


The implementation of gender equality within the South African Public Service (1994–2019)

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Background: There are various factors that affect the effective implementation of gender equality in South Africa. Some of the factors include digital divide, economic empowerment, gender relations, gender-based violence, poverty, women's access to political power, and women's mobility in the workplace.

Aim: The feminist movements resulted in the notion of transformation that demands that gender-based aspects need integration in all government policies, programmes and projects. This approach is called the gender mainstreaming approach (GMA). This article within the theoretical framework of GMA examines the factors that hamper the implementation of the gender equality (focus) within the South African Public Service (locus).

Setting: The research is descriptive in nature that played an important role in developing an in-depth account of gender inequalities in the public service.

Methods: A qualitative, descriptive research method was employed. This article, which is theoretical in nature, drew its arguments from secondary data, which included books, journal articles, newspaper clippings, Internet sources and official documents.

Results: The article argues that the consideration of women in lower management levels affects their career in the long term as the succession from entry-level positions to higher management positions requires a considerable time frame and is often delayed.

Conclusion: The article recommends that all South African Public Service departments need to submit a gender mainstreaming report annually to the Department of Public Service and Administration for assessment to identify gaps in the implementation of gender equality within the public service.

Keywords: gender; gender mainstreaming; gender mainstreaming approach; gender equality; South African Public Service.

Introduction

One of the key demands of the feminist movement (which started in the 1880s globally [but first arose in France in 1870]) has been and continues to be women's exercise of their full and active citizenship, which they consider was denied them as a result of not being recognised as equals at the moment of the definition and construction of citizenship in the 18th century. Since then, the women's movement and feminist movement have denounced this exclusion, calling for equal citizenship for women (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Lukamba 2011). At first, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the feminist movement demanded the right to vote along with other civic, civil and political rights, considered as a first wave of feminism. The second wave of feminism during the 1960s and 1970s continued to demand the expansion of women's citizenship in the case of the African continent as a whole, and called for a redefinition of the private sphere in which women were isolated. In this sphere, they were excluded from certain human rights and were thus unable to fully exercise rights expressing an equal citizenship (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Lukamba 2011).

In South Africa, gender equality is a constitutional human right whereby women are afforded the same status as men. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996* provides for the establishment of one sovereign state, a democratic system of government committed to achieve equality between men and women, as well as all people of all races by providing for the prohibition of racial, gender and all other forms of discrimination. Section 9 (2) of the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2) (Constitution of the RSA 1996) stipulates that:

[E]quality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken. (p. 5)

The achievement of gender equality is supported by an institutional framework of policies and mechanisms that include the National Gender Policy Framework and a Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities. The government is enforcing tough laws to ensure gender transformation compliance in the private and public sectors (Goko 2013 cited in Nhlapo 2019). Goko (2013) emphasises that:

[S]ince 1994, government departments and companies need to ensure filling a minimum of 50% of all senior and top management positions with women. Women deserve to be appointed and elevated to decision-making positions contrary to the norm of confining them to decision-implementing positions. (p. 1)

However, the *Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives in Public Service*, a report published by the Public Service Commission (PSC 2006 cited in Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad 2016), states that:

[E]mpowerment of women is not happening in any significant or meaningful way in departments. Apart from general policies and practices that affect all staff, there are no specific programmes that recognise women as a separate interest group with specific interests and needs. This includes issues related to recruitment, training and addressing the practical needs of women. (p. 171)

In addition, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) published a report (cited in Nhlapo & Vyas-Doorgapersad 2016:171–172), highlighting that ‘women mostly occupy lower levels where earnings and power to influence decisions are equally less’. The consideration of women in lower management levels allows them to obtain a job at entry level’. However, it affects their career in the long term as the succession from entry-level positions to higher management positions requires a considerable time frame and is often delayed. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) in its 2017 report emphasises that in the financial year ending 31 March 2016, 16% of the total complaints received alleged a violation of the right to equality. This violation is against the purpose of the *Employment Equity Act* (No. 55 of 1998) that aims ‘to achieve equity in the workplace by promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment through elimination of unfair discrimination’ (RSA 1998a) based on gender, race, disability or ethnic background.

This situation creates a warning, showing that women are marginalised in human resource (HR) processes (recruitment, selection, promotion and career management) and that gender mainstreaming requires serious consideration and implementation by South African policymakers. To improve the situation and enhance gender equality within the public service, the DPSA proposed the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service in 2005. The framework and processes to mainstream gender are reviewed in this article through document analysis of the official

reports of the DPSA, PSC and the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG). In view of the above background, the main research question addressed in this study is as follows: what are the institutional factors that influence the implementation of gender equality within the South African Public Service? The article aims to provide a conceptual framework gained from the relevant literature in an effort to explain the challenges related to gender equality. The article contextualises factors that affect the effective implementation of gender equality within the public service.

Methodology

The article employs the qualitative research approach that is considered significant as it emphasises the careful and detailed description of social practice (Sibanda 2015). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) further emphasise that:

[Q]ualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (p. 8)

The qualitative research approach utilises the triangulation of data (conceptual analysis, document analysis and unobtrusive research) to strengthen validity and reliability in the research process. The basic idea is that questions like ‘‘What is knowledge?, What is justice?, or What is truth?’’ can be answered solely on the basis of one’s grasp of the relevant concepts’ (Auriacombe 2011:96). According to the University of Southern California (2018), the:

[P]rimary reason for using conceptual analysis is to understand the meaning of an idea or concept. The secondary reason is to determine how that idea or concept relates to other philosophical problems. (p. 1)

A conceptual framework is a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that support and inform research (Maxwell 2005), and is generally regarded as an explanation proposed to reach a better understanding of the social reality and/or phenomenon that is being investigated (Auriacombe 2011). According to Research Methodology in Education (2016), document analysis:

[I]s a social research method and is an important research tool in its own right, and is an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation, the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon ... The purpose of triangulating is to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility. (p. 1)

Information from official documents of South African Public Service departments, the DPSA, PSC and PMG, was considered in the article.

According to Bryman (2004, cited in O’Brien 2011) unobtrusive research methods:

[O]ffer a strong critique of positivism, which is the concept that truths can be determined about the social world by scientific measurement. They instead belong to the epistemological theory

of interpretivism, which is that the social sciences are fundamentally different from natural sciences, therefore requiring researchers to reject empiricism and grasp subjective meanings of social action. (p. 2)

In terms of 'ontological considerations, unobtrusive methods fit into the constructionism theory, whereby social phenomena and their meanings are continually accomplished and revised by social actors' (O'Brien 2011). The reason to consider unobtrusive research, according to Web Center for Social Research Methods (n.d.), is that it 'presumably reduces the bias that results from the intrusion of the researcher'. (p. 1)

Conceptual clarification

Gender is socially and culturally constructed diverse tasks, roles and responsibilities related to women and men (Vyas-Doorgapersad 2015). Gender mainstreaming, according to Verloo (2001 cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad 2017):

[C]onstitutes a clear example of policy succession or policy adaptation, prompted by the desire to overcome the limitations of existing policies, and the need to respond to a changed policy environment. (p. 104)

This explanation is supported by Daly (2005), who highlights that 'the primary objective of the gender mainstreaming approach is to institutionalise equality by embedding gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes, and environment of public policy'. Gender equality has 'to do with the view that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles' (Holzner, Neuhold & Weiss-Gänger 2010). The South African Public Service, as described by the PSC (2017), is a holistic administration centre that consists of different department and sectors within itself that seeks to ensure that the people of the republic are serviced. Public service is the entire service centre of a particular state.

Moore (1994) says that achieving:

[G]reater equality between women and men requires changes at many levels, including changes in attitudes and relationships, changes in institutions and legal frameworks, changes in economic institutions, and changes in political decision-making structures. Gender equality denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men – including the ability to participate in the public sphere. (p. 55–56)

Gender equality also denotes equality on the professional front. The lack of equality may result in institutions creating gender gaps, which Goldin (1990) explains as a 'difference that exists between males and females in access to some social good or benefit based solely on their difference in gender'. To improve gender equality and to fill gender gaps, it is considered necessary by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD 2007) to establish gender indicators, which are tools for monitoring gender differences, gender-related changes over time and progress towards gender equality goals. The aforementioned aspects, according to the United Nations Fund for Women (2015), ultimately demand gender mainstreaming, which:

[I]nvolves bringing the contribution, perspectives and priorities of both women and men to the centre of attention in the development arena in order to inform the design, implementation and outcomes of policies and programmes. (p. 3)

Theoretical underpinning

Various development movements have been witnessed in the past that demand gender equality, such as women in development, women and development and gender and development. Various gender-based theoretical approaches have also emerged in a multidisciplinary context, such as the critical feminism theory, the gender disparities theory, the liberal theory, the equal treatment approach, the welfare approach, the efficiency approach, the equity approach, the empowerment approach and the gender mainstreaming approach (GMA).

Gender mainstreaming, according to the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE 2018):

[H]as been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men and combating discrimination. (p. 1)

The GMA is considered as a theoretical framework for this article. The rationale is that this approach (EIGE 2018):

[C]onsiders that gender mainstreaming requires both integrating a gender perspective to the content of different policies, and addresses the issue of representation of women and men in a given policy area. (p. 2)

The GMA addresses the issue of gender representation 'by examining the representation of women and men as policy beneficiaries, as well as their representation in the labour force and in decision-making processes' (EIGE 2018). The rationale is supported by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2018a citing African Development Bank 2011), emphasising that the approach aims:

[T]o integrate gender into development analysis, country dialogue, sectors and operations, in the hope that gender will become everyone's business, and lead to improved gender equality and more equitable and sustainable development. (p. 10)

The GMA is therefore considered with the intention that it may assist South African Public Service departments to develop and incorporate a gender perspective into all government policies and programmes.

Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service

The field of public management and public service reform in democratic South Africa has been shaped by the tenets of New Public Management (NPM), including a strong focus on decentralised management (Sheoraj 2015). However, decentralisation is not fully achieved in terms of embracing diversity; hence, the South African Public Service lacks gender mainstreaming and equality in processes, structures and programmes. Developmental and progressive thinking

by policymakers has resulted in the inclusion of gender in the public service in the form of a framework entitled 'Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service'. According to DPSA (2006), the:

[D]evelopment of this framework is premised on the Draft National Programme for Action for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (2005–2015) produced by the Office on Status of Women (OSW) in The Presidency. (p. 9)

According to Vyas-Doorgapersad (2018b):

South Africa faces a range of socio-economic and cultural challenges that continue to underpin aspects of gender inequality. There are a number of factors that play a crucial role in assessing progress towards achieving gender equality. These include the need to encourage a more equitable and non-gendered division of labour; and the need to ensure equitable access to employment opportunities for women. (p. 123)

Achieving 'the goal of gender equality is premised on the fundamental integration of women and gender issues within all structures, institutions, policies, procedures, practice, programmes, and projects of the government' (DPSA 2006). The DPSA (2006) emphasises that:

[P]riority focus on increasing women's participation in decision making, and the concomitant adoption of the Public Service employment equity target of 50% representation for women at all levels of the Senior Management Service (SMS), are built into the current strategy. This translates to a concerted effort needed across all government departments, at national, provincial and local levels, in addressing women's empowerment and leadership development. (p. 3)

It, according to DPSA (2006:12), 'is the full compliance, by government departments, to the imperatives contained in the South African National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality' which was adopted in 2000 by the South African cabinet.

The aim of the framework is to create an enabling environment in public service departments that demands a need (Jordaan 2013):

[T]o adapt their organisational management and planning methodologies to suit the anticipated realities of the environment. Due to the constantly changing environment, organisations will have to reflect the realities of the time in order to be really responsive and responsible. (p. 76)

The changed environment also emphasises a need to incorporate gender mainstreaming and equality in the South African Public Service.

The framework:

[P]rovides a wide set of options for the transformation of the workplace premised on the promotion and protection of human dignity and the rights of women. It recognises the role of the government in promoting non-sexism and non-discrimination for employees in the Public Service. (DPSA n.d.:3)

In other words, according to the DPSA (n.d.:4), the aim of the public service is to create an enabling and barrier-free workplace that is non-sexist and non-discriminatory.

Also note that related to the concept equality, according to Wessels (2008):

[A]re the concepts equal opportunities and equal employment opportunities. The implication of the concept equal opportunities within the context of government institutions is to have the opportunity to be treated equally, especially with regard to employment, hence the concept equal employment opportunities. (p. 26)

Wessels (2008) cites the Green Paper on a Conceptual Framework for Affirmative Action and the Management of Diversity in the Public Service by highlighting that:

[T]here are two characteristics to the concept equal opportunities, namely that of a principle enshrined within the ideal of a representative Public Service to ensure equality in employment for the equal enjoyment of rights, opportunities, benefits and access in the workplace and a tool to eradicate discrimination and unfairness in the workplace in pursuit of a representative Public Service. (p. 26)

It needs to be considered that 'mainstreaming gender ensures a comprehensive approach to transforming gender relations in the workplace, the community, and the home, with the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality' (Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy [PALAMA] n.d.). South Africa:

[H]as taken a stance that gender equality is not only a human rights issue, but also a developmental issue. The Public Service is one of the vehicles for achieving gender equality. A transformed Public Service that is equally responsive to the needs of all will contribute to delivering on the government's promise of *A Better Life for All*. (PALAMA n.d.:1)

PALAMA (n.d.) emphasises that by adopting a gender-sensitive:

[A]pproach to service delivery and integrating gender considerations into programmes and projects from the outset, the Public Service can play a significant role in improving the lives of women, men, girls and boys (p.1).

Status of gender equality in the South African Public Service

The discrimination of women and poor representativeness in the workplace can be traced to traditional norms and cultural practices. Mokhele (2016) states a Setswana proverb in this regard: '[a] team of oxen is never led by a female. Otherwise, the oxen will fall into the ditch'. Mokhele (2016) further adds that since democracy, only a small number of 'women in the public sector have grown significantly, particularly in the supervisory and technical skills positions'. Since the inception of democracy in 1994, women have always been under-represented in the South African Public Service, as shown in Table 1.

It is evident from Table 1 that women are poorly represented at management levels. The:

[S]ituation was at its worst in 1995, with increases in female manager numbers from 1995 to 2000. These increases are offset to a degree by corresponding increases in the numbers of male managers. (Thompson & Woolard 2002:14)

TABLE 1: Under-representation of women at managerial level per race group: 1995–2001.

Management: All levels	Male					Female				
	1995	1997	1999	2000	2001	1995	1997	1999	2000	2001
African people	1497	3922	12 891	14 602	12 353	5885	10 736	22 646	25 911	24 348
Mixed race people	162	338	1434	1550	1126	1418	1851	3954	4233	3648
Indian people	158	403	1215	1444	1221	677	1290	2513	3349	2890
White people	2356	4206	9629	10 885	7698	12 382	15 610	17 652	22 245	18 578
Total	6168	10 866	27 168	30 481	24 399	22 417	31 484	48 764	57 738	51 465

Source: Thompson, K. & Woolard, I., 2002, *Achieving employment equity in the public service: A study of changes between 1995 and 2001*, viewed 13 March 2019, from http://www.health.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/36/DPRU%20WP02-061.pdf

TABLE 2: Net change in female managers – All levels: 1995–2001.

Management: All levels	1995–1997	1997–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
African people	2425	8969	1711	-2249
Mixed race people	176	1096	116	-424
Indian people	245	812	229	-223
White people	1850	5423	1256	-3187
Total	4696	16 300	3312	-6083

Source: Thompson, K. & Woolard, I., 2002, *Achieving employment equity in the public service: A study of changes between 1995 and 2001*, viewed 13 March 2019, from http://www.health.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/36/DPRU%20WP02-061.pdf

TABLE 3: Net change in female managers as a percentage of total change in management – All levels: 1995–2001.

Management: All levels	1995–1997 (%)	1997–1999 (%)	1999–2000 (%)	2000–2001 (%)
African people	33.3	43.0	34.4	59.0
Mixed race people	32.2	34.3	29.4	42.0
Indian people	28.6	39.9	21.5	32.7
White people	36.4	72.7	21.5	46.5
Total	34.1	48.5	27.0	49.5

Source: Thompson, K. & Woolard, I., 2002, *Achieving employment equity in the public service: A study of changes between 1995 and 2001*, viewed 13 March 2019, from http://www.health.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/36/DPRU%20WP02-061.pdf

Tables 2 and 3 show the net change in female managers and the net change in female managers as a percentage of total change in management for the period 1995–2001, respectively.

The situation has still not improved on absolute basis. According to reports of the African National Congress (ANC 2014 cited in Mokhele 2016), in 2005, after the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service (2006–2015), South Africa experienced a:

[S]ignificant increase of women representation from 30% in 2005 and 40% in 2014, yet still below the 50% target. To drag down the progress which has been laid down by the South Africa [n] government institutions towards advancing women in SMS and decision-making position, statistics have indicated that such growth has been growing at 1% per annum. (p. 8)

In addition, the statistics published by the DPSA (2017) highlight that the ‘number of departments making progress in meeting the 50% equity target has decreased from 22 departments in 2015 to 16 in March 2016’. The increase in the representation of women at senior management service (SMS) has been at an average of 1%. This pace gives us an indication that the 50% target can only be achieved by 2025 if it does not change (DPSA 2017). This is confirmed by the 17th Commission of Employment Equity (CEE) Annual Report 2016–2017 (DoL 2018a), highlighting that more than two-thirds of employees (66.7%) in senior management level are men,

while female employees only account for 33.3%. The 18th CEE Annual Report 2017–2018 (DoL 2018b) highlights that the representation of women is at approximately half their economically active population at the top management level (see Figure 1).

The review of facts and statistics published by the DPSA (2017) indicates that the equity targets on the representation of public servants:

[W]ith disabilities (2%) and for women at SMS (50%) have not been met. Of concern are departments that have been hovering between 45% and 49% over the past three years, but do not seem to be making any progress to reach the 50%. Some departments still have representation of women at SMS below 30% and representation of persons with disabilities below 1%. (p. 21)

Gender equality has therefore been a concern and challenge in the South African Public Service, whereby especially women struggle to achieve strategic positions and equal representation in decision-making positions. The factors that hamper the incorporation of gender equality are discussed in the next section.

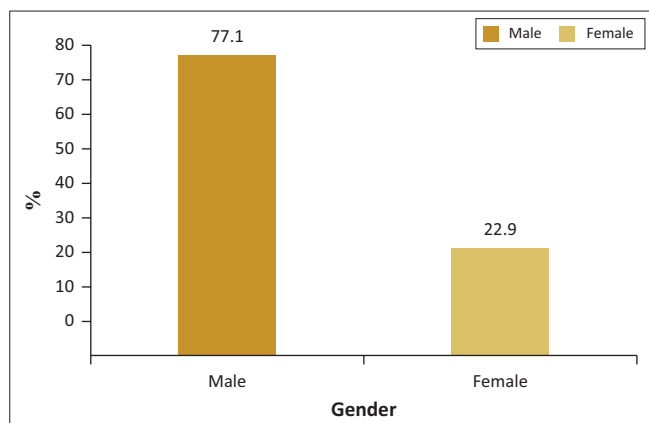
Institutional factors that influence the implementation of gender equality within the public service

Some of the institutional factors that hamper the implementation of gender equality in the public service are discussed below.

Representation at senior management service level by gender

As of 31 March 2017, according to the DPSA (2018), the public service had a total of 10 254 filled senior management posts. Of these, 41.3% were filled by women and 58.7% were filled by men. At the end of the 2016/2017 financial year, the public service had 1774 more male senior managers than female senior managers.

This situation shows a lack of implementation of employment equity in the public service. The South African government has introduced various policies in this regard, such as the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development of 1994, the White Paper on Transformation of Public Service of 1995, the White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service of 1998 and the *Employment Equity Act* of 1998, all aiming to mainstream gender in the public service. However, the departments are falling short of meeting their equity targets.



Source: Department of Labour (DoL), 2018b, *Commission for employment equity 18th annual report 2017–2018*, DoL, Pretoria.

FIGURE1: Top management by gender (all employers).

The key challenge for the South African government, as cited by Nhlapo (2019):

[I]s to move beyond these targets and ensure that gender relations in the public service are fundamentally transformed to empower all the sexes to be equal participants and beneficiaries in the consolidation of the South African democratic state, as well as to cultivate an entrenched reflexive intervention for this, particularly at senior management levels. This will entail moving beyond setting only numerical targets. Critical to this is the creation of an enabling environment to ensure that women's talents and potential are harnessed and nurtured for the benefit of the South African society as a whole.

Public servants in senior management service by salary and gender

It is clear from the reports of the DPSA (2018) that male dominance increases with salary levels so much so that the difference in male representation in SMS between salary levels 13 and 16 is 15.98%. The biggest concern is at salary level 16 (Director-General) where the percentage difference is 47.56%, which equates to 78 more male Directors-General than females. In stark contrast with the level below senior management, the percentage of women is less than that of the men for all senior management salary levels (DPSA 2018): 13 (42.20% female vs. 57.80% male), 14 (40.81% female vs. 59.19% male), 15 (37.76% female vs. 62.24% male) and 16 (26.22% female vs. 73.78% male). It is seen that men hold more positions and hence outnumber women at SMS level across all race groups. The DoL (2007) highlights that:

[A]lthough there is an increase of women participation in the economy of the country they still remain over-represented in low-income employment as the majority have jobs as unskilled elementary workers. As such, a clear gender disparity remains in terms of the implementation of equity targets within the skills development. (p. 36)

Compliance with the 50% target in the representation of women in senior management service

In the South African Public Service arena, only 'eight National Departments and 19 Provincial Departments have reached the 50% women at SMS target' (DPSA 2018). Thirty-two

provincial departments and 22 national departments have representation between 40% and 49% women in SMS (DPSA 2018:32). Forty-four provincial departments and 13 national departments have representation between 30% and 39% women in SMS (DPSA 2018). There are still 19 provincial departments that have less than 30% representation of women in SMS (DPSA 2018). The DPSA (2018) further confirms that the Department of Economic Development in Mpumalanga and the Department of Sports, Art and Culture in the Northern Cape have not submitted a progress report for the Gender Equality Framework for 2016/2017 as yet. The reason, as pointed out in the PSC report (2002 cited in Nhlapo 2019), is that:

[W]hile 30% is used as the benchmark for departments to use as an indicator for the success of gender mainstreaming departments, when they reach the 30% target, they assume that they do not need to do more. Target setting could therefore create a barrier to the continued advancement of women, especially as gender mainstreaming in the South African Public Service is still seen as meeting only numerical targets. (p. 245)

Gender equality policies or strategic frameworks and alignment with the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service

The DPSA (2013) confirms that:

[L]ooking at the date of approval of some, it was unlikely that the gender policies/strategic frameworks had been aligned as they were developed long before the Gender Equality Strategic Framework of the Public Service came into existence. (p. 13)

In addition, the challenge is that departments had adopted different variations in developing their policies or strategies, that is, some only developed the ones that are externally focused and did not have the internally focused policies or strategies (DPSA 2013). The root causes are as follows (Department of Women 2014; Nhlapo 2019): lack of stakeholder understanding and commitment to gender mainstreaming; lack of sharing information and knowledge; failure to comment on existing legislation and bills that negatively impact the socio-economic empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality; inadequate oversight capacity and expertise on policies and programmes for the socio-economic empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality; predominance of gender imbalances or disparities in the country, especially in key decision-making positions; reversal of the women's empowerment agenda; the inability to promote and protect the social and related rights of women; and the insufficient gender expertise.

Establishment of institutional structures and processes

The PSC (2006) highlights that:

[T]here is a lack of a clearly defined institutional framework that is necessary to facilitate the attainment of the vision of gender mainstreaming. Roles and responsibilities within the National Gender Machinery need to be clarified and then implemented and institutions held accountable for its success or lack thereof, within the Public Service. (p. 48)

The PSC (2006) furthermore states that:

[T]he national structures established to promote women's empowerment and gender equality, specifically the OSW and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), need to be strengthened to be able to provide the support and services required by government departments in implementing gender mainstreaming. (p. 48)

'Having addressed the lack of and inadequacy of the drivers of gender mainstreaming at all levels within department', according to the PSC (2006), it is fair to state that 'the environment in general is not enabling for the empowerment of women'.

According to the PSC (2006), gender mainstreaming:

[I]s not included in any departmental planning, monitoring, and budgeting processes, apart from ensuring that employment equity targets are met. To achieve gender equality, the government must embark on a rigorous gender mainstreaming strategy. (p. 48)

To this end, the PSC (2006) emphasises that:

[M]uch of the responsibility for planning and implementing effective and innovative strategies for the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality rest equally with key structures of the National Machinery and with individual government departments at the national, provincial, and local levels. (p. 48)

The institutional factors are internal factors that cause organisational inactivity with regard to gender equality initiatives. This inactivity, according to (Styodana 2015:32 cited in Nhlapo 2019:172) produces challenges for organisations as it creates divisions with regard to jobs, the racial and gender make-up of jobs and differences between the diverse groups in terms of power, status, reward and respect. These challenges greatly impact women most of the time. The power of internal constituencies tends to cause internal burdens for both organisational stability and change if it fails to recognise the inequality issues faced by organisations, that is, while considering gender inequality, competent women leave the organisation and constant changes must be made to the business and the projects those same women were working on.

Recruitment and promotion practices

In most South African Public Service departments, according to the PSC (2006):

[R]ecruitment takes place according to employment equity targets as informed by the employment equity plans. Women feel disadvantaged from the onset because they have practical needs that influence their ability to apply for certain jobs. A perception of both men and women was that women were less able to travel for work purposes because of domestic and parenting responsibilities and therefore did not apply for certain positions that require travelling. (p. 50)

The PSC (2006) therefore emphasises that:

[T]his should not be seen as the reason to justify why women do not apply for such jobs but instead it raises substantive questions regarding how far a department would need to go to ensure

organisational transformation to combat these challenges. Therefore, while there are no formal restrictions on the recruitment of women into senior positions, some subtle discrimination might come into play. This also refers to the obstacles or perception of the work that men and women should be doing. For example, secretarial work is generally seen as women's work. (p. 50)

As stressed by (Stamarski & Son Hing 2015:4, cited in Nhlapo 2019), HR policies:

[T]hat are inherently biased against a group of people, regardless of their job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, and performance, can be termed institutional discrimination. Institutional discrimination against women can occur in each type of HR policy from the recruitment and selection of an individual into an organisation, through to his/her role assignments, training, pay, performance evaluations, promotion, and termination. For instance, if women are underrepresented in a particular educational programme or a particular job type and those credentials or previous job experience are required to be considered for selection, women are being systematically, albeit perhaps not intentionally, discriminated against. (p. 170)

The above-stated challenges are further supported by the review of official documents to highlight gender inequality in the public service. Ms MmathaoMashao, Chief Director of the Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC), reported to the PMG that the PSC:

[H]ad conducted a study on gender mainstreaming initiatives. This was intended to provide a baseline for future research, to develop a gender representivity profile, to examine the extent to which there has been empowerment of women, to establish whether there were family-friendly policies, to examine the impact of gender mainstreaming, how recruitment and promotion enhance gender equality, and the sensitivity of issues associated with gender relations. All of this will enable the PSC to propose interventions. It would also examine the role of the OSW. (PMG 2007:4)

The key findings of the PSC's study were then summarised as follows:

[T]here was a general lack of knowledge and understanding of gender mainstreaming in most departments across all levels. The provincial overview of women in senior positions showed that the target of 30% had not been reached. Some individual provinces had reached or even exceeded the target (such as the North West) but other provinces, such as the Western Cape, were far below par. (PMG 2007:2)

The:

[A]verage percentage of women in senior positions in national departments was 31.2%. Targets had not been reached in respect of disability, with seven provinces having no female managers with disabilities. The empowerment of women was not happening ...[.] There was no defined institutional structure to attain the vision of gender mainstreaming. (PMG 2007:3)

The lack of implementation of the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service is supported by a report released by the DPSA (2016), emphasising that

South African Public Service departments during the Women in Management Week in 2016 reported on various activities aimed at promoting and protecting human rights and specifically women's rights, including workshops and information sessions. However, very few departments gave a breakdown of participants at these sessions, and the topics that were being addressed. In a few cases where the numbers of participants were provided, the information was not disaggregated.

Since 2012, as confirmed by the reports of the DPSA (2016), South African Public Service departments were given feedback to supply this information, but the situation has not improved. The majority of departments reported on sessions conducted for sexual harassment and this gives an impression that this is the only area used to address sexism in the workplace. Sometimes, broad statements such as women are given the same opportunities in the department, advocating for the rights of women is crucial to the unit, were given by departments and this does not give any indication of what progress was achieved.

The most important information that was required for this principle was for departments to report on the measures that they are putting in place to meet the 50% target of women in SMS and for departments that had met the targets to indicate how they are maintaining them. Although a majority of departments reported on having Employment Equity Plans, they did not show how the implementation is helping to meet or maintain the targets (DPSA 2016).

It can be deduced that even the institutional mechanisms, processes and structures incorporate gender aspects, the percentage of women involved in decision-making portfolios, strategic positions and capacity-building initiatives is low.

Recommendations

To improve gender equality aspects within the South African Public Service, this article proposes the following recommendations.

Regulatory obligations

All public service departments must ensure that workshops are organised to guide employees regarding awareness of the various global, regional and national commitments that demand gender equality in the public service. The officials must be able to translate these mandates into action plans for implementation.

Knowledge and awareness regarding gender mainstreaming and gender equality

The DPSA needs to ensure that the document *A Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service* is submitted to all public service departments. The departments thereafter need to organise orientation workshops at the beginning of every year to equip new appointees with the aspects and processes of gender mainstreaming and equality

in the public service. Gender forums must be established to organise such workshops in the departments to enable employees to reflect on gender equality aspects and processes in the context of their specific work areas.

Short courses on gender mainstreaming

The public service departments must ensure that SMS employees attend short courses on gender mainstreaming organised by the National School of Governance. For middle and lower management levels, workshops must be organised to ensure that all employees at all levels are informed and knowledgeable about aspects of gender mainstreaming and equality. The employees must therefore be able to implement actionable measures in their work environment.

The courses must include the aspect of diversity to ensure that both men and women are capacitated and work together as co-workers and partners and not as sub-employees, which is a gender-biased approach. Hence, gender awareness and diversity issues must be handled together with maintaining gender sensitivity in the workplace.

Capacity-building interventions

All public service departments must ensure that capacity-building interventions are in place for gender equality and women's empowerment. Human resource and line managers must identify the training needs of female employees and offer them opportunities to improve their competence for better career options. The capacity-building interventions must also include bursaries, learnerships and mentorship opportunities for female employees in the public service. This intervention also demands that the leadership in public service departments must set aside a portion of their budget for gender-based training. Gender-based training must also be provided to officials and staff members who are involved in programme planning, procurement and budgeting processes.

Human resource management processes

Human resource management processes in the public service must be gender-based. The gender mainstreaming of HR processes is imperative to ensure that women are given fair and equal opportunities in recruitment and selection, career development and training and development aspects of HR. This is required for women to access better positions and portfolios in the public service.

Integration of processes and structures

Public service departments must ensure that gender mainstreaming and equality processes and structures – for example, gender focal points, gender desks and gender forums – are established, integrated and functioning efficiently.

Monitoring and evaluation

The DPSA must ensure that all public service departments submit their gender mainstreaming and equality reports

annually to the DPSA for assessment. This will assist the DPSA in identifying gaps in the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service.

Conclusion

South African Public Service is regulated by statutory, regulatory and policy frameworks that demand gender equality in the public service to offer equal opportunities to male and female employees. These frameworks are requisites for a country to eliminate gender-based discrimination, and to create opportunities for both men and women to achieve better education, access to training and capacity-building initiatives, employment opportunities, and participation and representation in political and policy-making processes. In addition to frameworks, the HR processes in public service departments also need to mainstream gender in recruitment, promotion and employment equity aspects.

This article concludes that corrective measures can be established to improve gender equality in public service structures, processes, organisational strategic and leadership portfolios, department-based decision-making processes and work-based policies and programmes. However, the realisation of gender equality also demands political and administrative will to ensure that gender equality is streamlined and aligned with all organisational and departmental processes, structures, strategies and policy frameworks, and driven at the highest level in each public service department.

Future study can be conducted in selected public service departments to develop a comparative database with an aim to explore implementation gaps and success factors, hence expanding the knowledge base in the field of Public Management and Governance.

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Authors' contributions

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