

**Examining The Political/Administrative Interface in the Department of  
Social Development in the Eastern Cape for the period 2004 – 2009**

**By**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DEGREE**

In the subject of

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE**

**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

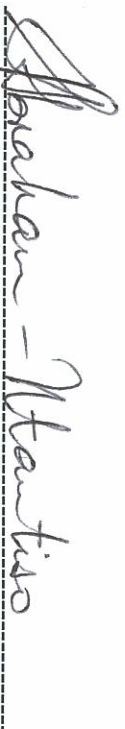
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**January 2010** —

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Noxolo Phoebe Abraham, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and that it has not been submitted and will not be presented to any other university for a similar or any other degree award.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Noxolo Phoebe Abraham", is written over a horizontal dashed line.

Signature

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

My deepest gratitude goes to the following people who contributed to the success of this project:

- My supervisor, Dr T.R. Mlle, Doc, you are simply the best. Thank you for not giving up on me even when I had given up on myself.
- My loving, supportive husband, Bonile. God created you just for me. I thank you for your understanding and encouragement, Thangana
- My children: Unathi the pillar of my strength, She's the motivator, Lhompfi, the typist and Dee the destresser! Siya.....
- My darling 80 year old mother. My late father, for believing in me even when I messed up.
- Bra Willa; Cebos & Hazel; Zaza; my father's children, you are just great.
- Thank you Buang for arranging my project.
- My Second Home, the ANC, thank you for creating the space for my academic empowerment.
- To all my respondents; the journey was made easier by your contributions.
- Last but surely not least; my one and only grandson: OBUKWAYO. Because of you, I had strength to carry on, I love you Ndoda..

## DEDICATIONS

The Lord Jesus, who is the author of all my thoughts and accomplishments. I bring you back the glory that belongs only to you. No matter how hard the road may be but I always stand on your promises.....: JOY COMES IN THE MORNING!!!!

"I KNOW THE PLANS THAT I HAVE FOR YOU, DECLARES THE LORD  
PLANS TO PROSPER YOU NOT TO HARM YOU..." JER 29:11

That Morning, when the Lord God will say 'Well done good and faithful  
Servants..... Come and share your Masters Joy"

Mat 25: 23

## Abstract

The administrative and political functions are so closely linked that it is almost impossible to separate them, practically. It is a well known fact, that public administration involves both the political and administrative component. These two portfolios therefore have an obligation of complementing one another. This, however, is not always the case. The political and administrative heads tend to compete rather than complement one another, hence the study.

In the area of policy making and implementation, each of the heads has a role to play. Clarity or lack thereof in the different roles is usually a cause for conflict. Conventionally administrators were expected to simply implement policy without questioning the rational and the consequences. That has since changed. The dawn of democracy ushered in new laws with new responsibilities to the administrative head.

One of the functions of the administrative heads is to advise the political head on policy, programme and budget related issues. It is granted that political heads receive mandates from their political parties but when it comes to translating those mandates into government policies, the expertise of the administrative heads come into the picture.

It cannot be denied that in the public administration, politics are the order of the day. It is also equally important to respect the fact that administrators are also human beings with value systems and can therefore make informed decisions based also on their vocation. It is equally important for administrators to respect the values of the party in power during their tenor of office, because that party is inevitably, the employer

In conclusion, neither of the two heads must in the interface, compromise quality service delivery.

(v)

## Abbreviations

AG	Auditor General
ANC	African National Congress
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
AO	Accounting Officer
DG	Director General
DORA	Division of Revenue Act
Dr	Doctor
EC	Eastern Cape
HOD	Head of Department
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
MPL	Member of the Provincial Legislature
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OTP	Office of the Premier
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PROF	Professor
PSA	Public Service Act
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SONA	State of the Nation Address
UDM	United Democratic Movement

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## **Chapter 1**

### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

All departments in Government seek to bring a variety of services to the people, ranging from waste removal, water, electricity, education, health, the list is long. The mandate of such delivery items is derived from the policies of the party in power. It is therefore mandatory on the party to deploy to each department public representatives that understand what the ruling party wants to achieve. Likewise a capable administrator, biased to the ruling party's values is duly appointed, following Public Service recruitment processes.

In the case of South Africa, Government has one unified programme aimed at the transformation of society and bringing about a better life for all. To this end, both the Executive Authorities and the Accounting Officers should work together towards the realization of government's objectives.

In the Departments and Municipalities in the Province of the Eastern Cape, there has been some degree of stability at least within the years under review. For the practical implementation of governments programmes, there is a distinction between the roles of Ministers and HOD's. Political heads of departments are elected representatives of the people, deployed as Executive Authorities. The Accounting Officers are referred to as Heads of Departments or Superintendents General in bigger provincial departments and as Directors-General in national departments. Likewise the Municipalities with Mayors as political heads

and municipal managers as administrative heads experience the same challenges.

The democratic laws of South Africa made a clear distinction between the responsibility of the public representative and that of the administrative head. These laws are necessary to ensure Ministers are responsible for policy matters, including the overall policy outcomes. Accounting Officers on the other hand have a responsibility for outputs in achieving the policy outcomes; in essence, the implementation of government programmes. These roles complement one another and tension begins when the participants themselves cause them to compete rather than complement one another.

The instability found in municipalities predominantly originated from lack of clarity on the different roles. In various governments the world over, there has been a need to define and redefine the roles of the Heads of Departments both administratively and politically. These roles are almost the same in all spheres of government: National, Provincial and local spheres. Power is just that: power.

This research will look at what the administrative and political interface includes, what the challenges are with the arrangement and having looked at a variety of existing situations, how they have come about and how best to deal with them, a few possible proposals will be put forward as solutions. As shall be demonstrated by the research, some challenges identified will be behavioural and some legislative.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The evaluation of the Political and Administrative Interface in the Department of Social Development will be the main focus of this research. The research will seek responses to various challenges, amongst others:

- Why is the turnover of HOD's so high in most departments in some, even MEC's do not stay long.
- Power-relations between the Member of Executive Council and the Head of Department.
- Breakdown of working relations between the political and administrative head of the department
- What leads to the breakdown of communication between the two?
- How the above contribute to service delivery in the relevant department.
- What impact does the above have on the recipients of the services?

As warranted by the nature of their jobs, there is so much that both the Accounting Officer and Executive Authority have to collaborate on. They have a similar mandate to deliver services to the people in the whole country. Functions, roles and responsibilities differ in the delivery of these services. However, these responsibilities overlap and cause conflict sometimes. This should not be, and herein the different roles are explained.

In a way, the Public Office bearer is responsible to the constituencies directly or through the legislature. Fundamental to this research is the fact that due to the administrative/political interface that presents itself in most departments, the service delivery processes are delayed and the lives of the people that the new democracy set out to change are not changed. Such adverse consequences can be avoided simply by each deployee sticking to their designated function.

Legislation through the Public Service Act 1994 is not ambiguous about the different accounting roles.

As shall be cited in the literature review later on, some departments have had the services of their Accounting Officers terminated, not because they did not deliver on the performance contracts signed at the beginning of the term but because they did not agree on a variety of issues with their Political Heads.

The PFMA allows Ministers to make decisions on matters that may not be adequately provided for in the departmental budget. This is an area that usually causes contradictions as the same budget is the responsibility of the Accounting Officer to answer for. The political Heads in various departments have at various times gone too far to bend the rules and overstep their mandate. In order to respond to constituency requirements at times like these, Accounting Officers have to intervene administratively, and at such interventions, the contradictions are sharpened.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The Study has the following objectives:

- Evaluation of the interface between the political office bearer and the administrative head in the Department of Social Development.
- Provision of solutions through the experiences shared by stakeholders in the department. Unlock the service delivery blockages that are as a result of the interface and provide remedial action, based on the interviews as well as a comparative study.

### **1.4 HYPOTHESIS**

There is generally a challenge of political heads competing with their administrative counterparts. The case under research here is the Department of Social Development, which is no exception to the challenge at hand. This Department is the base for poverty eradication but has seen changes in political heads with minimal changes in the administration.

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Although the research will be conducted within the department of Social Development, all other departments will benefit as they will identify with the challenges and the solutions will benefit all. The objective will not just end at accumulating knowledge, but will entail alternatives where there were none or few before.

The roles of the different participants have to be crystally clear to all and defined or redefined in such a way that there is no overlap and if there is a clash of legislation or regulation in this regard, everybody should be aware which rules or legislation take precedence.

Under this research it has been stated, specifically, is the department of Social Development, what the political and administrative dichotomy is, how the Accounting officer sees his or her role and what the provisions of the legislation are. The general working relations in current and future government departments will be improved. Service to the people will be unblocked. The expenditure patterns will improve as roles become clearly defined not only in paper, but also in implementation plans.

#### **1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study will focus on the Eastern Cape Department of Social Development

#### **1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Confidentiality especially with sensitive information will be maintained.  
Respondents will be treated with respect and dignity

#### **1.8 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The first strength is that the study is of interest to both political and administrative heads. The Premier as one of the respondents, carries with her the experience of having been the Speaker of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature. Additionally, she used to be a member of the Public Accounts Committee. As a whip of this committee she also has a strong background of having made all departments account to the Legislature. The only challenge that the researcher encountered when interacting with politicians is that there was a much guided response that was biased in favour of politicians against the administration. The researcher was able to balance that with follow up questions that would make the respondents more objective. In the final analysis, both administrative and political heads have the interest of the ordinary people at heart the recipients of

services.

## 1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

**The study is organized as follows:**

**Chapter 1 : Research Proposal:** this chapter introduces the research study and constitutes the problem statement, research objectives, hypothesis, significance of the study, delimitation of the study and ethical considerations.

**Chapter 2: Literature review:** literature including legislation is reviewed and critiqued in this chapter. The views of various scholars, academics and practitioners on the politics administrative interface are looked into.

**Chapter 3: Research methodology:** the methodology used in collecting data from the respondents is explained in this chapter. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised. Questionnaires were administered and interviews were employed to elicit information from a randomly selected group whose work experience and academic qualifications added value to this research work.

**Chapter 4: Data presentation analysis and interpretation:** This chapter presents analysis and interprets the data obtained from the respondents. In other words the inter-face will be explained as it takes place in the departments.

**Chapter 5: Findings, conclusions and Recommendations:** The last chapter of this research work comprises the findings, conclusions and recommendations by the candidate which may assist departments in dealing with the inter-face. Chapter 2 will deal with the literature review.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

In chapter 1 we have had an overview of the political and administrative interface. We have looked briefly at the different roles of the political and administrative heads, the local spheres of government have also been briefly mentioned as the political and administrative roles are the same in the National, Provincial and Local spheres.

The problem has been clearly state. The objectives have also been outlined and a convincing argument has been put forward to justify the need for the study. Chapter 2 will take the process forward by looking at the review of relevant literature.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Thornhill (2005:1), writing on the relationship between the executive mayor and the municipal manager had this to say, “The relationship between a politician and the Chief Executive Official is probably one of the most complex situations within any public institution. This is the convergence of politics and administration and the point where political values and administrative realities have to be reconciled. The interaction is, however, complicated by the fact that the CEO most probably have his/her own value system determined by political, social, cultural, religious or other considerations.”

It is interesting to note that Thornhill (2005:1) refers to Accounting Officers in public offices as CEO's, a term conventionally used in the private sector. This speaks volumes of the expectation of the society: The public service Accounting Officers are to rise to the standards of their counterparts in the private sector. Contradictions will surely arise if the political and administrative heads belong to different political parties. Issues of culture, religion and others are secondary to politics. Historically, relations (when political affiliations are different) break down immediately. A different scenario prevailed in the national Department of Arts, and Culture in South Africa for some time, where the two heads stayed together (the political and administrative) for almost two terms while they belonged to different political parties.

According to Cameroon (2003: 55) “the relationship between administration/management and their political counterparts is not one of a servant-master”. The relationship is much more multi-faceted and complex. Therefore it is necessary to consider first why governments need public servants in the first place, and their relevance in the administrative political interface.

Parliament cannot effectively perform the functions required to formulate policies. Not even cabinet or the premier and executive council could formulate a policy to be contained in, for example an act. It requires the assistance of “appointed, fully capacitated employees” (Thornhill 2005:176). This is one point where the political and administrative interface is clearly visible. It is therefore presumed that the Accounting Officer to be appointed is or should be an expert in areas of management and policy making, sadly, this is not always the case.

It should also be considered that even in determining the relative importance of a proposed policy; the possible administrative implications have to be considered. This is one of the occasions where the politicians have to liaise with the appointed officials and rely on their expertise. It is important to mention that Government can only keep its promise made in election campaigns and in policy statements if it can rely on the support of appointed officials. The latter have to translate political decisions into programmes and must thus ensure the policies become a reality.

In a developing country like South Africa, it is unlikely that managerial officials could be politically neutral. “They need to reconcile their views with those of the executive authority regarding the functional area in which they have to perform their administrative and managerial responsibilities” (Thornhill: 2005: 184). The implication is that the interference is becoming more complex and not less complex. It is important for respective role players to continue in the endeavor to distinguish between political and administrative issues and promote the primary duties each is responsible for.

What complicates matters even more in a province like the Eastern Cape are historical considerations that do not assist the interface. What was inherited by the democratic government was an administration that was not only fractured by demographics but by a culture of gross incapacity consisting of two Bantustans that were the creation of the apartheid regime meant to keep all black people

separated from the rest of the province. Not only that, but separated from themselves by creating a haven for a few at the expense of the majority. These black leaders were placed in Transkei and Ciskei respectively divided from one another by the river Kei and made to believe that they were each other's enemies. Meanwhile, the white and coloured minorities were kept in what was called the Republic of South Africa. The boundaries between the three administrations were so serious that one needed a passport to move from one administration to the other.

The above has been explained so as to appreciate that the democratic government of today inherited a "cocktail" of three administrations with three different loyalties. Therefore, it was not easy getting rid of all the directors-general, some of whom could well fit the position of registry clerks as their performance in those transitional interviews proved that they had been fraudulently appointed in positions that they were not adequately qualified for. It was indeed an uphill, reconstructing the fractured administration and making it one. The final product was underperforming public servants in most cases. Politicians coming in at the time were also no better; at least they could get some experience from their inherited DG's.

"Public officials, especially those in the top echelons such as directors-general and their immediate subordinates, can be regarded as a distinct group of officials.... Their intimate work situations..., the availability of resources ..... as well as their co-operation with political office bearers, make them a particular status group and part of the power structure" (Del Alcazar, 1987: 105-107).

The political/administrative interface debate has been on various agendas for more than a century now and although history, development, culture and time have brought changes to the debate, it still remains an interesting debate.

## 2.2 THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

According to Caiden (1971: 99) "...politicians likes to believe that they rule and that officials are mere ciphers, and the officials want the public to believe that the politicians really rule." This, however, is not a true reflection. The public manager is inevitably drawn into the political arena since public administration always takes place in a political milieu. The implementation of policy means that the public manager is implementing policy decisions of the government of the day, and these policy decisions are nothing else but the political ideology of the ruling party expressed as public policy.

In the preamble to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) white paper, the former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, wrote, "our people have elected us because they want change. Change is what they will get. Our people have high expectations which are legitimate. While the Government cannot meet all these needs, oversight and strategies to achieve this change must be put in place". This is indeed a great statement by the famous world leader. It cannot be underestimated or ignored. It has a clear meaning and an unambiguous political direction. All public managers, led by their Directors-General and Heads of Department had as their core business a serious obligation to analyze and formulate action plans to achieve this. The critical word he uses is "change" and this does not come easy.

The call was re-iterated once again by the president of the country, Honourable President Jacob Zuma. Addressing the nation in June 2009 in his STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS (SONA), he called upon all his recently deployed ministers to deliver on the election promises and public managers to translate policy documents into action plans. He took a no "nonsense" approach that said all those who do not perform will be asked to leave the public service. Indeed, the leaders (as quoted above) have clarity in understanding that the roles of political heads and administrators are complementary. The time has arrived to make true

the aspiration of the South Africa's democratic Presidents, including President Mbeki, who in 2008 called for "business unusual and all hands on deck". During question time in 2003 in the national assembly, the South African Parliament leader of the then official opposition, United Democratic Movement (UDM), General Bantu Holomisa asked the then President of the Republic:

- Whether he endorses the principle of clearly demarcated roles for Ministers and Directors-General and,
- Whether the principle of clearly demarcated roles for Ministers as political heads of departments and Directors-General as accounting officers is applied by all departments, if not, what is the position in this regard. If so, what are the relevant details? In response, the then President reminded parliament that government has one unified programme aimed at the transformation of society and bringing about a better life for all. To this end both Ministers and Directors-general are working together for the realization of government's stated objectives.

The President further went on to explain that for practical implementation of government programmes there is a distinction between the roles of Ministers as political heads of departments (elected representatives of the people) and of Directors-General as administrative heads (appointed officials) of departments as well as Accounting Officers. Such division is necessary to ensure that Ministers are responsible for policy outcomes, in essence, the implementation of government programmes.

Regarding the division of responsibilities between the political leaders and the administrative heads of departments, the Honourable President referred the Honourable member (Holomisa) to the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 and the Public Service Act, 1994, as amended from time to time, as the two key pieces of legislation on demarcating the respective responsibilities.

The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) directly vests responsibility for policy matters with political heads and responsibility for implementation with administrative heads. The Public Service Act confers final accountability and authority for human resources and establishment of departments on Ministers, while Director General's are tasked with the efficient management and administration of their departments.

In the next sub-topic, the specifics of the two pieces of legislation referred to above will be dealt with as well as other pieces of legislation that the President did not refer to but have a direct bearing on the topic currently under discussion. In concluding his response, however, the President does indicate that "the respective roles of political and administrative heads of departments are clearly demarcated by Legislation". By implication there should be no difference regarding how the different heads work in different departments.

The negative tension caused by the political and administrative interface has reared its head once again in the South African Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs nationally. The Departmental Director-General has fallen out of favour with the new Minister and not only the DG, the National Newspapers reported that the minister has displaced up to 20 officials by appointing the same number of his own loyalists. This is despite the President's call that no jobs should be lost because an administration is being started. It is interesting to note how huge an effect the African National Congress conference of 2007 in Polokwana had on the ANC led government.

Though still ANC, the new administration, after the general elections is bound to usher in new policies, strategies and plans. This obviously impacts on who then is loyal enough to those policies and will be willing to implement them to the letter. Van Oech (1998:14), writing in the Northern Training Trust, had this to say "....when the new formation comes into existence and circumstances change; it is no longer possible to solve today's problems with yesterday's solutions. Over

and over again people are finding out that what worked two years ago won't work next year. This gives them a choice; they can bemoan that things are not as easy as they used to be or they can use their creative abilities to find new answers, new solutions and new ideas.”

Completing his first hundred days in the Presidential office Honourable President Zuma also alludes to the fact that, soon, the African National Congress will be celebrating twenty years in the government seat and there has to be visible change in the lives of the people of the country. In order to do that, the President believes that things must be done differently.

Public Managers can continually and pro-actively assess themselves and make adjustments where necessary, bearing in mind that the fundamental purpose of the public service is government, not management. This means that attention should be given to the fundamental values like fairness, equity, justice, and social cohesion to maintain confidence in the governmental and political system as a whole. Managerial aspects, though important, must be considered secondary.

Though the public representatives will be evaluated by the electorate, both political and administrative heads need to build their capacity and improve their knowledge and skills. Highly proactive people are recognizing their responsibility. They do not blame circumstances or conditions for their behaviour. Their behaviour is a product of their own conscious choice based on values rather than a product of their conditions based on feelings.

“Despite public administration's claim to be a science”, writing in the Blackwell Synergy-Public Administration Review, Waldo declares ‘it is a political theory’. His book therefore had an effect of adding a whole new dimension to the study of public administration. Ever since, the field has been defined not by one kind of theory but by tension and debate between two different kinds: science and political” (volume6, Issue 1).

Waldo's (1969: 45), argument strips away the trappings of pure objectivity from the study of administration. "the important, interesting questions in the field have normative dimensions: they deal with what government should do. As such, he says, they require a different sort of theory from the kind scientists attempt to build by means of controlled empirical research. They require political philosophy. For him scientific theory asks "what is the case?" While political philosophy asks "what can be done."

Sheldon Wolin (1969: 1070), once argued that whereas scientific theory searches for "rigorous formulations which are logically consistent and empirically testable. Political theory reflects on political practices within historical, economic, and social context. When something seems wrong in its field of vision, scientific theory looks for error in the theory or method. Political theory looks for an error in the world and aims to envision new possibilities. It is critical rather than objective, suggestive rather than conclusive and can thus not be used as an objective instrument for evaluation. Scientific theory, which is upheld by administrative heads, can be very rigid. Political heads look for solutions that will improve people's lives, to a point of changing policies sometimes.

### 2.3 Legislative Framework on the Political-Administrative Interface

Pieces of legislation relevant to this research work will now be explained and these are the following:

- The constitution Act of the RSA, 1996
- The Division of Revenue Act of 1994 as amended
- Public Finance Management Act (Act 1 of 1999) and,
- Public Service Act of 1994 (Procl. 103 of 1994)

### 2.3.1 THE CONSTITUTION ACT, 1996

This is the supreme law of the country. By far, the South African constitution is one of the best in the entire continent. Reflecting on this law as at 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009, Juta's Statutes Editors had this to say "from the very outset of the process of political negotiation that resulted in the new Constitution, the major political players agreed that the new South Africa should have a supreme and justifiable Constitution and should abandon the Westminster constitutionalism that had informed South Africa's constitutional development up to this point. This agreement made possible a lawful transition from apartheid to democracy" (2009: xiii). It is the constitution that outlines the basis for various legislation. Chapter 10 (public administration) of the constitution lays down the general values and principles in governing public administration.

Section 195(f) of the Constitution emphasizes the principle of accountability as one of the basic values and principles governing public administration. All the principles outlined in section 195 point to both the administrative and political heads to lead the public service. Specific laws are drafted and passed to interpret the general principles outlined in the constitution. The Division of Revenue Act will be discussed here under.

### 2.3.2 THE DIVISION OF REVENUE ACT (DORA) of 2001.

The objective of this Act is to provide for the equitable division of revenue raised nationally for each financial year and report requirements for such allocations. This Act is better aligned to the PFMA. It gives managers greater flexibility while holding them accountable not only for the programmes funded but also for the budget. This is an area where in the past, the executive authorities would simply dictate terms to the accounting officers but the new Treasury regulations allow

the heads of departments to make decisions that were in the past made by political heads. This means that, according to DORA, the accounting officers have greater responsibility to account on funds allocated rather than simply taking instructions from the political principal. Dora sets out norms and standards and therefore, heads of government in all spheres should understand that DORA is a requirement of the Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Act, 2005.

The next relevant piece of legislation is the Public Service Act.

### 2.3.3 PUBLIC SERVICE ACT, 1994 AS AMENDED

The powers of the member of the Executive Council in relation to the Head of Department are clearly outlined under section 7 – 9 of the Public Service Act, 1994 as amended:

- to appoint
- to promote
- to transfer and,
- to discharge
- to retain an officer beyond normal retirement age but not for more than two years, without approval of parliament,
- to give permission for remuneration work outside employment.

The powers under clauses 1, 2, 3 and 5 may be delegated (by the MEC). Regarding the matter of retaining an officer beyond retirement age, the Public Service Act does not make any provision for delegation.

The above powers, for example, “to appoint” are fundamental in the functioning of departments. This means that the HOD can decide who should and who should not be part of the administration hence in the majority of departments the MEC’s retain the powers to appoint from the 13<sup>th</sup> level (directors) and above.

These levels are still the responsibility of the MEC where promotion and transfers are concerned. At this level, delegation is hardly ever encouraged.

Under bullet point 6, that is, giving permission for remuneration work outside employment, this clause borders around issues of ethical conduct and the office of the Premier co-ordinates the registration of business through a disclosure process where members declare ownership of houses and other properties as well as business interests.

The Public service Act as indicated above leaves nothing to chance or assumption. The Act moves beyond relations and refers to specific duties that are to be performed both by the Executive authority and the Accounting Officer jointly and separately.

Good Governance should be a result of co-operation and seamless interaction between the heads of government, at political and administrative levels. Human, believes the “South African public service will transform fully if we change bureaucrats into revococrats”. Revococrats signify the power of change, meaning that in each public service, there should be a revolutionary who understands that the agenda of the ruling party in this country is to change the lives of the people for the better.

#### 2.3.4 PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT, 1999.

The PFMA put in place a legal framework for modern public financial management and has been at the centre of government's effort to enhance public financial management and accountability. This legislation designates heads of departments as accounting officers and gives them the responsibility for effective, efficient, economical and transparent use of resources in accordance with the Appropriation Act.

The PFMA further compels ministers to fulfill their statutory responsibilities within their voted amount in the Appropriation Act and requires them to consider the monthly reports submitted to them by their Accounting Officers. It also sets out a framework to clarify accountability when a political directive could result in unauthorized expenditure.

In the final analysis, while accounting officers are required to maintain effective, efficient and transparent system, the minister has to ensure that departmental personnel are governed by efficient, effective and economical human resource management procedures. This requires a strong working relation between the two as the law expects them to complement each other in their tasks.

Parliament discovered that though the PFMA is legally sound and in line with Constitutional imperatives, it however, doesn't cater either for the legislatures or parliament. Not once does it refer to the secretary to Parliament as the accounting officer, the PFMA does not even mention, Secretaries to Parliament. Subsequent to the discovery of this omission, Parliament has since passed the "Financial Management of the National Parliament Act (10 of 2009).

In line with the above, the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, as is the expectation from all other Legislatures, has already drafted the "Financial Management of the Eastern Cape Legislature Bill. All other legislatures are expected to have passed the Bill by the end of September 2009 (as per the decision of the Speakers' Forum). This bill captures all the principles of the PFMA and the Speaker legally serves as the Executive Authority while the Secretary plays the role clearly demarcated in the act, to account.

While the Political Office bearers have a responsibility of ensuring the formulation of relevant policies, they cannot effectively perform that function. The Administrative head has a responsibility to plan, strategize and implement the

policies in accordance with the core functions of a given department. According to Rossouw (2003: 3) “Strategic management is defined as all the decisions and actions arising from the formulation and implementation of strategies with the aim of achieving the organization’s objectives.”

Carson & Harris write that “Traditionally, it was expected of public officials to only implement policy, to only act in an advisory capacity in policy-making and adopt existing policy according to changes made by political office bearers ” (1963: 2). As is clearly outlined in the above discussion, this is no longer the case.

In his paper “Enhancing Capacity”..Professor R. Thakhathi of the university of Fort Hare, states that, Public Managers are faced with a lot of challenges in the public service. He puts down the imperatives for all public managers, and one may add that, this should be a collective effort by both political office bearers as well as public managers.

Thakhathi further states that public managers should:

- Demonstrate the highest standard of personal integrity, fruitfulness, honesty and fortitude,
- Serve the public with respect, concern, courtesy and responsiveness, recognizing that service to the public goes beyond service to self,
- Strive for personal, professional excellence and encourage the professional development of those associated with and those seeking to enter into the public service and,
- Affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government.

He concludes his paper by saying “South Africa needs all of us. Let us stand up and deliver services to all the people of South Africa.”

Thornhill, addressing the Political/Administrative interface, had this to say in his abstract (2005: 176) “the role of political office bearers and appointed officials has been studied and described since Woodrow Wilson’s famous article was published in 1887. The relationship between a minister and the administrative cadre of a department is probably one of the most complex issues related to the public sector operation.”

Thornhill’s paper describes the effects of the political structures in a democratic country with special reference to South Africa. Thereafter, attention is devoted to the influence of politics in governing a country with a diverse society having to eradicate legacies of the past. The administrative functions are briefly alluded to. This is necessary to identify the respective roles of the politicians and the appointed officials and to clarify the interface. It is argued that the interface is not present in only the public sector, but also in the corporate sector.

This recent development also indicates that the clear distinction that used to be made between the public and private sectors should be revisited. The implication could be that the interface between the political office bearer in charge of a public institution and senior managers of a department has to be reconsidered (2005: 176).

Fox & Meyer believe that it is important to refer to politics as one of the most significant phenomena in the public sector. In this regard, it does not imply only party politics, i.e., the politics of political party, but politics referring to the process of decision-making. From the recipients to what, when, where and how, a conflict resolution process is applied. This is to determine whether and how governance is to be exercised in any given area, or the apportionment of values (1995: 98).

Cameron (2003: 63(3)) believes that senior management officials are involved in the political area within which the political office bearer operates. He writes, “the

criteria for posts that require political suitability can be defined as any post which involves the development of government policy at a strategic level ensuring alignment with party political objectives and programmes, which requires the incumbent to be trusted with sensitive and/ or confidential party political information, and which requires the incumbent to direct, at a political level, government communication.”

The participation of public managers in the formulation of public policy implies involvement in politics. When an official proposes legislation or makes policy decisions in the course of the execution of his/her duties he or she performs a political function and operates within the sphere of politics. As soon as the two terms are brought in relation to each other, the separation fades away. Politics and administration are like two sides of a coin (Van Zyl, 1972: 62), and absolute separation is impossible.

Wilson (1887: 210-213), argues that people have to recognize that in principle administration lies outside the sphere of politics... but in practice the lines of demarcation are convoluted and hard to trace because a great deal of administration goes about incognito to most of the world....it is possible to give some roughly definite criteria for defining the difference between politics and administration but at the bottom, the administrator should have and does have a will of his own in the choice of means to accomplish his work. He is not and ought not to be a more passive instrument. In fact, he should have large powers and unhampered discretion.

Evidently the above argument moves from a premise of the past, where the administrative head did not have the powers to decide, a scenery which makes them more of implementers than thinkers with execution powers.

Wilson further argues that, “a hard boundary between politics and administration is impossible....the administrator has the power to decide where administration takes off and politics take over....” (1887: 213).

According to Wilson therefore, the hard interface that exists between the political head and the administrative head can be eased by both heads, with the administrative head clearly leading in demarcating unclear boundaries, based on legislation without compromising or undermining the political counter part. Consequently once again instead of competing, the two heads will complement each other.

Kotze (1998: 15) introduces another role-player in the scenario, the taxpayers themselves, he writes, “the effectiveness of the government and the participation of inhabitants in it is what constitutes good governance.” This means that although the policy makers might be professional experts, the people on the ground must inform those policies.

Politicians have (as part of their core business) a role of ensuring public participation because good governance can never be claimed without the significant and qualitative participation of the recipients of the service, whom Kotze refers to as “inhabitants.’

Self (1977: 163) writes, “the top management of the Public Service comprises a mixture of political and (professional) administrative elements, and it is the nature of this blend, the ingredients which go into it and the ways in which they are mixed together...which does so much to determine the ways in which the executive uses its great accumulation of powers.”

Cloete (1991:65), puts it clearly that, “no uniform exist among different governments about the details of the relationship between the ministers and their top officials, or about the delineation of their respective roles. A combination of

systemic characteristics and personal preferences and styles normally determines the nature of the interaction among them” (1991:28).

Cloete further isolates the different roles of administrators as distinct from those of the political heads. For him the main functions of top official are as follows:

- They are responsible for the technical as well as political advice to the minister or government concerned....Some top officials develop and employ a full range of behind the scenes political skills to assure specific policy outcomes.
- Policy and services management which comprises directing and co-ordinating the planning, implementation & evaluation of all facts of the policy process.
- Resources Management. This includes management of Staff (direction and co-ordination),
  - Finances
  - Information
  - Technology
  - Communication
  - Accommodation
  - Supplies and other support services

Cloete (1991: 65) further goes on to say that with these responsibilities, top officials can function:

- Independently from their ministers
- In close co-operation with him/her,
- On the minister's instruction.

Self (1977: 65) concludes the argument by describing top officials... (as) public managers who must show a peculiar mixture of independence and compliance. It

is his duty “to speak out and then shut-up.” Under government rules he occupies the post of confidential policy advisor to his minister, and he should discharge this duty with outspokenness and integrity.

According to Thornhill and Hanekom (1995:25), “an important phenomenon affecting the administration of public affairs is the relationship between the political head of the state department the minister and the top officials in his/her department, especially the director-general.” Ministers on the one hand, are normally responsible for:

- Political direction
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Control

Cloete (1991: 65), agrees that the roles of ministers in the department are the following:

- The provision of political direction, leadership and motivation to the department officials and the public on policy issues.
- Overall political control and management of the department and the execution of various statutory functions and duties required by his or her office and
  - Political responsibilities and accountability towards the legislative executive and the public about his or her actions as well as those of her department.

It has been argued that political office bearers, because of lack of time and expertise, have to rely on the advice and views of the public officials in their departments. A significant issue is that public officials should not be indifferent to the ends for which a government strives, nor should they refrain from advocating

their own perceptions of public policy to political office bearers or be coldly objective in advising on alternatives (McKeough, 1969:4).

Successful governments, therefore, depend upon the political sensitivity of public officials, especially public managers. This does not imply that they should associate themselves blindly with the political ideology of the political party in power, and thereby substitute their own political judgment for that of the political office-bearer, but rather that they should advise the political office-bearer on the political implications of specific actions, and that they should seek his/her advice on sensitive matters. It does imply, however, that public managers should be conversant with the policies of the government-of-the-day, the viewpoints of opposing political parties, of political undercurrents and alternative actions that could be instituted in a particular situation. In brief, the appointed public manager should not be indifferent to party politics. Small wonder that in one occasion a minister declared that in order to perform his/her task effectively, the public manager should orientate him/herself to ensure that he/she makes the aims and goals of a particular policy his/her own aims and goals and should exert him/herself in the attainment of those goals.(information Bulletin: 172).

A research group in Belgium came to the conclusion that society and the government are best served if the public manager utilizes not only his/her technical know-how, but also his/her insight into policy options when making proposals pertaining to the general welfare, and that he/she should make decisions only within the framework of the authority delegated to him/her (De Pre *et al*, 1966:77).

The political sensitivity of appointed public managers and their relationship with political office bearers also has significance. It has been argued that public officials depend on the attention and cooperation of the political office bearer for the endorsement and support of the policy. This type of dependence is a motivational factor for public managers in the sense that the wishes and

preferences of the political office bearer serve as guidelines for their work (Aberbach *et al*, 1981: 248).

In view of the previous statements, political office bearers should be able to depend upon the political sensitivity of public managers, especially directors-general. According to Greenwood and Wilson, (1989:87), apart from the various styles that ministers possess in executing their work in the public office, there are other political factors which may influence the role of the minister directly or indirectly and these are :

- The ideologies which are pursued by the government of the day or the minister concerned which may severely restrict the degree of discretion which a decision maker has in micro policy making and implementation.
- The political circumstances which prevail and
- The personal or political relationship between the minister concerned, his cabinet and/or the head of the government who appointed him.

Neutrality among public officials is seen as mythical and detrimental to political regime and policy changes. The conclusion therefore is that top officials have to identify themselves wholeheartedly with policies of the government which they serve, in order to execute those policies fully.

If an official does not fully agree with a policy which he or she is supposed to promote, one can expect less than full corporation from such a person, especially if some discretion has to be exercised in some or other way. This explodes the myth of bureaucratic neutrality (Self, 1977: 166).

## 2.4 Conclusion

This has been a review of literature relating to the administrative and political interface in the public sector. Interestingly, the subject has been written about for as long as governments the world over have existed.

There has been significant tension in the relationship between Executive Authorities and Accounting officers in public offices. Some writers indicate how the two can complement each other. Issues like political affiliation and overlap in duties have been sited as some of the challenges.

Roles and responsibilities of the administration heads as well as those of political heads have been outlined to eliminate overlap and confusion. Legislation has also been sited to distinguish one responsibility from the other. It really is of interest to discover the amount of work done on the subject.

The literature used in the study has an international perspective. In South Africa, the leading legislation mentioned is the Constitution. Areas in the Constitution that are relevant to the relationship have been isolated and discussed. The Division of Revenue Act, the Public Service Act as well as the Public Finance Management Act have been discussed. The research has also discovered that gaps are also being closed in other institutions like the legislatures and parliament, the financial Management Act for Parliament/Legislatures is being introduced to clarify roles and responsibilities of both political and administrative heads in these important institutions. Having discussed the relationship between the two heads, the research does not leave out the tax payers themselves, who are the recipients of government services.

Chapter three, deals with the research methodology.

## Chapter 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the research methodology that has been used in the study that the researcher is pursuing. It will look at how the research is designed: how data is collected, how sampling is done and the method of interacting with respondents.

The study is primarily undertaken to demistify the administrative and political interface in the Eastern Cape Department of Social Development. Specifically, it concentrates on the social needs cluster in the government of the Province of the Eastern Cape. This chapter provides an exposition of the research methodology that was employed in the quest to answer the research question. It provides a detailed explanation that was used in the research in terms of sampling methods, the method of data collection and analysis. It also provides justification of methods used and possible limitations of the research. Hereunder is the discussion on the research design.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Bell (1989: 52)says, “the instrument is merely the tool to enable you to gather data, and it is important to select the best tool for the job.” In order to answer the research question and thus achieve what the research had set out to achieve the dominant method used was the qualitative method. The qualitative method of inquiry allows one to understand the respondents in terms of their definition of the world.

Babbie and Manto (1998: 189) define a qualitative interview as “essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent.” To complement the qualitative technique, the qualitative design was also used especially where qualities could be determined.

### **3.3 POPULATION DESIGN**

Generally, the population is a total number of cases with given characteristics or a set of characteristics from which a sample is drawn. In this study it refers to the total number of departments whose political heads, administrative heads, managers and service providers are to provide the researcher with the information required. Specifically here, one looks at the social needs cluster. In order to be able to propose solutions to the administrative and political interface, the researcher made an attempt to deal with those departments that have had a high turnover of heads of departments, like Education, Social Development and Health.

### **3.4 SAMPLING METHOD**

Qualitative research requires that the data collected be rich in description of people and places (Patton 1960: 69). For these reasons, the researcher applied purposive sampling methods. Marshall & Rossman, take it further and argue that a purposive sampling technique is characterized by identifying access points or settings, where subjects could be more easily reached and by selecting especially knowledgeable subjects (1995: 55).

The following departments are in the social needs cluster and have therefore been considered in collecting data by the researcher (in doing so, the researcher has considered the above description):

- The Department of Social Development

- The Department of Education
- The Department of Health

As an over-arching department, the Office of the Premier has also been considered and because of its interaction with local municipalities, the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs was also taken into account and the general manager for municipalities was interviewed (in the absence of an accounting officer in the department at the time). Lastly, a non-governmental organization called “praxos” which interacts with all social needs cluster departments was also chosen on behalf of the recipients of the services of government.

### **3.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

Hereunder is a discussion on the method of data collection that the researcher used to obtain information and these are:

- In depth Interviews
- Structured interviews

Lofland & Lofland describe an in-depth interview as a dialogue between a skilled interviewer and an interviewee. Its goal is to elicit rich detailed material that can be used in the analysis (1995: 15).

In-depth interviews are characterized by extensive probing and open-ended questions. Such interviews are best conducted face to face, although in some situations telephone interviewing can be successful. An interview guide is prepared and this includes a list of questions or issues that are to be raised and suggested probes for following up on key topics. The guide helps the interviewee pace the interview and makes interviewing more systematic comprehensive, relevant and productive. This means, owing to prior preparation of the guide, there will be logic in the questions asked; authentic and substantive content will

prevail; information obtained will be relevant to the subject matter and if not, follow up questions will be asked.

It is the quality of the questions in an in-depth interview that determine the product of the researcher's work. The researcher can set out to do good work, but how this is done, that is, the kinds of questions asked and, how the respondents get chosen in order to enhance the study becomes extremely important. In this study, the researcher selectively chose the respondents and ensured quality and substantive responses.

There are various ways to collect data: Audio recording, video recording and even written notes are some of the ways. In this study, the interviewer made use of written notes made by both the interviewer and the interviewee. There was also a standard questionnaire which was administered to all respondents, so as to compare the information gathered in order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion.

A standard questionnaire was used for all the respondents. This was done in order to manage and later analyze the data collected. The used questionnaire is attached for ease of reference: The first part contains general information on the interviewee, including area of work, department, position held and period of employment or deployment, academic qualification and gender. The researcher saw this information about the respondents as important as it gives the responses authenticity and therefore, reliability.

Questions 1 to 3 in the questionnaire deal with straight forward information seeking questions.

1. Is the role played by gender difference significant /insignificant to work relations?

yes	no
-----	----

Comment.....  
.....

- .....
- .....
1. It is understandable that all public institutions function on a mandate. Is yours a **political** or an **administrative** one? Circle your choice between the two.
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement regarding the expectations of the area of performance ;

**The area of performance is always clearly stipulated, readily available for reference in terms of what to do and when.**

- a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. neutral
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly disagree
3. Could you rate the interaction between politicians and officials with regards to crafting and implementing strategic plans as well as objectives as ;
- a. Excellent
  - b. Good
  - c. Fair
  - d. Poor
  - e. Non existent

Questions 4 to 7 go deeper into areas of analysis provoke thought and stimulate genuine interest in the interviewee.

4. Could you rate the interaction between politicians and officials with regards to crafting and implementing strategic plans as well as objectives as ;
- a. Excellent
  - b. Good
  - c. Fair
  - d. Poor
  - e. Non existent
5. If you could be given the opportunity to change the present situation with regards to expectations of politicians and government officials what would you do?
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
6. What do you think is the main challenge to the political and administrative interface?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

7. Understandably, all leadership and management entails possession of certain qualities.

To what extent does the electoral mandate take into consideration one's areas of specialization as well as previous experience in a particular field? Circle the relevant choice

- a. Extremely
- b. Mostly
- c. Not at all
- d. To some extent
- e. Not sure

These questions are based on the experience of the interviewees in the interactions with the subject under research. They are expected to sponsor their own opinions.

Questions 8 to 12 deal with relational questions within departments, between the political and administrative heads as well as intergovernmental relations with specific reference on how national departments deal with provincial departments and how provinces in turn, relate to local government.

8. While efficiency is the political competence effectiveness is the administrative one. To what extent does the system provide for filling in the information gaps with regards to implementation? (HOD performance as against MEC performance). Circle your choice.

- a. Extremely
- b. Mostly
- c. Not at all
- d. To some extent
- e. Not sure

9. To what extent does the political mandate from the national spheres take into consideration the mandate from the local sphere when crafting expectations (vision, mission, strategic plans and objectives) of the provincial sphere?

- a. Extremely
- b. Mostly
- c. Not at all
- d. To some extent
- e. Not sure

10. What could be the challenges posed by the national as well as local spheres to provincial competence in relation to political, financial and administrative functions?

.....  
.....  
.....

11. There are efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation strategies in place from the highest government officials (Directors and Heads of Department) to the highest accounting officials (Members of the Executive Council )in the province.

- a. Definitely
- b. Somewhat
- c. unsure
- d. Not really
- e. Not at all

12. There are effective monitoring and evaluation strategies in place for every step in every level of the implementation process (lowest government officials to highest government officials at directorate level).

- a. Definitely
- b. Somewhat
- c. unsure
- d. Not really
- e. Not at all

The researcher was convinced that this area is the climax of the study, where the respondents were expected to analyze the political and administrative interface.

Questions 13 to 17 deal with policy issues and how the respondents perceive their impact in government departments.

13. Policy is the basis of the country's governance. At which stage are you involved?

a. Formulation	b. Implementation	c. Both	
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14. To what extent do your everyday activities provide for accountability strategies on policy implementation?

extremely	above average	average	below average	
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15. To what extent do you think the political mandate takes into consideration the previous of what/when as well as areas of expertise as compared to government officials?

a. extremely	b. To some extent	c. Not really	
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16. To what extent does the role of politicians take into consideration the real situation on the ground when formulating policies? (For example effecting changes on recipients of grants)
- a. Mostly
  - b. Satisfactory
  - c. Adequately
  - d. Not at all
17. Policies sometimes exert pressure on implementation processes thus resulting in compliance as the main outcome rather than performance.
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Not sure
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree

The last set of questions provide for any information that could have been left out.

18. Given the opportunity to restructure the marriage of politicians and officials what would you do?
- .....
- .....
- .....

19. Given the opportunity to restructure the marriage of politicians and officials what would you do?
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

20. Given the opportunity to restructure the marriage of politicians and officials what would you do?
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

21. Does gender difference of politicians and officials somewhat poses a threat towards positive interface between the two groups of Human Resource?

yes	no
-----	----

Comment:.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

22. Both political and administrative managers play a significant role in policy formulation and implementation. Even so, South Africa, despite its international achievement on legislation, after 15years of democracy still experiences the worst problems. Identify three major challenges and give some recommendations

Challenges	Recommendations
i..... ..... ..... .....	..... ..... ..... .....
ii..... ..... ..... .....	..... ..... ..... .....
iii..... ..... ..... .....	..... ..... ..... .....

These include, way forward, challenges and recommendations. These responses provide recommended solutions to the topic researched. Hereunder is a discussion of the profile of the respondents

### **3.6 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

The researcher made choices that would assist to take the study forward. Selection in departments included both heads of administration and political heads. The researcher started with the Premier who is in a position of political co-ordination for all departments. The strengths and weaknesses of the choices will be discussed under the strengths and limitations of the study. The Office of the Premier authorizes the appointments and dismissal of all administrative heads. It is also the Premier who appoints and dismisses MEC's.

Apart from being the respondent herself, the Premier was also consulted for permission to interact with the MEC's under her command. In the Premier's office, the Director-General, Dr. Sibongile Muthwa was chosen for her role as head of administration in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, she too had to give permission for the researcher's interaction with different heads of departments regarding the study conducted.

The next respondent was the head of the Department of Social Development. Mr. Denver Webb who has completed a full term in the department. The merits and demerits of his employment will be discussed later. The Department of Social Development is the researcher's area of focus. Not only because of his qualification academically, but the researcher is of the opinion that Mr. Webb would have a thorough understanding of the interface in the department as the longest serving accounting officer. Before his tenure of Office, there was an extremely high turn over of heads of administration in this department.

In the Department of Education, the researcher solicited some responses from the accounting officer but was of the opinion that, his position is that of a caretaker head of department and he would have reservations. Secondly, as a professor in the University of Fort Hare, responsible for the same programme as the researcher's it would be awkward to make him a respondent. The

questionnaire was initially sent to professor Nengwenkulu, but, he obviously thought that the researcher was one of his student's and simply endorsed the questionnaire as correct. The researcher decided on ethical grounds, not to ask the Professor to be one of the respondents in the study.

Therefore, for Education, the Political Head who also is a scholar in Public Administration was chosen by the researcher to make observations. The MEC served as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Education (between 2004 and 2007) and has seen high turnover of HOD's and MEC's during his time. As MEC, Honourable Qwase has also chaired the Social needs cabinet committee and the researcher is of the view that he carries with him a lot of experience in the field. Most of the former Heads of Department in Education are still part of the department, contributing in different ways. The MEC had an insight not only in his own department, but in others as well.

Mr. Z. Mkabile is the General Manager responsible for municipal governance in the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs. Although this department does not fall within the social needs cluster, the researcher needed to have information about relations in the municipal structures as well, from the point of view of the provincial structure which is the department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs. Over and above, the respondent here was also identified because he was the chairperson of the Public Accounts Standing Committee, in the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature for the period between 2004 and 2008. The vibrant Standing Committee sometimes recommended the removal of some heads of departments based on their findings on the performance of these heads. It is the Scopa which saw the Accounting Officers in different departments coming and going and the political heads also being deployed and redeployed.

In conclusion, the profile of the respondents would not be completed without the input of the recipients of government services. One non-governmental organization which deals with Social Development, Education, Health, Agriculture

and municipalities was also interviewed by the researcher. Giving a sense of their experience in dealing with departments, they also are in a position to understand the relations as they impact on service delivery.

The researcher is of the opinion that the above respondents were qualified to answer any question relating to the study being investigated. The following discussion looks at the data analysis:

### **3.7 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Neuman defines data analysis as “a search for patterns in data recurrent behaviors, objects or body of knowledge” (2003: 447). The data analysis process was based on conversation and questionnaire analysis. The analysis also involved making connections between responses from political heads and officials in different government departments and the researcher related these to the reviewed literature.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter on the research methodology was characterized with first experiences on a variety of platforms. The researcher had an opportunity to open and perceive people's thoughts in ways that she has never done before. This research is of a qualitative nature and used qualitative methods to gather data and analyze it. A standard questionnaire was used with all respondents over and above the interviews. The interviewees had great knowledge and experience of the Eastern Cape Government Departments. They were of great assistance to the researcher. The following chapter will deal with data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

## Chapter 4

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the different methods that were used by the researcher to carry out the task at hand. Chapter four deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation of the administrative and political interface in the Social Development Department in the Province of the Eastern Cape during the period under review (2004 – 2009).

In order to answer the research question the researcher categorized the responses in the following headings:

- Conceptualization of the political and administrative interface
- Gender difference: Does it play a significant role in the work relations?
- The audit reports as a reason for the fallout
- Clarity of the roles of the political and administrative head
- Challenges in the interface

Under each heading, the researcher presents the data as collected analyses it and interprets it before moving on to the next heading. This way, the researcher will be able to present the case on each concept based on the view of all the respondents. Hereunder is the discussion on the conceptualization of the political and administrative interface.

#### 4.2 Conceptualization of the Political and Administrative Interface

Accounting Officers are accountable for all assets and liabilities of their departments. They are also liable for compliance with finances and management legislation. Political Office bearers on the other hand, have a responsibility of formulating relevant policies, but they cannot, on their own, effectively perform

that function. As has been indicated previously, the two functions should ideally complement one another rather than competing against each other. Some HOD's in the social needs cluster indicated that in term of PFMA, HOD's are "strictly speaking" accounting officers and MEC's accounting politically on the broad mandate. Interestingly, the Premier responded in the negative on the question whether there is an efficient and effective monitoring strategy for HOD's by MEC's.

According to all the respondents the relationship between the administrative heads and their political counter parts is crucial, because service delivery is about political decisions and these decisions have to find their way to the strategic and operational plans of each department. This is an administrative role that is informed by a political mandate. Although the accounting officers have to remain objective and play the rules by the book, they have to appreciate the intended political direction in order to complement their political heads. The respondents, however, indicated that most accounting officers are highly political and most felt they should be if they are to deliver the ruling party policies.

Issues of remuneration of the two heads of departments came up from the responses. Before the intervention of the Mosenke commission and the subsequent 2008 Proclamation by the President (regarding members salaries), tensions between the two heads were exacerbated by the gap in their remuneration packages. The researcher's analysis of the above is that indeed money can be a power instrument. It was difficult for administrators to take the instruction of the political head whose salary is below theirs. Legislation aside, it is the economic power in any sector that commands respect and authority.

### **4.3 Gender Difference: Does it play a significant role in the work relations?**

Women have a history of being oppressed socially, physically and economically. Even among accounting officers, gender stereotypes can be an issue.

One respondent felt that the gender question should not arise in a professional environment. The same respondent indicated that there are anecdotal accounts on how gender plays a role in the work relation.

The head of department for Social Development Mr Denver Webb felt that gender difference played a significant role in the interface. He, however, quickly adds that there are several other factors that one needs to be conscious of in managing a large and complex organization. These are, cultural differences, age, language diversity, religious issues, values and organizational culture.

Gender differences according to Denver Webb, manifest themselves in different ways in the workplace. At one end of the spectrum, in a negative manner, certain men might resent taking instructions from women, especially young women. At the other end of the spectrum, in a more positive way, some female managers show more compassion and empathy for the department's customers. In the same vein the researcher found that women as Accounting officers were sometimes compromised by their roles as wives, mothers and workers.

Concluding his remarks however, Mr. Webb argues that issues of gender do not pose a threat towards positive interface between the political and administrative heads. Once again, the researcher is of the view that gender differences should not be an issue in the field of delivering services to the people.

Responding on behalf of stakeholders who are recipients of government services, Mzili Dumisane who is an education and training (NGO) director argues that, recognition of gender inequalities will ensure that all needs and interests of each gender group are catered for. Gender monitoring in departments also helps

one to calculate the ratio of people in reference to the total population of the country, thereby indicating interventions needed. He further states “at the moment, we are still battling with the attitude and ignorance that there are men who still think that women are the weaker sex and should be in the kitchen. Opportunities are not equally distributed according to capabilities and competence”.

The Premier, Ms. Kiviet (MPL) felt that the role played by gender differences is not significant and therefore does not pose a threat to the positive interface between the political and administrative heads. The top leadership in the Provincial Government, both administratively and politically seem to treat the gender issue with a high level of maturity and gender equality and gender mainstreaming. This may not necessarily reflect a true picture in other departments in the Province

The role played by gender in the political and administrative interface cannot be underestimated. Between the Premier and the Director-General of the Provincial Government in the Eastern Cape, there is obviously a significant level of maturity. If the researcher bases the research on their relationship, it will not find expression of what prevails in the Province. To start with, both leaders are women and should therefore not have a lot of negative tension between them.

Having said the above, the turnover of heads of departments, especially in the Social Needs cluster has been high even in those departments where both HOD and MEC are female or male. To a large extent, power issues have been central in the turnover. As the attached table will indicate, there was once a situation where both the political head and the administrative head in the Department of Social Development were women, but the relations displayed harmony. Power relations there transcend gender harmony. Although it is normally much easier for the government system to exclude political heads, the extent to which HOD's leave departments makes the researcher probe other areas that might bring

about the fallout between the two heads. This brings in the next sub-topic the researcher considered as a factor in the political and administrative interface.

#### **4.4 Audit reports as a source of difficulties.**

The Auditor-General's office is one of the most respected and reviewed institutions in the public sector. The researcher discovered that the fall-out between the political and administrative heads in most cases revolves around audit opinions. The respondents indicated that the administrative heads sometimes have difficulties with unfunded mandates.

#### **4.5 General Reports**

A good example of a report is the evolution of the general report. This is a consolidated report that provides a comparative analysis of government departments, so that their progress against that of their peers can be tracked and assessments can be made as to the general report. First of all, it is more user-friendly, with summaries of the financial statements and compliance audits for easy reference. Secondly, it has been extended into three different reports, one on the outcomes of the audits of national departments a second report on provincial audit outcomes, and a third on local government. These are important accountability tools and are in demand among stakeholders.

#### **4.6 Clarity of Roles**

One of the respondents, the head of the Department of Social Development felt that the area of performance for HOD's is always clearly stipulated for reference in terms of what to do and when. Other respondents including the Director-General, the Premier and stakeholders representatives strongly disagreed.

Based on the above, the researcher thus concluded that one of the reasons for constant conflicts in the interface is lack of clarity on the roles of the two heads of departments. The researcher was told by the respondents that the content of the induction program for political representatives needed to be changed to inform MEC's of their task as government's political heads. The respondents also felt that a manual on critical areas and issues of the interface with administration ought to be developed.

The researcher discovered through, the stakeholder representative that the starting point would be to conduct a skills audit that would be matched with the government profile. "The profile will indicate what is needed so that the job descriptions can be needs driven. Do away with useless job positions, identify gaps and develop an integrated strategic plan that will be effective towards quality serving delivery."

Clearly, for the recipients of services, the main agenda should be delivery of quality services to the people. The point of departure for them is skills audit: whether these skills are what the particular department needs at a point in time. For this sector, the emphasis is more on the quality of service delivery rather than the political and administrative interface.

Hereunder, is a discussion on the challenges of the interface as seen by respondents:

#### **4.7 Challenges in the Interface**

Before one deals with what is not happening in the departments under review it is necessary to refresh one's memories of what should be. Good governance should be a result of co-operation and seamless interaction between the heads of government, the political and administrative. The HOD for Social Development saw many challenges in the interface "not just in South Africa, but in many

different countries the interface has not been perfected.” The chief director for municipalities in the Department of Local Government agrees with him on this point and adds, ‘when the interface is not sound, this is due to lack of clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each by the other.’”

There are other challenges pointed out by the respondents, especially the chief Director for the Municipalities in the Local Government Department. These have to do with the confusion around roles between local, provincial and national spheres in relation to political, financial and administrative functions.

One HOD felt that the above question depends, to a large extent, on the nature of the functions being performed and where they are located within the Constitution. Some respondents felt that integrated planning amongst these spheres and resource allocation would be paramount. However, capacity challenges especially at provincial and local levels were mentioned as impediments. Social Development is, for an example a concurrent competency between National and Provincial spheres. There is a large degree of coordination and discussion around sector priorities. However, it was discovered also that the skills in public servants at all spheres needed to deliver on some of the policies were either lacking or were inadequate. Apartheid and all the previous unjust and undemocratic systems were also cited as challenges. Most respondents felt that there is no proper understanding of how the apartheid government had bankrupted the country.

One Director from the Department of Health said, “The MEC gives Accounting Officers unfunded mandate and somehow, the accounting officer, on the other hand has to answer to the political oversight portfolio committee which expects set targets to be met while the Public Accounts Portfolio Committee will penalize the same accounting officer for issues ranging from unauthorized irregular and wasteful expenditure including overspending and under spending on the various items.”

The director further asserts that having capacity is one thing capability is quite another. Most people are given positions but are discovered later that they do not have the capability to deliver on the mandate. These may not necessarily be heads of departments but people deployed in different areas of government.

Touching briefly on the issue of clarity of roles, the health director argues that, people holding one of the two top positions tend to protect their territories (kingdoms) by avoiding communicating with each other and relations get badly affected in the process. The Director-General of the Province of the Eastern Cape, Dr. Spongile Mutwa strongly agrees that poor communications is one of the fundamental causes of the breakdown and further adds that “mismatch in expectations, disagreement on matters of principle affect relationships.” The D-G is quick to add, however, that these challenges are not insurmountable.

Another HOD argues that the rate of turn over of administrative staff in the Eastern Cape Provincial departments is an indication of how administration suffers due to political changes. The D-G comes back on this point and says that, “administration (sometimes) oversteps into the political arena.”

On the above argument, the Premier feels that “administrators are employed on the basis of their qualification/skills, whereas politicians are not, but, when things go wrong the first to go will be the politician. She adds that, the roles and responsibilities between political and administrative heads are not as clear and distinct as they should be and thus the lines of accountability are blurred.”

This has been the presentation analysis and interpretation of the data collected. The next chapter will deal with conclusions, findings and recommendations

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The journey through the project has been very challenging, empowering and most importantly, fulfilling. It has had its controversial areas and it has had quite positive interactions. One tends to agree with scholars who wrote about the interface. The likes of Thornhill wrote that the relationship between a politician and a chief executive official is probably one of the most complex within any public institution.

The researcher and the respondents were able to pick up and conclude on a variety for areas that are critical, including, but not limited to communication, political affiliation, clarity of roles and many others.

The preceding chapter already gave an exposition of the findings of the study. The researcher sought to answer the question of the Political and administrative interface in the Social Development Departments in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government during the period 2004 - 2009.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS**

While there is clarity on the roles in terms of legislation, during implementation a lot of overlap and subsequently misunderstanding, takes place. An example of that is where the political head has a mandate to translate a party mandate into government policy. In terms of roles and responsibilities they have a duty to formulate those policies but it is their administrative counterparts who have the expertise to implement the formulation of such policies.

Political affiliation is another area of critical contestation in the interface. The administrative heads assume a position of neutrality, which is not necessarily the case: They are in control of a political agenda but they deliver in an environment that expects them to be neutral and treat the constituencies equally. The administrative head has his day of accounting in Parliament or the legislature; according to law but the political head has the electorate to account to for government failures and achievements.

Most respondents were of the view that when it comes to the interface, politics are not an issue. The very appointment of HOD's is political. The political differences therefore, where they exist, should not affect the interface.

Gender was another area that the researcher identified as a contributing factor. Although the South African system remains patriarchal when it comes to the role of gender in the interface, not much has been found to be contributing to the interface. More emphasis is rather placed on the content of the service, rather than who delivers the service.

Another conclusion is that the relationship is affected by the Auditor – Generals reports. After the reports have been tabled, the blame-game starts. When the audit reports are clean, the political head assumes that the HOD is doing his/her work well. However when the audit reports are bad, the assumption is that the HOD did not work well enough.

The above is even made worse by the PFMA expectation that when some weaknesses in the programmes of departments are picked up, first it is the HOD that is called to account to the standing committee on Public Accounts.

The Executive Authority is required by law to appear before the oversight committee of the Legislature. In the period between 2004 and 2009 there has been some improvement in the audit reports of most departments, thus the

turnover of HOD' s was frequent the previous term, when all departments were negatively impacted by the audit reports.

### **5.3 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Authority and the Head of Department have no option but to complement one another. The failure and success of the department depend on the two heads pulling together. When the two heads are united, the programmes of the department proceed with minimal hindrances. There should be clarity of roles not only in understanding them but also how the get interpreted into programmes. The fundamental instrument that both heads should wisely use is communication.

There should be clarity of roles not only in understanding them but also how they get interpreted into programmes. There should be no ambiguity in how things are done and, as per the legislative requirement, the HOD and the Executive Authority should meet frequently, preferably on a weekly basis, to ensure common understanding and smooth running of government programmes. The researcher also felt that the gender balance has to be addressed in such a way that there is equal distribution of both men and women in leadership positions in the departments in the Eastern Cape Province specifically and in the national Government Departments generally. The corridors of power are generally hostile to women and their life demands which make it difficult for women to excel in what they do.

When the Executive Authority signs the HOD's contract, is imperative that the agreed upon areas are adhered to. Both heads have a responsibility to ensure conformity to agree upon standards.

Constant reviews will lessen tensions as possible errors will be identified in good time when there is still space to rectify them. These monthly reviews will simplify

quarterly reviews which subsequently will further elucidate any complication in the annual evaluation of HOD's. The Public Service Commission, under whose jurisdiction the performance of Public Service officers resides should be part of the advisory team in the departments. Their contribution should not only come at the tail-end, rather, the activities in the department must be informed by the input or advice of the PSC from the beginning.

Apart from strengthening their own department structure, the two heads must also maximize their participation in already existing structure like the cluster committees, cabinet committees and similar structures based at either national, provincial or local spheres of government.

Central in the interface should be the interest to deliver quality service to the people. The only reason why each head, whether political or administrative takes up such a position should be first about making a contribution towards changing people's lives for the better. Other motivations should be secondary. The two heads will always have a responsibility to make the relationship vibrant. As the years pass and political landscapes change, this relationship becomes more dynamic. As research is being concluded the researcher is impacted by the dynamics of the interface. Where possible, personalities have to be excluded from the interface in order to keep the programmes objective.

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## Appendix 1.

### Research Planning Correspondence

Private Bag X0051  
BHISHO  
5605  
08 July 2009

The Director-General  
Dr. Sibongile Mutwa  
Eastern Cape Provincial Government  
BHISHO  
5605

Dear Madam

#### Permission to interact with Government Officials.

I'm a registered Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree student at the University of Fort Hare. The programme, inter alia, comprises a research project/dissertation (PAD 800). The title of my research project is "The Political Administrative Interface" with specific reference to the Eastern Cape Department of Social Development.

To succeed in this exercise, I shall need to interact with various functionaries and I have identified the following:

- 1) Head of Department: Social Development
- 2) Head of Department: Education
- 3) Head of Department: Rural Development
- 4) Chief Director: Municipalities (LGVVT Dept).

If it is not too much to ask Director General (DG), I'd really appreciate it if you could also be one of my respondents.

Would Director General (DG) allow me to engage the above official of the Eastern Cape Administration on the matter at hand?

I will appreciate a prompt response DG.

Yours faithfully

-----  
P.N. Abraham-Ntantiso

## Appendix 2

### Research Planning Correspondence

Private Bag X0051  
BHISHO  
5605  
01 June 2009

Honourable Premier  
Eastern Cape Government  
BHISHO  
5605

Dear Honourable Premier

#### **Re: Permission to conduct interviews and use questionnaire for academic purposes.**

Hon. Premier, I am currently studying towards a Master's Degree through the university of Fort Hare (Public Administration) and have chosen a topic on the political and administrative interface in the department of Social Development.

This serves to humbly request the honourable Premier's permission to conduct interviews with honourable MEC's: Hon. MEC Tom (former Social Development) and Hon. MEC M. Qwase, for Education. I will also ask the Honourable MEC's to fill in questionnaires for me.

If not too much, would the Hon. Premier also be my respondent? May I also indicate honourable Premier, that, I will write to the Director-General, seeking permission to conduct similar interviews with HOD's for Social Development and Education Departments. Additionally, an official responsible for all 45 municipalities in the Province will also be asked to respond.

Lastly, I will ask SASSA (provincially) to participate.

I hope this is in order and that permission will be granted as requested.

Yours sincerely

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**N. Abraham-Ntantiso**

### Appendix 3

#### Questionnaire Used:

Questionnaire To .....

Name:.....Age:.....

Department.....

Directorate:.....

Position held/occupied and period

Date:.....Academic Qualification(s).....Sex:.....

23. Is the role played by gender difference significant /insignificant to work relations?

yes	no
-----	----

Comment:.....

.....

24. It is understandable that all public institutions function on a mandate. Is yours a political or an administrative one? Circle your choice between the two.

25. To what extent do you agree with the following statement regarding the expectations of the area of performance ;

**The area of performance is always clearly stipulated, readily available for reference in terms of what to do and when.**

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly disagree

26. Could you rate the interaction between politicians and officials with regards to crafting and implementing strategic plans as well as objectives as ;

- a. Excellent
- b. Good
- c. Fair
- d. Poor
- e. Non existent

27. If you could be given the opportunity to change the present situation with regards to expectations of politicians and government officials what would you do?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

28. What do you think is the main challenge to the political and administrative interface?

.....  
.....  
.....

29. Understandably, all leadership and management entails possession of certain qualities.

To what extent does the electoral mandate take into consideration one's areas of specialization as well as previous experience in a particular field? Circle the relevant choice

- f. Extremely
- g. Mostly
- h. Not at all
- i. To some extent
- j. Not sure

30. While efficiency is the political competence effectiveness is the administrative one. To what extent does the system provide for filling in the information gaps with regards to implementation? (HOD performance as against MEC performance). Circle your choice.

- f. Extremely
- g. Mostly
- h. Not at all
- i. To some extent
- j. Not sure

31. To what extent does the political mandate from the national spheres take into consideration the mandate from the local sphere when crafting expectations (vision, mission, strategic plans and objectives) of the provincial sphere?

- f. Extremely
- g. Mostly
- h. Not at all
- i. To some extent
- j. Not sure

32. What could be the challenges posed by the national as well as local spheres to provincial competence in relation to political, financial and administrative functions?

.....  
.....  
.....

33. There are efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation strategies in place from the highest government officials (Directors and Heads of Department) to the highest accounting officials (Members of the Executive Council )in the province.
- Definitely
  - Somewhat
  - unsure
  - Not really
  - Not at all
34. There are effective monitoring and evaluation strategies in place for every step in every level of the implementation process (lowest government officials to highest government officials at directorate level).
- Definitely
  - Somewhat
  - unsure
  - Not really
  - Not at all
35. Policy is the basis of the country's governance. At which stage are you involved?
- |                |                   |         |
|----------------|-------------------|---------|
| d. Formulation | e. Implementation | f. Both |
|----------------|-------------------|---------|
36. To what extent do your everyday activities provide for accountability strategies on policy implementation?
- |           |               |         |               |
|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| extremely | above average | average | below average |
|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|
37. To what extent do you think the political mandate takes into consideration the previous of what/when as well as areas of expertise as compared to government officials?
- |              |                   |               |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
| d. extremely | e. To some extent | f. Not really |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
38. To what extent does the role of politicians take into consideration the real situation on the ground when formulating policies? (For example effecting changes on recipients of grants)
- Mostly
  - Satisfactory
  - Adequately
  - Not at all
39. Policies sometimes exert pressure on implementation processes thus resulting in compliance as the main outcome rather than performance.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree

j. Strongly disagree

40. Given the opportunity to restructure the marriage of politicians and officials what would you do?  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....

41. Does gender difference of politicians and officials somewhat poses a threat towards positive interface between the two groups of Human Resource?

yes	no
-----	----

Comment.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

42. Both political and administrative managers play a significant role in policy formulation and implementation. Even so, South Africa, despite its international achievement on legislation, after 15years of democracy still experiences the worst problems. Identify three major challenges and give some recommendations

Challenges	Recommendations
i..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....
ii..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....
iii..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....