Competency Based Assessments for Senior Management Service (SMS) members in the South African Public Service

37th International Congress on Assessment Centre Methods together with the 33rd Annual ACSG Conference
March 2013
Stellenbosch, South Africa

Presented by: Rhulani Makhubela
Department of Public Service and Administration; South Africa
Presentation Outline

- The South African Public Service
- Journey of Senior Management Service (SMS) assessments
- Competency frameworks, assessments & validation process
- Outcomes of assessments, implementation challenges
About South Africa
The Public Service consists of 1,340,410 employees (Both at National and Provincial Government)

9113 employees are members of the Senior Management Service.

This number excludes employees at Local Government level.

Processes are underway to pass the Public Administration Management Bill in order to have a seamless integration from National to Local Government.
Leadership in the Public Service

Roles and responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>DG</th>
<th>DDGs</th>
<th>CDs</th>
<th>Directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide political leadership to meet government objectives. Accountable to the President and the Citizens.</td>
<td>Direct support to the Minister. Provide strategic leadership of the Department Institutional integration and integrated governance Regional Integration Implementation of MISS Managing a corporate/enterprise through leading people and task execution management Design Strategic Planning Frameworks Leadership and Management Strategy</td>
<td>Support to the DG and Minister. The interpretation and implementation of the Departmental Strategy. Achieving the strategic objectives of the Branch Managing a group of functions. Tracking progress of the Branch and reporting appropriately Oversight of Branch Programmes Stakeholder relationship management (internal &amp; external) Strategic framework/ M&amp;E</td>
<td>The interpretation and implementation of Branch strategy. Develop Policies, design planning frameworks and guidelines to operationalise strategy. Managing functions of Directors and Component (ensure resources are available, financial management etc) Performance/ Standards/ Policies/ M&amp;E</td>
<td>“Project” management Ensuring the achievement of operational targets. Managing others and projects ensuring that all contribute towards achievement of dept goals Guidelines/ Practices/ Frameworks/ M&amp;E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background into competency assessments

- Competency assessments for senior managers were introduced in the Public Service in order to:
  - improve and enhance the development of quality senior managers;
  - ensure that SMS members who are appointed have the requisite competencies and are proficient at the appropriate strategic performer levels.

- The assessment represents one part of the broader selection process and the final decision in terms of who to appoint still rests with the Executing Authority, taking into consideration reference checks, security checks and equity targets.
The legal framework for recruitment and selection is provided for by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the Labour Relations Act, 1995, the Employment Equity Act, 1998 and the Public Service Act, 1994, read in conjunction with the Public Service Regulations.

The Senior Management Service Handbook outlines the conditions of service for Senior Managers within the Public Service.

- Human Resource Development Strategic Framework
- HR Planning Strategic Framework
- The Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework which provides a structure for capacity development of Senior Managers.
Core Elements of an Enabling Environment “Manage and Lead Change”

PILLAR 1
Constitution of the Republic Of South Africa
Public Service Act, 1994
White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1997
Employment Equity Act, 1998

PILLAR 2
Cabinet decision taken on the implementation of Competency –based Management for Senior Managers

PILLAR 3
Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework.
Competency Framework Skills Audit Competency Assessment.

PILLAR 4
Competency based HR Management: - recruitment, selection, performance management, HRD Change Management to ensure buy-in from employees and supervisors. Monitoring & Evaluation
# The journey of assessment practice for SMS in the Public Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>What transpired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Establishment of the SMS initiative in the Public Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Cabinet decision on the use of competency based assessments for SMS &amp; the development of Competency Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Implementation on a voluntary basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Decision by Cabinet on the compulsory implementation of competency based assessments for SMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Validation of assessment battery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Issuing a Ministerial Directive on the compulsory implementation of the competency based assessments for SMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Departmental monitoring on the implementation of the Directive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial competency framework (2002)

- Ten Core Managerial Competencies were identified and these were:
  - Strategic Capability and Leadership.
  - Programme and Project Management
  - Financial Management
  - Change Management
  - Knowledge Management
  - Service Delivery and Innovation
  - Problem Solving and Analysis
  - People Management and Empowerment
  - Client Orientation and Customer Focus
  - Communication
In order to assess the 10 CMC’s, the following tools were used:

- Case study exercises–
  - Management Exercise
  - Project Exercise
  - Role Play Exercise
- Occupational Personality Profile (OPP)
- Learning Styles Inventory
Review of the Competency Framework

- Focus was placed on critical generic leadership and managerial competencies, rather than technical/professional competencies, which are essential to a specific department or a specific job.
- Streamlining the management competencies and providing the users with a thorough understanding of the leadership function and identifying the skills and attributes needed to be a successful leader.
- Understanding the issues and challenges of anticipating, analysing, managing and implementing change processes.
- Understanding the issues and challenges of enhancing performance at the individual, team and organisation levels.
- Understanding how to develop new policies and to plan and lead the implementation of these within the organisation.
- Reviewing the essential skill sets that leaders require to foster positive cooperation and coordination in their organisations.
Competencies assessed

5 CORE COMPETENCIES
- Strategic Capability & Leadership
- People Management & Empowerment
- Programme & Project Management
- Financial Management
- Change Management

5 PROCESS COMPETENCIES
- Knowledge Management
- Service Delivery Innovation
- Problem Solving and Analysis
- Client Orientation and Customer Focus
- Communication
The simulation exercises, which are based on a case study and consist of:

- **Programme and Project Exercise** – takes the form of a project to be managed through a problem statement.
- **Planning exercise** – takes the form of a strategic analysis of an organisation considering service delivery innovation.
- **Reporting and Role Play Exercise** – also measures managerial skills at a strategic level.
Assessment Tools

Psychometric instruments consist of:

- **The Occupational Personality Profile (OPP):**
  - The OPP is a personality test developed for use in both industrial and organisational settings. The OPP measures nine different personality dimensions.
  - Psytech International is the distributor of the OPP.

- **Cognitive Process Profiler (CPP):** The CPP is a computer based measure that assesses levels of complexity with regards to how one cognitively approaches unfamiliar situations.
Validation process: Aims

- To determine the profile of current employees at SMS and EMS level with regard to the important competency dimensions identified as well as in terms of results on assessment measures included in the test battery.
- To report on the psychometric properties of the measures.
- To evaluate the predictive validity of the different measures in the public service context using supervisor evaluation as criterion measure (the only available criterion measure at the time).
- To compare predictive validity results of the different measures.
- To use the obtained information to guide employee development within the public service context.
Validation process: Findings

- Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for role play, planning and practical exercises for the sample was 0.955
- Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for self-evaluation questionnaire for the sample was 0.976
- Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for supervisor questionnaire for the sample was 0.987
- Positive rating of all assessments (competency assessment and instruments) by participants – rated “very good” – therefore good ‘face validity’
- Positive rating of assessors (on average “very good”) on all aspects indicated
Assessments 2011–2012
Number of assessments conducted

Total number of assessments 2013

- 2011/2012: 1707
- 2012/2013: 1922

2000
1900
1800
1700
1600
1500

2011/2012
2012/2013
Gender distribution

Female  Male

2013  832  1090
2012  711  972
Aggregated educational statistics

- Unknown: 24%
- Postgraduate degree: 34%
- Undergraduate degree: 38%
- Grade 12 and under: 4%
Strong and Weak competencies measured.

- The most challenging competencies identified were:
  - Financial Management,
  - People Management and Empowerment
  - Project and Programme Management.

- The strongest identified competencies were:
  - Strategic Capability and Leadership
  - Change Management.
Competency based assessments are aimed at primarily identifying developmental gaps of individuals.

The intention of competency based assessments as part of the recruitment process is to determine developmental gaps of potential candidates to be appointed into the SMS cadre. The aim of the assessment is to provide the department with a detailed report capturing areas of development.

The identified gaps will thereafter feed into the Performance Management and Development process where, the PDP identified in the competency assessment will assist as part of performance management for continuous development.
Addressing Implementation Challenges


VISION
Achieving an effective and efficient Public Service for improved service delivery

COMPETENCY BASED HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Communication
Collaboration
Cooperation
Coordination

COMMON APPROACH TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS & CHANGE MANAGEMENT

LEGISLATIVE & POLICY FRAMEWORK AS A FOUNDATION
Concluding remarks

- There are lessons learned in this process
- Continued support and engagements with Departments in order to ensure that this practice is implemented
- Improvements are necessary to ensure that this practice remains relevant and contributes to the overall HR terrain
- A review of the assessment tools remain critical to ensure that the case studies remain relevant
- A different approach to the current process also need to be explored.
Thank You!