the Department of Finance to form a single National Treasury (in 2000); and the splitting of the Department of Health and Welfare into two separate departments. These more visible functional changes do not of course take into account the significant changes in delivery scale affecting departments that transitioned into 1994, including departments such as Agriculture and (National) Education. In addition to these changes, the post-apartheid Act also confirmed the previous disestablishment of bodies such as the Department of Community Development and the Department of Co-operation and Development. Finally, South Africa's four provincial administrations became nine provincial administrations with the passing of the interim Constitution in 1993, bringing into the fold the previous homelands and self-governing territories.

Table 4.4 can offer only an indication of the considerable organisational turbulence created by functional re-prioritisation and a scaling-up in the service delivery mandate of the public service. This needs to be considered together with the 'right-sizing' that began around 1996, which Ncholo (2000: 98) described as having been an almost interminable challenge for the government to '...balance service delivery needs against downward pressure on the public service wage bill'. Relating the goals of the 'right-sizing' strategy, that is to streamline and re-prioritise post establishments in the public service, in an expanded delivery context where public service personnel numbers fell by approximately 151 764 in the period between 1993 and 2006¹², presents difficulties for analysing the effect of racial redress. The question is: in the absence of race and gender changes in the public service, would the

bureaucracy have been better able to carry out an expanded agenda of new policy priorities in a restructured organisational environment and under restrained hiring circumstances?

In attempting to probe the relationship between racial redress and the broader effects of public service reform, there is evidence suggesting that, setting race off to the side somewhat, the post-apartheid public service appears to be grappling with broader challenges relating to the overall management of its available human resources. For example, research by the PSC (2003) showed that between 1998 and 2002 a significant amount of mobility was occurring *within* the public service management corps (calculated at 62 per cent), and particularly at the national level (see Table 4.5). This later declined but stabilised at what remained a high overall rate (internal and external mobility) of 32 per cent at the national level and 38 per cent in the provinces, where the provinces continue to be affected by what appears to be an incongruent allocation of management resources relative to their total employment, in a scenario where provinces shoulder the bulk of policy implementation responsibility in South Africa (Table 4.6).

Although mobility within the public service appeared to be more heavily pronounced between 1998–2000, the Presidency (PCAS 2003: 12) observed in its Ten Year Review of government programmes report that ‘career-pathing’, particularly at the highest levels of the public service, had not yet been fully developed, resulting in skilled and experienced personnel being lost to the private sector (i.e. external mobility).

Table 4.5: Mobility of senior managers in the public service, 1998–2002

	National	Provincial
Average annual mobility rate (1998–2002)	68.0%	13.0%
Percentage external mobility (out of public service)	6.0%	
Percentage internal mobility (within public service)	62.0%	
Average annual mobility rate (2000–02)	32.0%	38.0%

Note

Levels 13–16, including directors, chief directors, deputy directors-general, directors-general.

Source: PSC (2003)

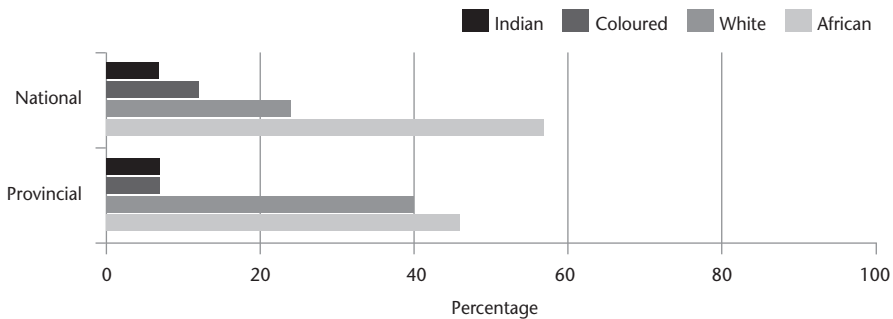
Table 4.6: Ratio of senior managers to subordinates (national and provincial levels), 2006

	Total excluding senior managers	Senior managers	Ratio
National departments	246 945	4 585	53.86
Provincial departments	736 341	4 109	179.20

Source: Own calculations based on PERSAL data (excludes Department of Defence and Secretariat for Safety and Security)

Staying with the issue of mobility, Figure 4.10 shows that nearly 60 per cent of mobility that took place at the provincial level involved African people, with 24 per cent involving white people. Amongst national departments, 46 per cent of mobility involved Africans, followed closely by whites, who constituted 40 per cent of mobility. The overall effect of this mobility data suggests that creating greater stability in high level public service employment, regardless of the race of the incumbent, has to be seen as a significant issue.

Figure 4.10: Senior management mobility by race, 1998–2002



Source: Based on figures published by the PSC (2003)

In addition to the problems presented by high mobility rates, the public service has also been experiencing difficulties filling vacancies at middle and senior management levels. In order to obtain an empirical impression of the problem, published senior manager (level 13–16) vacancy figures for 22 national departments were tabulated by consulting annual reports for the periods 2004–05 and 2005–06. For those departments that were not

included, published figures were either not available or appeared to have been miscalculated. Table 4.7 illustrates the result of this exercise. The 22 departments averaged a 22.3 per cent vacancy rate at senior management level, rising to 25.3 per cent in the 2005–06 reporting period. The problem was more pronounced at middle management (level 9–12), which on aggregate contains more posts than senior management, and where the average vacancy rate was 32 per cent and 31 per cent for 2004–05 and 2005–06 respectively.

Table 4.7: Senior management vacancy in selected national government departments

National Departments	Year 2004–05 (%)	Year 2005–06 (%)
Agriculture	24.6	27.1
Communications	24.3	31.9
Correctional Services	11.7	9.6
Defence	0.0	1.1
Education	15.3	19.3
Environmental Affairs and Tourism	22.0	37.2
Foreign Affairs	11.0	18.0
Home Affairs	42.0	45.2
Justice and Constitutional Development	70.0	44.0
Labour	8.2	18.2
Land Affairs	12.6	13.7
Minerals and Energy	17.0	23.9
National Treasury	17.0	13.0
Presidency	27.6	27.5
Public Service and Administration	24.0	22.6
Provincial and Local Government	18.6	34.4
Public Works	20.4	21.7
Public Enterprises	16.3	24.1
Social Development	26.6	23.1
Trade and Industry	32.8	48.3
Transport	35.0	27.0
Water Affairs and Forestry	14.0	26.2
Average vacancy rate	22.3	25.3

Source: Own calculations based on figures published in departmental annual reports

In an effort to assess the significance of the vacancy rates shown in Table 4.7, the percentage change in vacancy rates in the 2004/05–2005/06 periods was compared with the percentage change in the post establishment, or number of posts specified by each department, which depending on the degree of change here, could give some indication of the impact that organisational restructuring might be having on the filling of vacancies. The results are presented in Table 4.8, which showed that in only four observable cases could a significant relationship be drawn between the rate of change in the number of posts and that in the vacancy rate. Notable examples included the Department of Communications, which showed a 31.3 per cent increase in vacancies, accompanied by a 27 per cent increase in the number of posts. The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development showed a 37.1 per cent decrease in its vacancy rate; however its total post complement was reduced by nearly 49 per cent. In contrast, there were ten departments which displayed, in many cases, a considerably higher increase in vacancies as compared to a more modest rise in post establishments. The results also showed that, in a handful of cases (Departments of Correctional Services, National Treasury, Public Service and Administration, Social Development and Transport), vacancy rates were being reduced in the face of increased post establishments. The overall picture obtained from published departmental reports suggests that most departments appear to be sustaining high levels of senior management vacancies in a relatively unforgiving environment, consisting of across-the-board increases in post establishments.

Table 4.8: Senior management vacancy rate compared with changes in post establishments, 2004–06

National departments	Percentage change in vacancy rate	Percentage change in number of posts
Agriculture	10.2	3.5
Communications	31.3	27.0
Correctional Services	-17.9	9.4
Defence		
Education	26.1	3.5
Environmental Affairs and Tourism	69.1	4.9
Foreign Affairs	63.6	12.1

National departments	Percentage change in vacancy rate	Percentage change in number of posts
Home Affairs	7.6	8.3
Justice and Constitutional Development	-37.1	-48.5
Labour	122	20.5
Land Affairs	8.7	9.2
Minerals & Energy	40.6	3.4
National Treasury	-23.5	3.7
Presidency	-0.4	1.5
Public Service and Administration	-5.8	24
Provincial and Local Government	84.9	25.8
Public Works	6.4	0.7
Public Enterprises	47.9	10.2
Social Development	-13.2	21.9
Trade and Industry	47.3	-49.7
Transport	-22.9	-1.1
Water Affairs and Forestry	87.1	17.5

Source: Own calculations based on figures published in departmental annual reports

The vacancy picture remains a key area of concern as it contributes directly to the capacity of public service departments to effectively carry out programmes and services. It should further be acknowledged, though, that the vacancy situation has also been a subject of contestation in South Africa. The source of the confusion stems from an article published in a South African newspaper in which the director-general of the DPSA was reported to have said that although the PERSAL system had recorded 320 000 vacancies in the public sector, most of these vacancies were unfunded, but in any event '97.8 per cent' of the personnel budget was being spent each year. Furthermore, he was reported to have added that new positions were often being created while existing vacant posts were not being abolished (and presumably de-recorded) and this had resulted in the true vacancy position being inaccurately reflected.¹³ This casts some confusion on at least one segment of the vacancy picture being published by departments themselves (management posts), whilst hinting at a potentially more serious problem with the manner in which departments have

created and managed post establishments. Further research that could provide a time-series picture of departmental post establishment and disestablishment, along with an in-depth analysis of the factors affecting this, could make a useful contribution towards clarifying the vacancy issue. For now, it appears evident that recent moves to expand the capacity of the state, through a general increase in management posts at least, which are furthermore being sought in an increasingly competitive domestic and international hiring environment, are proving difficult for the state to fulfil.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has had two purposes. The first has been to review the state of racial representation in the South African public service. This review has shown that efforts to transform the racial composition of state bureaucracy have yielded considerable shifts in the representation of black people since 1994. In particular, the representation of Africans at senior management level has increased significantly in comparison to the picture that existed prior to this date, where the representation of this group was heavily regulated in order to maintain the integrity of the apartheid policy. The overall picture indicates that shifts in racial representation have produced a public service that is organisationally more balanced in relation to the makeup of South African society. The representation of women in the public service has also increased markedly since 1994, especially at the middle and senior management levels, although in aggregate terms the appearance of women at key decision making levels remains below their share of the population.

The second purpose of this chapter was to situate changes in racial representation in a broader transformational context defined by functional re-organisation and re-prioritisation, and human resource management. It was apparent that the state continues to struggle with the management of its key human resources, following an initial period that saw considerable organisational restructuring and an increase in the scale and orientation (that is, a more participatory developmental approach) of government service delivery. Symptomatic features of the state's human resource management difficulties have included high rates of internal and external mobility of personnel of all race groups, and a potentially serious problem with filling vacancies in a more competitive job environment that is also witnessing an overall increase in post establishments. The net result of these observations would tend to call for the

relaxation of rigid measures designed to regulate staffing in the public service, including affirmative action, where this could result in greater flexibility being applied to attracting and retaining personnel, thus countering the effects of mobility and vacancies.

Notes

- 1 Race groups defined as white, coloured, Indian/Asian, and African.
- 2 'Black' population comprised coloured, Indian/Asian, and African race groups.
- 3 Primary statistics derived from data in the personnel and salary information system (PERSAL), obtained from the Department of Public Service and Administration. Data on vacancies derived directly from that published by government departments in annual reports.
- 4 See the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (No. 46 of 1959).
- 5 See also Ncholo (2000: 89, 95).
- 6 'Self-governing states' conflates the two distinct categories of homelands, that is, the TBVC 'states' and the self-governing territories. The total employment figure given by Hugo and Stack for the 'self-governing states' suggests that just one of these categories is being referred to, rather than both, as a subsequent PSC report (1995: 9) counted that the TBVC states and self-governing territories each had in excess of 200 000 employees (see Table 4.1). It is assumed therefore that Hugo and Stack are referring either to the 'self-governing territories' or 'TBVC states', and not to both.
- 7 See Southall's data on the racial composition of the public service (including 'non-independent homelands') as at 1993. Southall observes that 43 per cent of African public servants resided in these homelands (presuming that 'non-independent homelands' refers to self-governing territories) (Southall 2004).
- 8 Apart from the marginalisation of Africans in the apartheid-period public service, it has been recognised that women were also severely under-represented. The RDP White Paper for example observed that although there were many capable women in the public service, very few were in senior positions. Cameron (2004) also observed that apartheid discriminated against white women, with very few holding senior management positions.
- 9 *Finansies en Tegniek*, 24 April 1991.
- 10 The White Paper remarked on a need to diversify public administration by arguing that the goal of improving quality and extending public services to all would require fresh thinking and innovative approaches that lay outside the traditional culture of public administration (section 3.3.2).

- 11 Does not include the Department of State Expenditure, which was established prior to 1994.
- 12 If comparing aggregate size presented earlier in Table 4.1 with that published by the PSC (2006: 69) as at February 2006.
- 13 *Mail & Guardian*, June 1 to 7 2007, Gear blamed for public service vacancies.

References

- Cameron R (2004) Affirmative action in the South African public Sector. Unpublished manuscript
- CEE (Commission for Employment Equity) (2005) Annual Report 2004–2005. Pretoria: DoL (Department of Labour)
- CEE 2006 *Annual Report 2005–2006*. Pretoria: DoL
- DPSA (Department of Public Service and Administration) (1994) White Paper on reconstruction and development. Pretoria: DPSA
- DPSA (1995) White Paper on the transformation of the public service. Pretoria: DPSA
- DPSA (1996) *Annual Report*. Pretoria: DPSA
- DPSA (1997a) White Paper on human resource management in the public service. Pretoria: DPSA
- DPSA (1997b) White Paper on a new employment policy for the public service (2nd draft). Available at: <http://www.info.gov.za/Whitepapers/1997/employ2.htm>
- DPSA (1997c) White Paper on transforming public service delivery. Pretoria: DPSA
- DPSA (1998) White Paper on affirmative action in the public service. Pretoria: DPSA
- Hugo P 1989 *Black access to the South African bureaucracy*. Working Paper No. 8, Institute for the Study of Public Policy, University of Cape Town
- Hugo P 1990 Affirmative action in the public service. In RA Schrire (Ed.) *Critical choices for South Africa: An agenda for the 1990s*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press
- Hugo P & Stack L (1992) Whites in the South African public service: Angst and the future. In P Hugo (Ed.) *Redistribution and affirmative action: Working on the South African political economy*. Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers
- Luiz JM (2002) South African state capacity and post-apartheid economic reconstruction. *International Journal of Social Economics* 29(8): 594–614
- Maphai VT (1992) The civil service: transition and affirmative action. In P Hugo (Ed.) *Redistribution and affirmative action: Working on the South African political economy*. Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers

- Marger MN (1994) *Race and ethnic relations: American and global perspectives* (2nd edition). Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing
- Martin G (1999) Affirmative action in the South African Public service/L'affirmative action dans la fonction publique sud-africaine. *Revue Tiers Monde* 40(159): 625–638
- Naff KC & Uys F (2005) Representative bureaucracy in South Africa: success or failure? Paper prepared for the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago (7–10 April)
- Ncholo P (2000) Reforming the public service in South Africa: A policy framework. *Public Administration and Development* 20: 87–102
- PCAS (Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services, South African Presidency) (2003) Towards a ten year review: Synthesis report on implementation of government programmes. Pretoria: PCAS
- PSC (Public Service Commission) (2006a) State of the public service report 2006. Pretoria: PSC
- PSC (2006b) An audit of affirmative action in the public service. Pretoria: PSC
- PSC (2003) Report on the causes and effects of mobility amongst senior management service and professional staff in the public service. Pretoria: PSC
- Ruiters G (2006) South Africa, public services: Transformation of stasis. *Public Services Yearbook 2005/2006*. Available at:
http://www.queensu.ca/msp/pages/Project_Publications/Chapters/services.pdf
- SAIRR (South African Institute of Race Relations) (1990) Race relations survey 1989/90 Johannesburg: SAIRR.
- Southall R (2004) Political change and the black middle class in democratic South Africa. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 38(3): 521–542
- Stats SA (Statistics South Africa) (2003) *Census 2001: Census in brief*. Pretoria: Statistics SA
- Stats SA (2006) *Labour force survey* (March). Pretoria: Statistics SA
- Thompson K & Woolard I (2002) *Achieving employment equity in the public service: A study of changes between 1995 and 2001*. Development Policy Research Unit Working Paper No. 02/61