

# **A Public Service perspective on senior management thinking, learning and training delivery methods**

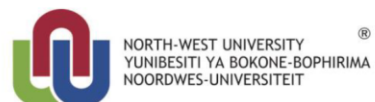
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It all starts here <sup>TM</sup>



## Agknowledgements

**“U het my weeklag vir my verander in ’n koordans, U het my roukleed losgemaak en my met vreugde omgord; sodat my eer U kan besing en nie swyg nie” Psalm 30:12.**

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In 2000 the Public Service Senior Management cadre (SMS) was introduced to the Public Service. It was envisaged that the SMS will resolve the service delivery challenges of the Public Service and lead the public servants to a shared vision and improved results. Even so, the National Planning Commission (2011) found that the SMS are still not sufficiently knowledgeable or skilled and has not shown their commitment to lead the Public Service to provide the services as expected by the Constitution (1996).

The study made use of a mixed method research design to analyse and better understand the Thinking Style Preference and Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS, and describes the factors that motivate the SMS to participate in learning and professional development interventions. The comprehensive analysis of the legal frameworks governing the SMS, and the professional development of the SMS, shows that, even though a well-designed and supportive policy regime exists, this has not resulted in a sufficiently skilled, knowledgeable, and committed SMS (National Planning Commission, 2011). The in-depth literature review provides a clear theoretical foundation for an understanding of the role of cognitive preferences and motivational factors in learning and professional development of the SMS. Literature confirms the link between personality and learning ability and concludes that rigidity and inflexibility negatively impacts on the ability to learn.

The study found that, considering individual and organisational needs on an equal basis will enable the SMS to perform better at a practical, competency level, and at a higher level of self-awareness, enabling them to lead the Public Service to successful service delivery.

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**Key words**

Thinking, Thinking Style Preferences, Learning, Learning Style Preferences, Professional Development, Public Service, Delivery Methodology, Public Service Development, Senior Management Service.

### 1.1. Introduction

One of the prominent changes affected by the (South African) Government during the restructuring of the Public Service in the new Millennium, was the creation of the Senior Management Service (SMS) through an amendment to the Public Service Regulations (PSR) in 2001 (Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), 2001:Section 4). The PSR, 2001, requires that the performance of all members of the SMS should be managed through a performance agreement or -contract, which is linked to the strategic plan of the department in which they serve (DPSA, 2001:Section 4). Included in this performance agreement is a development plan designed to ensure that the SMS members is provided with relevant professional development opportunities to maximise productivity in the workplace (DPSA, 2001:Section 4).

The Foreword to the SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:ix) articulates that the Government recognises the critical role of management in the effective, efficient and economic functioning of the Public Service. The strengthening of the leadership and management capacity in the Government is therefore a prerequisite to efficiency in service delivery (National Planning Commission (NPC), 2011:343).

During the financial years (FY) 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 the total number of SMS members within the Public Service increased from 8778 in FY 2007/08 (13% of total public servants), to 10 943 in FY 2007/08 (7% of total public servants) to 10 637 in FY 2009/10 (12% of total public servants) (Public Service Commission (PSC), 2011:2). In the Foreword to the former Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) Annual Report, Frazer-Moleketi, reiterates the very prominent role that these senior managers play in the ability of the Government to fulfil its responsibility towards the citizens of South Africa (PALAMA, 2013:1). The senior manager plays a key role and has the responsibility to convert the policy mandates of the Government into effective departmental strategies, plans and programmes. Furthermore, the individual SMS member is tasked to effectively account for and utilise

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government resources whilst actively pursuing performance and delivery (DPSA, 2003:1).

The total number of SMS members is only a small percentage in relation to the total number of public officials. Even so, these are the men and women who are charged with the responsibility to be the administrative leaders of their respective government departments. The SMS should at all times ensure that efficient, effective, economical and applicable services are delivered to the citizens of the country in the right place and within the expected timeframe (DPSA, 2001:Sections 4 and 5).

The Public Service Commission (PSC) reports that the verification of qualifications of members of the SMS that was conducted during 2001 confirmed the high qualification levels of the SMS. Despite such qualifications, there appears to be a deficiency in the management skills of the SMS in the Public Service (PSC, 2008:2).

Traditional forms of education and learning provide for academic expert knowledge required for various professions, but lack in developing skills, knowledge and attitudes that individual public officials need to be efficient and effective and take responsibility in the environment of the Government (Erasmus, Swanepoel, Schenk, Van der Westhuizen and Wessels, 2005:324). Pauw (1995:8) describes these essential attributes as the “tricks of the trade”. Thus the traditional forms of education and learning have become unsuitable and ineffective in preparing public officials for the challenges of the continuously changing Public Service (Erasmus *et al.*, 2005:323).

Achieving success in the professionalising of the Public Service Senior Manager, as envisaged by the Government, may be challenging for a number of reasons:

- The PSC (2008:36) reports that SMS members who participated in professional skills development courses agree that skills courses had met their objectives and were practical, although not intellectually challenging. The implication of the prior finding is that the SMS members may not have learnt as much as they would have preferred. They were disappointed by the teaching material not being customised or adapted for their environments.
- Learning statistics, provided by the former PALAMA (2012(a):35-47), now the National School of Government (NSG), proves that senior managers are seldom

available to be involved in classroom teaching for extended periods of time. During the 2011/2012 financial year 2,427 learners from various departments attended formalised and accredited learning interventions at the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy, reworked to a workshop format (PALAMA, 2012(a):35-47).

- Formal qualifications of SMS members are in most cases at a very high National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level (HR Connect, 2012), yet the professional skills courses offered are at a much lower NQF level due to the nature of the content and the level of the skills and knowledge required (PALAMA, 2012(b)).

Sangweni (2008:ii) writes the following on the needs of senior managers in the Public Service:

“Following the introduction of the Senior Management Service (SMS) dispensation in the Public Service, Government has improved its ability to compete for the employment of managers with the necessary skills and qualifications to manage the implementation of its policies. Having implemented a dispensation to attract managers of the potential higher calibre, Government has to make sure that it capacitates such managers to deal with present and pressing challenges facing the Public Service.”

Considering the abovementioned, it may be argued that members of the SMS, although well qualified academically, lack the skills and knowledge that the Public Service requires. It may further be concluded that, based on the responses of SMS members, the current professional development opportunities offered are not intellectually challenging enough, and that skills based workshops are preferred above accredited courses and programmes. Thus, the current supply of development opportunities available to the SMS members is neither suitable nor effective, requiring a different approach.

The National Development Plan: Vision 2030 (NPC, 2011:Section 13) is specific when it proposes solutions for service delivery insufficiencies in the Government. Vision 2030 (NPC, 2011:Section 13) explains what is required to build a sufficiently skilled public service and states that:

“Building a skilled and professional public service requires a vision of how public officials’ experience and expertise will develop during their careers... Effective learning is empowering and makes people feel valued. It fosters a shared understanding of basic principles, gives people a chance to develop specific skills or knowledge and allows a neutral environment in which workers can discuss the challenges they face”.

The NPC (2011:Section 13) ascribes the lack of public service performance, the failure of the public administration, and the unevenness and poor quality of services, to the lack of capability of the South African Government to implement key policy programmes. Aimed at understanding and documenting the desired destination for South Africa, the NPC (2011:Section 13) based its findings on solid research, and sound evidence, collected by means of host of public forums, to identify weaknesses of Government. After the comprehensive analysis, the Public Service was found to be inadequate and unable to deliver the services prescribed in the Constitution (1996); the reason confirmed as an insufficiently skilled, unprofessional management echelon.

The study argues that, derived from the perspective of the NPC, the development of skills and knowledge is an important enabler for SMS to discuss and resolve challenges faced by the Public Service. Furthermore, that successful professional development will make allowance for SMS members from different academic and professional backgrounds to acquire the knowledge and skills relevant to the Public Service, thereby creating an environment impartial and unbiased for the effective resolution of problems.

Since 1994 there have been different models of learning and development implemented by Government to continually develop and train public officials for their roles in the Public Service (PALAMA, 2012:Section 1). The NSG, launched on 21 October 2013 is representative of Government’s vision towards the creation of a capable and committed Public Service and has developed a fresh approach towards learning and development. The NSG intends to build effective and professional public service cadres through the provision of relevant, mandatory learning programmes, directing learning, education and development opportunities in order to professionalise the Public Service (NSG, 2013:4).

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The NSG will organise national leadership summits aimed at commissioning accounting officers to lead the process of establishing “a capable, developmental, professional and responsive state as envisioned in the NDP” (NPC, 2011:Section 13) through a dynamic process of learning and improvement (NSG, 2013:1). The argument can be raised that, through the elevation of learning and development strategies to this level of participation, the importance of the role of SMS in the successful implementation of Government policies is confirmed.

To achieve the goals set out in a learning and development consideration should be given to the argument raised by Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda and Nel (2009:323) that traditional education and learning may no longer assist in meeting the requirements of professional competence of public officials. For this reason, Erasmus *et al.* (2009:323) argue for a fresh approach to learning and development. This is specifically applicable to the SMS. Thus the essentials of professional development and competence for the Public Service may need to be redefined.

According to Erasmus *et al.* (2009:323), citing Larson (1977), Louw (1990), Pauw (1995) and Wessels (2000), the professional element focuses on the attention to a unique skill based on a specific body of knowledge and theories. Erasmus *et al.* (2009:323) cites Messic (1994) and agrees that competence increases the range of the professional element to what a person can achieve or do with these skills and knowledge under ideal circumstances.

The Government provides public services which encompass the complete range of policies and services required in South Africa, mandated to the Government by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and reinforced by way of democratic elections. These services rendered in the national, provincial and local government spheres includes functions that range from financial management and -accounting provided by treasuries, to the more creative functions such as the Departments of Arts, Culture and Sport (South Africa, 2016:online). To better understand the diversity in profile not only of the departments in the Public Service, but also the individuals who serve in the departments with specific regard to the SMS members, the motivation of their thoughts and actions must be grasped.

Gouws, Meyer, Louw and Plug (2000:50) define thinking as all cognitive processes that are non-perceptive and through which aspects of the environment are understood and interpreted. Gouws, *et al.* (2000:50) cite Carl Gustav Jung (1919) and describe the thinking function as one of the basic functions of the psyche; and thinking type as the preferred thinking function in the conscious mind. Both Rothman (1990:144) and Neethling (2000:29) further note that people are inherently different, and that individual differences result in personal thinking preferences that influence the manner in which people communicate, make decisions, solve problems and manage themselves and others.

Thinking preferences are determined by the manner in which the brain is structured. Neethling (2000:29) argues that children are born with 20% to 30% of thinking preferences, while 70% to 80% develop through social and environmental interaction. These preferences reside in the four quadrants of the human brain. Figure 1.1 depicts the structure of the brain as defined by Neethling's Thinking Style Preference Model (Neethling, 2000:7):

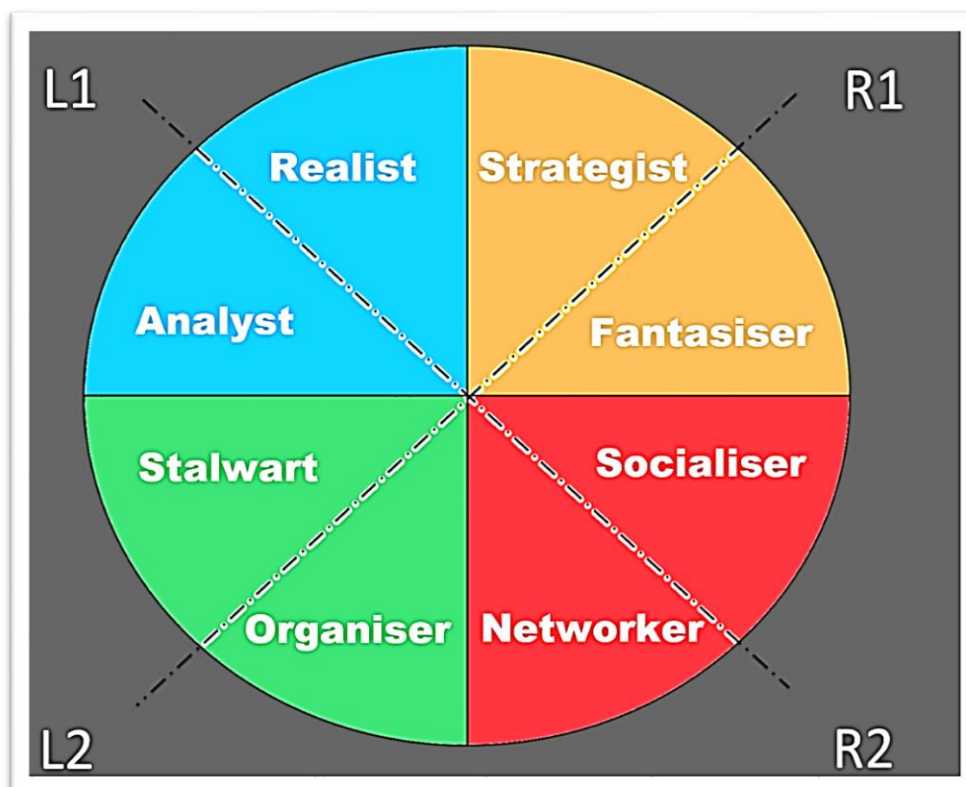


Figure 1.1: Neethling's Thinking Style Preference Model

Source: Neethling (2000:7).

Each individual receives and processes information and acts upon this information in a specific manner, depending on which brain quadrant is dominant. This explains why people prefer to think, learn, communicate and make decisions in different ways. Because individual thinking preferences and brain profiles have a specific impact on how an individual communicates, acts towards other people, does business, learns, solves problems and makes decisions (Neethling, 2000:2), it can be argued that presenting information in a way fitting a specific thinking style preference crafts an environment where learning can take place. It implies that different people have different learning styles.

Four main categories of learning styles can be distinguished:

- cognitive personality elements (Witkin, 1977:15);
- information-processing style (Kolb, 1984:38);
- approaches to studying (Entwistle and Tait, 1994:93-103); and
- instructional preferences (Riechmann and Grasha, 1974 cited by Richlin, 2006:34-41)

This dissertation will conjoin with the second distinction of David Kolb. In 1984 David Kolb continued on the work done by John Dewey and Kurt Levin and determined that “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984:38).

In his original work, Kolb (1973:2) presented a cyclical model of learning, consisting of four stages:

- concrete experience (or do);
- reflective observation (or observe);
- abstract conceptualisation (or think); and
- active experimentation (or plan) as is also presented visually in Figure 1.2.



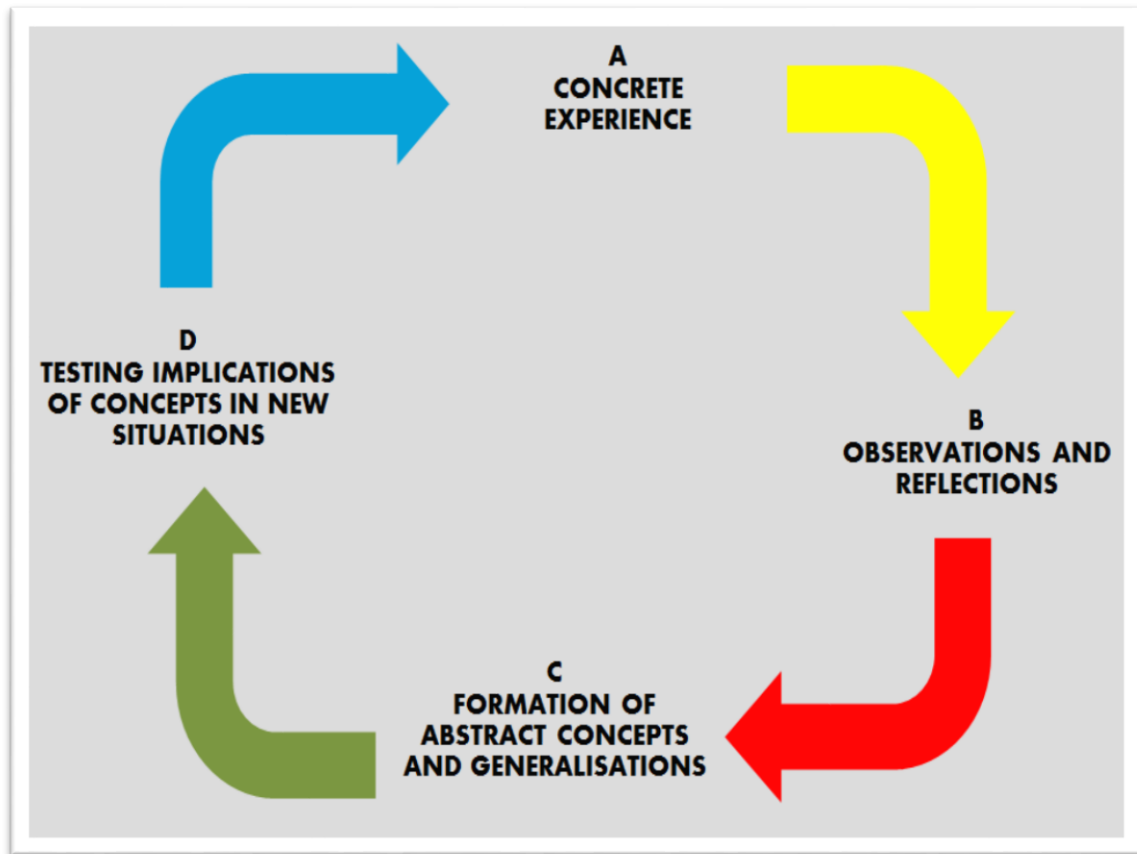


Figure 1.2: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.  
Source: Kolb (1973:2)

Kolb's four-stage learning cycle illustrates how learners translate experience through reflection into concepts, using these concepts as directions or guides to actively experiment and make choices for new experiences. In addition to defining the stages of learning, Kolb is also very well known for the Learning Style Instrument (LSI) which originated from his theory. The LSI determines an individual's learning preference from the possible four learning styles, corresponding to the four stages in the Experiential Learning Cycle Model (Figure 1.2). In each of these styles the conditions under which learners learn better, are different (Kolb, 1984:36).

The following present the categories of the learning preferences (Kolb, 1984:36-38):

- assimilators who learn better when presented with sound, logical theories to consider;
- convergers who learn better when provided with practical applications of concepts and theories;

- accommodators who learn better when provided with “hands-on” experiences;  
or
- divergers who learn better when allowed to observe and collect a wide range of information.

Kolb's (1984:76) model assesses learner perception and processing of information and bases the model on two continuums, namely:

- a processing continuum (how a task is approached - from doing to watching);  
and
- a perception continuum (emotional response, or thoughts or feeling about a task, - from thinking to feeling).

From abovementioned scales four dimensions of learning are depicted:

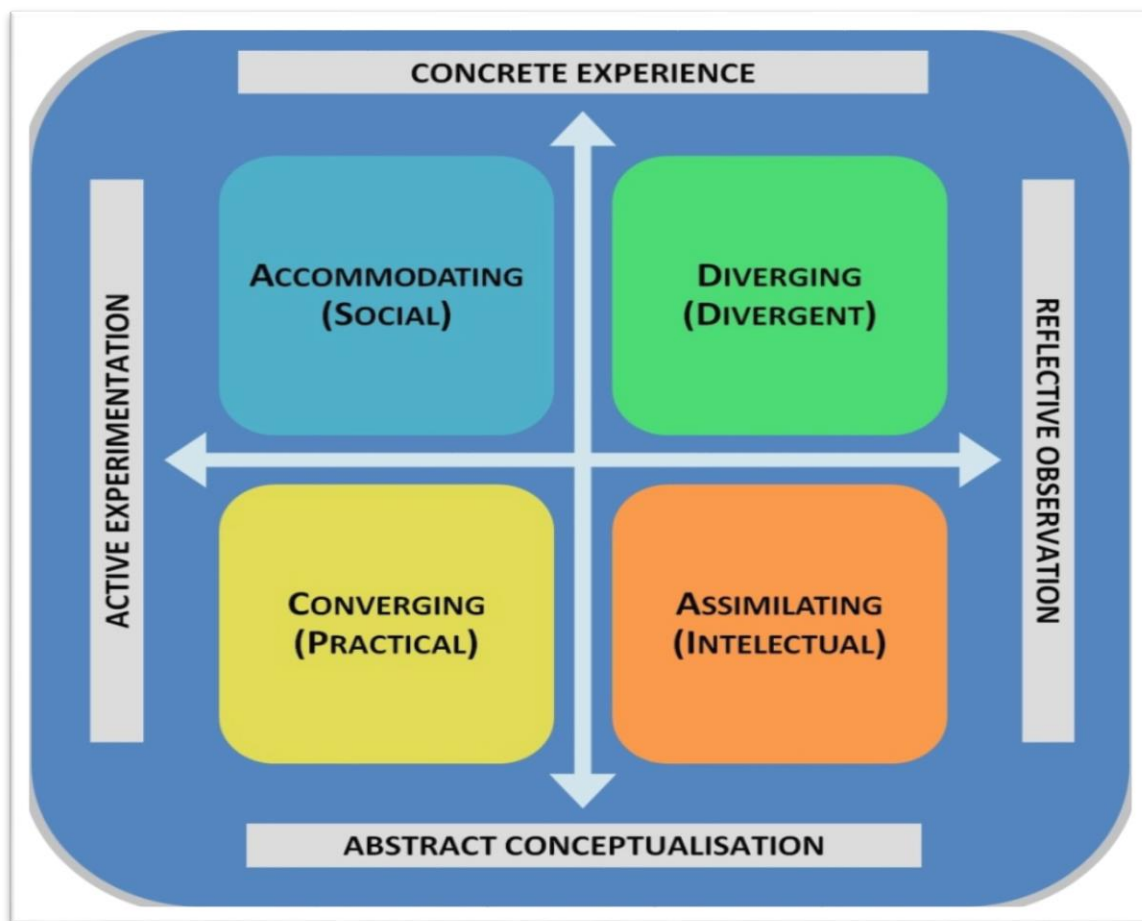


Figure 1.3: Kolb's Learning Style Model

Source: Kolb 1984

Kolb's model considers individuals' preferred reactions to information presented in four quadrants. Kolb links each of the four profiles to feeling, thinking, doing or converging. In a similar way, Neethling's four-quadrant Thinking Style Preference Model determines profiles in relation to a holistic, analytical, structured or feeling oriented thinking pattern. Bringing these two models in connection with each other, an argument can be made that taking equal consideration of thinking and learning preferences, and incorporating these in learning delivery models based on adult education principles, the performance of a SMS member may improve significantly after participating in such a learning intervention.

Knowles (1974:29) clearly outlines the diversity in adult education when he derives that the adult educator has a mission that is far beyond the pedagogical norm. He emphasises that the adult educator should at all times help individuals in more complex and significant ways than what might appear on the surface. "Most of what is known about learning has been derived from studies of learning in children and animals. Most of what is known about teaching is derived from experiences with teaching children under conditions of compulsory attendance" (Knowles, 1974:37).

Knowles (1974:37) argues that, somewhere in the history, the specific reference to children had been removed from the definition and pedagogy became the application across all boards of learning and development. In his efforts to correct this blanket application, Knowles (1974:37) teaches that skilful adult educators have long realised that one cannot teach adults in the same way as one would children, mostly because adults are in most instances voluntary learners. Should learning experiences not satisfy their need, they would simply disappear from the learning experience. In *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (1974), Knowles goes beyond the known definition of *pedagogy* and defines *andragogy* as the art and science of helping adults to learn, or helping human beings to learn.

Knowles (1974:37-38) built this definition on four assumptions:

- as a person matures, his/her self-concept changes from being a dependant person to a self-directed individual;

- as a person matures, his/her collection of experiences accumulates and becomes an ever growing resource for learning;
- as a person matures, his/her readiness to learn is linked to the social roles and developmental tasks thereof; and
- as a person matures, his/her time perspectives become more direct and require instantaneous application of knowledge and skills rather than postponed application of skills.

This argument is supported by the NPC (2011:377) who reported that a one-size-fits-all approach to learning will not achieve the required objectives. This confirmation creates a strong motivation to provide professional development solutions that are relevant, timely and that give special attention to packaging and delivery that are aligned to thinking- and learning preferences. The design of professional development solutions should not assume that methodology and delivery are defined by the content, but should rather consider the need of the SMS members.

## **1.2. Problem statement**

The need for the successful learning and professional development of the SMS members is essentially a key requirement to ensure an able and willing Public Service (Sisulu, 2013:online). Recorded in the Personnel and Salary Management System of the South African Government (PERSAL), the SMS are a collection of unique individuals, appointed from different backgrounds and with different levels and specialist areas of education (PERSAL 2014). Data from the NSG Learning Management System (NSG, 2014) shows that only 2500 SMS members from a possible 10000 have opted to attend the learning and development opportunities offered by the NSG.

In a Directive issued by the DPSA (2008:Section 4), the evolved roles and increased responsibilities of the SMS members since 1994 are acknowledged. The Directive (DPSA, 2008:Section 4) illuminates their findings by emphasising the increased awareness of citizens and their expectations for improved services. This continues to challenge the capability and resourcefulness of the SMS.

Diverged from the data in the PERSAL the education levels of the SMS members indicate that the majority are professionals, duly qualified with post school qualifications. The study argues that performance and leadership should thus be of a professional standard, and that quality leadership should be reflected by the way SMS members lead public officials to successfully serve and implement the policies of the Government.

Over and above academic qualifications, the theoretical and statutory frameworks for professional development are greatly supportive of the further development of the SMS members. A number of initiatives in this regard, such as the professional development requirements for SMS members, are stipulated in the SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:Sections 2 and 4), the human resources development requirements of the PSR (DPSA, 2001:Section 4) and the emphasis on the developmental needs for SMS members, mentioned in the Human Resource Development Plan for the Public Service (DPSA, 2006:Section 4). This recognises and supports the importance for the continuous professional development of the SMS.

Clearly the fervent energy devoted to the establishment of a state of the art legal framework for the professional development of the SMS proves that policy and legislation by itself is not sufficient to improve skills, competencies and efficacy of the SMS. Considering that the NPC performed comprehensive research and analysis of the challenges experienced by the country, their findings are evidence of the unprofessional and incompetent state of the SMS. Urgent, effective, human resource development solutions, are paramount to an efficient and effective public service management cadre (NPC, 2011:Section 13).

Van Dijk (2005:202) explains human resource development as the harmonious efforts of “training and development, organisational development, and career development”, to increase effectiveness of employees, teams and the institution. The strategic importance of on-going learning and development should not be underestimated, and this important management function remains central to the achievement of the vision and goals of any organisation (Van Dijk, 2008:391).

The NPC (2011:406-407) emphasises that it is essential for the South African Government and its Public Service to be more capable, professional and responsive,

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and that good management is crucial to ensure efficient, economic and appropriate use of resources. However, management is rarely empowered and encouraged to use the discretion and power that are available to them within the policy contexts of the Public Service. The NDP (NPC, 2011:380) accentuates the lack of key professional skills in that the Public Service, but that focussing on the development of key skills alone is not enough if professionals are not empowered to do their jobs. Effective management is about making things work. Too often policies are made, very well considered and structured, but with a limited view or plan for implementation. Quality management should turn these policies to relevant, effective and implementable strategies (NPC, 2011:377).

Contemplating the well-resourced and supportive legislative environment within which the professional development of the SMS is managed, it seems ironic that the reports presented highlight mostly shortcomings in the professional capabilities of the SMS. Although organisational structures are in place to enable the professional development of the SMS, the professional development intervention and opportunities are not delivering the expected results: to improve the ability of the SMS to lead the Public Service to success.

Anticipating the uniqueness of the human mind in relation to the environment within which government departments function, noting that the Public Service is led by a team of approximately 10 000 professional senior managers, it is fair to expect that this team will be equally unique in its nature and expectations and that the uniqueness of the SMS members may have an influence on the effectiveness of learning and professional development. Professional development qualifications, courses and certificates that are designed for the development of the Public Service, specifically the SMS, consider only the organisational requirements and policy context from a vocational perspective. This results in a disjuncture between professional development requirements and solutions for the Public Service and the professional development needs of the SMS (PSC, 2014:21-24). This raises the question whether the professional development framework for the SMS can be enhanced by considering the needs of the SMS not only in relation to the vocational and organisational needs of the Government, but also by considering the motivational drives.

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Senior managers play a key role in shaping the direction, culture, structures and systems to support delivery of government programmes (Frazer-Moleketi, 2007:n.b.). The DPSA and the PSC performed a number of studies between 2000 and 2006 including the Basdin report on the establishment of the SMS (2000), SMS review (2005), Personnel Expenditure Review (2006) probing the quality of public service management. The DPSA (2007) reports on these studies, providing combined findings in a composite report providing an overview of the leadership and performance deficiencies of the SMS. The shortcomings identified include the impact of inadequacies in the training and development initiatives provided to the SMS, as well as the unacceptable standard of professional conduct by the SMS.

The DPSA composite report (2007) confirms the need for innovation and focus to improve development programmes available to SMS. Towards the improvement of management, leadership and skill levels of the SMS, a Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework (LMDS) was put in place to enable the provision of development opportunities focused on the improvement of the quality of leadership in the Public Service.

Mujere (2015: online) found that there had been a major rise in fatalities during service delivery protests in recent years. This increase in the number of severity of service delivery protests are directly related to the inability of the Public Service to place the right person with the right skill in the right job, resulting in a lack of skill and professionalism by the SMS (PSC, 2008 cited by Muthien, 2014:136). Muthien (2014:136) further reiterates that a need was identified by the DPSA to issue a "Strategy for the management of poor performance of the SMS", to respond to the incompetence and inconsistency in managing performance of the SMS in the Public Service.

The South African Risk Report of 2015, issued by the Institute for Risk Management South Africa (IRMSA) (2015:39), still sets the grim scene of multiple critical areas of risk impacting on the South Africa. As stated by Briers in the Risk Report (2015:39) major risks face the country, among others the decline in social cohesion, corruption that has doubled in 15 years, and the results from the public opinion survey indicating

a strong decline in the levels of satisfaction with the delivery of basic public services, all of which are managed by the SMS.

The IRMSA report (2015:38-39) argues that South Africa is widely described as an undirected and disorganised country, within which too much bureaucracy, nepotism and self-enrichment exists. Resulting from the aforementioned challenges is that Public Service leadership benefiting greatly from the public purse, whilst millions of South Africans still have no or little food (2015:38-39). Booysen (2015:43) argues that there is a direct relationship between the major risks facing South Africa, and the lack of technical skills of public service managers, their perceived inability to take accountability for (a lack of) results, as well as the apparent lack of competence in basic and financial management.

The arguments of the IRMSA (2015:38-43) are an echo of the NDP (NCP, 2014:363-364) that recognises the failure of the public administration and public management to maintain efficiency and effectiveness of the Public Service and public service delivery. Correspondingly, the NDP (NCP, 2014:364, 432-434, 462) places great emphasis on the unevenness and poor quality of capacity, skills and competence of public servants and services rendered by the State. The NDP (NCP, 2014:364) argued that this is a result the lack of capability of the state to implement key policy programmes, even though great strides have been made in policy formation since democracy in 1994. The study argues that the conclusions by Briers and Booysen (2015) and the findings and proposed plans by the NDP, is evidence of the unprofessional and incompetent state of the SMS. Efforts made to legislate development for improved performance of the SMS, has thus failed.

When proposing solutions to turn around the failures of the State, the NDP (2014:365) underscores the importance of focusing on key capabilities, and the need for a rigorous effort by the State to reinvigorate its role as a developer of much needed specialist and professional skills in the country. Muthien (2014:127) argues that “Effective leaders assemble an 'architecture of execution' underpinned by high performance, execution driven managers with a value proposition of 'end-to-end capability' and a strong operational culture”. From the perspectives of Briers and Booysen (2015:30-45), there continues to be a major gap between the expected level of competence and

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professionalism of public service managers and the actual palpable levels on incompetence and inability to deliver on government programmes resulting in major risks for South Africa.

Up to 75% of SMS hold postgraduate qualifications (DPSA, 2007:23-26), but still significant challenges in the ability of the SMS to efficiently deliver government programmes. Though the SMS are highly qualified, the circadian of reports of mismanagement, corruption and lack of services is evidential of the lack of professionalism and leadership in the SMS. These weaknesses in the management systems of the Public Service, continuous to manifest itself in the inability to maintain acceptable service delivery standards. Arguably, education, training and development offerings, expected to professionalise the SMS and develop relevant skills, has not yet delivered the anticipated result.

The problem that this study will address, therefore focuses on the extent to which the structuring of professional development solutions not only fits the needs of the Public Service, but is packaged in such a way that also considers the preferences and needs of the SMS members. The study intends to argue that the professional development of senior managers and the influence of their thinking preferences, learning preferences and motivation for learning may have specific requirements and conditions for the design and delivery of professional development interventions for the SMS.

### **1.3. Research objectives**

The study will create a better understanding of the Thinking and Learning Style Preferences of SMS members in the Public Service and explores the possibility of a relationship between Thinking and Learning Style Preferences of the SMS in the Public Service and its subsequent impact on executive development, professional development methodologies and delivery methods. The result of the study entails making recommendations pertaining to professional development solutions that not only fit the need of the Public Service from a vocational perspective, but is packaged in a way that considers the preferences and needs of the SMS to improve the learning

experience and impact on the competency and ability to perform effectively as the SMS.

The specific objectives are:

- to describe the statutory framework that governs the professional development of senior managers;
- to describe the theoretical framework supporting thinking and learning styles with the view to analyse the influence thereof on professional development;
- to understand the factors that motivate the SMS to participate in learning and professional development opportunities;
- to explain the correlation between thinking style preferences and, learning styles preferences of SMS members; and
- to explain the influence of thinking styles preferences, learning style preferences and factors that motivate the SMS to learn contribution to the development and design for successful professional development interventions.

#### **1.4. Research questions**

Against the setting of the above-mentioned discussions, the following questions will be answered during the execution of this study:

- i. Does the statutory framework for learning and professional development sufficiently enable the successful professional development of senior managers?
- ii. What are the theoretical frameworks underpinning the effectiveness of professional development interventions in specific relation to cognitive preferences?
- iii. What is the Thinking Style Preference profile of the SMS?
- iv. What is the Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS?
- v. What are the factors that motivate the SMS to participate in learning and professional development opportunities?

- vi. What, if any is the correlation between the Thinking Style Preference profile and the Learning Style Preference Profile of the SMS?
- vii. How can the inclusion of the personal preference profile of the SMS contribute to an improve curriculum and instructional design of professional development solutions to improve participation and learning?

### **1.5. Central theoretical statements**

Within the learning milieu, Kirkpatrick (1998) as reflected on by Erasmus *et al.* (2005:324), theorises that there are four suggested levels for evaluation of learning: reaction – how the participant feels about the learning; ii) learning – the degree to which learning outcomes have been mastered; iii) behaviour – the behaviour of the learner also assessed during the learning phase; and iv) results – the impact which the learning programme has on the improvement of service delivery. An evaluation matrix in support of this theory considers learning that takes place (competence based), learner experience, ease of learning, learner performance, the perceived worth of learning, among others issues such as the state of happiness of learners (Erasmus, *et al.*, 2005:340; 341). The focal point of the evaluation of learning is the learner, his or her experience, achievements and impact on the workplace. The learner's needs and not the organisational needs should be the point of departure for the development of professional development interventions.

In service training is usually provided by organisations with the intent to develop individuals to perform better in the workplace and strengthen competencies related to the job (Malone, 1984:209). A number of scholars have defined learning and professional development. Jucius (1963:280) defines learning as the process of acquiring specific skills in order to perform a job better. From the perspective of Flippo (1961:229) differentiates between education and learning, locating these at the two ends of a continuum of personal development ranging from a general education to specific learning. Van Dorsal (1962) explains that process of teaching, informing, or educating people so that they may become as well qualified as possible to do their job, and become qualified to perform in positions of greater difficulty and responsibility.

Arguably learning and professional development is the foundation for the improved performance of the SMS and can add great value to a better, effective SMS.

Taylor (1911:41) argues that the most important ambition of both workers and management should be to train and develop each individual in the establishment, so that he or she can do (at his or her fastest pace and with the maximum of efficiency) the best quality work that he or she is able to perform. The research argues that this principle equally applies to SMS members. In the following section attention will be given to the methodology used to answer the research objectives and questions posed by the study.

## **1.6. Research methodology**

Research methodology differs from the research design in that the design determines the overall plan whilst the methodology describes the collection of methods and tools required for the systematic, methodical and accurate execution of the design or the

research process (Mouton, 2008:55). The tools and procedures to be used during the course of the study, including the steps to follow and tasks that must be executed, must assist the researcher to come to a non-contaminated conclusion and produce an unbiased and objective result (Mouton, 2008:56).

The methodology to be applied, as described in the forthcoming paragraphs, considers the objectives of the study to obtain the data that is required to better understand the preferences of the SMS members. For the purpose of this study information was therefore obtained from both a literature review and an empirical study.

### *1.6.1. Research approach and design*

Mouton (2008:55) defines the research design as the plan or blueprint of how the research is executed. According to Mouton (2008:57), research designs are specifically formatted or tailored to suit the requirements of the different kinds of research questions. Furthermore, Mouton (2008:57) confirms that it is expected that, when design types are classified, it is done in accordance with the kinds of questions that the design can answer.

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Cooper and Schindler (2003:170) define the research design as the strategy for the study and a plan designed to ensure that the strategy is carried out. Cooper and Schindler (2003:170) further clarify that research design postulates the methods and the procedures for the collection of data, how it is measured and how the data is analysed.

The aim of this study is to understand the members of the SMS of the Public Service with a specific reference to their thinking and learning preferences and its subsequent influence on professional development interventions' design. A true reflection of the individual's- and group's experience and perception is required to fully understand its influence on learning experiences. A mixed mode approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods collecting, analysing, understanding and interpreting is applied. Mixed mode research approach is also known as the "third methodological movement" by scholars such as Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003:5, (compare Cresswell and Clerk, 2011:1-3). Greene (2007:20) describes mixed mode method as "multiple ways of seeing and hearing". Green, Caracelli and Graham (1989:156) defined the mixed mode method as designs that incorporate both one or more quantitative methods that are designed to collect numbers and one or more qualitative methods that are designed to collect words. The definition of the mixed mode research approach that is most relevant to this study is that of Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007:123) stating that mixed mode research combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (i.e. qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis and inference techniques) to better understand and corroborate findings, therefore making this method the best suited to respond to the research questions.

Grossman (2006:245) denotes that mixed methods research is a "blended approach" that proves especially valuable when dealing with complex factors. De Vos (2002:365) argues that the use of mixed methods is embedded as a suitable approach where compounding evidence is needed to unambiguously prove theories and contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

The SMS and the argued need for the effective and successful professional development of the SMS members, is a multifaceted phenomenon. Learning and

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professional development of the SMS in a well-regulated environment, is further examined in Chapter 2. The complexity is elevated by the nature of the Public Service, the controlled and highly legislated context within which the SMS functions, and the prerequisites and expectations in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (The Constitution of South Africa (herein after referred to as The Constitution), 1996:Section 10). The mixed method approach remains the most reliant design to maintain the integrity of the study. The study argues that it is important to have an understanding of the thinking and learning preferences of the SMS based on classical theories from scholars such as Knox, Kolb, Neethling and others, and also to provide insight from a more idiographic perspective, creating that in-depth, deeper understanding of the context and characteristics presented by the SMS.

To understand this personal and social world within which learning and development takes place, an interpretative phenomenological design was followed. Smith and Osborn (2008:53) explain that the aim of interpretive phenomenological analysis is the discovery of the participants' understanding of their personal and social world, creating value from the meaning that these participants find in particular experiences. Analysing the phenomenon of the SMS (as unit for analysis) in relation to Thinking and learning style preferences will provide an opportunity for the detailed examination and understanding of the life-world of the SMS members. In this context, Finlay (2008:1) reminds the reader of the reflective practice as described by Mezirow (1981), Boyd and Fales (1983) Boud *et al.* (1985) and Jarvis (1992) of learning through and from experience. According to these writers this reflection contributes towards gaining valuable new insights of oneself and/or practices that you are involved with.

This life-world can also be observed as a "locus of interaction between the self and its perceptual environment" (Von Eckartsberg, 1998:3). This life-world can be defined as the meaningful world that is lived and experienced and is of value and meaning in a "humanly relational world" (Todres, Galvin and Dahlberg, 2007:55).

The aim of the interpretive phenomenological method, as described by Smith and Osborn (2008:53), is the discovery of the participants' understanding of their personal and social world, creating value from the meaning that these participants find in particular experiences. The conceptual design of the study aided in achieving the

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objective of the study to consider the possibilities for the improvement of learning and professional development opportunities and solutions for the SMS, that not only fit the need of the Public Service from a vocational and policy perspective, but a solution designed and delivered in a way that also incorporate the Thinking and Learning Style Preferences of the SMS members, providing a concept that motivates the SMS to learn and develop.

The phenomenological design will enable the study to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the SMS members in the Public Service. A mixed mode method, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative instruments collecting, analysing, understanding and interpreting is applied.

A mixed methods interpretive phenomenological approach and design incorporates both qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection analysis and inference techniques, enabling maintenance of the integrity of the study and the finding thereof (Gill, 2014:17:2, 118-137). Miller and Brewer (2003:326) maintain that consideration and inclusion of various approaches in the study, does not merely cancel flaws of its corresponding item, but more over fortifies the contrasting approach. The mixed methods for data collection added the most value and resulted in high standards of validity and triangulated findings between the in-depth literature review, quantitative data collected from the data units and the assessment of the policy regime pertaining to the learning and professional development of the SMS. According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee, (2006:20) an in depth literature review provides the theoretical foundation for the collection and analysis of the results, while a semi-structured questionnaire collects data from a more quantitative perspective.

#### *1.6.2. Population and sampling*

The study aims to illuminate how to maintain a high level of learning and professional development in the SMS, by critically analysing the legal and theoretical contexts pertaining to thinking, learning and motivation, and comparing these with data collecting from participating study units. To achieve this goal, the non-proportional quota subcategory of the purposive sampling method was selected to be best suited to the study.

The nature of the SMS members, the geography and the availability of access challenges experienced daily, required a strategic decision guarantee a valid, suitable sample from where data will be collected (Oppenheim and Oppenheim, 1992:62). The sample for the study was specifically selected, judging the relevance of selected units, by defining the population that are of interest, but specifically in relation to determine which characteristics will enable a response to the questions asked by the researcher.

To enable a sampling theory is the scientific foundation in the everyday practice of drawing conclusions about a specific group (Bless *et al.*, 2006:97) Sampling enables inferences for a specific group, either by generalising or by means of describing or illustrating. A sampling plan refers to how specific data sources will be chosen (Tracy, 2013:134). To consider the size of the sample, the objectives, as well as the approach for the study should be considered (Tracy, 2013:136). A sample size should be selected to gather as much as you need to know (Kvale, 1996:101). Tracy (2013:134-138) emphasises the importance of achieving a balance; not to overload the study with data whilst maintaining sufficiency to protect the study from stale and shallow contributions. Bless *et al.* (2006:107) are of the opinion that the size of the sample depends on the kind of data analysis that the researcher plans, the accuracy requirements as well as the characteristics of the population.

The non-proportional quota sampling method, a sub category of the purposive sampling method (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003:713, Palys, 2008:697-698), was selected to be best suited to the study. This type of purposive, sometimes referred to as a non-probability or a purposeful sample, allowed for the sample to be selected specifically to achieve the purpose of the study, rather than randomly selecting a sample (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003:713). The non-proportional quota sample applied a set of specific criteria to the population, to determine who the sample will be (Palys, 2008:697-698). This method allows the freedom to engage research subjects in a less restrictive way, and creates the opportunity to successfully research the SMS members even though they are geographically widely spread.

A target sample of 191 Executive Development Programme (EDP) participants, complying with the undermentioned criteria set for the sample, was identified from the dataset of participants. The target sample consisted of public officials at SMS level in

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national and provincial government departments. The criteria to participate in the study included that respondents need to be:

- an employed public servant;
- at the level of director, chief director or similar; such as a brigadier in the National Defence Force that is deemed to be at the same rank and level than director;
- employed at the time of participation in the EDP at either national or provincial sphere of Government (including public agencies such as the South African Revenue Service (SARS), the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), the protection services like the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and similar institutions);
- must have enrolled and attended at least seven modules of the EDP (from 2007 onward), also including qualifying participants from the original EDP pilot programme run during 2006. The minimum number of the required modules includes those modules required to attain the Certificate in Executive Leadership, six (6) Modules, as well as the Orientation Module; and
- successful and unsuccessful participants were included in the population to determine the sample to ensure that a holistic perspective of experiences can be attained.

Based on the above criteria, 191 possible respondents were identified. While the whole sample was included in the distribution of questionnaires, saturation in terms of thinking and learning preference analysis was achieved with the 47 respondents who returned the questionnaire within the allotted time. The demographic profile, indicating and arguing the representativeness of the respondents is further described in Chapter 3 of the study. An example of the questionnaire is attached (Annexure A).

The focus of the study is the convoluted SMS phenomenon, at the centre of interest being the Thinking and learning style preferences, related cognitive, motivational and learning needs, and the positive contribution that an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon will have towards specialised professional development interventions for the SMS. A greater level of understanding of this phenomenon pioneers a potential

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new approach in the design and development of curriculum and instructional designs for SMS professional development programmes.

### *1.6.3. Instrumentation*

Two instruments are utilised to obtain data for this study namely a literature review and a semi structured, self-administered questionnaire.

#### *1.6.3.1. Literature review*

“In an academic context, all research is based on previous research” (Badenhorst, 2008:155), strongly suggesting that a literature review is inherent in the initial design of the research and the research topic. A comprehensive literature review, logically arguing the case originating from an expansive understanding of the current state of knowledge about the research topic, establishes the theoretical context identifying issues for argument in response to the research questions (Machi and McEvoy, 2012:4). Mouton (2008:87) describes a literature review as the study of work already done in the field of study envisaged in the research. Mouton (2008:87) explains further that a literature review can be regarded as a review of existing scholarship relevant to the study, to provide the most recent, credible and relevant overview of the study field.

The theoretical review approach described by Kaniki (2006:23) is used for insight in the theoretical developments on the research topic. In this case being the professional development of SMS, in relation to the Thinking and Learning Style Preference profiles of the SMS, the considerations and motivational factors for learning and how this may influence curriculum and instructional design. The literature review sometimes includes a knowledge review (Ridley, 2008:43), enhancing the theoretical, and explores related policies and legislative contexts, evaluation reports and findings.

Mouton (2008:87) emphasises the importance of a review of the research produced by other scholars, for a number of reasons:

- ensuring that one is not merely duplicating an existing study;
- to discover the most recent and authoritative theory on the subject;
- to identify the most widely accepted empirical findings related to the study;

- identifying valid and credible instrumentation available; and
- understanding the most widely accepted definitions of key concepts in the field.

Leedy (1989:66) adds to the findings of Mouton (2008) that the literature review provides the necessary knowledge that cultivates insight into and creates a better understanding of the problem being investigated. The literature review also provides the opportunity to ensure that the study is not merely a duplication of what has been done previously (Aitchison, 1998:58). Bless *et al.* (2006:20) provide more clarity confirming the value of the literature review as providing an in-depth theoretical framework, providing relevant and current developments in the field of study. It determines whether there are any gaps in the existing knowledge and illuminates possible weaknesses in previous studies, while comparing various research results and findings in the area of the study. Bless *et al.* (2006:20) explain further that the research benefits greatly from a literature review by presenting an understanding of previously determined characteristics that may or may not be adopted for the study. It also contributes to determine the suitable research methodology that needs to be implemented.

Thus the in-depth literature review completed during the course of the study, collected knowledge and interpretations of the theoretical and legislative frameworks relevant to the professional development of the SMS as well as the status of effectiveness of members of the SMS. The literature review further provided the theoretical baseline and framework for the data collection and analysis.

#### 1.6.3.2. Empirical investigation: self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire

Questionnaires are widely used and are possible to administer without the presence of the researcher and with little or no personal interaction as described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003:404). Questionnaires are usually viewed to be more objective, allowing the generalisation of results. Results obtained through a questionnaire may be vulnerable and the validity of findings affected by faulty questionnaire design; sampling errors, non-response errors and the possibility of faulty interpretation of results (Oppenheim and Oppenheim, 1992:62-65). This semi-

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structured questionnaire provided for a disciplined record, gathering relevant data only, and benefit from the process by having less information to sift through in order to provide concise records of responses (Kvale, 1996:169).

The questionnaire was designed to make relevant data available, in response to specific questions pertaining to the Thinking - and the learning style preferences of the respondents. In addition, the questionnaire included questions about the biographical composition of the respondents, previous experience with professional development interventions, what motivates the respondents to learn and what their expectations for future professional development solutions are. This questionnaire was designed and constructed in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

From a quantitative perspective, data was collected by discovering, counting and identifying themes and categories as these emanated from the literature review. Standardised questions were designed to which respondents were required to reply (Taylor, 2005:243). Qualitative data was collected by asking open ended questions, requiring from the respondent to provide his/her experiences toward specific responses in the questionnaire, in order to better understand the underlying reasons for the responses received (World Bank, 2014:online). The quantitative questions were fortified by the collection of qualitative data, through open-ended questions, probing respondents to share their perspectives, reasoning and personal experiences.

The questionnaire is attached as Annexure A, and is structured as follows:

- Part A: Biographical information
- Part B: Training and developmental profile – experience and exposure
- Part C: Learning style profile
- Part D: Thinking style preference
- Part E: Motivation for learning
- Part F: Learning and developmental needs

To maximise the validity of responses and results, questions were kept as short as possible, not exceeding 16 to 20 words per sentence in instances where questions consist of more than one sentence (Lietz, 2008:3). The instrument allowed for a cost

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effective solution to the accessibility challenges for the widely spread SMS. Respondents were allowed a comfortable environment where they felt safe to reflect and respond, allowing for comprehensive, honest and anonymous feedback. The questionnaire further created an opportunity to eliminate superfluous questions and minimised ambiguity (Bless *et al.*, 2006:119-123).

#### *1.6.4. Data analysis and verification*

The data collected during the course of the study being both qualitative and quantitative required a differentiated method of analysis. Analysis of qualitative data followed the typology approach as described by Patton and Patton (2002:457) as a classification system that is made up of categories that distribute some aspect of the world into parts along a specific range. The data collected was coded, analysed and interpreted to better understand the needs of members of the SMS in relation to thinking and learning.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:150) clarify that the analysis of data provides the researcher with the opportunity to categorise and order, and also manipulate and summarise data and thereby providing the researcher with the opportunity to answer the research questions. The following process was followed during the data analysis phase of the study:

- The literature review forms the theoretical basis of the study in relation to the statutory frameworks as well as relevant literature on cognitive preferences in support of the professional development of senior managers, as well as theories in thinking and learning preferences, motivation for learning and professional development.
- The literature review was followed by the dissemination of a semi-structured questionnaire to 100% of the target population, collecting quantitative and qualitative information.
- Information obtained from questionnaires was captured, processed and thematically analysed to derive the findings of the study.

#### 1.6.5. *Validity*

The study was approached in a pragmatic way, making use of different data sources, both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, and in this way improves the validity of the study through triangulation. Denzin (2009:301) refers to four types of triangulation:

- data triangulation: time, space, and persons;
- investigator triangulation: multiple researchers in an investigation;
- theory triangulation: using more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon; and
- methodological triangulation: using more than one method to gather data, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents.

A variety of theories, multiple data sources, and the qualitative and quantitative data collected during the course of the study, provides a conclusive result assisted by the theoretical and methodological triangulation applied.

#### 1.6.6. *Ethics*

When engaging in the social research field, the researcher should move cautiously not to inadvertently create the perception that the rights of individuals are abused. For this reason, ethical conduct is of great concern in the social research (Bless *et al.*, 2006:139). Resnick (2011: online) defines ethics as the norms for conduct distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Tracy (2013:242-243) highlights two areas of concern when considering ethics for qualitative studies, procedural and situational ethics:

- Procedural ethics, as those standards or ethical actions prescribed by organisations or institutions. These standards are deemed universal or necessary and are:
  - to do no harm;
  - avoid deception;

- get informed consent; and
  - ensure privacy and confidentiality.
- Situational ethics, referring to those ethics that arise within the context of a specific situation, such as utilitarianism concerning itself with the greater good, and requires that the benefits of the study be considered weighing cost and the cost and implication on questionable practices.

This study is aligned to the ethical standards of the North West University. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Information gathered is confidential and no response has been linked to a specific respondent. Each respondent confirmed their voluntary participation and consent to participate to the study.

Due to the fact that this study pertains to the information required from individuals in the SMS of the Public Service who have participated in the EDP, principal approval for the study was obtained from the Head of the Department to access information related to enrolled participants in order to conduct this study.

### **1.7. Significance of the study**

“It follows, therefore, that research on professional and practice-based learning is emerging as a crucial topic within educational enquiry, and one whose findings requires to be broadly considered, widely disseminated and acted upon in educational programs seeking to prepare individuals for professional occupations and then sustaining their employability across lengthening professional lives”. (Billet, Harteis and Gruber, 2014:xvii).

In February 2013, the Director General of Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy addressed the Portfolio Committee of Public Service and Administration on the plans for the establishment of a NSG. During the address he explained the values and principles of Public Administration as a constitutional imperative to establish a sector of public officials that was accountable, transparent, equitable, efficient, effective, corruption-free and responsive to the needs of the citizens of South Africa (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG), 2016:online). As stipulated in Section 195 of the Constitution (1996), the values of public administration

are clear. The Constitution (1996) determines the exceptional standards and professional ethics for the Public Service and reiterates the importance of efficient, economic and effective use of resources, a development-orientated public administration, provision of services in an impartial, fair and equitable way, without bias, responding to people's needs and encouraging the public to participate in policy-making, accountable administration; and to foster transparency.

"Professional Ethics is a code of values and norms that actually guide practical decisions when they are made professionally. Professional ethics is a fully idealised set of values whose purpose is to explicate the best possible world in which the given profession could be working" (Elliot, 2009:28). This high level of professional ethics, guiding the professional SMS, is enshrined in the code of conduct and value systems of the SMS (DPSA, 2003:5). It is imperative that concise consideration is given to the implications of these norms and standards for the learning and professional development of the SMS members.

The NSG was launched by the Minister of Public Service and Administration on 21 October 2013 with the explicit responsibility to professionalise the officials of the government. Sisulu (2013) indicated that there were no short cuts to delivering operational excellence. She explained that the curricula of the School will be reflective of the need of the Public Service and said that:

"Curricula and programmes will be designed on the basis of a sound understanding of the challenges and realities of the Public Service environment. It is about unleashing the best in our students to enable reform and performance oriented public service." (Sisulu, 2013). Clearly the intent of curricula and programmes of the NSG is to unleash the best public servants have to offer. Even though these officials, and therefore the learners of the School, are at the centre of public service professional development, no known study exists where profiles of these individuals, or the groups of officials of the Public Service such as the SMS, have been analysed to understand who they are, what their specific needs are and how professional development opportunities can be enhanced by applying this knowledge, thereby improving the quality and results achieved of these interventions.



The results of the study will provide a better understanding of the place and role of the Public Service senior manager in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and inform the future of professional development principles and standards. This in turn should create a professional public service senior manager corps as the Public Service teaches and trains towards improved public service delivery.

### **1.8. Chapter layout**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background to the study and the problem to be investigated. This chapter includes a detailed description of the research methodology, profile of the SMS involved in the study, their role and mandate and a reflection of learning and development in the Public Service.

Chapter 2 reflects on and explains the legislative environment as an enabler for professional development of SMS. The Chapter further analyses current methods and practices involving the professional development of the SMS.

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical orientation towards the understanding of cognitive preferences in thinking and learning. A full review of existing knowledge and relevant studies provides the literary overview and creates a knowledge base to inform the interpretation of results and findings.

Chapter 4 comprises the results and findings of the study and compare preferences in thinking and learning of the SMS and how this may or may not influence future professional development initiatives. Chapter 4 further clarifies findings, and report on the implications for existing methods and models applied to professional development.

Chapter 5 concludes the study, proposes solutions and makes recommendations to inform future design and delivery of executive professional development interventions.

### **1.9. Conclusion**

Chapter 1 introduces the need for a better understanding of the theoretical and statutory frameworks within the Public Service supporting the professional development of senior managers. The chapter highlights the need for a professional and capable SMS to lead the Public Service to maintain service standards as are set

out in the Constitution (1996). To achieve these professional development interventions must be relevant and suitable to the needs not only of the Public Service from a vocational perspective, but also allows for the needs and preferences of members of the SMS.

Chapter 1 further provides perspectives from scholars and a theoretical basis for the need to truly reflect on individual- and group experiences in the SMS and their perception pertaining to professional development, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the impact that these preferences and perceptions may have on their learning experiences. Chapter 1 elevates the need to be cognisant of the Thinking and Learning Style Preference profiles of the SMS, and the factors impact on the motivation for the SMS to participant in learning and professional development opportunities, together with the possible influence that these personal preferences may have on the curriculum and instructional design of professional development opportunities provided to the SMS.

Chapter 2 introduces and explains the statutory and policy contexts for professional development of the SMS.

## **Chapter 2 – Statutory and policy frameworks enabling professional development of senior managers**

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### **2.1. Introduction**

Learning and development is not new in the Public Service. As stipulated in the Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996:Section 1), the Public Service is the enabler of the democratic rights in the country. The argument can be made that the legal context in relation to the function or practice of public administration, human resource management, development and learning in the Public Service creates the enabling environment for learning and development. This enabling environment may provide for a comprehensive and applicable adult learning practice for the SMS. Considering this possibility, this chapter focuses on analysing the statutory framework supporting the importance of learning and development in public administration and how that relates to the SMS.

### **2.2. Learning and development in the Public Service**

The Constitution (South Africa, 1996:Section 1) defines the Republic of South Africa as a single sovereign democratic state. The Constitution (South Africa, 1996:Section 10) establishes the Public Service by determining that there shall be a public administration responsible to deliver the responsibilities of the Government. The Constitution prescribes the value set required from the administration that will be governed by democratic values and principles of the Constitution. It is therefore expected that the administration maintains human resource management and career-development practices of a high standard (South Africa, 1996:Section 10).

There is an assumption today that human resource management is the most complex aspect of management and that South Africa depends on the performance, honesty and motivation of public servants, elevating the necessity and importance of public service resource management (Erasmus *et al.*, 2005:4). Erasmus *et al.* (2005:269) suggest that performance appraisal should not be done in isolation but should be integrated with other areas of human resource management including employee

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learning and development. In order to create a standardised approach toward performance management and appraisal in the Public Service, this area of human resource management is governed by the Public Service Act (PSA), 1994 (Proclamation 103 of 1994) (Section 2), the PSR, 2001 (DPSA, 2001) and the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (WPHRMPS), 1997 (DPSA, 1997).

The PSA, 1994, (South Africa, 1994:Section 11) specifically provides for the learning and development of the Public Service when it establishes a learning institution for public officials, listed as a national department, under control of the Minister of Public Service and Administration. The role of this learning institution is comprehensively and clearly determined in Section 11 of the PSA (South Africa, 1994). Herein this learning institution is responsible for the learning and development of public officials, and may request that specific learning and development interventions are mandated by the Minister of Public Service and Administration. The PSR, 2001 (DPSA, 2001:Section 4) further requires the establishment of an echelon of leaders, managers and administrators that are responsive to the needs of the citizens of South Africa. The study argues that these values have a specific influence on the manner and meaning of education and learning for public officials.

Wilson (2005:4) explains that education has primarily been linked to schools, colleges and universities teaching academic knowledge, whereas learning is to be more immediate and with specific application of knowledge and skills learnt. Okedara and Brown (1981:17) defined education (specifically out of school education) as “learning and instruction outside the formal school system and ranges from individualized apprenticeship to nationwide literacy”.

Randhawa (2007:115) refers to learning as the “use of systematic and planned instruction and development activities to promote learning”. Ranhawa (2007:114) further argues that learning is concerned with an improvement in the skills of an individual, but education is increased general knowledge and understanding of a subject. It is evident that literature supports the notion of a clear distinction between education and learning.

The White Paper on Public Service Training and Education (WPSTE), 1997 (Department of Higher Education (DOE), 1997:Section 5(5)) rejects this rigid distinction between learning and education and argues that these are equally weighted components of the learning process. The WPSTE, 1997 (DOE, 1997:Section 5(5)) identifies effective design and delivery as two of the key principles in the formulation and delivery of programmes. The WPSTE, 1997 (DOE), 1997:Section 5) explains that the principles of effective learning and education for the Public Service cannot be achieved in the absence of the assessment of needs, a focussed effort on the delivery of a positive learning outcome towards measurable competencies, linking learning and policy and other relevant forms of certification. The WPSTE, 1997 (DPSA, 1997:Section 5(10)) further determines that there should be an optimum balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of the institution.

Following the PSA, 1994, Cabinet approved the Public Administration Management Bill (DPSA, 2014) that was signed into law by the President on 22 December 2014. This Public Administration Management Act (PAMA), 2014 (Act 11 of 2014) provides insight into the intent of the Government towards learning in and development of the Public Service. Section 4 of the Public Administration Management Act, 2014 contextualises the policy framework that gives effect to the requirements for the promotion of the values and principles of public administration as are determined by the Constitution, 1996. The Public Administration Management Act, 2014, continues to outline the policy in relation to capacity development and learning, regulating the responsibilities of heads of institutions to develop its human resource capacity to a level that enables the institution to perform efficiently with a high level of quality. The Public Administration Management Act, 2014 (South Africa, 2014:Section 4(9)) further determines that the Minister of Public Service and Administration may direct specified education and learning as a requirement for promotion, transfer, appointment to a specific position, or to meet the development requirements of a specific position.

The PSA, 1994, creates the legal framework to allow for formal learning and development interventions for the Public Service. The PSR, 2001 (DPSA, 2001:Part IX) requires that learning and development should be driven by needs and should be linked to human resource management and practice. The WPHRMPS (DPSA,

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1997:Section 5 (10.1)) furthermore determines that learning and development is one of the key objectives of performance management and that understanding the strengths and weaknesses of officials provide valuable insight into the decisions made when considering various learning and development options. Even so, evidence still exists that the full potential of the SMS is not yet achieved and that management practices in the Public Service is not up to the required standard (NPC, 2011:386).

Under the guidance of the quality councils and education and training authorities appointed by DHE to govern training and education, most learning and development programmes and courses are aligned to the NQF and accredited by one of the quality councils (SAQA, 2016). Figure 2.1 provides a holistic overview of the legal and policy frameworks governing HRD, discussed in this chapter. Evidence shows that the legal regime provides clear direction and support for training and development in the Public Service.

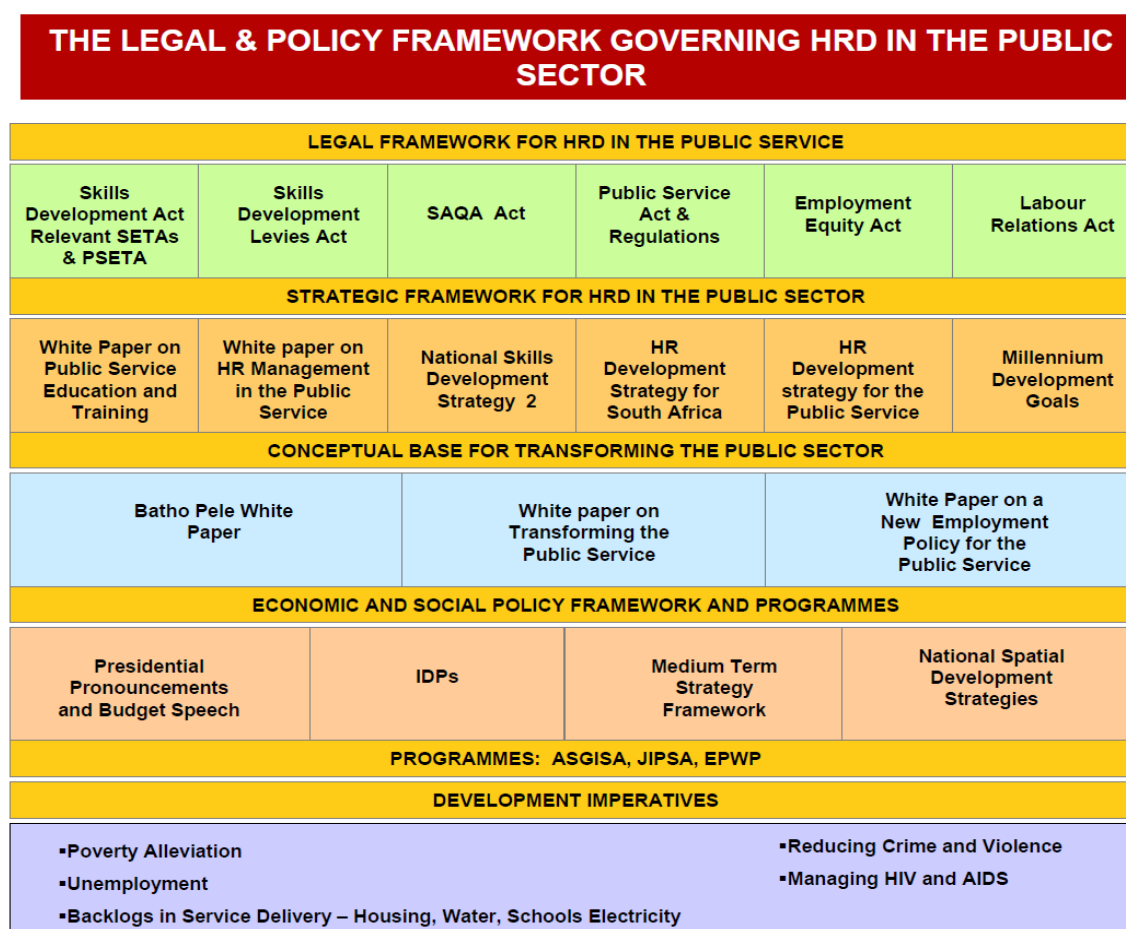


Figure 2.1: Legal and Policy Framework for HRD in the Public Service

Source: Adapted from DPSA (2007)

The legal framework for HRD presented in Figure 2.1, is supported by a clear vision for a highly competent, committed and professional SMS (Figure 2.2). This focussed effort to professionalise the SMS further supports the argument that legislation and policy alone, and only considering the needs of the Public Service cannot resolve the major challenges in the efficacy of Public Service Management.

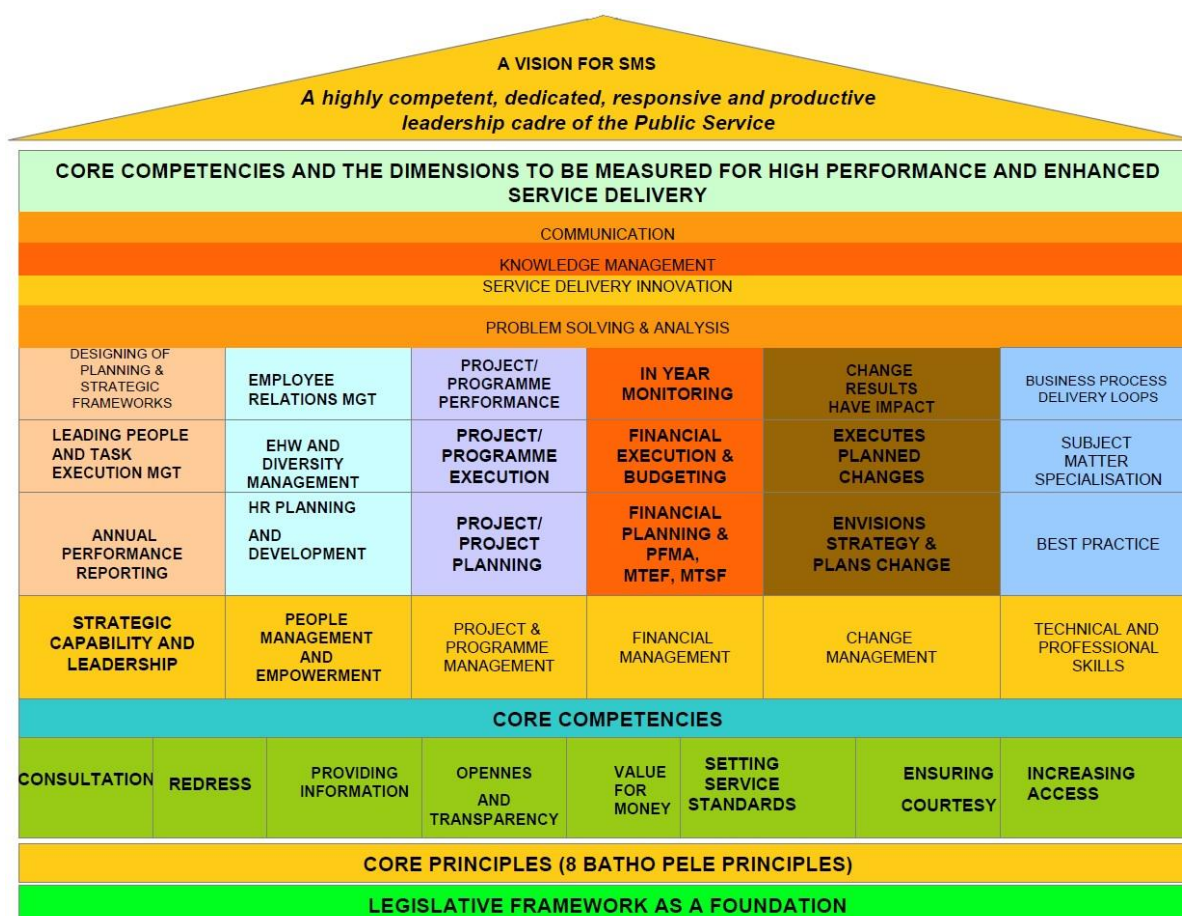


Figure 2.2: Visual Representation of the Vision for SMS

Source: DPSA (2007)

Clearly, against the backdrop of the evidence provided, the policy regime for professional development of the SMS, is built on the strong foundation of inclusivity, consultation and research. The policy regime undoubtedly identifies problem areas, provides strong strategic direction, established quality indicators for the evaluation of success, and unmistakably pronouncing on roles and responsibilities, accountability



and punitive measures for non-achievement of the objectives set in the legislation. Yet there is a lack of service delivery, mismanagement of public resources and a general lack of governance in the Public Service (Grant, 2015).

Against this backdrop it is argued that learning and development are critical conditions for the success of the Public Service. The argument therefore confirms that human resource management and development practices are important to facilitate effective delivery. From this perspective learning and development is a cornerstone of public administration and the importance of managing the human resources of the Public Service cannot be understated.

Erasmus *et al.* (2009:4) consider that there are different perspectives in defining and considering public service human resource management. Erasmus *et al.* (2009:4) point out that some groups may adopt a more general or generalist view of the subject of public service human resource management whilst another group, also known as the absolutists, view public service human resource management as a very specific way in which people at work are managed. Erasmus *et al.* (2009:265) argue that, in order to be responsive to the public, officials must be evaluated and the level and quality of service assessed to determine whether their level of ability and skills are at the desired level required for efficient service. Furthermore, the White Paper on Public Service Training and Education (WPSTE) (DHE, 1997:Appendix C) defines the competencies that are minimum requirements for an efficient and effective public official and public service leader. Because these competencies are not time-, technology- or knowledge-specific, they may become obsolete (Wessels, 2005:319). Thus the PSC (2000:40) in their report on career management in the Public Service recommends an annual skills audit.

Erasmus *et al.* (2009:317) argue that the size of the Public Service renders it impractical to consider the individual developmental needs of officials resulting in coordinated identification and scheduling of learning interventions. The PSC (2000:39-40) also proposes that programmes developed for the Public Service should consider line functional needs of departments, provide for standardised courses and that these should be attended by officials on an annual basis. The PSC (2000:39-40) notes that a conscious effort must be made to ensure that material is continually updated to

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ensure relevance. Hall and Mervis (1995:330) argue that a new career, in this case of the public official, is about “experience, skill, flexibility and personal development”. While the abovementioned identifies the importance of a coordinated approach to learning, this study argues that understanding the learning and thinking preferences of SMS members may greatly enhance the influence and effectiveness that training may bring to the organisation.

The importance of the learning and development of the Public Service and the need for progressive development of public officials are emphasised in the preceding paragraphs. The Public Service is a macro organisation that requires skilled leaders to maximise success (NDP, 2013:Section 13). Swanepoel, Erasmus and Schenk (2010:445) argue that organisations must have competent officials to enable the latter to deliver on the expectations of the organisation. According to Swanepoel *et al.* (2010:445) this requires an on-going development of the individual to ensure that officials have the job-specific skills that are needed to perform optimally. Swanepoel *et al.* (2010:447) emphasise the importance of human resource development to train and develop people in functional and other areas to maximise decision making ability towards a successful Government. The argument is made by Swanepoel *et al.* (2010:446-451) that any needs assessment should consider the organisation, the job as well as the individual, thus triangulating the analysis to enhance the effectiveness of the Public Service.

The question may be asked whether this well-regulated function within the human resource management practice in the Public Service, provides sufficiently, for the development of relevant and suitable development interventions, to create a knowledgeable and effective SMS that can lead public officials toward efficiency and success. Consequently, in an effort to create greater insight into the practice and functions in relation to the learning and development of the SMS, the following paragraphs are dedicated to the application of learning and developmental practice and principles in the Public Service with specific reference to members of the SMS.

### **2.3. Professional development of the SMS**

Management development aims to develop practitioners into good managers (Van Dijk, 2006:349). Van Dijk (2006:349) further presents the reality of the Public Service in South Africa are not only good at administration, but who are development focussed, and, citing Margerison (1991:2-13) explains the need to find a continued process and alignment of all aspects of human resource development from recruitment onward. Van Dijk (2006:349) proposes that development needs to be integrated and that not only intends to develop the individual, or the team, or the organisation, but that each of these components must receive equal focus to maximise efficiency and productivity.

Professional development of the SMS is governed by a system of performance management as recorded in the SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:Section 4(2)). Inherent in the performance requirements for the SMS are the standards of required core competencies. These competencies are defined by the competency framework for Senior Managers as recorded in the SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:Section 5 (2)).

Considering the competency requirements for the members of the SMS, assumes various definitions for professional competency. According to the University of Victoria (2016) professional competencies are the skills, knowledge and attributes that are explicitly prized by the associations and bodies connected to a profession. Epstein and Hundert (2002:1) define professional competencies as the on-going use of knowledge, communication, technical ability, cognitive ability, feelings, beliefs and thoughts to benefit and serve a specific community. The PSR (DPSA, 2001:5) defines “competence” as “the blend of knowledge, skills, behaviour and aptitude that a person can apply in the work environment, which indicates a person’s ability to meet the requirements of a specific post.” The SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:Section 5) defines competence in the context of the SMS competency framework as follows: “Competency is a set of behaviour patterns, displayed by an individual to perform effectively and efficiently in his or her position”. The PSR, 2001 (DPSA, 2001:Chapter 1:(1) 7)) defines ‘competence’ as “... the blend of knowledge, skills, behaviour and aptitude that a person can apply in the work environment, which indicates a person’s ability to meet the requirements of a specific post”.

Scholars and practice seem to agree that competency are a set of skills, knowledge, attitudes and attributes relevant to the workplace, possessed by individuals and used

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to the benefit of a specific group. Thus the categorisation of SMS competencies includes a specific set of skills, knowledge and attitudes, complying with the code of conduct for SMS members, relevant to the Public Service, with the specific aim to provide excellent service to all citizens in order to create a better life for all. This understanding of the crucial role of specified competencies for the SMS, links closely with the determination of the SMS as a profession as previously considered.

The core generic management competencies apply to all staff in the SMS and are intended to help build a common sense of good management practice in the Public Service. The SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:Section 5 (3)) further describes the context for the competency framework and explains that the competency framework defines the competencies that are important for the Public Service to be successful. In addition to defining the individual competencies for SMS members, the SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:Section 4(8)) instructs Public Service departments to ensure that systems to enable learning at individual and departmental levels are in place and that this practice should inform planning and decision-making.

As described, the framework for the development of SMS envisions a common language across human resource processes, and identifies the benefits of having centrally recorded knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes as a support mechanism to enable a common understanding by both the individual and the organisation (DPSA, 2003:Section 5 (3)). This framework recognises which knowledge and skills are needed to be effective in a given role. This recognises the individual as an important part of determining learning and development standards and practices and it can be argued that the needs of members of the SMS, as determined by thinking and learning preferences, should be considered equal in value to the stipulations of the framework (DPSA, 2003:Section 5 (3)) that ensures the development of a central knowledge and skills base for the Public Service. The study argues that, even though SMS members may be well qualified, they may not have the competencies required to be effective as a public official due to the nature and relevance of professional development propositions that do not consider the preferences of members of the SMS towards thinking and learning.

The SMS competency framework is structured in two main categories namely core competencies relating to leadership and management functions of the SMS, and process competencies relating to the manner in which an individual use and interpretation of information to solve problems (DPSA, 2003:Section 5 (3)) Competencies identified as a requirement for the SMS are identified in the following table.

Table 2.1: SMS Core and Process Competencies

Core Competencies	Process Competencies
i. Strategic Capability and Leadership	i. Knowledge Management
ii. People Management and Empowerment	ii. Service Delivery Innovation
iii. Programme and Project Management	iii. Problem Solving and Analysis
iv. Financial Management; and	iv. Client Orientation and Customer Focus
v. Change Management	v. Communication

Source: DPSA (2003:Section 5 (5-8)).

In response to the need to provide for the further development of members of the SMS to improve individual competencies, the EDP was designed, as is described in the next section.

## 2.4. The Executive Development Programme

The Programme was developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders and focuses on the development of a programme to support professional development, providing for a Leadership Pipeline (Figure 2.1). The EDP makes provision for succession planning and suitable candidature to be employed in the key role of the SMS, in order to be successful leaders in the Public Service (NSG, 2008:Chapter 1).

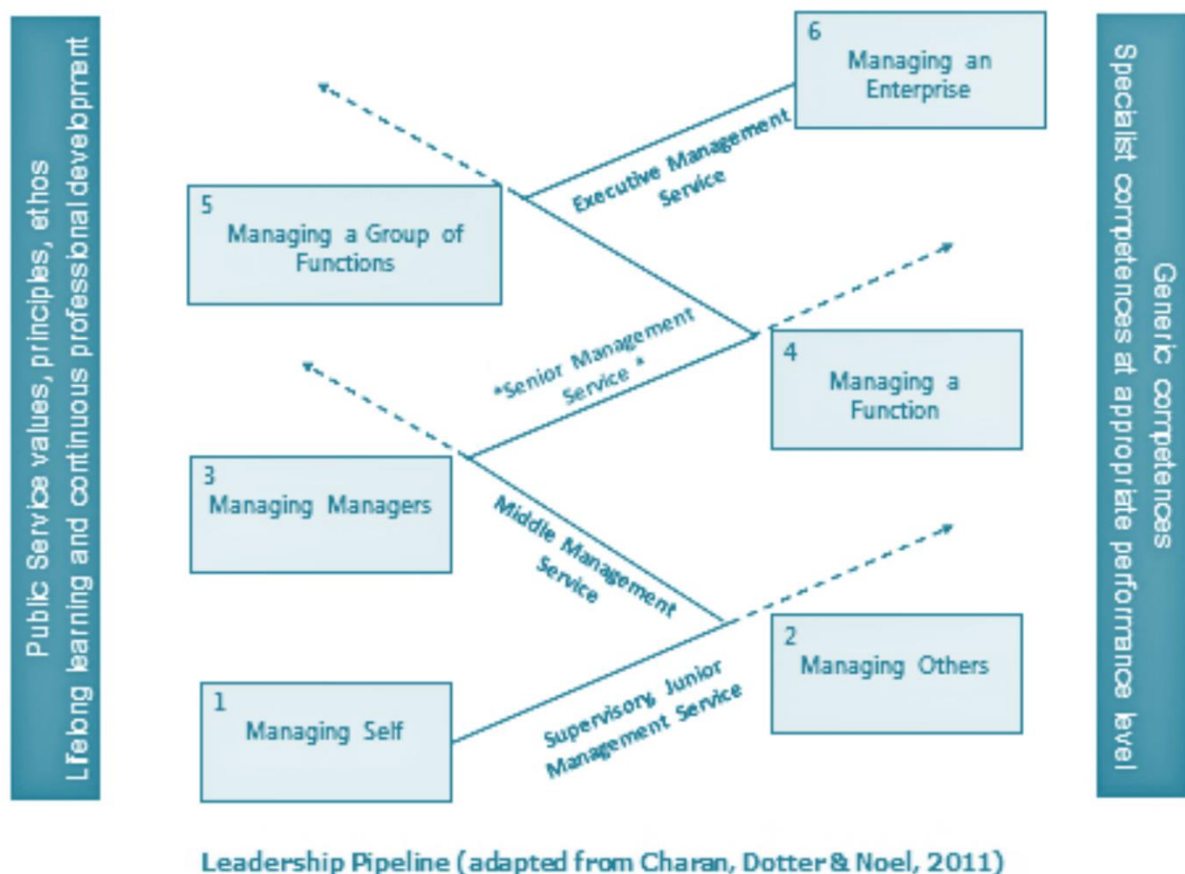


Figure 2.3: Leadership Pipeline

Source: Information Brochure for Senior Managers (NSG, 2013:5)

The curriculum and content of the EDP are aligned to the competency framework for the SMS as is previously discussed. The programme incorporates the principles in the leadership pipeline (Figure 2.1) by providing opportunities to engage with theory and discussions from a micro level (managing self) to the macro level (managing the enterprise), infusing values and principles of the Public Service. The EDP is designed by making use of a requisite mix of knowledge, skills and applied competencies in South African governance, -public management and administration and -financial management. The curriculum is structured into ten (10) modules that include development of individual skills relevant to the leadership and management roles played by the SMS as shown in Table 2.2 (NSG, 2013:Chapter 1).

Table 2.2: EDP Curriculum –Relation with the SMS Competency Framework

	<b>Module</b>	<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>Competency</b>
1.	Strategic Human Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic human resource management and planning</li> <li>• Recruitment and selection</li> <li>• Challenges to and opportunities for strategic human resource management</li> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Labour and employment relations</li> </ul>	People management and empowerment
2.	Programme and Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• programme life cycles in government</li> <li>• programme success and ministerial oversight</li> <li>• Managing inherent and residual risks in programmes</li> <li>• The project life-cycle</li> <li>• Project management knowledge areas</li> <li>• Project documentation</li> <li>• Projects in a global and culturally diverse setting</li> </ul>	Programme and project management Problem solving and analysis
3.	Finance Management and Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to public service financial management</li> <li>• Planning, budgeting and performance management</li> <li>• Risk management, internal control and supply chain management</li> <li>• In-year monitoring and reporting</li> </ul>	Financial management Honesty and integrity

	<b>Module</b>	<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>Competency</b>
4.	Strategic Planning and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysing the external and internal environment</li> <li>• Develop a strategic intent</li> <li>• Develop and evaluate a strategic business plan</li> </ul>	Strategic capability and leadership
5.	Leadership for Good Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beyond management:the art of leadership</li> <li>• Leading for strategic alignment</li> <li>• From motivation to inspiration</li> <li>• Considerations for an African leadership approach</li> <li>• Principles and practices of good governance</li> </ul>	Strategic capability and leadership
6.	Policy Formulation and Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy formulation</li> <li>• Policy implementation</li> <li>• Policy monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>• Education and training for policy development</li> </ul>	Knowledge management
7.	Research Methodology for SMS in the Public Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and management in the developmental public service</li> <li>• Needs assessment research</li> <li>• Research planning, design and strategies</li> <li>• Identification and formulation of research problems</li> <li>• Presentation and communication of research results</li> <li>• Research proposals and dissertation</li> <li>• Ethics implications and considerations in research</li> </ul>	Knowledge management

	<b>Module</b>	<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>Competency</b>
8.	Communication and Customer Focused Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication in government</li> <li>• Communication strategy and planning</li> <li>• Communication and customer focused strategies</li> </ul>	Client orientation and customer focus Communication
9.	Leading Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instituting change and leading transition</li> <li>• Practical guidelines for leading change</li> <li>• Change and transition:the strategy link</li> </ul>	Change management
10.	South African Economy in a Global Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The economic problem within the South African context</li> <li>• Micro economics:market structures and competition</li> <li>• Basic framework for macro-economic analysis</li> <li>• Fiscal, monetary and macro-economic policy in South Africa</li> </ul>	Service delivery innovation

Source: PALAMA (2012).

The EDP design is based on adult learning principles (NSG, 2013:Chapter 1). The EDP thus provides workplace education that is based on *andragogy* (principles in the training of adults) and individuality. According to Allen (2013:1-2) workforce education and adult learning cannot be separated and are closely interconnected. Allan (2013:1-12) cites Merriam and Brockett (1996) that adult education has been defined as “activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults”.

The EDP Learner Guide (PALAMA, 2009:34) explains that interactive, discussion-based methodologies are used to realise learning objectives and develop independent thinking and problem solving skills in the SMS. It further provides for a mixed approach



to delivery including facilitation, group interaction and teamwork (PALAMA, 2009:34-40).

On adult education and learning, Charters (1992:3-9) argues that the world order will continue to change, and therefore, adults will have the continuous need to be empowered. Charters (1992:3-9) explains that adult learning assists adults to adjust to change. For this reason, there should be a constant analysis of the way in which adult learning takes place, and that adult educators should be open for self-criticism (Quan-Balfour, 2015:online).

The question arises whether, even though the relevance of the methodologies infused in the EDP is supported by the selected theory, the methodologies were correctly implemented and provided for in the EDP. Quan-Balfour (2015:online) quotes Popper (1994) arguing that self-criticism in itself is education. Even though possible differences in learning preferences have to some extent been recognised in the design of curriculum and instruction for the EDP (inclusive of on-line, contact and self-directed learning), the comprehensive needs and preferences of the SMS have not been considered and resulted in the poor participation rate and unacceptable results, not providing the skills required in the Public Service.

Van Dijk (2004:510) argues that competencies are not necessarily improved when training and learning is offered, and cites Drejer (2000:5) who has continued to emphasise the importance of critical reflection of experiences in the learning process. When evaluating the professional and technical learning needs for SMS during 2008, the PSC (2008:12) requested members of the SMS to identify from their personal development plans the learning needs identified, to indicate the extent of the developmental gap, how the skills needs was determined and to identify how the needs was met. In the introduction of the published report, the PSC (2008:2) wrote as follows: "The question that may rightfully be raised is what the Public Service is doing to bridge the gap between the qualification and experience these managers have, and the competencies that are required of them to successfully implement the policies of government" (PSC, 2008:vii). An argument can be made that the PSC's (2008:2-4) findings are restrictive to proposed solutions and that professional development initiatives may not be designed or delivered in a way that maximises learning and

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impact, nor recognising thinking and learning perspectives of SMS members for whom learning and development solutions are designed.

The comprehensive analysis of learning and development in the Public Service elevates the importance of the individuals needs in the development of learning and development solutions. The report on the Launch of the NSG (NSG, 2013:4) records the objectives of the NSG to provide learning and development opportunities that:

- meet the expectations of stakeholders and communities;
- are based on the policy commitments of government;
- do not emphasise the need of the individual in conjunction with the need of the organisation.

The Strategic Plan of the NSG for the medium term (2015 – 2019) (NSG, 2014:18) clearly stipulates that a curriculum will be developed to provide in service learning that is responsive to the needs of sectors and institutions as determined by a national learning and development strategy. The Minister of Public Service and Administration further directed that all SMS members will attend at least eighteen (18) days of training over a three (3) year cycle, in a combination of technical and generic learning and development interventions (DPSA, 2015:Section 8(8)). The Minister further directed as a pre-entry requirement that an approved Senior Leadership Management Programme will be attended before entry into the SMS is allowed (DPSA, 2015:Section 8(9)).

The study provides evidence that much has been done since the 1994 democratic elections to produce an effective and relevant learning and development institution for the Public Service. It can therefore be inferred that human resource management and development and learning and professional development of public officials is prioritised by the Public Service. As determined by the SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2001:Sections 4 and 5) the development of a skilled and equipped SMS corps to lead the Public Service in becoming an able and willing workforce, is imbedded in all legal frameworks for learning and development. Swanepoel *et al.* (2010:451) conclude that, in order to reach a position where the Public Service comprises of a willing and able workforce, both the organisational needs and the needs of the individual must be considered.

Considering the context and frameworks developed for public service learning and development it is argued that these frameworks do not consider the individual when planning, developing and delivering professional development interventions for the SMS. This framework focuses furthermore extensively on the needs of the organisation and the job, while ignoring the needs of the individual. A different approach that considers the preferences and needs of the individuals may perhaps attain more success when members of the SMS participate in professional development propositions.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

In Chapter 2 this study highlights the theoretical and statutory frameworks that government learning and development in relation to the SMS. The chapter responds to the objectives of the study by providing the statutory framework that enables the professional development of senior managers. Chapter 2 concludes that there is an opportunity to improve the learning and professional development solutions developed for the SMS, contributing to the improved performance and efficiency of the SMS corps.

From Chapter 2 it can be concluded that there may be an opportunity to improve learning and professional development solutions developed for the SMS to contribute to improved performance and efficiency of the SMS.

Chapter 3 continues the theoretical analysis by providing the theoretical background and relevant theories in thinking and learning preferences, as well as the theories related to motivation for learning and adult education. Chapter 3 further explores the scholarly inputs that support the perspective of a possible relationship between Thinking and Learning Style Preferences, and how this, together with the motivation for learning, may influence the design and delivery of executive professional development

## Chapter 3 - Thinking, Learning and Professional Development

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### 3.1. Introduction

Adult and continued education is a clearly perceptible field of practice, and this distinct field that depends on a unique set of skills for success (Kasworm, Rose and Ross-Gordon, 2010:5). Kasworm *et al.* (2010:5) cites Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed (1973) confirming that continuing education takes place in formal education settings, organised activities in business and organisation outside of the formal educational environment and informally in day to day settings. This study concerns itself mostly with further education and professional development of SMS in the Public Service, therefore mostly focussing on the latter two places of further education (the workplace in both formal and informal day-to day settings).

The SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003) highlights the need for professional development of Public Service Management as an important tool to develop managers and leaders who are responsible for the delivery of relevant and quality public services. There seems to be limited knowledge in the academic domain specifically aimed at developing an in-depth understanding of the critical success factors for successful professional development of managers and leaders in the public service. However, providing learning aimed at developing and improving knowledge, skills and attitudes remain the key components of professional development (Sparks and Richardson, 1998).

“Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous” (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.). The significance of the assimilation of the concepts of thinking and learning is herewith underscored.

Over the year’s scholars such as Revans (1971) Knowles (1975), Knox (1977) and Wilson (2012) have researched and published theories and models that reflect and inform learning and development. Kolb (1976:9) acknowledges that the successful manager is distinguished by the ability to learn and not as much on a single set of

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knowledge or skills. Kolb (1976:10) further argues that life skills and experiences together with the expectations from the here and now guides the way in which learning styles and preferences are developed (Kolb, 1973:1-5).

Gonczi (2004:19) argues that the previous ways of thinking about learning should be replaced with new and pertinent ideas arguing that development of an individual into an expert professional is only possible by way of acting in the world they live in. Knowles (1974:21-29) challenges adult educators to provide help to individuals to enable them to continue a maturing process for the development of a successive, constant, and assimilated programme of lifelong learning. The importance of continuous professional development to counteract the fast moving world we live in, is affirmed by Gonzales (2004:online) who frames the demising duration for the validity of information and writes that:

“One of the most persuasive factors is the shrinking half-life of knowledge. The “half-life of knowledge” is the time span from when knowledge is gained to when it becomes obsolete. Half of what is known today was not known 10 years ago. The amount of knowledge in the world has doubled in the past 10 years and is doubling every 18 months ... To combat the shrinking half-life of knowledge, organizations have been forced to develop new methods of deploying instruction.”

Embedded in programmes developed for the learning and professional development of the SMS, should be suitable content and method that motivates the SMS toward active involvement in learning and development activities.

The categories of cognitive preference reflected on in this chapter are:

- Thinking styles and preferences in order to understand the theories that may assist in the possible thinking pathways and preferences of the SMS.
- The concept of adult learning – specific learning styles, motivation for learning and preferences toward delivery methods as relevant to the SMS
- Integrated cognitive styles that consider both thinking and learning preferences to better understand the needs of the SMS.

Consideration should be given to the possible theoretical connection between thinking style preferences, learning style preferences and motivation for learning and the

possibility to integrate these theories. The study argues that this connection may provide a holistic perspective of the preferred style or styles that may be found among the SMS. The study further highlights the value of incorporating these preferences in the SMS learning and professional development interventions.

The SMS is a unique, well-educated team of professionals with their own set of skills, knowledge and experience (Public Service Commission (PSC), 2008:5) and arguably, in their adulthood, the SMS should be assisted to continue a process of maturing as a professional by providing relevant interventions that lends itself to the development of adults. This study argues for a holistic approach to professional learning and development and the SMS be considered as professional, adult learners and should integrate knowledge based curriculum and instructional design not only with the requirements of the regulatory and process requirements of the public service, but should consider the implications of cognitive preferences and motivation for learning to advance professionalism in the SMS and maximise successful continuous professional development of the SMS.

### **3.2. The SMS professional**

To determine the requirements for professional development of the SMS, the professional status should be confirmed. The characteristics of a profession are widely defined by, among others, scholars such as Larson (1977:x, 21, 221) Spies and de Witt (1981:8-18), Landman, Mentz and Moller (1982:250), Van Zyl (1997:1), Loots (Van der Westhuizen and Wessels, 2011:34), and Webb and Webb (1897) The mentioned scholars have made valuable contributions towards the understanding and definition of a profession, have written much about the characteristics of a profession, that clearly demonstrate the golden thread of a common understanding is shared by most authors. Mentionable political importance together with some apprehension have developed regarding the nature of a profession, professionalism and professional conduct, especially in a modern democratic context and are also of considerable civic concern (Billits, *et al.*, 2014:5-6). A profession is typically described as an occupation with prestige and power (Larson, 1977:x), usually characterised by professional association, a cognitive base, institutionalised training, authority and autonomy, control

over others, a strict code of ethics and conduct and professional and intellectual excellence (Larson, 1977:221). Webb and Webb (1897) delineate a profession is as a specific ability to be success at a specific occupation, founded upon specialised knowledge dedicated to provide service to others. A profession has been further defined type of occupation with communal cohesion, specialised training and a service orientation with implicit codes of comportment and *Esprit de corps* (Brown cited by Princeton, 1992:19).

The United Nations Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (UN) reports that, over the years, models of public administration in developing countries have derived their content form the public service reform initiatives of developed countries (UN, 2015:4). The UN explains that these public service reforms have delivered a number of models to classify and analyse methods of public administration and the impact on public reform (2015:5).

During the 1980s and 1990s, most efforts to interpret and understand various models of public administration mostly focussed on the inclination away from public administration towards the concept of New Public Management, described in terminologies ranging from “new public service” and the “new public governance” or the “post-New Public Management” (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; 9-16, Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000:549-559, Osborne, 2006:377-387). The context and objectives of the different methodologies, always focused on the further development and improvement of the public service, derived from a discernible philosophy and concept (Table 3.1) (UN, 2015:5).

Table 3.1: Public Service Reform Problems and Approaches

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>Main action period</b>
How can we put government on an orderly efficient footing?	“Weberian” public administration and capacity-building	Post-independence

How can we get government closer to the grassroots?	Decentralisation	1970s to present
How can we make government more affordable?	Pay and employment reform	1980s and 1990s
How can we make government perform better and deliver on our key objectives?	New Public Management	1990s to present
How can we make government more honest?	Integrity and anti-corruption reforms	1990s to present
How can we make government more responsive to citizens?	“Bottom-up” reforms	Late 1990s to present

Source: UN (2015:5).

There is a visible contrast between the traditional approach of public administration (top-down, exclusive, values of chain of command, independence, and integrity and shielded from politicians and citizens), and the principles of new public management (public choice, oversight, not allowing self-interest, citizen focus, improved efficiency and prevention of corruption, public officials motivated to serve by virtue of pledge to public interest) (Osborne, 2006:379). Osborne (2006:380) further notes that, as argued by scholars such as Farnham and Horton 1996; Ferlie *et al.* 1996 McLaughlin *et al.* 2002), New Public Management in itself is not an ideology or philosophy, but that it should rather be considered as a collection of a number of phenomena i.e.

- New Public Management has a number of identifiable façades, dependent upon others for ideological, managerial and research concepts and principles (Dawson and Dargie, 1999);
- Limited geographic extent to Anglo American, Australasian and (some) Scandinavian arenas in contrast to the prevalence of public administration in most other areas. (Kickert 1997);



- New Public Management being geographically dependent with, for example, the uniqueness of the British and American variations both differentiated in core and focus (Borins 2002);
- New Public Management is limited in theory and concept by nature of the hierarchical dependence on public administration; (Frederickson and Smith 2003);
- New Public Management has limited (and challenged) benefits (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004); and is a failed model (Farnham and Horton, 1996).

At its centre and strictest form, New Public Management elevates private-sector managerial techniques and promotes these techniques over the known public administration techniques. New Public Management assumes that a change in management technique, from the public administration approach to a private sector oriented approach, will lead to progression and enhancement of the efficacies of public services (Osborne, 2006:379 citing Thatcher, 1995). Key characteristics of New Public Management are recorded as, learning from private sector management approaches, “hands-on” management and “arms-length” organisations where leaders of the organisation are operationally equipped and part of the implementation while a distance between policy making and policy implementation is maintained (Osborne, 2006:379,380). Osborne (2006:379,380) further emphasises that innovative and ground-breaking leadership, process control and performance oriented management and audit, decentralised cost management and implementation of service, practicing principles of competition and outsourcing services plays a key role in New Public Management.

In the Public Service, control or governance is achieved by setting crosscutting norms and standards, values and ethics within a concept of “self-regulated motivation” (Billit *et al.*, 2014:42-44). Self-regulation is defined as the ability to consciously consider options when making decisions to act and to adjust a response of action based on a central social value system and goals (Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice, 2007:351). Self-regulation suggests controlling thoughts, emotions, compulsions or needs, and task performance, and in a duty oriented situation maximises performance to achieve the ideal result (Ent, Baumeister and Vonasch, 2012:620-626). Stemming from the

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understandings of self-regulation, it entails the conscious consideration and decision to maintain motivation and commitment towards the crosscutting norms and standards, values and ethics of the Public Service.

Analysing the determination of the SMS Handbook (South Africa, 2003) pertaining to the characteristics of the SMS, as well as the findings of a study by the PSC (2008:5) the SMS are:

- a highly educated group of individuals;
- operating within the strictly regulated and disciplined public service;
- governed by law and an austere code of conduct;
- (required to) maintain exceptional ethical standards;
- with a specialised knowledge base and skills that have been comprehensively researched by practitioners and academics; and
- are acknowledged by the citizens as the key to providing a better life for all.

The Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework (LDMSF) for the SMS, specifies the management responsibilities for all performer levels and the SMS. An overall perspective is presented in Figure 3.1, and provides for management responsibility areas, dominant key performance indicator and associated delegations to be cascaded to the different performer levels.

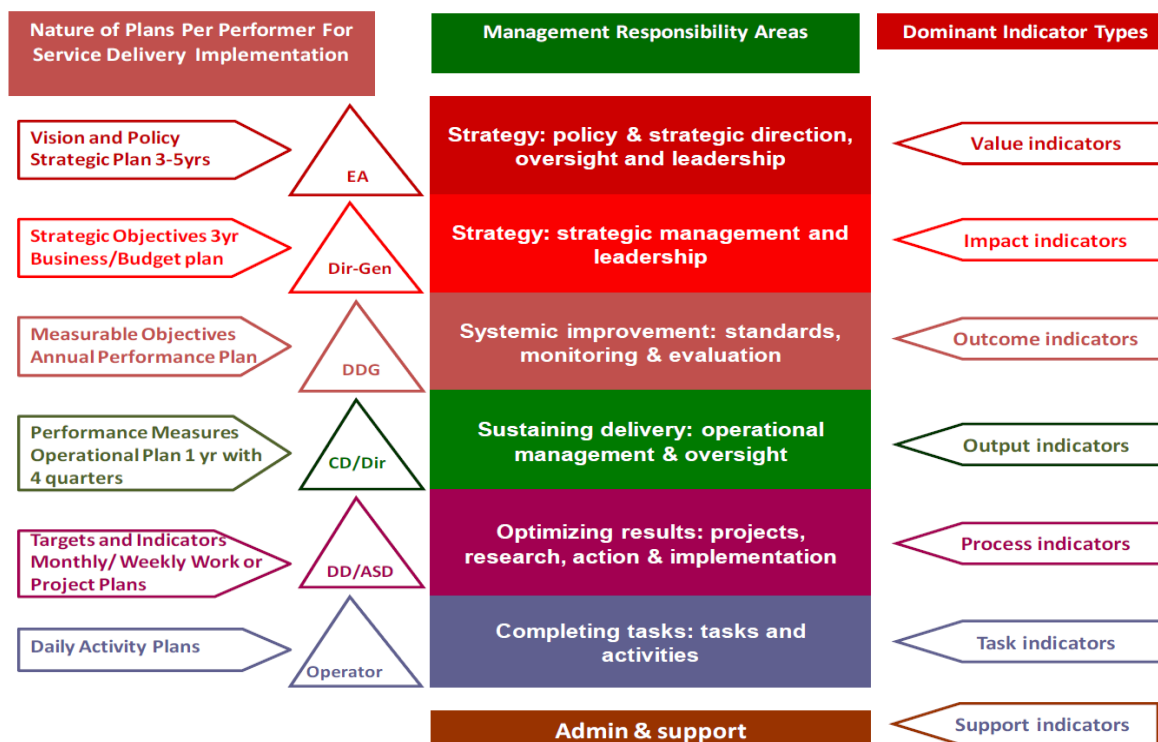


Figure 3.1: Management Responsibilities per Performance Level

Source: National Treasury (2013)

The Minister of Public Service and Administration further directed minimum levels of Delegation for Public Management and Administration (DPSA, 2014:20). Further to the provision of authority and power, it is required that any prospective SMS member be in possession of a prescribed Senior Management Leadership Qualification (12 to 24-month programme) as directed by the Minister (DPSA, 2015) such as a Master's Degree in Public Service Administration, and as approved by the NSG (source).

All public service conduct and ethics are governed by legislation. The SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003) dedicates Chapter 6 towards the determination in relation to ethics and conduct for the SMS, and provides an overall perspective of the provisions are specifically relevant and regulate the conduct of senior managers:

- Section 195(1) (a) of the Constitution, 1996 – specifies the high standard of professional ethics to be promoted and maintained;
- The Code of Conduct in Chapter 2 of the PSR (2001) gives practical expression to the constitution and the Public Service Act, 1994.

- Predeterminations and conduct prescribes that all SMS must disclose their financial interests (PSR, 2001:Chapter 3)

Part VII/B of Chapter 4 of the Regulations further addresses the promotion of ethical conduct, and provides that the Minister for the Public Service and Administration issue directives to promote ethical conduct amongst members of the SMS. The Regulations (DPSA, 2001:Chapter 4), determine that “Executing authorities shall appoint and utilise members of the SMS within a framework of uniform norms and standards; and “the (Public Service) Act, these Regulations and the directives issued and determinations made by the Minister under the Act and these Regulations constitute the framework of uniform norms and standards applicable to members of the SMS”.

The SMS is established by an act of law (PSA, 103 of 1994, PSR, 2001:Chapter 4), and are delegated specific powers and responsibilities (DPSA, 2014:20, SMS Handbook, 2003:Chapter 6, NT, 2013:Chapter 4(5)). A wide regime of policy and other governance mechanisms conserves unique profile, high level of education, standardised practice, strictly governed conduct and ethics are in place as has been shown. The argument is made that the SMS occupation present with all the requirements of prestige and nature of its assignment (Larson, 1977:x), the determination of a professional association to the state and state bodies, a substantive cognitive base and requirement for regulated and prescribed institutionalised training, a high level of independence and power, and control, a strict code of ethics and ethical conduct, and sustained professional and intellectual excellence (Larson, 1977:221). The professional SMS requires the specific ability and specialised knowledge of the public service, government structures, legal and policy specific frameworks, team orientation and *esprit de corps* with the key objective to enable successful, effective and efficient services to the citizen (Webb and Webb, 1897; Brown, 1992:19). Continued professional development is paramount to sustainable leadership and quality service.

This study contributes to the improved state of professional learning and development of the SMS as public service leaders and managers, by providing an in depth understanding of the SMS and how their experiences, needs and preference profiles can add value to their learning and professional development context to enable

effective leadership and performance. As professional adult learners in a professionalised workspace, acknowledgement should be given to the uniqueness of the SMS and their needs in relation to learning and development. A clear distinction between the practice of teaching only for the sake of knowledge sharing, and professional and personal development concerning professional and personal growth. Exploring the world of the SMS Adult learning conveyed an irradiated the need for a focussed approached to learning and professional development of the SMS.

### **3.3. The SMS Adult Learner**

Billet *et al.* (2014:86) argue that debates on professional learning are clouded and muddled by rigidities and tensions that are experienced between key concepts such as theory and practice, the academic world and the workplace, knowing how to or knowing what, implied knowledge versus unambiguous knowledge, constancy or flexibility, and predictability and change. While academia and practitioners continue to engage on these issues, professional learning and development fail professional learners who are conflicted between the thoughts and ideas of the faculty and those of the practitioners (Billet *et al.*, 2014:102).

The term learning is referenced daily by so many individuals in just as many ways and contexts of daily life. This may sometimes lead to a situation where collectively there is the assumption that the term is widely and correctly understood. When reviewing this closely, one may find that the term, learning, is not as clearly understood as was initially thought to be the case (Wilson, 2012:45). Wilson (2012:45) argues that a more in-depth insight and understanding into the invisible operation known as learning will cast light on how individuals learn and thus provide guidance on which approaches will achieve the best result. Knowing how learning occurs in the SMS, will benefit not only the design and development of curriculum and instructional design, but will provide great insight to practitioners as well as the SMS as a learner.

The definition of learning, provided by Driscoll (2000:11) encapsulates learning as the on-going change of the ability of the human to perform specific functions or actions, as well as the improvement of the performance potential of such individual. Driscoll (2000:11) further argues that this change or improvement must be the result of the

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experience of the learning, as well as his/her interaction with the world. Therefore, as attributes described in theories such as behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism, learning is the lasting change in the emotional, mental, physiological (skills) state, directly related to the learners' experiences and interactions with content or other people (Siemens, 2004:online).

Learning comprises three (3) functions including management of the learning content, and the management of the incentive for learning, directing the motivation for learning, energising the mental processes responsible for the management of learning (Illeris, 2009:9). Illeris (2009:10) further explains that learning includes the content, on the one hand, or "what is learnt" dimension representing knowledge, skills and meanings, attitudes, values, behaviour and other concepts that increase the understanding and capacity of the learner, constructing meaning and the ability, in response to daily life, to personal functioning. On the other hand, feelings, emotions and decision provides the incentive and motivation for learning to take place (Illeris, 2009:10). The interrelationship and integration of the learning dimensions described by Illeris (2009) are presented in Figure 3.2.

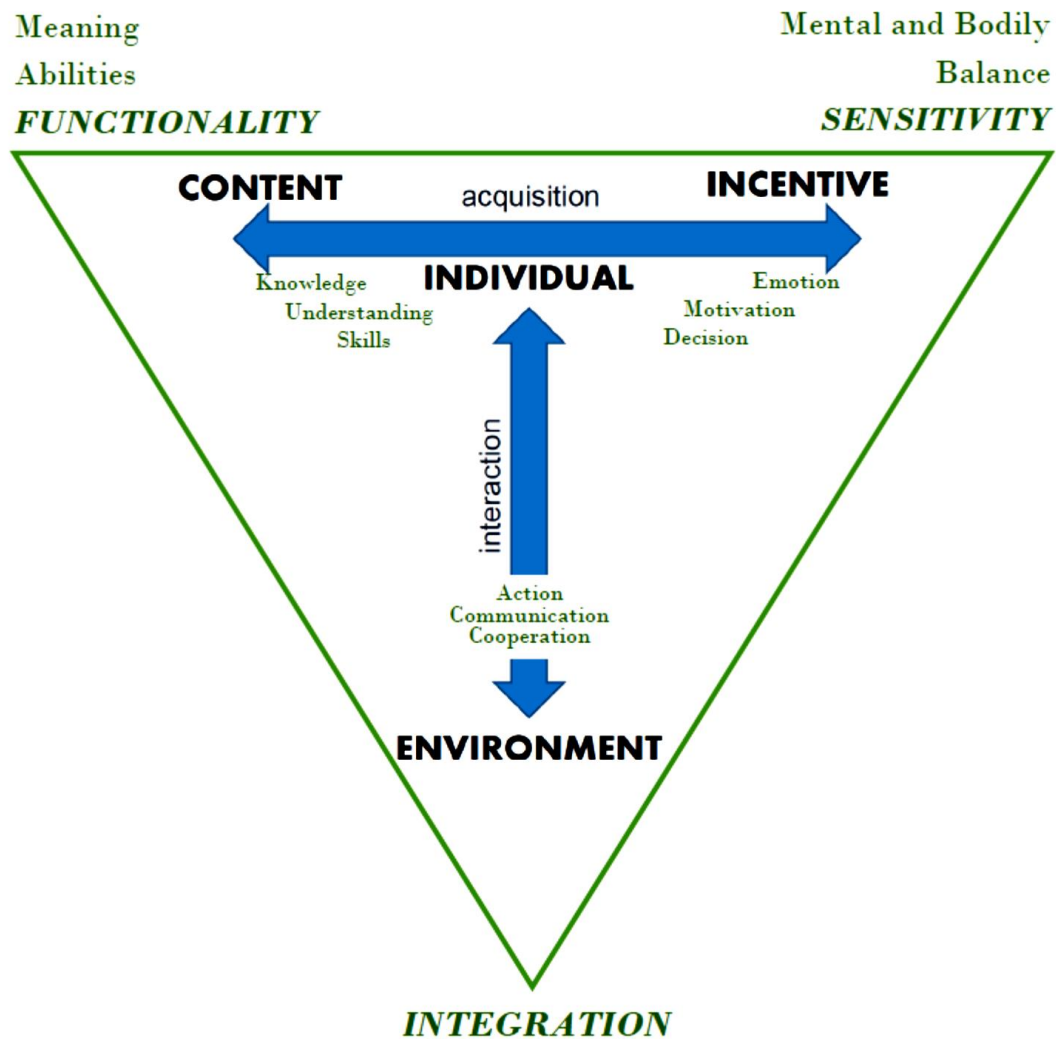


Figure 3.2: The Three Dimensions of Learning and Competence Development  
Source: Illiris (2009:9,10)

The theoretical analysis provides a wide range of information and knowledge to better understand the importance of motivation in personal development. Kyndt, Dochy, Struyven and Cascallar (2011:1) argue that motivation is no longer a matter of an established disposition or characteristic, but a contextual and variable factor impacted by context and subject area.

“The term motivation in psychology is a global concept for a variety of processes and effects whose common core is the realization that an organism selects a particular behaviour because of expected consequences, and then implements it with some measure of energy, along a particular path” (Heckhausen, 1991:9).

All learners are motivated in some way and that this motivation results in a particular pattern of behaviour (Ormrod, 2014:1). Motivation can be negative, and result in avoidance, rather than participation in learning activities Ormrod (2014:1).

Morstain and Smart (1974:83-98) identified six (6) common factors that motivate individuals to learn. These factors are recorded on an Educational Participation Scale (EPD) developed by Morstain and Smart (1974:83-98). The Morstain and Smart model highlights social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, professional advancement, escape/stimulation and cognitive interest as the contexts that inform and motivate learning (Morstain and Smart, 1974:81-88). The themes presented in the Morstain and Smart model (Morstain and Smart. 1974:83) informed the directives and questions to participants of the study providing the opportunity to reflect on the reasons why they prefer to learn.

The Morstain and Smart Model (1974:83-98) is the compass that directs development solutions in a way that build the passion and energy for learning in the SMS. The factors presented by Morstain and Smart (1974) guided the design of questions to collect data related to the motivational factors that lead the SMS to participate in learning and development. Equal questions were developed, representing a typical motivational factor linked to a category.

Cognitive and emotional process must function in unison and balance for learning to take place. Any learning is initiated by the incentives, knowing “what is at stake” and motivation can relate to desire, interest, necessity or compulsion (Illeris, 2009” 12-13). In this context, content influences incentives and should new information become available, the incentive and motivation can change (Illeris, 2009:12).

As a human grows from childhood to adulthood, his or her capabilities and capacity are improved by experiences and by being enrolled in a formal schooling environment. Similarly, adults change gradually in many ways over the years (Knox, 1977:515). Wilson (2012:46) cites the following examples of scholarly theories on learning which shows the multifaceted understanding of the learning field:

- Revans (1971:100) believed that a change in behaviour is the evidence required that learning had actually occurred;



- Kolb (1984:38) understands learning as the creation of knowledge through a transformation of experience;
- Mezirow (2000:5) regards learning as finding new meaning in experiences that may guide future action; and
- Illeris (2009:3) defined learning as any process in a living organism that results in a permanent change in capacity or ability that cannot solely be ascribed to maturing or aging.

Considering the Neethling (2005:12) argument that learning style Preference and thinking style preferences are related, it is debatable that the experiences and responses of the individual SMS members are similar in nature and is therefore also influenced by the thinking and learning Style Preference profile of the SMS.

During the 1960s, the lifelong learning was conceptualised and became a continuum part of the literature pertaining to adult learning. Tugbiyele (cited in Okedara and Brown, 1981:14-15) explains that adult education is much more than literacy learning or remedial learning (though it had previously been associated with these types of learning) but that learning is relevant to each individual, for as long as they may live, and irrespective of what education they have. Knowles (1974:37-38) explains that, skilful adult teachers are aware that adults cannot be taught in the same manner as children, mostly because adults are in most instances voluntary learners.

Literature from Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005:385-386) and even earlier by Gusky and Huberman (1995:119) eludes to the fact that personal identity will be a factor when the professional learning needs of experienced professionals are determined, stressing that there are more ways than formalised learning from which individuals can develop and learn. Among the findings of these scholars, the adult learner is identified as a unique learner.

Adult learning and lifelong learning bears relevance to the learning and development interventions for the SMS as the SMS comprise a group of adult, professional life-long learners. The concepts of adult learning, understanding that adults function within their own context and appreciation of their world, have valuable experiences that could all influence or add value to the learning process, directly relate to the characteristics of

the SMS. Learning opportunities should emphasise self-direction, make use of previous experiences to inform new learning, understand the social role of the SMS and provide for immediate application of knowledge in the workplace.

Moreover, to learn and develop must be chosen, and in this context scholars such as Bushier (1971) and Burgess (1971) Morstain and Smart (1974) and Cross (1981, 1982) explored the reasons why adults choose to learn. An in-depth review of theories found similarities reflected upon in the next section. These broader nuances provide even more clarity on the implications for learning and professional development of the SMS, comprehensively considered in the paragraphs to follow.

Hoffman (2015:8), reiterates that it is extremely easy to misunderstand motivation. Motivational beliefs are developed from personal experiences and presenting a definitive structure with fixed parameters to box motivational factors may result in a weak and insufficient understanding of the origins of behaviour, and the and the interdependence of motivational stimuli (Hoffman, 2015:45). One perspective is that the best learning occurs when there is an opportunity to construct personal knowledge (McLaughlin, 1997:79).

Different factors determine why adults choose to or are motivated to learn (Morstain and Smart, 1974:83-90), individuals may also have a preferred way of learning. Knox (1989:423) argues that personality is directly associated with learning ability, and that that rigidity and inflexibility will influence learning. Knox (1989:90) motivates for a more flexible approach when designing and delivering development interventions. Traditionally the differences in achievement between individuals have been ascribed to either personality or attitude (Zhang, Sternberg and Rayner, 2012:1). Sternberg and Zhang (2005:9) added to the field and developed the term Intellectual Styles and used this as an umbrella term, applicable to all style constructs, referring to preferred ways of processing information and dealing with tasks

Cross (1981:85) found that most of the studies aimed at better understanding the motivation for learning began with psychometrically designed instruments. The instruments have been reworked by applying statistical methods to meaningful clusters of data. Cross (1981:83) cites Bushier (1971:3-26) and Burgess (1971:3- 29) found that all similar studies were grouped into comparable categories. The studies found

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that there are between five (5) and eight (8) factors that relate to the motivation for adults to learn and among these are found to be six (6) common factors (Cross, 1982:86), depicted in Table 3.2., summarising the findings of these studies.

Table 3.2: Motivation for Learning: Factor Analysis of the Educational Participation Scale (EPS)

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>
Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. to fulfil the need for friendships and personal relationships;</li> <li>ii. to make new friends; and</li> <li>iii. to meet members of the opposite sex</li> </ul>
External Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. to comply with the requirements or suggestions of someone else;</li> <li>ii. to comply with the expectations of someone with a formal authority; and</li> <li>iii. to carry out recommendations from someone with authority.</li> </ul>
Social Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. to improve his or her ability to serve others;</li> <li>ii. to prepare himself or herself for community service; and</li> <li>iii. to improve his or her ability to participate in the work of the community.</li> </ul>
Professional Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. to improve his or her job status;</li> <li>ii. to secure advancement as a professional; and</li> <li>iii. to compete or keep up with competition.</li> </ul>
Escape/Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. to create an opportunity to be challenged and address boredom;</li> <li>ii. to change the routine at home or work; and</li> <li>iii. to provide a contrast that is different from the rest of the life</li> </ul>
Cognitive Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. to learn to gain more knowledge; and</li> <li>ii. to satisfy an enquiring mind.</li> </ul>

Source: Morstain and Smart (1974)

The factors described in Table 3.2 are representative of the reasons why adults participate in learning interventions (Cross, 1982:87). These factors can be related to the subgroups or clusters of people who participate in learning interventions namely:

- Goal Oriented Learners (Factors II and IV),
- Activity Oriented Learners (factors I and V), and
- Learning Oriented Learners (factor VI) (Cross, 1982:88).

Clearly research shows that motivation plays an important role in successful learning and development. This study proposes that a better understanding of the SMS *re* preference profiles will provide valuable insight into the improvement of development initiatives. A better perspective on how the SMS think, learn and experience development, and incorporating these criteria in the learning and professional development solutions designed for the SMS, will go a long way to produce a competent, skilled and motivated cadre of senior managers, willing and able to serve the citizens and lead the public service to success.

### **3.4.Imperatives for maximising efficacy of SMS learning and development - Thinking and Learning Style Preference: Theory and Application**

Perception and action are equally important, and entirely integrated with processes in the mind (Billit *et al.*, 2014:102). Professional education cannot be one-sided and extrapolate only perception or action as the area of concern, and Knowledge, concepts and theories, skills, perception and action cannot be the only consideration for learning and professional development, but should be integrated with constructs, processes and environments that engage both the physical and mental realities (Billit *et al.*, 2014:102). Creating this all-encompassing learning environment, will allow for professional learning to contribute to the knowing, perceiving and intelligently sensing of the SMS professional, adult learner.

Knowledge of brain functioning emerges from an understanding of Sperry's Split Brain theory (1974:15-19). Sperry (1974:15-19) found that each hemisphere of the brain functions as an independent and cognisant system that perceives, thinks, remembers, reasons, wills, and emotes at a typical human level, and that the left and the right

hemispheres may be conscious at the same time in different, even in reciprocally conflicting, parallel mental experiences.

Levy and Trevarthen (1976:299-312) found that both hemispheres are frequently simultaneously involved in most activities performed by an individual. Similarly, Morris (2006:online) records that each hemisphere of the brain can be dominant in selected activities, but both halves of the brain are skilled in all areas of thinking and function.

The research that was done by Sperry (1974), discussed in Chapter 1, highlighted the particular functions associated with the left and right hemispheres of the brain (Trotter, 1976:219). Herrmann (1996:42) took an expanded approach and pointed out that the connection of the left and right hemispheres of the brain by the hypothalamus ensures integration of activities inside the brain. In the course of his own research into the field, Herrmann (1996:20) found that the limbic system must be factored in and that this was the only way to fully appreciate the experiential and thinking processes of the human brain. The work by Herrmann (1996) resulted in the development of his whole brain model. The Herrmann whole brain model supports the notion that the brain is divided into two halves, the cerebral cortex and limbic system, each of which are subdivided and aligned to a specific way of thinking (Herrmann, 1996:15). Herrmann (1996:16) named the subdivisions as the cerebral left, cerebral right, limbic left and limbic right, as represented in Figure 3.3.

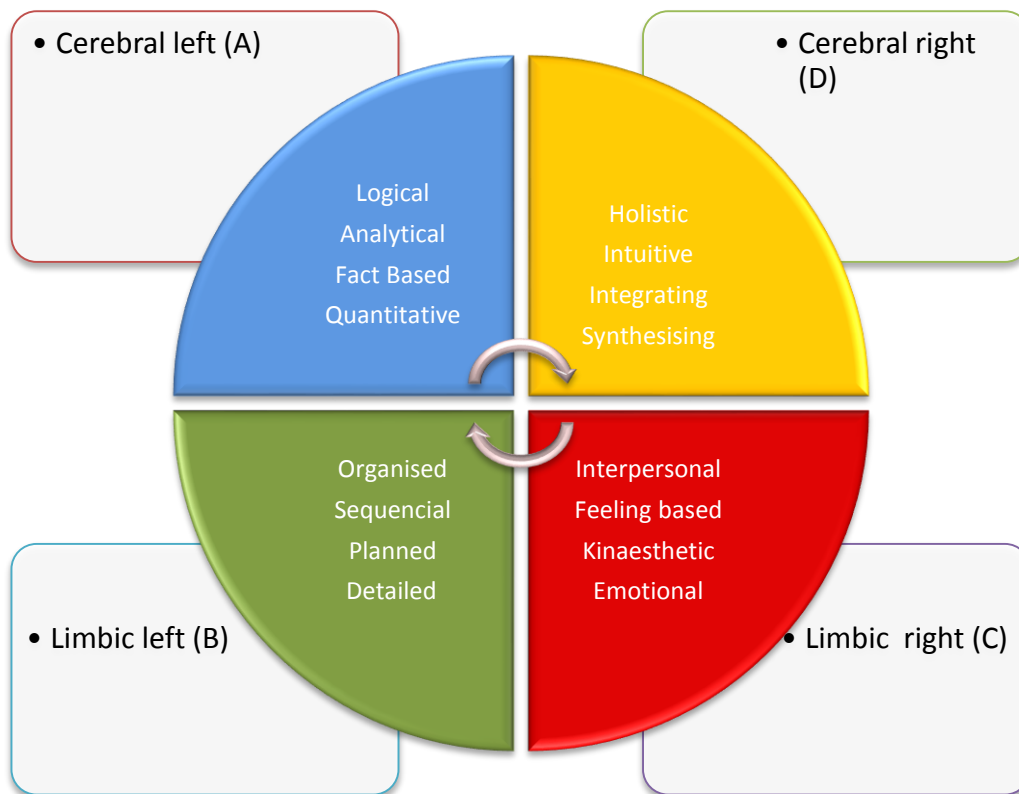


Figure 3.3: Herrmann's Fourfold Model of Brain Dominance

Source: Herrmann (1995)

Herrmann (1996:40) further explains that the cerebral mode is the cognitive, intellectual part of the thinking processes and the limbic mode is the structured visceral and emotional part of the thinking processes. Herrmann (1996:15) alludes to the phenomenon that:

- on the one hand, a person with a preference for the left cerebral mode will typically favour activities that involve logical, analytical, fact-based information; and
- a person with a preference for the left limbic mode will lean towards a linear approach to activities, favouring organised, sequential, planned and detailed information; while
- on the other hand, persons with a preference towards the right hemisphere of the brain have totally different preferences (Herrmann, 1995:40).

- Processing information in the right limbic mode is indicative of favouring information that is feeling based and involving emotion.
- A preference for the processes of the right cerebral mode is branded by an all-inclusive and intangible approach in thinking.

Herrmann (1995:42) cited by Herbst and Maree (2008:34) points out that, even though the processes in each hemisphere are specialised and unique, the physical connections continue to ensure that brain activities are integrated. From the defined types and preference model, Herrmann is able to devise learning preferences and dislikes as well as strengths and weaknesses. The consideration of the unique preference of individuals in relation to thinking and learning (Herrmann, 1995:42) provides support to the argument that consideration would be given to the needs and preferences of the SMS when professional development interventions are designed.

Herrmann (1996:6, 15-17) shares an example and explains that an individual with a preference toward the left cerebral mode will learn by acquiring and quantifying facts and by considering and evaluating ideas. This individual prefers logical, rational activities. Emotional, musical and artistic activities will be more problematic and will not achieve the learning that is required. From this perspective a discussion within the learning context, aimed at resolving service delivery issues, will have a more positive response in an individual with a preference toward the left cerebral mode when facts and numbers on the impact of a lack of service delivery (such as numbers of citizens who do not have access to running water) are reflected upon. An individual with a preference toward the right cerebral mode will most likely respond more positively when considering the emotional and physical strain on the affected citizen.

Between the years 1988 and 1991, Neethling (2005:2-3) developed the Neethling Four Dimension Whole Brain Thinking Model. Prior to finalising the model, Neethling (2000:4-7) determined that four categories of typical characteristics are identifiable in each individual:

- exact, precise, accurate though preference;
- organised, planned, structured though preference;
- person and feeling oriented though preference; and

- experimental, change oriented thought preference.

Subsequent to the initial research, Neethling (2005:2-3) continued his work and developed the Neethling Whole Brain Instrument to determine the thinking style preference of individuals specifically concerning the ways in which they:

- communicate;
- act towards other people;
- conduct business;
- learn;
- teach;
- may be satisfied in a career;
- solve problems; and
- make decisions.

Neethling's thinking style preference model and the supporting Neethling Brain Instrument, could inform a framework for better understanding the differences in the Public Service when considering the needs of the public official towards learning and development. The fact that an instrument exists that can clearly differentiate between preferences in thinking, communication, learning, teaching and others supports an argument that, when applying this or similar instrument to the SMS, the results may provide an indication of the preference of the SMS toward thinking and learning.

Subsequent to the Four Dimension Model developed by Neethling (2005:2) in the 1990s, further studies performed by Neethling showed that the abilities and complexity of the human mind, preferences and skills can be developed in any quadrant. Neethling (2005:14) further found that, within each of the four quadrants, two main dimensions exist as are depicted in Figure 3.4. Neethling (2005:14) found that a person may either be strong in one dimension while scoring low in the other, or be balanced in each of the two dimensions.



<b>L1 – Analyst</b> Assess Monitor performance Dig deeper Financial Clinical Logical Priorities Calculate Probing Examining	<b>L1 – Realist</b> Clarity No distractions Focused Set goals No mental clutter Define target Pros and cons Simplicity Clear guidelines Factual	<b>R1 – Strategist</b> Visionary Future-connected Predictions Change Risk-taking Big thinking Experience the unfamiliar Variety Design Challenge status quo	<b>R1 – Imagineer</b> Inner voice Picture thinking Aha Daydream Fantasize Doodle/scribble Unsystematic Unconventional Clutter Zigzag thinking
<b>L2 – Preserver</b> Well-proven Discipline Order Time-conscious Methodical Cautious Loyalty Experience Stability Traditional	<b>L2 – Organizer</b> Action Hands-on Plan Systematic Supervise Persevere Checklist Schedules To-do list Organize	<b>R2 – Socializer</b> Groups Sharing Consensus Networking Co-operation Gatherings Entertaining Outgoing Connecting Sociable	<b>R2 – Empathizer</b> Empathizer Encourage Assist Care Service-oriented Intuitive Hopeful Reaching out Sensitive Special attachments Nurturing

Figure 3.4: The Neethling Eight Dimensions – Summary of Characteristics

Source: Neethling (2005:6)

Neethling (2005:4-12) expanded on the 8-dimension thinking theory, finding strong correlation between thinking preference and learning preference. Neethling (2005:13-14) argues that it is important to lay the foundation for effective learning by understanding learning and teaching from a whole brain perspective in order to understand how adults learn most effectively. Resembling the argument by Neethling (2005), Knox (1989:423) reaffirms the relationship between personality and learning ability.

The importance of learning preference continues to permeate the practice of professional adult learning. According to Merriam and Caffarella (1991:249), in Wilson

and Hays (1997:55-59), this focus on the individual learner is founded in two basic assumptions:

- that thinking and learning primarily happen internally (in the mind), and the outside environment receives no attention; and
- personal background or the situation in which learning occurs, do not influence ability to learn and thus all adult learners are effective learners

A number of well-known learning preference models have shaped the learning and development environment over the years. David Kolb's Learning Style Inventory is at the leading edge of learning theory. Kolb's and others' models are discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

### **3.5.Appreciating the relevance of Learning Style Preference in SMS Professional Development**

Each individual has his or her own specific need, a unique way of doing things and natural preferences towards some activities whilst shying away from others. Similarly, the study argues that in learning it is no different and that people learn for different reasons and in different ways.

“No matter what you teach, you face the challenge of bringing students from point A — what they currently know—to point B—the learning goals of a course. In many courses, the distance between points A and B is huge, and the path is not obvious. Students must not only acquire new skills and information, but also radically transform their approach to thinking and learning”

McGonigal (2005:1).

Mezirow (1991:167) describes transformational learning as a process where a learner becomes aware of the fact that assumptions have possibly come to constrain the way that the world is observed and experienced. Mezirow (1991:167) further argues that should these habits and expectation be changed, be able to change these to a more inclusive, discerning and integrated perspective which can be achieved to enable choices and act upon this new understanding.

In this study aspects of cognitive preferences are analysed to determine the most effective way to delivery information to the SMS to enable such learning and change. It is important to find a balance between providing support to the learner and the challenges that reposed (McGonigal, 2005:4). Cranton (2002:66) argues that empowerment and support of learners are important but it is as important to provide an environment of challenge as an essential component for transformative learning.

The paradigm has shifted from direct instruction to constructivist learning (Kirschner, Sweller and Clark, 2006:8-12) Constructivism argues, on the one hand, that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas (Hartwig, 2008:12). On the other hand, Kirschner *et al.* (2006:3) argues that, when considering cognitive human infrastructure, minimally guided instruction is likely to be ineffective and that, guidance designed to support cognitive processing of information necessary for learning, has proven to have much greater efficiency and success. To enable effective learning and development of the SMS, learning must take place when opportunities for professional development are available requiring that the cognitive needs of the SMS are considered in the design and delivery thereof.

Literature provides clarity in relation to the learning style Preference of individuals. The study focuses on a number of scholarly theories and the models derived from these theories to provide a deeper and better understanding of learner preference as a cognitive need, and how this may influence learning and development programmes designed and developed for the SMS. Conclusive knowledge of the SMS's preferred type of learning will guide the development process to maximise learning and the achievement of learning outcomes.

The undeniable relationship between learning and the human mind is confirmed by Schoeberlein and Sheth (2009:xi) who found that the mindful presence of the teacher, and the attentive presence of the student, contributes greatly to the quality of learning. Theories and notions of learning and teaching converge into a representative sample:

- Activities that develop new knowledge and skill or generates new qualities from old knowledge (Galperin, 1965).
- Changing the capabilities of the individual, continuing over time and is not a result of natural growth and or development (Gagne, 1983).

- Creating knowledge through personal experience (Biehler, 1993).
- Restructuring of sensory-feedback patterning, resulting in a shift in control over own behaviour and responses to objects and situations or the environment (Smith 1966).
- A change that results from a reaction to a situation or encounter (Bower and Higard 1981).
- Changed contrivances of behaviour from specific impetuses, responses based on previous experience with stimuli (Domjan 1998).

The definitions and understanding of thinking and learning are not new, and the relationship between the concepts of thinking and learning as old as Methuselah. The significance of the assimilation of the concepts of thinking and learning is herewith underscored.

### *3.5.1 The Neethling 8 -Dimension Learning Preference Model*

Chapter 1 reflects on the Neethling Thinking Style Preference Model, as is also done in a previous section of this chapter. After an in-depth analysis of a wide sample of learners, Neethling (2005:4) concluded that there is strong relation between the individual Thinking Style Preference, and the preferred ways of learning. Based on these empirical findings, Neethling (2005:4) developed a set of characteristics, linked to each thinking style preference in the Neethling 4-Dimension Thinking Style Preference Model (Neethling, 2000:2), presented in Figure 3.4.

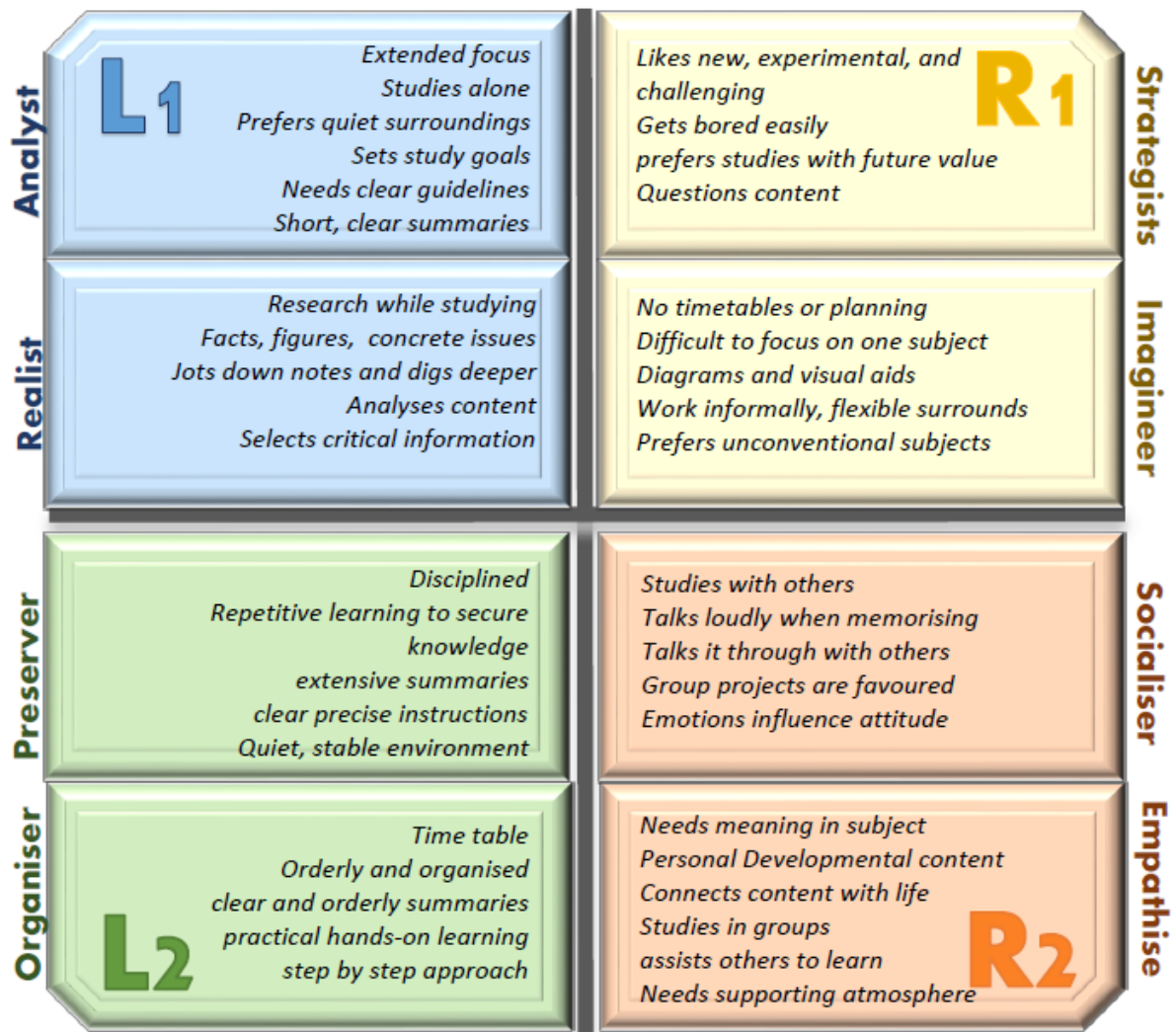


Figure 3.5: The Neethling Argument – Characteristics of Learning Style Preference within the context of Neethling Thinking Style Preference Model

Source (Neethling, 2005:4-5)

Neethling (2005:4) argues that learning style preference correlates with Thinking Style Preference, and that argues that Learning is enhanced when the learning takes place providing for the thinking style preferences of an individual (Neethling, 2005:5) (Figure 3.5). The study argues that there is a correlation in Thinking and Learning Style Preference models, and that there is a distinct alignment between the thinking Style Preference profile and learning Style Preference profile of the SMS.

Creating a learning environment that allows learners to have the freedom of selecting learning instances, may provide greater results in the learning process, and may

further motivate learners to attend or participate in learning interventions. An example would be where, on the one hand, a learner who prefers to work in groups including, group work, discussion groups and facilitated post learning sessions can assist and guide learning where, on the other hand, a learner who prefers a structured and self-guided learning process will achieve more when working on their own in resolving problems and working assignments.

### 3.5.2 *The Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI)*

As was indicated in Chapter 1, Kolb (1984:38–45) designed the Learning Style Inventory (KLSI) as a tool to determine the learning style preference of an individual. The basis of the KLSI is the principal of experiential learning. Kolb (1984:38–45) explains in his book, *Experiential Learning Experience as The Source of Learning and Development*, that the model applied as the KLSI is construed of two related approaches towards understanding the concept of experience as it relates to the concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation, as two approaches towards transforming experience namely reflective observation and active experimentation.

Kolb and Fry (1975:35-6) expound that a propensity towards one of four abilities exist within each learner and that propensity results in effective learning: concrete experience abilities, reflective observation abilities, abstract conceptualisation abilities and active experimentation abilities. Kolb and Fry (1975:35-6) further argue that not everyone has the ability to move between the four abilities and that individuals will tend to develop a strength in, or orientation to, in one of the poles of each dimension.

According to Willcoxson and Prosser (1996:251-261) the construct and validity of the KLSI has been tested by way of three (3) strategies:

- discipline-based research that explored the extent to which specified professional or student groupings demonstrate the learning style Preference s predicted on the basis of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory or his research;
- factor analysis that examined the KLSI response alternatives in relation to the experiential learning theory on which the instrument was based; and

- instrument associations; results obtained on the KLSI was compared with the results attained with other instruments testing aspects that are predicted on the basis of the KLSI theory's underlying constructs, related to learning style preferences

In their review and study of validity and reliability of the Kolb KLSI, Willcoxson and Prosser (1996) found KLSI is an instrument of high reliability in terms of its internal consistency. Kayes (2005:256) concluded that there is a consistency in the internal characteristics of the updated randomised versions of KLSI and confirms the validity of the instrument.

The KLSI is a useful tool to determine the preferences of SMS, whilst adding the additional advantage of being able to consider the style preference of the SMS and use this knowledge of the learning style profile of the SMS to inform the development of professional development courses and programmes. The definitions and characteristics of the KLSI informed the structure and content of the semi-structured questionnaire to determine the personal interpretation and perception of the SMS as they understood their only learning style and needs.

Another valuable contribution to the learning and development literature, in addition to the learning style preference models of Neethling and Kolb, is the well-known Knowles model for self-directed learning. The role of the individual in the learning process is considered, adding the notion of self-motivation. Knowles contributed greatly by developing the self-directed model. This model is comprehensively analysed and described to understand the impact of professional development of the SMS.

### *3.5.3 Knowles' Self-Directed Learning Model*

Knowles (1990:103-125) argues that individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes. Merriam and Bierema (2013:1-5) note the characteristics of a highly self-directed learner, determined through Guglielmino, Guglielmino and Long (1987:73) as the most-used operational definition of a self-directed learner.



According to Guglielmino *et al.* (1987:73) highly self-directed learners are those who exhibit initiative, independence, and persistence in learning; who accepts responsibility for his or her own learning and view problems as challenges, not obstacles; is capable of self-discipline and have high degrees of curiosity; has a strong desire to learn or change and is self-confident; is able to use basic study skills, organise time and set an appropriate pace for learning, and develop a plan for completing work; enjoys learning and has a tendency to be goal-oriented.

Knowles (1975:18) identifies the following activities involved in the process of self-direction:

- diagnosing their learning needs,
- formulating learning goals,
- identifying human and material resources for learning,
- choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and
- evaluating learning outcomes, taking responsibility for, and control of, their own learning

Adding on to the work of Knowles (1975) and derived from the principles of self-directed learning, Towly and Cottrell (1996:357) provide guidance on the activities and features of self-directed learning Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Activities and Features of Self-Directed Learning

<b>SELF DIRECTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>COURSE FEATURES THAT ENHANCE SELF DIRECTED LEARNING</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Setting own learning goals</li> <li>▪ Identifying appropriate learning resources</li> <li>▪ Selecting appropriate learning strategies</li> <li>▪ Selecting important from unimportant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clear, advance information about tasks</li> <li>▪ Specific performance goals for assignments</li> <li>▪ Intrinsic rewards for task completion</li> <li>▪ Timetabling that allows sufficient time for task completion</li> <li>▪ Trust that learners will remain on task</li> </ul>



<b>SELF DIRECTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>COURSE FEATURES THAT ENHANCE SELF DIRECTED LEARNING</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integrating material from different sources</li> <li>▪ Time management</li> <li>▪ Monitoring achievement of learning outcomes</li> <li>▪ Monitoring effectiveness of own study habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support for student learning, for example, personal tutors, study skills courses</li> <li>▪ Formative assessment and feedback that enables students to monitor and modify their own learning</li> <li>▪ Appropriate summative assessment, that is, that tests problem solving rather than repetition of facts</li> <li>▪ Appropriate staff development/teacher learning</li> </ul>

Source: Towly and Cottrell (1996)

As determined by the SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:Section 1), the SMS are the appointed leadership of the Public Service and are responsible to convert the policy mandate of Government into departmental strategies and programmes. The PSR, 2001 (DPSA, 2001:Section 4) reinforces the expectation that SMS must have the ability and attributes required to solve problems, give direction and promote improved delivery among public officials. The argument can be made that the self-directed approach to professional development is not only relevant, but necessary to ensure that the SMS develop into a professional cadre able to perform and lead as required.

Another factor that may possibly improve professional development opportunities provided to the SMS is Action Learning. McGill and Brockbank (2004:11) describe action learning as follows:

“Action learning is a continued process of learning and reflection with the support of a group of colleagues, working on real issues. The action learning method is increasingly used to bring innovation to many different fields of work. The principles of action learning can achieve improvement and transformation in a wide range of applications and disciplines, including professional training and educational contexts”

Vaill (1996:.42) emphasises that “learning must be a way of being – an ongoing set of attitudes and actions by individuals and groups ... to try to keep abreast of the surprising, novel, messy, obtrusive, recurring events.

The next section provides a more in depth understanding of action learning and its relevance to the professional development of the SMS.

### **3.6.Action Learning, Incorporating Experience in the Professional Development Solutions**

Known as the founder of Action Learning, Revans (1978:14) formulated the Revans Law in which he argued that that it is a requirement for an organisation that its rate of learning must be equal to, or greater than, the rate of change in its external environment if it expects to survive. The Revans Formula, Revans Law and subsequently the Theory for Action Learning were born from the work which he started in 1945 (International Foundation for Action Learning (IFAL), 2014, 2016).

McGill and Beaty (2002:2) argue that professional development is based on the actual experience of the individual and that is focuses on a problem solving type of learning that is mostly self-directed. McGill and Beaty (2002:190) further argue that action learning results in a rational structure, creating an opportunity for the inclusion of the full learning cycle, including reflection on learning and situation.

A further development of action learning, referred to as the Action Research Model, coded by Rimanoczy and Turner (2008:145-165) identifies 16 elements and 10 underlying principles of action learning. Table 3.4 details these elements and principles.

Table 3.4: Rimanoczy and Turner Action Learning Elements and Principles

<b>The Sixteen Elements of ARL</b>	<b>The Ten Learning Principles</b>
A- Taking ownership for learning	i. <b>Relevance</b> “Learning is optimal when the focus of the learning is owned by, relevant to, and important and timely for, the individual.”
B- Just in time intervention	

The Sixteen Elements of ARL	The Ten Learning Principles
<p>C- Linking information</p> <p>D- Balance task and learning</p> <p>E- Guided reflection</p> <p>F- Feedback</p> <p>G- Learning in unfamiliar environments</p> <p>H- Exchange of learning</p> <p>I- Appreciative approach</p> <p>J- Safe environments</p> <p>K- Holistic involvement of the individual</p> <p>L- Learning and personality styles</p> <p>M- Coaching one on one</p> <p>N- Sequenced learning</p> <p>O- Learning coach</p> <p>P- Five system levels</p>	<p>ii. <b>Tacit Knowledge</b> “Knowledge exists within individuals in implicit, often unaware forms; it is frequently under-or not fully utilized and can be accessed through guided introspection.”</p> <p>iii. <b>Reflection</b> “The process of being able to thoughtfully reflect upon experience is an essential part of the learning process, which can enable greater meaning and learning to be derived from a given situation”.</p> <p>iv. <b>Uncovering, adapting and building new maps and mental models</b> “The most significant learning occurs when individuals are able to shift the perspective by which they habitually view the world, leading to greater understanding (of the world and of the other), self-awareness and intelligent action.”</p> <p>v. <b>Social Learning</b> “Social interaction generates learning”.</p> <p>vi. <b>Integration</b> “People are a combination of mind, body, feelings and emotions, and respond best when all aspects of their being are considered, engaged, and valued.”</p> <p>vii. <b>Self-Awareness</b> “Building self-awareness through helping people understand the relation between what they feel, think, and act, and their impact on others, is a crucial step to</p>

The Sixteen Elements of ARL	The Ten Learning Principles
	<p>greater personal and professional competence.”</p> <p>viii. <b>Repetition and Reinforcement</b> “Practice brings mastery and positive reinforcement increases the assimilation.”</p> <p>ix. <b>Facilitated learning</b> “A specific role exists for an expert in teaching and learning methods and techniques which can help individuals and groups best learn.”</p> <p>x. <b>Systemic understanding and practice</b> “We live in a complex, interconnected, co-created world, and, in order to better understand and tackle individual and organizational issues, we have to take into account the different systems and contexts which mutually influence one another and effect these issues” Rimanoczy and Turner (2008:165).</p>

Source: Rimanoczy and Turner (2008)

The principles developed by Rimanoczy and Turner (2008:145-165) are of specific value to the development of the SMS. Among the 10 principles Rimanoczy and Turner (2008:145-165) find that true learning occurs when individuals are able to change their perspective of the world that then leads to greater understanding of the world and of others in their world. Furthermore, Rimanoczy and Turner (2008:145-165) find that learning must be owned by an individual, must be relevant and timely for success.

Action Learning, as described before, provides a valuable opportunity for the SMS to engage in a simulated environment to resolve real world challenges (Revans, 1978:18). The challenge is that the Public Service is not centralised in one

geographical area. The Public Service is dispersed across the nine (9) provinces of the country. This requires that the SMS be spread in this same way to enable leadership for public officials. Typical classroom based Action Learning may therefore be limited. A version of action learning is Virtual Action Learning (VAL) which is explored in a paper by Dickenson, Burgoyne and Pedler (2010:59-72). Dickenson *et al.* (2010:59-72) searched for current practices and key enabling factors for VAL and argue that the positive prospects for VAL arise from a convergence of three developments, namely:

- technological advances;
- globalisation; and
- a shift towards context-sensitive, work-based approaches to individual and organisational development.

In this information age Dickenson *et al.* (2010:59-72) cite Gill and Birchall (2004) who argue that the development of interactive and social communication technologies has enhanced the opportunities for working in a virtual space, much more accessible than before. Dickenson *et al.* (2010:59-72) further cite Paré and Dubé (1999) who view the opinion that virtual access to teams and team members is predicted to become even more widespread in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This opens up the opportunity to introduce technology mediated professional development opportunities or eLearning to support and enhance relevant and up to date solutions.

Gordon and O'Brien (2007:xi) argue that educational theories are not necessarily always established facts or undisputable truths, and that these theories may not always fit the application requirements in the learning environment, relevant to all situations yielding the same results.

Hennessy (2014:xvii) argues that traditional, top down approaches to professional development interventions only aims at improving a specific aspect of practice or policy without follow up or support. These approaches are usually unsuccessful and does not result in durable change (Hennessy, 2014:xxx). Similarly, it can be debated whether this top down, instructional or directed approach permeated in policy and directive in determining the what and how of professional development interventions

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comprehensively discussed in Chapter 2, is sufficient and contributory to the realisation of the objectives for professional development.

Supplementing the focus on the individual learner, Wilson and Hays (1997:59), argue that, the context within which adults learn, must be included in the considerations for design and instruction, as it plays an equally important role towards reaching expected outcomes. This need, provided for by contextualised learning and opportunity for simulation, role-playing, apprenticeship and learnership has greatly benefited and improved instructional design (Wilson and Hays, 1997:59).

Consciousness and learning is continuous, deriving knowledge through a process of testing experiences (James (1890) and Dewey (1938), cited by Kolb, 1984:10). Kolb (1984:10) quotes Dewey (1938:35, 34) that promotes the understanding that, as an individual move from one situation to another, his life world and environment expands and contracts. No learning and professional development offering can be successful, if the content is not presented in a way for the learner or participant to process and assimilate the information by thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving, to apply this knowledge by demonstration a new skill or attitude (Kolb, 1984:15).

### **3.7. Conclusion**

Learning must be owned by the SMS, thus, when the thinking and learning style preferences of the SMS are considered, the opportunity possibly exists to introduce action learning, both face to face and technology mediated, successfully into the professional development interventions of SMS. Embedding thinking and learning style preferences in design and development of curriculum and instructional design for continued professional development of the SMS, is arguably a primary determiner of success.

Evidence collected from the in-depth literature review, provides a clear theoretical foundation for an understanding the role of cognitive preferences and motivational factors in learning and professional development of the SMS. The literature supports the study and presents evidence of the importance of the consideration of personal styles and preferences to maximising learning outcomes. Following are the empirical findings from the analysis of the data collected with the self-administered, semi-

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structured questionnaires (Chapter 4). Comparative results of the Thinking Style and Learning Style Preference profiles of the SMS are elucidated in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 further describes the results pertaining to the motivational factors and reasons why the SMS choose to learn. Findings are considered and particular profiles and preferences deliberated on, assessing these as possible conduits for improved professional development solutions for the SMS.

## **Chapter 4 – The role of Thinking and Learning Style Preference in the professional development solutions for the SMS: Empirical findings**

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### **4.1. Introduction**

The Batho Pele Handbook (DPSA, 2007) establishes the role that public servants play in the South African society. The Batho Pele Handbook includes nine principles, determining the anticipated values for the Public Service. Public managers and leaders are required to be expressly committed to exceptional levels of integrity, quality services and professional administration, effective, impartial and transparent authority. The leadership of the Public Service are expected to take responsible stewardship of government funds to maximise cost-effectiveness and accountability, improved policy making and service delivery (DPSA, 2007:26-27).

“The professional development of an educator does not cease once he/she leaves an institution for pre-service training. It is a career long process of development, which begins with the educator's pre-service training and continues throughout his/her career practice until retirement.”

Ndlala (2001:44)

The argument made by Ndlala (2001:44), can equally be applied to the SMS, and continued professional development remains relevant and important to maintain quality and success.

In Chapter 1, the research problem for this study was introduced that questioned the success of theoretical and statutory frameworks employed for the professional development of the SMS. The argument is that these frameworks highlight the importance, provide for the continued professional development of the SMS and put the organisational structures in place to enable the professional development of the SMS. The study argues that the theoretical and legal frameworks alone are insufficient and that ostensive lack of efficacy, management and leadership of the Public Service

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is evident of the failure of professional development intervention opportunities designed to improve the ability of the SMS to lead the Public Service to success. Chapters 1 and 3 further reflect on the association between personality and learning ability. Knox (1989:423) argues that inflexibility may have a negative influence on the ability of an individual to learn.

The data and statistics collected during the study, were obtained from secondary databases such as the document repository of the PSC, Statistics South Africa, the repository of reports and documents from the DPSA, and the Learner Records Database of the NSG. These statistics are recorded and considered in the analysis and determinations in this chapter as defined by Creswell (2014:190), preparing the data, and consider the complexities of the data to create a much deeper understanding of the larger meaning of the data. The data collected during the course of this study was rich in direct and indirect notions.

Learning is a culmination of previous and current experiences, creating new knowledge and an ability to change future experiences (Watkins, 2000:91). Karen Stephenson notes:

“Experience has long been considered the best teacher of knowledge. Since we cannot experience everything, other people’s experiences, and hence other people, become the surrogate for knowledge. ‘I store my knowledge in my friends’ is an axiom for collecting knowledge through collecting people.”

Cited by Siemens (2004, online)

Both in the past and in recent times, a basic common view for personalised learning has been that a learner should be able to choose a self-aligned learning path that meets personal needs, interests and abilities (Bentley and Miller, 2004, cited by Sanna Järvelä, 2006:32). The personalised learning domain creates a positive setting within which it becomes possible to promote both independence and dependability (Siemens, 2004:online; Downes, 2007:online). Downes (2007:online) argues that when providing training and development that is personalised, the learner is provided with options and choices, various ways of testing and/or assessing learning, following a customised

approach to the design, fitting the curriculum and instruction to the learner's preferences. Providing the learner the opportunity to develop connections with previous and current knowledge and experiences (Siemens, 2004:online), curriculum and instruction provides for fewer rules and restrictions or constraints, providing the learner with a measure of in the learning environment (Downes, 2007:online).

Providing a personalised learning domain, supported and led by a personalised system of instruction, further promotes the development of social skills and create an increased sense of responsibility toward others resulting in creative, intellectual, social and moral growth (Keller, 1968:79-89; Parkhurst, 1922:13). Read in conjunction with the need for the Public Service manager and the SMS to be professional, highly skilled, resilient and exceedingly appreciative of the responsibilities of the Public Service, it is a signpost for personalised learning concepts derived from the principles of Thinking- and Learning Style Preferences, adult learning and motivation to learn.

#### **4.2. Context and process**

Against the backdrop of the importance of the whole, a comprehensive interpretation of aspects within the study is an on-going concern. Findings are integrated and presented by theme, combining quantitative and qualitative data, providing a deeper understanding of the inferred phenotype of the learning and professional development needs of the SMS.

Quantitative data was collected to determine Thinking and Learning Style Preference profiles for the SMS. These profiles are specifically defined and based on the existing models of Neethling (2000) and Kolb (1984). Data was analysed in relation with the structure of the questionnaire and its alignment with the selected models.

In addition to the data of Thinking and Learning Style, quantitative data in relation to the Motivation for the Learning Model of Morstain and Smart (1974), was obtained from the responses to the questionnaire. The quantitative data was complemented by qualitative data obtained acquired from the open-ended questions posed to participants in the semi-structured questionnaire. Qualitative and quantitative results are integrated and present a comprehensive and in depth understanding of the character, preference and motivation of the phenomenon.

A coding system identifies themes unfolding during the analyses phase. The code structure separates content into individually discernible categories (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Categorisation of Themes derived from Data:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Category Description</b>
Facilitation and instruction	are specifically aimed at responses related to the quality and level of knowledge and experience of the facilitator.
Instructional design and Delivery methods	include the requirements for face to face attendance, engagement with content pre- and post-class and assessment requirements and methods.
Quality and relevance	refer to a more generic response to total quality as perceived by the respondent and reflect on the relevance of the material and context to the Public Service.
Value for money	raises financial issues and the value from the interventions for monies spent.
Logistics, Process and Planning	include matters of logistics, quality of planning, quality of pre- and post-interventions, support and administration.
Professional development expectations	relate to the personal development needs of a respondent such as relevance of skills and tools in order to improve work related performance.
Personal needs	are defined as needs of personal nature, not relevant to the work environment that may

Category	Category Description
	refer to the emotional experience of the respondent and the effort required to attend sessions and participate in assignment and assessment activities.

Considering the logic and content of the characteristics in Table 4.1, derived from the qualitative, the following data definite themes emerged:

- Cognitive profile and preference;
- Relevance, quality and learning context;
- Instruction and Instructional Design;
- Professional Learning and Development needs; and
- Persuasive factors inducing learning and development.

Contributing to the wisdom and knowledge in the theoretical background, verifiable data was collected to measure whether the argument for a unique and inclusive approach for learning and professional development of the Public Service Leadership, can be confirmed by interacting with a sample of the population. Even more than validation or verification, the empirical data adds value by enriching the study, providing for robust interrogation, and to facilitate deeper and much more comprehensive understanding to prove or disprove the argument.

The thematic discussion of the empirical results, marks out the boundaries and makeup of the professional characteristics of the SMS, within the context of the research objectives:

- to determine the thinking- and learning style preferences of the SMS;
- to understanding the motivational factors involved in learning and learning decisions; and
- to assess the possible correlation between thinking style and learning style preferences, as well as the motivation for learning profile of the SMS

The information derived from the data shows an impatience with learning and development intervention that are not considerate of the professional senior manager in the Public Service.

The methodology followed a mixed and integrated process for collecting and analysing data. Findings are extrapolated from by integrating qualitative and quantitative data (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007:4) including statistical analysis to find the deeper meaning to the Thinking Style and Learning Style preferences, and Motivation for Learning of the SMS. The applied process resulted in the successful collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the responses to the semi structured questionnaire. Interpretation followed an approach of the Steven's Scale of Measurement (nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio categories). The data is deemed ordinal, as there is no standard distance between the options provided (Ary, Jacobs and Sorenson, 2010).

Responses to the semi-structured questionnaire provides for quantifiable data to infer a personal style preference. A five (5) point Likert scale is used to collect Learning Style preference data, and individual responses are treated as ordinal data due to the nature of the data and the risk in assuming that the perceived difference between responses (strongly disagree to strongly agree) are interpreted in the same way by all respondents. In reference to the frequency of a choice, a score is allocated to each category, multiplying the frequency value for each Likert scale option to determine the composite score for all provided options in the questionnaire. Composite scores are analysed at the interval measurement scale. Descriptive statistics includes the mean, mode, median and standard deviation for each variable. Results are reflected relating the thinking style preference profiles within the context of the variable (Table 4.2 and Chart 4.1).

Thinking Style Preference data is collected per category (A, B, C D) and rank (1, 2, 3, and 4). Data is ordinal as previously explained. Respondents were required to rank each response per statement, thus ordering responses based on personal preferences. In order to get a clearer picture, respondents were not allowed to rank two proposed responses equally, not allowing for ties (Fielding, Riley, and Oyejola. 1998:35-39). The results per category per question are recorded per category and the

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overall frequency per priority per participant is determined. The category achieving the highest count is considered as the Thinking Style Preference of the respondent.

Data is recorded and analysed in PSPP and in Microsoft Excel. From a qualitative perspective, during the initial data analysis, the data was systematically and carefully checked for consistency and accuracy, exploring the study sample and preparing the data for further analysis (Van den Broeck, Cunningham, Eeckels, and Herbst, 2005:e267). Results are presented in concurrence, giving consideration to quantitative analysis as well as the deeper, integrated qualitative interpretation thereof.

### **4.3. Demography**

Demographics is the statistical study of human populations and is widely used for small, targeted populations or major projects (Crossman, 2016:online). In supporting the validity of the results attained through this study, it was important to compare the demographic of the sample with the demographic of the population, and the demographic of all SMS members in the Public Service. To achieve this, the database of the population, prepared from the Learner Records Database of the NSG (2014) and the comprehensive analysis of the SMS demographic reported and published by the DPSA (2007) was used in conjunction with the demographic of the sample.

The study sample comprises out of the EDP participants, between 2008 and 2014, at salary levels 13 and 14, who attended the Orientation Module of the EDP, and at least the 6 Core Modules of the Programme. After the data clean-up, verifiable, complete records were included in the population (191). A sample of 47 was selected to engage with during the course of the study.

The validity of the sample was tested for each variable (Table 4.2). The sample was then compared to a broader spectrum namely the population from where the sample was selected, the EDP database and the all-inclusive SMS (Table 4.4). Indications from the comparison between the demographic of the overall SMS employed in the Public Service, the qualifying EDP and the findings of the study, are indicative of the relevance and representativeness of the sample in relation to the population of the study, as well as the broader SMS community.

Before reflecting on the overall and integrated representation of the sample, a statistical analysis of the sample develops the holistic view of the sample in itself. The tables and charts to follow represent the analysis of relevant variables. Table 4.2 provides the overall result from the test performed to determine the validity of the sample in relation to each variable.

Table 4.2: Demographic profile

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Sphere_of_Government	45	100.0%	0	0.0%	45	100.0%
Language * Sphere_of_Government	45	100.0%	0	0.0%	45	100.0%
Race * Sphere_of_Government	45	100.0%	0	0.0%	45	100.0%
Age * Sphere_of_Government	45	100.0%	0	0.0%	45	100.0%
Education * Sphere_of_Government	45	100.0%	0	0.0%	45	100.0%
Salary_Level * Sphere_of_Government	45	100.0%	0	0.0%	45	100.0%

Evidence provided in Table 4.2 confirms the validity of cases, and completeness of records. Six (6) variables were identified as relevant and important to consider the level of representation of the sample in relation to the population and the SMS. The variables, presented in Table 4.2, are Spheres of Government, Gender, Race, Age, Level of Education and Salary Level.

Table 4.3: Comparative Profile Study Sample: Gender and Sphere of Government

Gender \* Sphere\_of\_Government [<sup>A</sup>count, <sup>B</sup>row %, <sup>C</sup>column %, <sup>D</sup>total %]

Gender	Sphere_of_Government		Total
	National	Provincial	
Female	20.00 <sup>A</sup>	7.00 <sup>A</sup>	27.00 <sup>A</sup>
	74.07% <sup>B</sup>	25.93% <sup>B</sup>	100.00% <sup>B</sup>
	58.82% <sup>C</sup>	63.64% <sup>C</sup>	60.00% <sup>C</sup>
	44.44% <sup>D</sup>	15.56% <sup>D</sup>	60.00% <sup>D</sup>
Male	14.00 <sup>A</sup>	4.00 <sup>A</sup>	18.00 <sup>A</sup>
	77.78% <sup>B</sup>	22.22% <sup>B</sup>	100.00% <sup>B</sup>
	41.18% <sup>C</sup>	36.36% <sup>C</sup>	40.00% <sup>C</sup>
	31.11% <sup>D</sup>	8.89% <sup>D</sup>	40.00% <sup>D</sup>
Total	34.00 <sup>A</sup>	11.00 <sup>A</sup>	45.00 <sup>A</sup>
	75.56% <sup>B</sup>	24.44% <sup>B</sup>	100.00% <sup>B</sup>
	100.00% <sup>C</sup>	100.00% <sup>C</sup>	100.00% <sup>C</sup>
	75.56% <sup>D</sup>	24.44% <sup>D</sup>	100.00% <sup>D</sup>

The detailed comparison in Table 4.3 seems to show a skewed participation between national and provincial participants, represented by the count of the participants: Twenty (20) National Female (74.07%), seven (7) Provincial Female (25.93%); fourteen (14) National Male (77.78%) and eleven (11) Provincial Male (24.44%). However, after further analysis and consideration, the ratio between male and female in both spheres illustrates a close correlation, namely twenty (20) National Female (58.82%), fourteen (14) National Male (41.18%); seven (7) Provincial Female (63.64%) and four (4) Provincial Male (36.36%).



Table 4.4: Comparison: Gender in relation to Sphere of Government

	<b>Population</b>	<b>EDP</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>PS SMS</b>
<b>% Female National</b>	48.5%	47.2%	74.1%	41.0%
<b>% Female Provincial</b>	41.9%	52.8%	25.9%	38.7%
<b>% Male National</b>	51.5%	45.2%	72.2%	59.0%
<b>% Male Provincial</b>	58.1%	54.8%	27.8%	61.3%
<b>% Female Overall</b>	45.2%	50.0%	50.0%	39.8%
<b>% Male Overall</b>	54.8%	50.0%	50.0%	60.2%

Comparing holistically, the results in Table 4.4 endorse the gender per sphere of government variable as presented in the sample (Female 50%, Male 50%), as it correlates well with the profiles of the population (Female 45.2%, Male 54.8%), all EDP (Female 50%, Male 50%), almost a 100% correlation, while comparing relatively well with the Public Service SMS profile (Female 39.8%, Male 60.2%). From the perspective of gender representation in relation to the Sphere of Government, the profiles are somewhat different.

The analysis of the age and race representativeness of the same was tested and is presented in Table 4.5. Age and race defines the population and may have an influence on preferences.

Table 4.5 Comparison: Age Distribution per Race

	<b>SMS</b>			
<b>Age category</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>African</b>
26-35	7.84%	7.65%	5.35%	79.16%
36-45	8.78%	6.27%	7.27%	77.68%
46-55	14.22%	6.41%	10.30%	69.08%
56-65	26.86%	5.66%	7.39%	60.10%

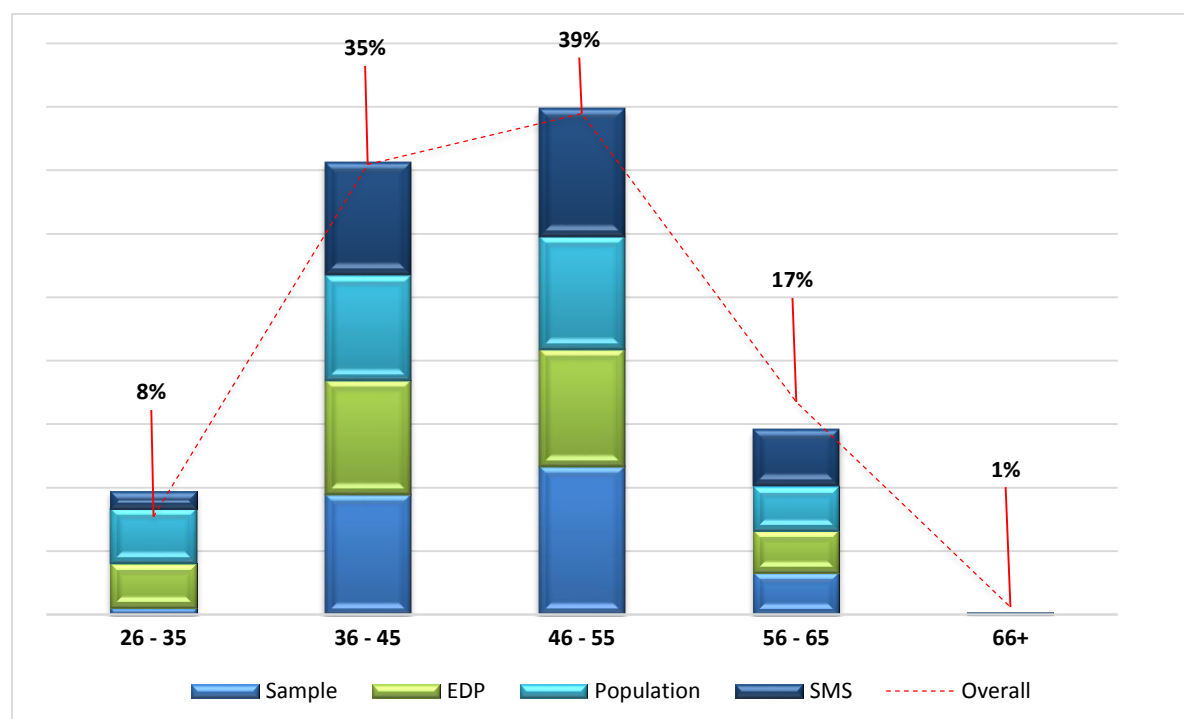
66+	33.33%	5.80%	1.45%	59.42%
<b>EDP</b>				
<b>Age category</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>African</b>
26-35	5.79%	3.42%	12.89%	77.89%
36-45	6.32%	3.67%	8.05%	81.96%
46-55	8.33%	4.17%	8.93%	78.57%
56-65	5.85%	3.90%	8.08%	82.17%
66+	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>POPULATION</b>				
<b>Age category</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>African</b>
26-35	5.00%	3.33%	10.00%	81.67%
36-45	8.62%	0.00%	9.48%	81.90%
46-55	8.87%	4.84%	6.45%	79.84%
56-65	4.08%	4.08%	10.20%	81.63%
66+	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>SAMPLE</b>				
<b>Age category</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>African</b>
26-35	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
36-45	11.76%	5.88%	17.65%	64.71%
46-55	14.29%	9.52%	9.52%	66.67%
56-65	0.00%	0.00%	16.67%	83.33%
66+	0%	0%	0%	0%

This demonstrates a clear correspondence between the age representation for age groups 36-45, 26-35, 46-55 and 56-65 in all categories (SMS, EDP, population and sample). A clear deviation between the sample category and all other categories in the age group 26-35 exists, as there is no representation for this age group in the population. This age group is strongly delineated in all categories as pointed out in Table 4.5.

From the data, a trend is identified in relation to the average age of the SMS. Results show that the age of the SMS range between 36 and 55 years, and this tendency is

repeated (Chart 4.1) in the analysis of the sample, the EDP participants and the population (thus a representative sample). The overall result show that 74% of members of the SMS are aged between 36 and 55 years.

Chart 4.1: Summarised age profile SMS



Professionals in the age category 36 to 55 years have very specific and unique expectations from learning and professional development interventions (Du Plessis, 2015:2). Du Plessis (2015:7, 76 & 78) found that the learning needs for the age group 36 to 55 years mostly related to personal needs, and that these individuals are typically frustrated and feel that their career has come to a standstill. Furthermore, that they need more meaning in their lives, that interventions must be immediate and timely, and that relevant opportunities are being presented for further development.

Responses to this study strongly correlate with findings of Du Plessis (2015:2-3), as are found in some of the phrases mentioned by respondents. These responses are recorded under each heading as it is relevant to the Du Plessis (2015:2) finding.

- Continuous professional development: Learning and development opportunities specifically targeted at personal growth and professional improvement (Du Plessis, 2015:84):

“I am only interested in courses of strategic nature to assist meaningfully to work I do.”

“I would like to have a mentor who assists me with the resolution of daily challenges and also connect on interpersonal relationship challenges and the political mechanisms of being a senior manager in the Public Service.”

“I will prefer professional development interventions that keep me up to date with SMS strategies and responsibilities going forward.”

"It helps in making one understand more trends in my area of work."

These responses are specific and evident of the SMS's need of continuous development at this most important time in their career. This supports the argument of Du Plessis (2015).

- Interpersonal communication: Communicating more effectively, especially communication between different levels, entities and units, rather than being inwardly focussed (Du Plessis, 2015:84):

“Dealing with the political mechanisms of being a senior manager in the public service.”

“I would like to learn about social dynamics, diversity and acquire better skills on negotiations, assertiveness and general conflict management.”

The SMS play a key role in the implementation of the policies of the South African Government. It is expected that they engage with political, executive and community leaders. Further members of the SMS must lead the public service and effectively engage peers and juniors to unite them towards the vision of the organisation.

- Life goals: Motivated toward individual performance and development, personal goals and find direction and purpose (Du Plessis, 2015:84):

“I would like to have a mentor who assists with the resolution of daily challenges and also connect on interpersonal relationship challenges.”

“I attend training to develop executive leadership skills and develop others.”

"I believe in always improving myself and in lifelong learning."

The SMS express the need for acquiring personal strength and competence, well-developed knowledge and skills, confidence, individuality, and freedom. The respondents expressed these areas of importance when sharing their personal perspectives.

Not specifically revealed from the data is the relevance of the specific vocational training in project management and financial management, as specified in the finding from the Du Plessis (2015) study. The fact that there is no mention of these specific areas of development may be an indicator that these skills and competencies are already developed and practiced by the SMS, or that they have a lesser focus on the need for practice based learning. As this study mainly focuses on the Thinking- and Learning Style preferences of the SMS, and factors of motivation for learning, these possible reasons can neither be confirmed nor denied, and therefore further research is required in this respect

The SMS are adult learners (Knowles, 1990:57), and present as such. The SMS are mostly between the ages of 36 and 55 (age group categories 36 to 45 and 46 to 55). The SMS members have a professional and personal focus as per their responses to the study as recorded above. The SMS are neither young, nor old, but they are in a time in their life where professional goals and personal improvement objectives need to be met when participating in learning opportunities (Du Plessis, 2015:74-84). Clearly this has implications for the development and design of curriculum and instruction. From an age distribution perspective and considering Du Plessis (2015), together with the findings of this study, there is no other option but to conclude that age and the age related learning and development needs, must be key considerations in designing curriculum and instructions for the SMS.

Of further interest is a report by the DPSA (2007:33), also reflecting in the data presented in Table 4.4, that annually, the SMS female representation increases by a percentage point (1%). At the time of the report, 19 departments had met the equity target of 50% female at SMS level, and at another 57 departments, females made up between 40 and 49% of the total SMS cadre of that organisation. Other results show

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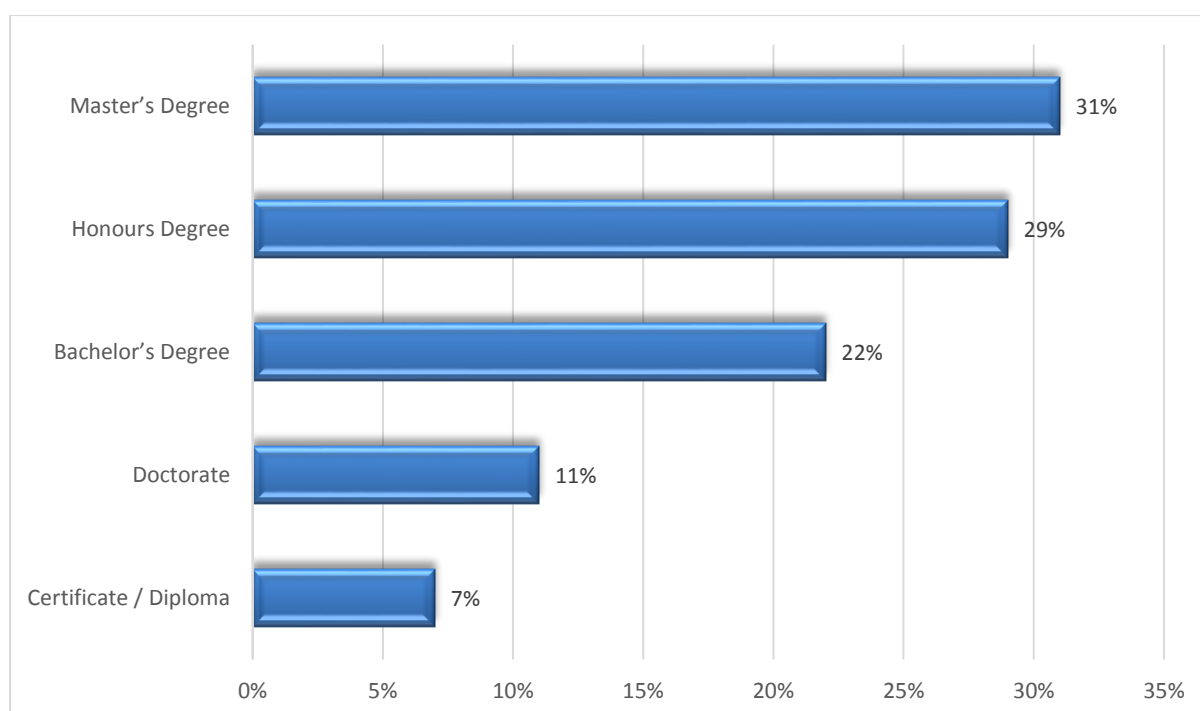
that a total of 54 departments have representation between 30 and 39% while females represent less than 30% of SMS at 24 departments. The indications are that there is a shift towards the achievement of the equity targets at SMS level in support of the transformation of the Public Service, and even more important, this trend is a positive contribution to the implementation of the NDP which states as follows:

“To build a skilled and professional public service, we need to attract talented people from a diverse range of backgrounds” (NPC, 2011:372).

Erasmus and others (2005:323) report that most public officials have a qualification obtained from a University or Technicon. They further argue that many officials attend in-service skills development interventions and that these are mostly traditional in nature. They rightfully pose the question whether these interventions meet the necessary requirements if considered that the premise should be that those who have the knowledge, teach those who do not have the knowledge and are thus not purposefully engaging in competence improvement and professional development (Erasmus *et al.*, 2005:323).

The data revealed that the SMS are a well-educated working corps (Table 4.6), and grounded by sound experience in life, work and education. Baron (2011:54) found that employees with a higher educational background have higher ambitions and are more able to engage with the further learning and development system, possessing an above average knowledge about longer term values and the benefits of further learning (Baron, 2011:12, 54). The educational profile of the SMS presents evidence of a highly qualified entity that needs to be considered from the perspectives of qualified adult learners in the professional world.

Chart 4.2: Educational levels of sample data



Empirical evidence and literature confirm that the design and development of learning and professional development solutions are not delinked from the SMS, but are of personal concern to the members of the SMS as independent, well qualified, adult learners. The solutions for further learning and professional developmental opportunities should therefore not attempt to provide accredited solutions for qualification purposes, that are linked to vocational and policy requirements only. Successful interventions should focus on the individual preferences and needs ("what is needed to perform better"), the objectives of the Public Service, vocational and professional developmental needs as well as policy-specific requirements.

A deeper understanding and validation of the preferences and motivation impacting the professional development was established by triangulating findings of the in-depth literature review with data collected from a purposive sample by means of a stakeholder sample strategy. A self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire, required respondents to reflect on their personal preferences and motivations pertaining to thinking and learning, and their motivational factors that lead to a personal desire to learn. The information acquired, provided insight and a deeper understanding of the SMS, and possibilities to advance SMS professional development, in order to

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contribute to the achieving of the objectives of the policy regime for the professional development of the SMS.

#### **4.4. The SMS Thinking Style Preference profile**

Much more emphasis is placed on results-orientated management development in current years, *vis a vis*. the previous, action orientated approach to learning and development (Fourie, 2004:493). For this reason, Fourie (2004:493) argues that development entails much more than just the design and instruction of a learning programme, but is aimed at bettering and maintaining performance, as well as developing individuals for promotional positions and applying what was learnt in the classroom, in daily practice.

Derived from the contributions of Fourie (2004), the need to engage at the level of the individual is once again emphasised, calling for the integration of individual needs and preferences in the design and development of curriculum and instruction for development initiatives.

The questionnaire was structured by presenting respondents with ten (10) statements, each of which describe a specific situation or experience in the daily life of each person. For analysis purposes, priorities were allocated a score: Priority one (1) - four (4) points, Priority two (2) – three (3) points, Priority three (3) - two (2) points and Priority four (4) - one (1) point. Respondents were required to prioritise the responses from a personal perspective and rank the proposed responses (coded A, B, C or D), on the scale of one (1) to four (4), where one (1) means “this is mostly how I would react”, and 4 means “this least describes how I will react”.

Each possible response, coded by an alphabetical category indicator A, B, C and D, represents a specific Neethling dimension (as illustrated in Figure 1.1):

- Responses proposed in category A of each question are typical characteristics of the Left, Quadrant One (L1) thinking style – the Realist/Analyst;
- Responses proposed in category B of each question are aligned to the typical characteristics of the Left, Quadrant Two (L2) thinking style – the Preserver/Organiser;



- Responses proposed in category C of each question are associated with the typical characteristics of the Right, Quadrant One (R1) thinking style – the Strategist/Imagineer; and
- Responses projected in category D of each question are associated with the typical characteristics of the Right, Quadrant Two (R2) thinking style – the Socialiser/Empathiser.

An example of the method is presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Example of Converting a Priority into a Score

<b>Statement:</b> Before I start on a project...			
<b>Proposed response</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Score</b>
I make sure that I understand the essence of the project	A	1	4
I develop a step by step plan to ensure that I know what I how to execute the project	B	2	3
I move between various activities on the project and complete these simultaneously	C	3	2
I make sure that I become involved with all aspects of the project	D	4	1

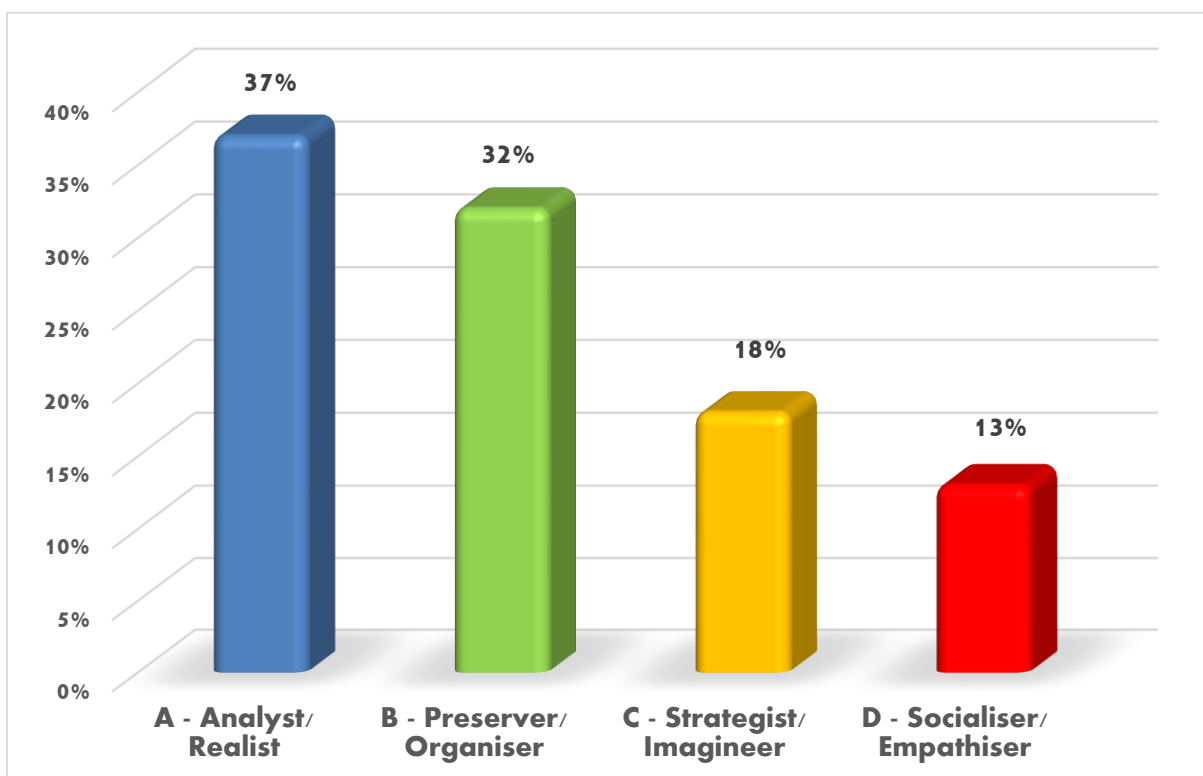
The questionnaire collected data using a quantitative data collection technique. The quantitative data informs the phenomenological analysis, modelled around the response to the experience or situation from the participant's personal point of view, directed toward context and perspective of the SMS. This method provides for the personal reflection on Thinking Style Preference and the results depict the preferred personal style of thinking of the member of the SMS, indicative of how he or she experiences and interacts with his or her work and home life on a daily basis.

Data was analysed by:

- Determining the frequency for assigning Priority 1 to categories A, B, C, or D, first per respondent, and then summarising the frequency per category by calculating the sum of frequency, per category, for all respondents.
- Calculating the percentage of the total per category (total of frequency per category as a percentage of the total of frequency across all categories).

Results are captured in Chart 4.3.

Chart 4.3: SMS Thinking Style Preference Profile (visual representation of findings)



The SMS Thinking Style Preference profile shows a very definite preference toward the structured, analytical and organised left hemisphere of the brain (Chart 4.2). The results are also presented in graphical format in Chart 4.2. The profile indicates that members of the SMS present with characteristics typical to the left hemisphere of the brain. The first preference of the SMS is the L1 - Analyst/Realist dimension (37%), and the second preference, following very closely at 33% of the total, in the L2 Preserver/Organiser dimension as explained in the Neethling Thinking Style Preference Model. Very low preferences are recorded for the thinking preferences in

the right hemisphere of the brain, for R1 - Strategic/Imagineer and R2 - Socialiser/Empathiser dimensions, with an overall result of 18% and 13% respectively (Chart 4.2).

As documented by both Herrmann (1996) and Neethling (2000) the typical thinking patterns of the left brain are structured, process driven, analytical with no consideration of the big picture or feelings and people. Thinking patterns in the left hemisphere are void of any visionary, strategic and imaginative considerations and individuals with a left brain dominant profile prefer the process and plan above solution finding and innovation (Neethling, 2000:29).

The L1 - Analyst/Realist dimension (Neethling, 2005:4), as the first or primary Thinking Style preference of the SMS, means that the SMS prefer to focus and consider the essence of a case, are clinical in their approach, prefers the concrete, are performance driven, objective, rational, clinical and critical, and have a quantitative orientation. The second and supporting preference is the L2 - Preserver/Organiser dimension. The typical characteristics in this dimension include a need to be organised and orderly, planning, a step-by-step approach to achieve objectives, working sequentially, showing attention to detail and task and result driven, to name a few.

The SMS scored the lowest in the right hemisphere dimensions (Neethling, 2005:4), scoring a mere 18% in the R1 – Strategist/Imagineer dimension and an even lower 13% in the R2 - Socialiser/Empathiser dimension. The very low preference recorded in the right hemisphere Thinking Style dimensions (Neethling, 2005:4), is indicative of a lesser tendency of the SMS to include and consider the bigger picture, flexible solutions, does not tend to consider another individual's perspective, the possibility to move into uncharted and unfamiliar territory, and break new ground or be part of change and transformation. With the low preference in the R1 dimension, the SMS is typically less able to multi-task or experiment and integrate different ideas and link unrelated concepts. The SMS will thus have the understanding of principles and practice of innovation and experimentation, but will prefer to rely on known, conventional and proven practices.

The low score in the second (R2) Socialiser/Empathiser dimension, the SMS is not inclined to reach out to people, encourage and cheer people on, assist, help or put

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others first, not appreciating the opportunity to work in a service and hopeful environment. This result is indicative of lack of picking up on the non-obvious and non-verbal cues, resulting in being uncooperative, passive (not wanting to participate in activities), inaccessible or not approachable (Neethling, 2005:4). The SMS therefore have a very weak receptiveness ability and lack people focus and people awareness. They have little or no empathy, are uncaring and can easily disrespect others.

The benefit of a leadership with strong left brain thinking skills, is the inclination towards evidence based decisions, thorough analysis, and scientific or quantitative assessment of factual representation. Left brain thinkers are the “stalwarts” (Neethling, 2005:5-5), that will protect the status quo, applying policy strictly without considering the bigger intent thereof, using policies as safe enablers rather than restrictors for delivery. The left brain SMS is a typical manager, transactional and process orientated, showing little competence or skill in developing and sharing a vision, or innovation (Chung, 1987:359).

The SMS, as proven to be mostly left brain thinkers as defined in this study, will be likely to solve problems from a logical and analytical standpoint, rather than from a non-linear, intuitive and sympathetic point of view as would a typical right brain thinker. The SMS would further prefer to work alone and engage others only to solve problems and find solutions, and would choose to process information by themselves. The left brain oriented SMS would also prefer to study a subject or process before attempting to implement such, while a typical right brain oriented manager would defy the known and conventional and try out new and innovative ways to resolve problems and improve delivery (Leonard and Strauss, 1997:3).

Higgins and Kreischner (2011:online), proposes that an analytical left brain approach can improve productivity, but will be caught up in the known and proven ways, sometimes not being effective and efficient. This may result in the SMS and their teams doing much but achieving little. Thornhill and Van Dijk (2003:345) present the juxtaposed methods of management and leadership, presenting management as instructional and directive, whereas leadership relies on “leading, directing, actuating, and motivating of subordinates” (Sisk and Williams 1981:7).

This overwhelming left brain Thinking Style Preference profile of the SMS pose a serious risk for the Public Service. Leaders who are successful and produce results in the 21<sup>st</sup> century typically develop and maintain high performance teams, where team members have their specific roles, focus on the comprehensive series work activities, are innovatively committed to a common purpose or vision and deliver exceptional results (Margerison, McCann and Davies, 1986:2-32). Margerison (2001:120) places emphasis on the term “linking” as the key to developing high performance teams. This concept requires effective people skills, task skills, motivational skills and involved leadership.

The challenge is that the left brain thinking style makes very little provision for strategizing, innovation and new integrated approaches to delivery and solutions. There is no opportunity for engagement with others and to argue different options and strategies to achieve goals and results. The SMS members are able to implement a plan, already stated, by following a step-by-step approach needing much guidance along the way, without a clear vision or direction, easily losing the ability to deliver the relevant and appropriate services. Members of the SMS are not approachable and therefore may be less engaged with peers and juniors, not focussing enough on the people. This will subsequently lead to a lack of leadership and guidance, and the non-achievement of team goals. Even though leadership is imbedded in the character of managers, the need does exist to develop leadership skills in managers through learning and development, (Nigro and Nigro, 1989:211).

#### **4.5. The SMS Learning Style Preference profile**

The Public Service needs a cadre of innovative leaders with the ability to create strategies and new solutions to existing challenges (NPC, 2011:Section 13). The evidence show that the SMS are not inclined to a natural preference to perform in such a context creating new pathways to success. The Public Service and its leadership must grow, learn, and develop continuously to evolve into the powerful machinery required to deliver services to all South Africans (NPC, 2011:334). To develop the skills, attitudes and competencies required to achieve such a successful, highly effective organisation, necessitates a dynamic Public Service, with a clear vision, internalised by leaders (NCP, 2011:Chapter 13).

As discussed in Chapter 2, as well as earlier in this Chapter, learning and professional development is at the core of the success development of an SMS for effective delivery. The Minister of Public Service and Administration (DPSA, 2015:1, 2) directed the Public Service to implement the compulsory, continuous development of the SMS. This Directive (DPSA, 2015) aimed at developing a culture of continuous professional development, ensuring that members of the SMS are kept abreast of management policies and techniques, and harmonise job expectations and training to ensure that learning opportunities are relevant and appropriate.

Management development has over the years moved from being action oriented to a more results based approach (Fourie, 2004:493). Successful professional development initiatives require an even distribution between the development of the individual both from a knowledge and skills perspective and a personal development and growth realm (Long, 2004:701; Van Dijk, 2006:353-354). Participation in professional development initiatives might not be based only on the requirements of a strict policy regime for the SMS. Learning and professional development solutions in reaction to the support provided by policy, should respond to the needs of the organisation, the team and the individual member of the SMS (Van Dijk, 2006:349).

Billet and others (2014:86) note that the relevant blend of academic- and workplace experiences can provide a solution to resolve the problems in professional learning and development, recognised by employers, academic teachers and students. Based on the arguments and evidence provided and supported by scholars such as Billet and others (2014), clearly a deeper analysis of the capacities that distinguish effective, innovative professional workers from neophytes or the conservative, provides alternatives to the development of professional development innovations for the public service manager.

Contrary to the expectation, for the period since the introduction of the EDP programme (2006 to date), just more than 2000 from a possible 10 000 SMS, were registered and engaged with the programme in some way. Even more disturbing is the fact that only 191 of the SMS completed at least the six (6) core modules of the EDP. Critical questions have to be asked: This lack of interest in the EDP underscores the need to find creative and new solutions for learning and professional development

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initiatives by better understanding the needs and preferences of the SMS, and what influenced the SMS in the participating / not in the EDP.

The Kolb Learning Style Preference Model (1984), described in detail in Chapters 1 and 3, is in the opinion of the author, the most suitable in studying the SMS. As explained earlier in this chapter, respondents were required to consider each statement in relation to his or her personal understanding of whether or not the statement is representative of a situation wherein he or she will optimally learn. Each question relates to a specific Kolb Learning Style category. Responses were analysed not from a purely quantitative perspective, but also from a qualitative assessment to find meaning in the responses and the trends identified during the analysis.

A descriptive analysis per question is presented in Table 4.7, providing a view of the median, mode and range for every question posed.

Table 4.7: Description of Responses per Question

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Frequency: positive responses</b>	<b>Frequency: negative responses</b>
CQ-1	3.65	4	4	21	14
CQ-2	3.50	4	3	31	12
CQ-3	4.35	5	3	44	1
CQ-4	3.80	4	2	36	7
CQ-5	4.15	5	4	26	11
CQ-6	3.65	4	3	34	5
CQ-7	2.95	2	4	36	5
CQ-8	3.50	4	3	35	7
CQ-9	3.32	4	3	29	9
CQ-10	3.20	4	2	38	5
CQ-11	3.10	4	2	40	4
CQ-12	3.95	4	3	7	33

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Frequency: positive responses</b>	<b>Frequency: negative responses</b>
CQ-13	3.58	4	3	13	25
CQ-14	3.70	5	4	40	2
CQ-15	3.45	4	2	43	1
CQ-16	3.80	4	2	38	5
CQ-17	3.40	4	4	42	2
CQ-18	4.05	4	3	43	1
CQ-19	3.35	4	4	38	4
CQ-20	3.85	4	3	37	6

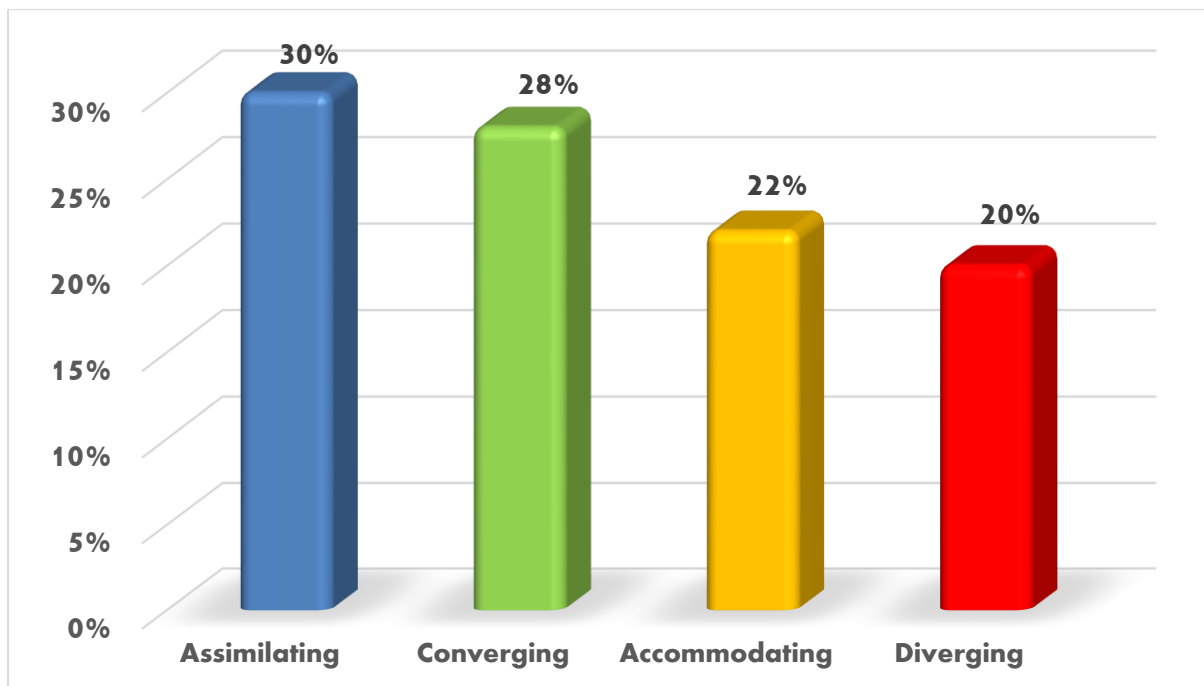
The median and mode are different kinds of averages. The median relays the midpoint of the distribution between the independent variables (Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1), indicating the point where there is equal probability that a choice above or below will be selected. The median for all questions but one is above three, and ranges between 3.10 (a somewhat positive response) and 4.35 (a very definite positive repose). The mode is the selection that occurs most often and for 19 of a total of 20 questions are four or five.

Supplementary to the median, mode and range descriptors, analysis of the frequency of positive responses (Strongly Agree, and Agree) and negative responses (Strongly Disagree, and Disagree) was determined. Results (Table 4.10) confirm the distinctive positive association of respondents to the proposed statements. Negative responses frequented between one (1) and thirty-three (33) times per question, while positive responses frequented between seven (7) and forty-four (44) times per question.

The summarised results per Learning Style Preference category, showed in Chart 4.4. provide a more definitive result that does differentiate between the four (4) Learning Style Preference categories.

Chart 4.4: SMS Learning Style Preference Profile





Results of the Learning Style Preference data collected from the sample, show a stronger preference towards the Assimilating (1<sup>st</sup>) and Converging (2<sup>nd</sup>) Learning Styles of learning, and a lesser preference toward the Accommodating (3<sup>rd</sup>) and Diverging (4<sup>th</sup>) Learning Styles (Chart 4.3).

- 1<sup>st</sup> Preference - Assimilating Learning Style (30%);

This style represents the abstract, reflective learner who will develop a number of different observations and thoughts into an integrated whole. The Assimilating Learner likes to reason inductively by way of a logical process based on confirmed data from where conclusions are made.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Preference – Converging Learning Style (28%);

This style presents the practical learner who chooses the practical application of ideas when solving problems, easily makes decisions and easily solves problems. The Converging learner prefers the practical application of ideas, and technical problems rather than engaging on interpersonal issues.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Preference – Accommodating Learning Style (23%); and

This style experiments with different possibilities and solutions and learn by trial and error. The Accommodating learner easily adapts to changing circumstances, will respond to their intuition when solving problems, and in this way learn by discovery. The learner with this style preference is at ease with people.

- 4<sup>th</sup> Preference – Diverging Style Preference (20%).

Emphasises the innovative and imaginative approach to doing things. Views concrete situations from many perspectives and adapts by observation rather than by action. Interested in people and tends to be feeling-oriented. Likes such activities as cooperative groups and brainstorming (Kolb, 1973:2, 26, Mainemelis, Boyatzis and Kolb, 2002:5-7).

The SMS adult learner is task focussed, detail oriented, wanting to implement solutions and process detailed information. The SMS learner prefers to learn alone, prefers not to engage in learning in relation to personal relationships and requires quick decisions and results.

The SMS learner does not present with the need to strategize or experiment, and prefers concrete content. The SMS learner will not adjust to changes easily, are not at ease with emotion, and typically does not prefer group activities and collaboration with others.

Similar to the challenges identified with the Thinking Style Preference profile of the SMS, the results from the Learning Style Preference profile analysis, poses the challenge that members of the SMS present with a lack of interest in exploring new avenues and ideas, and to a great extent are not instinctive solution finders. The SMS members further present an attitude of defiance toward proposals for change and new and innovative learning approaches.

Research by Kolb (1984) shows that learning styles are influenced by a number of factors namely personality type, didactic specialisation, choice of career and the current job profile, role and tasks (Kolb and Kolb, 2008:9). Subsequent to the Jungian theory that presents adult development as a process that moves in adapting to the

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environment from a specialised perspective to a more integrated way of adaption, Mainemelis *et al.* (2002:9) argue that sophistication in learning implies the move from “specialisation to integration”. This ideal, sophisticated learning cycle is a product of integrating conceptualising/experiencing and acting/reflecting in the learning process (Mainemelis *et al.*, 2002:2-3). This integrated learning helix can act as an important instrument to develop learners, in this case members of the SMS, into better learners. It can be a mechanism for members of the SMS to “learn how to learn” when the approach is aimed at consciously following the learning cycle of reflecting, thinking and acting (Kolb and Kolb, 2009:297).

There is a definite need to integrate the individual focus with the organisational focus for the learning and professional development of the SMS. It is imperative that, among others, the design and development of professional development solutions for the SMS must include and focus on personal and emotional development, values and instilling pride and passion to serve. It is essential to expand the abilities of the SMS members by practicing and developing their capacity to think “out of the box” and to create innovative solutions for the challenges experienced in the public service.

#### **4.6. General observations: Learning Style Preference and Thinking Style Preference profiles of the SMS**

Kolb (1984:33, 34) acknowledged the close relationship between various cognitive and mental models. So much is the extent of his belief, that he emphasised, on record in his book *Experiential Learning, Experience as the source of Learning and Development* (1984), the following: “So stated, this proposition must seem obvious. Yet strangely enough, its implications seem to have been widely ignored in research of learning and practice in education”. Kolb (1984:2,26) derived his Experiential Learning Theory, and the accompanying learning styles model, by building on the assertions of Carl Jung (1921:178, 193, 207, 226, 251) that learning styles result from a person’s preferred way of adapting to the world.

Literature supports the argument that a mentionable relationship between the Kolb (1973) and Neethling (2000) Learning- and Thinking Style Preference models exists. The review of the literature and theory pertaining to the Kolb (1973,1984) Learning Style Preference Model, and the Neethling (2000) Thinking Style Preference Model, revealed the agreements between the characteristics described for each dimension in the Neethling Thinking Style Preference Model (2000) and the characteristics described by Kolb (1973,1984) in each Learning Style Preference category. The result of the analysis is captured in Table 4.7.

The empirical evidence profiles the SMS (Chart 4.2) as mostly having a preference towards the dimensions of the left hemisphere of the brain (described by Sperry, 1974) and represented by the L1 - Analyst/Realist and L2 - Organiser/Stalwart dimensions of the Neethling Thinking Style Preference model (Figure 1.1). Similarly, the Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS (Chart 4.3) clearly highlights the Assimilating and Converging Thinking Styles (Kolb, 1984) as the SMS preference profile. The typical characteristics of the Assimilating and Converging Thinking Styles (Kolb, 1984), also closely linked with the processes in the Left hemisphere of the brain (Sperry, 1974, Neethling, 2000). This overlap in style is reflected upon in Figure 4.1.

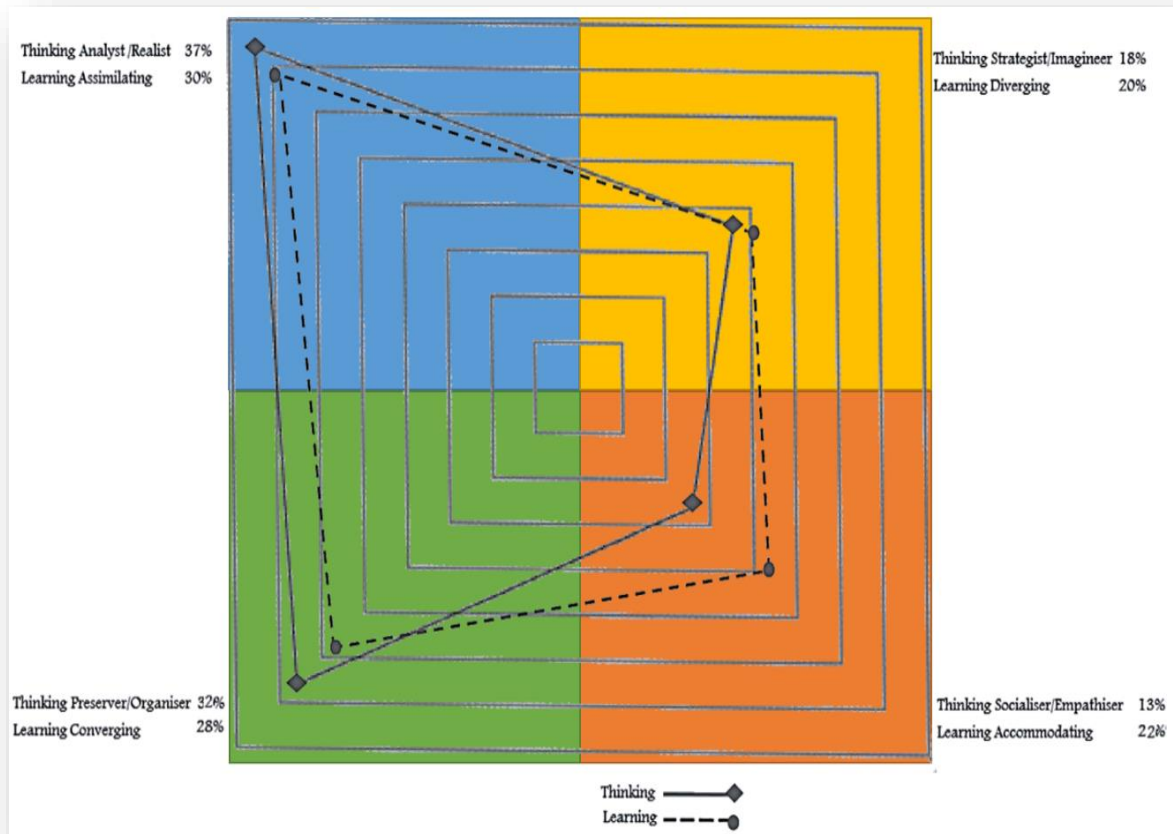


Figure 4.1 Similarity in SMS Thinking and Learning Style Preference profiles

Figure 4.1 provides the overall comparative result from the statistical analysis and the empirical findings of the Thinking Style and Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS (Chart 4.2 and Chart 4.3) viewed as an integrated profile, while maintaining the integrity of the resulting by presenting the integrated profile with the explicit inclusion of the distinct results for the Learning Style Preference and Thinking Style Preference profiles of the SMS. There can be no conclusion other than that Thinking Style Preferences and Learning Style Preferences are related, and are linked at the cognitive level. This means that, should a Thinking Style Preference profile of an individual be *Analyst/Realist* according to the Neethling (2000) model, the comparative Kolb (1973, 1984) *Assimilating* Thinking Style Preference will be found in the same individual.

From the findings of this study, supported by scholars such Kolb (1984) and Neethling (2000), the importance and value of an integrated and holistic approach for learning and professional development becomes prevalent. As presented, among other cognitive processes, individuals have a natural preference in the way they think, learn and solve problems. These preferences towards the one or the other concept, even though measurable, are flexible. A great number of people are able to develop and/or move between various cognitive preferences. For this reason, these individuals are not limited or held ransom by their natural preferences, and can, especially within the right context and with sufficient motivation, move beyond their primary preference (Van Dijk, 2006:349). Providing an enabling environment for the development of the whole, will map the way from a delineated, specialised perspective to adaptation and move toward the integrated way of adaption and learning sophistication (Mainemelis *et al.*, 2002:2-3).

#### **4.7. Analysis: Motivation for Learning**

The importance of motivation is stressed by a number of scholars, including Bushier (1971), Burgess (1971), Morstain and Smart (1974) and Cross (1981 & 1982) who have over the years intensively studied motivation, to gain greater insight into reasons why individuals choose to learn and partake in learning and development opportunities. There is a rich literary repository in the field and the literature was expansively engaged with in Chapters 1 and 3.

The results present a number of direct and indirect motivators (or dissuaders) for learning and participating in learning and development opportunities. Kyndt *et al.* (2011:1) argue that motivation is no longer a matter of an established disposition or characteristic, but agree with Heikkilä and Lonka (2006:99-117,) who describe motivation as a contextual and variable factor impacted by context and subject area. Ormrod (2014:1) argues that all learners are motivated in some way and that this motivation results in a particular pattern of behaviour. He further argues that motivation can also be negative in nature and can thus result in a motivation for a learner or learners to avoid participation in learning activities.

The reflections and records of the evidence give the opportunity to appreciate, examine and connect with the SMS and the relationship they have with learning and

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professional development, *vis-a-vis* the provision of learning and professional development opportunities. Even when provided by a wide range of learning and development opportunities, the individual must still feel motivated and make the definitive choice to participate.

The questionnaire presented respondents with seventeen statements, identifying specific reasons why the respondent chooses to learn. These statements reflected the intent and meaning of the Morstain and Smart (1974) factors contributing to the motivation for learning (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: Structure of Motivation for Learning Questions and the Relationship to the Morstain and Smart Model.

<b>Morstain and Smart Motivation Factor</b>	<b>Morstain and Smart Factor Characteristic</b>	<b>Question#</b>
Cognitive Interest	learning to gain more knowledge	EQ 16
	to satisfy and enquiring mind	EQ 17
Escape/Stimulation	to change the routine at home or work	EQ 15
	to create an opportunity to be challenged and get away from boredom	EQ 13
	to provide a contrast that is different from the rest of the life	EQ 14
External Expectations	complying with the expectations of someone with a formal authority	EQ 5
	complying with the requirements or suggestions of someone else	EQ 4
	to carry out recommendation from someone with authority	EQ 6
Professional Advancement	job status improvement	EQ 10
	securing advancement as a professional	EQ 11
	to compete or keep up with competition	EQ 12

<b>Morstain and Smart Motivation Factor</b>	<b>Morstain and Smart Factor Characteristic</b>	<b>Question#</b>
Social Relationships	to fulfil the need for friendships and personal relationships	EQ 1
	to make new friends	EQ 2
	to meet members of the opposite sex	EQ 3
Social Welfare	to improve his or her ability to serve others	EQ 7
	to improve their ability to participate in the work of the community.	EQ 8
	to prepare themselves for community service	EQ 9

Respondents were required to record their level of association to each statement on a five (5) point Likert scale. The method to analyse data is similar to the method applied for the interpretation of the Learning Style Preference data. Each priority is represented by a score. Individual responses are treated as ordinal data. Median, mode and range analysis results are reported, including a frequency analysis of positive and negative responses (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Description of Results: Motivation for Learning

Question number	Median	Mode	Range	Frequency: Positive responses		Frequency: Negative responses	
				#	%	#	%
EQ 1	3	4	4	22	5%	21	4%
EQ 2	2	5	4	7	1%	31	7%
EQ 3	2	1	3	3	1%	37	8%
EQ 4	3	4	4	22	5%	19	4%



Question number	Median	Mode	Range	Frequency: Positive responses		Frequency: Negative responses	
				#	%	#	%
EQ 5	2	5	4	14	3%	26	5%
EQ 6	2	5	4	17	4%	23	5%
EQ 7	4	4	4	40	8%	4	1%
EQ 8	4	5	4	32	7%	8	2%
EQ 9	4	4	4	34	7%	5	1%
EQ 10	4	3	3	37	8%	5	1%
EQ 11	4	5	3	39	8%	4	1%
EQ 12	4	2	4	25	5%	14	3%
EQ 13	4	5	3	33	7%	3	1%
EQ 14	4	2	3	36	8%	4	1%
EQ 15	4	5	4	27	6%	11	2%
EQ 16	5	2	2	44	9%	0	0%
EQ 17	5	5	2	43	9%	0	0%

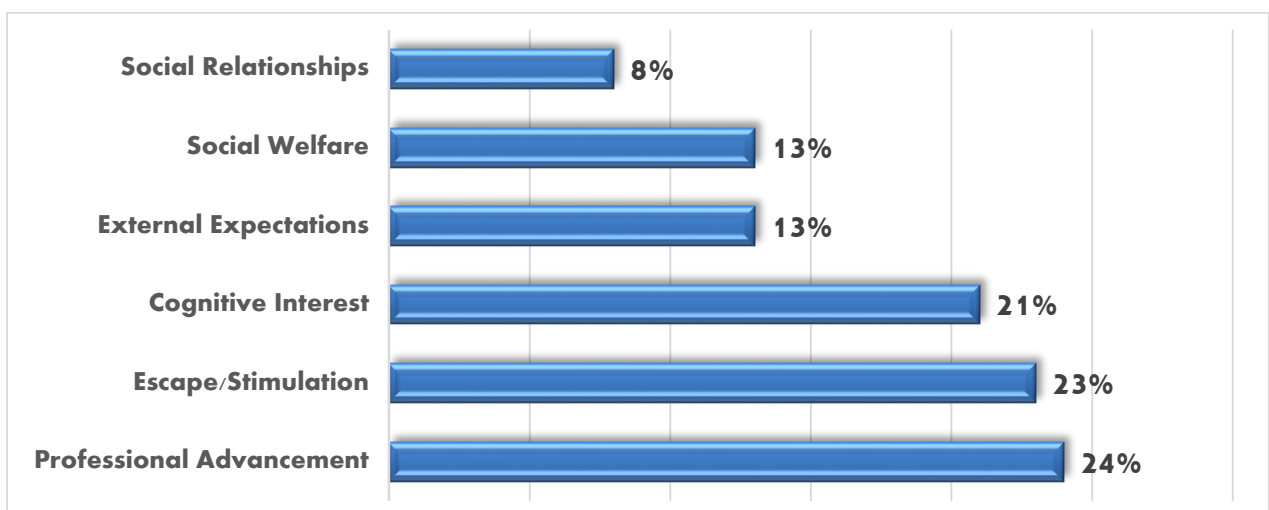
To provide the overall perspective on the primary reasons SMS choose to learn, cumulative results per motivational factor is represented in Table 4.10. Cumulative results were calculated by clustering questions per motivation category

Table 4.10: Descriptive Results per Morstain and Smart Model Factors

	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Range</b>
Cognitive Interest	4	4	3
Escape/Stimulation	3	2	3
External Expectations	4	4	4
Professional Advancement	4	4	4
Social Relationships	4	4	3
Social Welfare	4	4	4

From the detailed analysis of the data, a profile was established, presented in Chart 4.5.

Chart 4.5: SMS Motivation for Learning



The SMS report that they mostly participate in learning and development interventions to support their Professional Advancement (24%), followed by Escape/Stimulation (23%) and Cognitive interest (21%). Table 4.10 confirms a profile that shows a very low response to the need to respond to External Expectations (13%), Social Welfare (13%) and Social Relationships (8%). Based on the Morstain and Smart Model (1974), the SMS are mostly motivated when opportunities of learning and development increase the possibility to improve his or her job status and advance as a professional actively competing with others.

The direct analysis of the structured responses suggests a need to be intellectually challenged, and be provided the opportunity to be away from the normal, daily experiences that are mundane, implying that office based learning and development may not be as well received as opportunities presented in new, interesting environments. Further to the requirement for professional advancement, the results show that the SMS expect knowledge rich solutions.

The need for professional growth is echoed in the responses to the open-ended questions posed to participants. Study participants offered informative responses when requested why they were satisfied with the learning and development opportunities that they had participated in, and if they were dissatisfied, to provide the reasons thereof. Responses include:

"Events that I attended includes conferences, seminars... mainly my choice (is) according to my needs in context of constitutional goals and challenges"

"The training which I undertook provided me with the necessary tools required to enhance my management skills"

"Training yielded the expected results"

"Learning always interests my knowledge of the subject I am learning about"

"Training provided me with the skills required for my job"

One response offered the following:

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"Training development interventions are designed generically and therefore provide good overviews of things, models and frameworks he needs to be grounded in, in order to perform his or her duties"

Covington (2011:online) recommends a learning environment that engages learners and stimulate curiosity and interest. He argues that desire to become competent in the field of study, proving evidence of abilities and avoiding making mistakes, plays a secondary role to the need of the learner to achieve good results, being the fundamental motivation for learning. In this regard an insightful overall perspective was presented by one the respondents determining that:

"The level of satisfaction is highly dependent on a number of variables such as general organisation of logistics towards hosting of the meeting; availability of learning material as well as the attitude and knowledge of the facilitator"

Contrasting the expressions that lead to the need for and participation in learning and professional development events, is the very low interest in learning that provides opportunities of building relationships, for the good of people and in support of social welfare. This shows that members of the SMS are inwardly focussed when considering learning and development, and does not relate with these opportunities from an emotional perspective, or to comply with pressures, requirements and expectations from others or to develop service delivery skills and abilities and improve the ability to engage with the community and participate in the work of the community. This is a disturbing finding, as the major role of the SMS is to lead the Public Service to deliver efficient, effective and appropriate services to communities and citizens, and ultimate to present a considerate and caring attitude to the poor and disadvantage (NCP, 2011:Section 13).

Statements were made by the respondents confirming the fact that the SMS are mostly interested in professional development and growth from a personal perspective. Of great concern is the indication that members of the SMS are emotionally unresponsive, not showing great interest in building relationships and developing lateral engagement opportunities, to further collaboration with colleagues in other departments. The qualitative analysis supports the results from the structured data, and indicates the

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orientation of the SMS members to their own needs and internal focuses. This individualistic thrust can lead (and may already have led) to the undesirable status of the siloes (compartmental) delivery processes, approaches and methodologies the Public Service is faced with.

An important trend was noted in the qualitative data. A number of respondents reported that there is a connexion between the positive or negative experiences in the classroom, and the motivation for learning and participation in these events. A specific theme within this context was the dynamic relationship between facilitation (learners and facilitators) and the impact that it has on motivation for learning.

The facilitator is the conduit for the transfer of knowledge and development of skills in the classroom setting. Failing at this crucial point is of considerable concern. There is a definite challenge with the provision and the facilitation of the content of learning, resulting in dissatisfaction and a lack of learning and development. Foley (2004:57) is adamant that the focus is on the facilitator's conscience and balanced ability to perceive, and interpret information, being able to categorise the information and ultimately being able to store this knowledge for future reference. According to Pratt (1981, cited by Foley, 2004:76-78) the efficiency of the presenter or facilitator, as determined by the satisfaction reported by the participants, plays an important role in the increase in knowledge.

Heron (1999:8) describes three (3) facilitating styles namely:

- Hierarchical facilitation: where the facilitator directs the *learning* determining the way which the classroom is managed, takes responsibility for decisions, processes and direction *of the learning*.
  - Co-operative facilitation :where the facilitator works in partnership with the learners and together with the learners devise the *learning* process, sharing power/control a, helping learners towards self-direction, negotiating outcomes incorporating and considering all views.
  - Autonomous facilitation: where the facilitator respects the autonomy of the learners and provide an environment where learners determine their own learning, make personal judgements with no engagement with the facilitator, maximising self-
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directed learning. The role of the facilitator is to support the learning in their learning journey.

Heron (1999:6) argues that within the mentioned learning styles, facilitators can influence learning in various ways, calling these the six (6) dimensions of facilitation:

- Planning: Determining how the group will achieve the goals of the learning intervention.
- Meaning: Determining how participants will find meaning and understanding in experiences and actions in the classroom.
- Confronting: Determining ways in which to enable the learner deliberately deal with areas where resistance and avoidance of content or situations is experienced.
- Feeling: Determining ways in which to manage feeling to enable learning and growth
- Structuring: Determining suitable ways to structure the process of learning, classroom time and other to maintain high levels of success in learning.
- Valuing: Determining effective ways to maintain an environment where learners act with integrity and respect toward others in the classroom.

Relating the context of the SMS adult learner (Knowles, 1990:57) and the determinations made by Heron (1999:6-8), any facilitator responsible for learning and development interventions presented to the SMS, must enable learning by planning the work programme, creating and understanding the content and knowledge, confronting and challenging inflexible behaviour, being emotionally considerate and include feelings when facilitating learning. The study argues that the facilitator plays an irreplaceable role in ensuring that learning and development takes place.

The question was raised to the respondents whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with learning and development events they have participated in. Respondents were also asked to provide reasons for their response. Respondents were either satisfied

or dissatisfied with interventions, and the reasons they provided are categorised accordingly:

Respondents who were dissatisfied offered the following reasons that are directly linked with facilitation and delivery:

"There are times I feel that facilitators are out of sync with the Public Service and are unprepared and this has impact on the quality of training"

"There have been times when the facilitator had no prior experience of government and in depth knowledge policies and workings"

"Some interventions were not facilitated well"

"At times the facilitation is not as practical as it could be and/or as theoretical as required"

"How the training and development is presented plays a critical role"

Respondents who reported that they were satisfied with the opportunities attended reflected positively on the facilitation of the event:

"I am always satisfied with the training especially when we have a facilitator who is from the public sector and understands the environment"

"Quality of facilitator good and learning content appropriate"

"I have been completing a few modules of the EDP with NMMU and it was a pleasure doing the course with them"

Being rigid and inflexible can impact negatively on the performance of participants and their ability to learn (Knox, 1977:423). For effective learning, a facilitator should adjust their delivery and facilitation style to the learning style preferences of individuals (Yum, 1997:81). Dunn and Griggs (2000:12), argue that individual learning styles may change and develop as an individual develops, learns and grows through adulthood.

A few outlying reasons were recorded. Even though these factors did not recur during the analysis of qualitative feedback, the importance of the individual perspectives must be acknowledged. Issues raised includes:

"There is no sustainability after the training"

"Sometimes training becomes too theoretical"

"Many times the previous/existing knowledge and background of attendees are not at the same level"

"Portfolios of evidence are time consuming and laborious"

Two very interesting responses are considered as indirect confirmation of the inability of the SMS to solve problems creatively to enable service delivery. This is not so much deduced from the direct interpretation of the phrases that may easily be linked to a well-defined and supported theme, but the unspoken expectation that someone, or something other than the individual, must solve service delivery problems. In the phrase below, it is expected that training should provide the solutions encountered on the job, whereas theory clearly explains that training and development provide skills and competencies to enable the individual to perform better in the workplace and to resolve challenges due to these improved abilities.

"Sometimes the training is not able to provide all the solutions encountered on the job"

Similarly, the next statement shows an expectation that service delivery needs should be addressed by training.

"At times the training provided fails to address the service delivery needs"

Covington (2011:online) contends that learner motivation may sometimes be determined by fear of failure, resonating with the empirical evidence that learning and professional development are expected to resolve individual problems. It reiterates the fact that personal development and improvement necessities are redirected and the importance of the development of abilities to resolve service delivery challenges are not highly regarded. It provides the clear perception of the SMS who expect quick and easy solution when attending a course or programme.

There is a definite link between the findings from the open-ended questions on learning experience and expectations, and the quantitative results for motivation of learning.

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Ultimately the driving force of a decision to participate in a learning and development opportunity, is the expectation of the level of satisfaction. Satisfaction is described by Giese and Cote (2002:1) as:

- an emotional or cognitive response;
- the response pertains to, among others, a specific expectation or experience; and
- the response occurs at a time after the experience and can be based on an accumulation of experiences.

Even though Giese and Cote (2002:3-7) were able to present these three factors affecting satisfaction as presented, they found that a generic definition will be subject to different variables and should therefore be considered in the context of the analysis. Giese and Cote (2002:3-7) proposes to researchers to utilise the following components to determine the relevant definition for satisfaction in the context of a specific study:

Lui and Zhao (2009:253) argue that a number of studies (Dimitriades, 2006:782-800; Olorunniwo *et al.*, 2006:59-72; Chi and Qu, 2008:624-636; Faullant and Matzler, 2008:163-178) have explored customer satisfaction. Lui and Zhao (2009:256), after a comprehensive literature research, found that customer satisfaction:

- proliferates customer allegiance;
- provides motivation for a customer to continue use of a product; and
- result in customers sharing a positive message about a provider.

In the context of this study satisfaction is not linked to one specific provider, but is considered in specific relation to the satisfaction levels of members of the SMS. The findings of Lui and Zhao (2009:256) provide a context to determine the possible positive spin offs from participant satisfaction. It may be argued that, when the SMS members are satisfied with learning and professional development opportunities offered, it may result in the SMS committing to and participating in continuous professional development programs, potentially becoming change agents in the professional development of the SMS.

Making responsible choices for learning and development is no longer a generic social responsibility, but has been transferred to the individual and is a key building block for economic survival and competitiveness in global markets (Anderson, 2004:3). Anderson (2004:4) further argues that choice today is an apparatus through which individuals are empowered as patrons of education and training services. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1996:55), lifelong learning in the further education and training marketplace, is characterised by the ability to choose and to create individual pathways, through learning and work. Therefore, providers of learning opportunities have no other option that to ensure that offerings provide for the needs and preferences of the individual consumer (OECD, 1996 55).

These philosophical approaches to learning and development is echoed by De Wet (2010:4) who argues that, when senior managers serve in the administration of the democratic, developmental states, high levels of competence and efficiency are a pre-requisite, set by national standards for service delivery and equally expected by the citizens of the state. De Wet (2010:4) reiterates the importance of a secure value system and moral standards as mechanisms to promote and enable development. De Wet (2010:116, in citing Leftwich, 2007:5,7; Tiwari & Singhal, 2009:414; and PALAMA Annual Report, 2009/10:11), found that the inferred competencies to include among others are initiators, mobilisers, inclusion of stakeholders and the civil society. Further indications are that an in-depth understanding of the economic policies of the country is an important requirement for the objectives of the developmental state to be met. (McLennan, 2008:6; Gumede, 2009:12; McLennan and Munslow, 2009:20).

Empirical evidence indicates that members of the SMS (34%) are participating in learning and development interventions, in some instances for more than ten (10) days in a given year. A further 14% of respondents attended professional development initiatives for between 6-10 days and 24% attended between 4 and 5 days in a calendar year. This high rate of participation is probably a result of the determination of the sample, as only participants of the EDP were earmarked to participate. The structure and design of the EDP leans to ostensibly high numbers of training days in a relatively short period of time, as reported by some.

Perceptions about the provider of the learning and development opportunity or solutions play a role in the perceived success or failure of learning and development initiatives. In addition to exploring personal experiences of participants with content and delivery of content, the participants were asked to share their thoughts about providers of training. Participants were requested to identify and document the criteria that should be used in selecting providers for learning and development interventions. The participants were also asked to indicate their preference of provider from a list of relevant providers emerging during the literature review.

The data collected indicated that the members of the SMS as consumers have specific preferences and reasons for their selections as described by the OECD (1996:55). Universities were the clear winners as the providers of choice. Universities were closely followed by government providers including sector colleges and provincial training academies. When probing participants on the reasons for their choice, most participants reported that relevant content and supporting learning opportunities were the deciding factors when selecting a provider. The options were considered based on the provider's ability to deliver relevant learning content to improve skills, knowledge and attitudes for success as a public official.

One participant showed the true character required for the successful leadership of the Public Service that should be facilitated:

“As a public servant there is a lot that often take for granted like citizen rights due to lack of knowledge. It sounds like a petty issue however it has impact on how I do my job and how I conduct myself when serving the citizens. The Public Service does not have a service culture as a result citizens walk away with bad experience when dealing with public servants. The behaviour of the public servants is influenced by their perception of the citizen that they are the passive recipients of government services. Change management is the integral part of this process and it is an on-going process. Government training programmes should unpack the role of the citizen in the Public Services versus the role of the public servant. It is a soft issue however if it is not managed well it can have undesired outcomes.”

This value should be at the centre of the hearts and minds of every public servant. This is message that learning and professional development opportunities should share and enhance. The internal focus and need for personal advancement inform the development of such solutions. There is a need to facilitate a process of learning that is conduit presenting emotional wisdom to convince adult learners of the need to find new and innovative solutions, and critically assess their personal values and behaviours (Brookfield, 1986:136). Only when members of the SMS rise the occasion, valuing the citizen and the contribution that the Public Service must make to the wellbeing of the citizenship, will this attitude and set of values be translated into true leadership and action. The SMS will find the solutions and focus for success within themselves, realising the objectives for the establishment of the SMS.

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

The results obtained from the analysis of data collected, clearly finds that there is a sufficient legal framework that enables and supports the learning and development of the SMS. Findings further indicate that there is a correlation between thinking and learning styles preferences. Supporting this deduction is the results obtained from the data recorded for the reasons why the SMS learn.

Arguably, when considering the cognitive preferences of the SMS and imbedding relevant methods and processes when designing and developing curriculum for professional development interventions, relevance, quality and value should be greatly improving interest, adding value to better-quality learning and ultimately advance competence to improve performance in the workplace.

The triangulated findings and results, comprehensively analysing the legal frameworks and policy regime governing and supporting the SMS learning and professional development, the in-depth literature review of theory and models pertaining to learning and professional development, adult learning, learning style preferences and thinking style preferences, together with the empirical evidence provided by collecting data from participants of the EDP representatives of the SMS, contribute valuably to the learning and professional development knowledge base for public service managers and leaders. Evidence supports the notions presented at the start of the project and provides sufficient proof for the emphasis on a holistic approach to the design and

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development of learning and development solutions for the SMS. Legislation, literature and empirical evidence is conjoined with policy, theory and practice. It confirms that the one phenomenon cannot produce maximum result without consciously and skilfully integrating the other.

## **Chapter 5 – Implications for existing methods and models applied to professional development**

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### **5.1. Introduction**

This research is founded in the realisation that “We can’t solve with the same kind of thinking we used when we created the problem” (Albert Einstein, 2016:online). The research set out to develop a better understanding of the Thinking- and Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS, and the factors that play a role in the motivation for or demotivation of the SMS to participate in learning and professional development opportunities. The possibility was considered whether these personal preferences play a role in the success of learning and professional development solutions for the SMS. The study ultimately sought to know the extent to which incorporating the preferences into the curriculum and constructional design of interventions can improve participation and quality of learning.

The general theoretical literature relevant to the field of learning and professional development of the SMS specifically is limited and inconclusive, mostly focussing on professional development in the field of the health and education professions, or from a generic human resource development perspective, and is therefore inconclusive of a number of essential questions pertaining to the learning and professional development of the SMS. This study pursued the following seven (7) relevant questions:

- Are the statutory frameworks for learning and professional development sufficient to enable the successful professional development of senior managers?
- What are the theoretical frameworks underpinning the effectiveness of professional development interventions in specific relation to cognitive preferences?
- What is the Thinking Style Preference profile of the SMS?
- What is the Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS?

- What are the factors that motivate the SMS to participate in learning and professional development opportunities?
- What, if any is the correlation between the Thinking Style Preference profile and the Learning Style Preference Profile of the SMS?
- How can the inclusion of the personal preference profile of the SMS can contribute to, and improve Curriculum and Instructional design of professional development solutions to improve participation and learning?

Responding to these important questions provides the valuable insight needed to further enhance the field with reference to the professional development of the SMS in the Public service.

## **5.2. Empirical findings**

The foremost empirical findings are presented for each of Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Findings in each chapter are summarised from the perspective of each chapter and are aimed at providing a synthesised presentation in response to the specific research questions.

### *5.2.1 Do the statutory frameworks for learning and professional development enable the successful professional development of senior managers adequately?*

The purpose of the analysis is to determine whether there is a relevant and effective statutory framework for the learning and profession development of the SMS, and if this framework provides sufficiently for the SMS learning and professional development milieu. The analysis of the statutory frameworks shows a comprehensive and well-developed policy structure, designed at maximising the skills and capacity of the SMS to lead the Public Service. Inherent in these policies are the specific focus of the development of the SMS as the leadership of the Public Service, including as much detail in determining the competencies required (DPSA, 2003:Sections 2 and 4). The policies make specific mention of the need to consider the individual and their preferences (DPSA, 2003:Sections 2 and 4), the expected number of training days required (DPSA, 2015:8(8)), and the provision of guidelines for the design and development of solutions (DPSA, 2003:Sections 2 and 4). The intrinsic value of a

professional and skilled Public Service leadership, is confirmed by the legal requirement for the SMS to participate in prescribed learning and professional development offerings. Notwithstanding this mentionable legal framework, SMS professional development opportunities are not considered by or participated in by a sufficient number of SMS members. There seems to still be a lack of leadership in the design and development of learning and professional development solutions, resulting in irrelevant and one-sided solutions, lacking in quality and resulting in the unsatisfactory performance of the SMS in leading the Public Service to success.

*5.2.2 What are the theoretical frameworks underpinning the effectiveness of professional development interventions in specific relation to cognitive preferences?*

Before a determination can be made on the personal preference profiles of the SMS, and the influence that this may have on the success of professional development interventions, the theory and literature underpinning the fields of professional development, thinking and learning and motivation for learning must be understood. The intent of this question is to clarify these fields and develop the comprehensive understanding needed to maximise the efficacy, quality and validity of the study. The literature further informed the design of the semi-structured questionnaire.

A comprehensive theoretical repository exists from research collected over decades that involves the personal preferences of individuals. Concepts of workplace learning and professional development (Coombs *et al.*, 1973; Kasworm *et al.*, 2010), adult education and professional development (Knowles, 1974; Charters, 1992; Merriam & Brocket, 1996; Allen, 2013) have been comprehensively analysed and reported on. Billet *et al.* (2014:86), confirms the importance of perception and action, and its relationship with the processes of the mind.

Thinking Styles and the cognitive processes of the brain have been studied since 551 B.C. by Confucius, when he linked thinking and learning and the importance of the coexistence and integration for development and learning together (Confucius., Tsai and Goh, 1989). Uncontested is the relationship between learning and the human mind, evident in the work of Galperin (1965), Revans (1971), Kolb (1973, 1976, 1984),

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Knowles (1974), Boward and Higgard (1981), Gagne (1983), Biethler (1993) and Wilson (2012) to name a few. Gonczi (2004:19) expresses the importance of a new approach to learning and professional development that includes the consideration and integration of the world the professional lives and works in, into development initiatives.

The Sperry (1974) Left Brain, Right Brain Thinking Style Preference Model, informed the works of Buzan (1995), Jensen (1995), Hermann (1996), Neethling (2000), Mook and Douglas (2004) and other scholars in the field. These all conclude that individual thinking styles are unique within the context of brain processes and responses to information.

The importance of the inclusive approach to determine what successful learning and development are, is emphasised by the work of Mezirow (1991), Cranton (2002). McGonical (2005) and Illeris (2009). Learning is not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but includes the transformation of action and experience with an objective to change future experiences, in order that learning could transform (Cranton, 2002:66). Okedara and Brown (1981:14-15) reiterates that adult education is relevant to each individual. Knowles (1974:37-38) explains that adults cannot be taught in the same manner as children, as adults are in most instances voluntary learners.

Learning is complex, and required the inclusion of all learning dimensions to be reliable. Considering learning types and learning preferences are equally important and the understanding of the factors that impact on learning motivation understood.

### *5.2.3 What is the Thinking Style Preference profile of the SMS?*

Knowing the Thinking Style Preference profile of the SMS, provides clarity on the methods and processes that the SMS use to process information, respond to problems, and communicate with others (Neethling, 2000:8, 11, 19). The Neethling (2000) 4-Dimension Thinking Style Preference model was used as the basis for the determination of the Thinking Style Preference profile of the SMS.

Results from the empirical analysis show that most of the members of the SMS have a primary preference toward the Realist/Analyst dimension of the Neethling model,

implying that the SMS represent with the following characteristics in their thinking styles and processes:

- clarity of thinking;
- concrete information;
- focus on a specific goal or outcome;
- no distractions;
- achievable and clearly defined goals;
- no clutter and confusion;
- weigh benefits and disadvantages;
- understand all possible consequences;
- get to the essence of things;
- dig deeper to achieve results;
- involved in financial and investment matters;
- connect a figure or measurement to things;
- certainty; and
- calculate, probe, research and examine conditions.

The secondary Thinking Style preference of the SMS members, also linked to the left hemisphere of the brain (Sperry, 1974), is the Preserver/Organiser thinking style dimension. The characteristics linked to this dimension in the Neethling (2000) model are:

- traditions and well-proven methods and practices are respected;
- rules and regulations to be in place;
- methodical and cautious;
- neat and secure environment;
- plan, organise and arrange things;
- follow an orderly, detailed and systematic approach;
- implement and to put things into action;
- schedule or a 'to do' list;
- administer and oversee tasks; and
- perseverance, effectiveness and usefulness.

In the work environment, the SMS is evidently well positioned to naturally provide technical and statistical insights into the data, grasp the information and the problem, critically analyse options to determine the solution. Further, based on the secondary thinking style preference, the SMS will tend to be effective when the organisational aspects are needed, and planning to put an idea into action. The SMS members are also well positioned to execute a work plan, criticise and correct content and plans, organisation, time management, and practical application of ideas and solutions.

Because of the very low preference of the SMS toward the right hemisphere dimensions of the thinking process (Sperry, 1974; Hermann 1996), the SMS will be inclined not to consider interpersonal implications in the workplace, plans and decisions. The SMS does not easily bring teams together and foster team work and a common vision. Communication is probably ineffective and interpretation of responses and messages from teams during meetings and information seeking sessions are weak. The SMS may not naturally present with an awareness of values and bias, being more task-orientated than people-orientated.

The strongly left oriented thinking style preference of the SMS, further challenges the ability of the SMS to define the problem and explore the problem and possible solutions from a holistic, contextual perspective. A lack of innovation and intuition may result in bad judgement and evaluation of ideas, and a lack of synthesis to understand the big picture, and setting goals that show only the link between the existing, and does provide for change and innovation (Neethling, 2005, 9).

#### *5.2.4 What is the Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS?*

Building on the thinking Style Preference profile of the SMS, an analysis of learning style preferences develops a more comprehensive profile of the SMS, highlighting the natural tendencies, strengths and weaknesses of the SMS in relation to learning. The SMS members are mostly assimilating learners with a strong second preference toward converging learning (Kolb, 1973; Kolb, 1984). As assimilating learners, the SMS are well positioned to create theories from facts. The Converging Style allows the SMS to consider facts on a single topic, find right or wrong answers to problems, to be hands-on in application of these theories. These characteristics mostly present

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themselves in the thinking variable of the Kolb Learning Style Preference model. The challenge is that members of the SMS may have strong abilities in understanding the experience as determined by the Kolb (1973, 1984) model, but may lack the abilities to transform the experience (Kolb, 1984:38).

A further analysis finds that the Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS relates well with a concise, logical approach, where the consideration of ideas and different methods are more important than people. The SMS members require an exact explanation rather than needing practical opportunity to learn skills. Members of The SMS will perform well with understanding and organising wide-ranging information in a distinct, logical format.

In learning the SMS members are more attracted to logically sound theories, and are less interested in approaches and solutions based on practical value. The SMS prefer to process information and scientific concepts easily and will favour reading and lectures, exploring analytical models, having time to consider and evaluate, specialise and simulate work by practical application. The SMS will be less hands-on in the learning and development environment, and not be prone to consider intuition to find solutions or make decisions. The SMS will lean towards only considering the information received from others and not perform their own analysis.

Learning and professional development rely on the transformation of experiences, ideologies and beliefs of others to effect real learning (Knowles, 1980). The SMS members are required to lead a Public Service to success, enabling relevant, efficient, effective, cost effective, quality and timely services to the citizens. This implies that the development of the SMS can never only focus on being competent from a vocational perspective, but should be transformative in thinking and learning to ensure that the strategies of the South African Government are put into action and the country's goals are achieved (NPC, 2011). Learning content should naturally include the policy related vocational training, but must develop members of the SMS as well, to be able to improvise, be innovative and relevant to the objectives of the Public Service.

The ideal learning process ensures that the learner engages with all four learning modes (Kolb, 1973, 1984), namely experience, observation, conceptualisation and experimentation, and follows a reiterative process responding to different situational

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demands. Learning and professional development solutions must concretely attempt to guide members of the SMS through these learning modes to not only maximise learning, but also develop the individual from a personal perspective.

#### *5.2.5 What are the factors that motivate the SMS members to participate in learning and professional development opportunities?*

The SMS are adult learners and thus will typically be influenced by the characteristics proposed by Knowles (1980), namely self-concept, adult learning experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn (Knowles, 1980:12). Kolb (1984:34-38) argues that the motivation for the adult learner is internal, and Morstain and Smart (1974:83-98) specifies six (6) factors influencing individual motivation:

- Social Relationships;
- External Expectations;
- Social Welfare;
- Professional Advancement;
- Escape/ Stimulation; and
- Cognitive Interest.

The empirical analysis shows that members of the SMS prefer development opportunities that promote their professional advancement, followed by the opportunity to escape from the mundane daily life and to be challenged with stimulated content. The SMS members do not respond to the external expectations to train, to develop and promote social welfare or to create and maintain social relationships. The SMS present the need to be intellectually challenged, and be provided the opportunity to get away from normal, daily experiences.

Obviously the reasons why members of the SMS choose to learn are closely connected with the levels of education of the SMS. The SMS are well qualified and most SMS members have either a masters or a doctoral degree. Improved qualifications are therefore less relevant, while the already well developed cognitive and knowledge base of the SMS forms the baseline from where further learning and

professional development should start. Focussing on accredited training, with a strict theory base, will not entice the SMS to learn. It directly impacts on the disinterest shown to available solutions. Learning and professional development solutions that are clearly aligned to the career paths of the SMS will be much more positively received, especially with an intensified focus on cognitive skills and intellectual challenges.

*5.2.6 What, if any is the correlation between the Thinking Style Preference profile and the Learning Style Preference Profile of the SMS?*

The golden thread between the Thinking Style Preference profile and the Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS, is an important indicator of the natural preferences of the SMS that should be considered in the adequate design and development of curriculum and instruction of learning and professional development solutions offered to the SMS. It will enhance the study by identifying development areas in the SMS developing the attitudes and ideologies of the SMS toward a more people focussed, citizen centric leadership, that is able to transform the public service and improve service delivery.

An analysis of the models of Neethling (2000) and Kolb (1984) reveals the similarities in the models. Thinking Style Dimensions (Neethling, 2000) could be aligned to specific Learning Styles (Kolb, 1984) as shown in the following characteristics:

- **The Realist/ Analyst (L1) and Assimilating Learning Style:** Focus, essence, precise, accuracy, clinical, factual memory, performance driven, logic, objective, diagnostic, analysing (digging deeper), quantitative, realistic, important to do it right, critical, rational, best at understanding a wide range of information, concise, logical structure, less focused on people, more interested in ideas and abstract concepts, finds the logical soundness of a theory more important than the practical application, prefer readings, lectures, exploring analytical models, and having time to think things through.
  - **The Preserver/ Organiser (L2) and Converging Learning Style:** Organised/orderly, punctual/time conscious, planned, structured, step by step
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approach, steadfast, sequential, thorough, security/safekeeping, detail, traditional, drive/task driven, neat, reliable, result driven, best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories, solve problems and make decisions by finding solutions to questions or problems, prefer technical tasks and problems, less interest in personal issues, prefer to experiment with new ideas, simulations, laboratory assignments, and practical applications.

- **The Strategist/Imagineer (R1) and Diverging Learning Style:** holistic/big picture, flexible, risk taking, curious, looking for alternatives, experimentation, artistic, speculation, imaginative, strategic, simultaneous doing different things at once, fantasy, visualising, synthesis/link ideas, idea intuition, investigation, integrating ideas, unstructured, preference for change, viewing concrete situations from many different points of view, performs better in situations that call for generation of ideas, broad cultural interests, like to gather information, interested in people, imaginative, emotional, cultural interests, specialize in the arts, prefer to work in groups, listen with an open mind, personalised feedback.
- **The Socialiser/ Empathiser (R2) and Accommodating Learning Style:** Non-verbal gestures, touch, co-operation, sociable (one on one and in groups), take part, accessible, approachable, expressive, empathy, teamwork, people-focus, people awareness, people perceptive, responsive, receptive, sensitive, support, involved, playful, respectful, “hands-on” experience, carry out plans, new and challenging experiences. act on “gut” feelings rather than on logical analysis, rely on others for information rather than their own technical analysis, prefer to work with others to complete assignments, set goals, do field work, and test out different approaches to completing a project.

Members of The SMS are mostly left brain thinkers, with a Thinking Style Preference strongly leaning toward the Analyst/Realist and Preserver/Organiser dimensions in the Neethling (2000) Thinking Style Preference model. This orientation is fact orientation, process driven, practical and unemotional, with a weak ability to maintain healthy interpersonal relations, present with empathy, extremely limited or no preference for innovation, big picture thinking and developing new ideas, moving into unknown territory to find success. There is a definite correlation between the Learning Style

Preference profile of the SMS and the Thinking Style Preference profile, and an exciting opportunity to infuse learning and development solutions with curriculum and instruction designs that advance learning and further develop the SMS to comply with the trying circumstances and high expectations that exist in the current South Africa.

*5.2.7 How can the inclusion of the personal preference profile of the SMS contribute to, and improve Curriculum and Instructional Design of professional development solutions to improve participation and learning?*

The direct and indirect implications of the Thinking- and Learning Style preferences of the SMS must be applied when determining design and development methods and practices for learning and professional development solutions. The SMS as implicated by the empirical evidence, does have the patriotism required for success, but seem to lack the personal skills to create the enabling environment necessary for performance. This needs to be accounted for in learning and professional development.

Motivation for learning and professional development is an important building block towards the creation of a capable state (NPC, 2011:376). The NPC (2011:376-377) proposes a model for learning and professional development that develops skills of public servants over the course of their career, serving as a tool to nurture a sense of professionalism and common purpose, shared visions and ethical standards and principals, provide for the development of skills and create opportunities to engage and discuss workplace challenges and solutions. The importance of a positive attitude and healthy state of motivation for learning and professional development among the members of the SMS should not be underestimated. The Public Service faces many challenges that require commitment, leadership, innovation and the implementation of policies, programmes and projects (NPC, 2011:363 -369).

To fully develop a representative and effective Public Service, as envisaged in the Constitution, 1996 (South Africa, 1996), necessitates that the Public Service becomes an organisation that repeatedly assesses itself to enable the continuous improvement of practice required for optimal performance Senge (1990:14) This can be achieved



by a cadre of leaders that are professional, focussed, and creative, and who infuse passion and energy into their teams (NPC, 2011:Section 13).

In order to achieve the status of a learning organisation, Senge (1990:14) proposes that the organisation identifies creative ways in which to tap into the full potential and ability of people at all levels, in order for individuals to commit to the organisational goals and to learn continuously. Learning and professional development become a principal part of this vision. Van Dijk (2004:518) argues that learning and development provide the organisation with the opportunity to respond to the needs of the environment and in being flexible in this response develop into a learning organisation.

Siemens (2004:online) argues that decisions that are made are influenced by continually evolving fundamentals, the collections of new information. Siemens (2004:online) claims that one of the vital skills to support successful decision making, is the ability to differentiate between important and unimportant information, and knowing when such new information impacts on the current landscape, created by the decisions previously taken. Because learning rest in diverse views, connects various sources of information, maintaining connection to facilitate continual learning is one of the important enablers of successful development (Siemens, 2004:online). From the arguments presented by Siemens (2004:online), it is clear that, in order for professional development opportunities to deliver expected results, SMS must be presented with up to date knowledge, be provided the opportunity to develop sufficient decision making skills, and realise the shifting reality within which the Public Service finds itself, knowledge, wherever this is retained, must be connected with the SMS for learning to occur.

Literature shows that members of the SMS have the ability and opportunity to develop the skills required to function successfully within the Public Service. Presented literature further supports the argument that the SMS can, if provided relevant opportunities for learning, develop the ability for a whole brain approach in managing and leading public servants through a selection of well-designed and relevant learning and professional development solutions (Mainemelis *et al.*, 2002:2-3; Van Dijk, 2006:349), and grow into the cognitive state where decisions are based on the holistic consideration of fact and knowledge (Siemens, 2004:online).

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Staley and Eastcott (1999:41) challenge the status quo, and argue that in the context of lifelong learning, work-based learning will develop and increase creating links between theory and practice that are conclusive and explicit. Professional development extends beyond the boundaries of only the development of knowledge, or practice, or self, and must be a fusion of theory, practice and personal and emotional growth to be successful.

A clear determination from the in-depth literature review is that Thinking and Learning are undeniably related (Stanford, 2007; Hydan, 2011; Biggs, 1987; Prosser & Millar, 1989; Ramsden, 1992; Hounsell, 1985; Ramsden *et al.*, 1986). Collaboration and interpersonal relations enhance learning and promote a deeper understanding (Gibbs, 1992:155,156, 163). Deep learning is non-judgmental and embraces the whole being (Hyland, 2011:138, 139).

In the words of Sperry (1987:online):“When the brain is whole, the unified consciousness of the left and right hemispheres adds up to more than the individual properties of the separate hemispheres”.

When the learning intervention approaches the learning from a comprehensive perspective a greater measure of success can be achieved. Learning and professional development opportunities should comprehensively consider the individual, and inclusively promote the development of the concepts, beliefs, feelings and judgements of the SMS to shape the understanding of the SMS during the learning and development experience (Mezirow, 1997:223). Considering individual and organisational needs on an equal basis will enable the SMS to perform better at a practical, competency level, and at a higher level of self-awareness, enabling them to lead the Public Service to successful service delivery.

Pausanias (Paus.10.24) writes that the Greek aphorism “know thyself” is said to be inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo in Pompeii since 150 BC. The importance of emotional wisdom and understanding yourself has been a profound and relevant truth for centuries. Collinwood (2001:8) declares self-awareness to be the decree of effective leadership and a principle aspect of personal development, while Hall (2004:154) suggests that becoming aware of oneself is an inseparable component of personal development.

Literature confirms the need for contextualised learning (Wilson & Hays, 1997:59), supports and sanctions the validity of the argument for a fundamental change in the basic concepts and practices pertaining to learning and professional development design for the SMS. Specialists in the field of human resource development and teaching and learning must consider the impact, and influence, of adult learning principles, thinking style - and learning style preferences, as well as the motivating factors that influence the learning and development decisions, learning experience as well as the quality and impact of learning of the case.

Confirmed by the in-depth literature review, the inference that the cognitive preferences of the SMS will influence quality of learning, and the certainty that motivational factors can either facilitate or impede on the successful development of the SMS, are undisputable. Deep learning is non-judgmental, is present in the here and now, considers the individual and is mindful to their life world, expectations and needs, is accepting to intellectuality, spirituality and emotionality, demonstrates patience, trust, and the ability to greet new experiences open-mindedly (Hyland, 2011:138, 139).

Learning is a process and not just outcome specific (Kolb and Kolb, 2008:3). Dewey (1897:79) argues that education is an ongoing process of reconstructing experiences. To improve the value and effectiveness of learning, the participant in the learning process should be provided continuous feedback on their level of success and effectiveness in relation to the learning process (Kolb & Kolb, 2008:3), for this reason the process for education, and the expected outcome from education, is the same.

Learning never happens in isolation, and all learning is linked to previous experiences and beliefs and Kolb and Kolb (2008) argues that:

- learning allows the examination of ideas and beliefs and the latter can be reviewed, tested and integrated with new ideas.
- learning requires that the conflicts between the different style preferences, and the natural instinct toward the one or the other to be resolved to enable the flexibility to move between the style preferences as and when needed.

- Learning is a comprehensive process that allows the individual to adapt, not only from a cognitive perspective, but encompassing the whole person: thoughts, feelings, perceptions and behaviour.
- learning takes place when there is a synergy between the person and their environment the manner in which options are considered during new experiences will determine the solutions that are deemed to be available at the time.

An exciting prospect presents itself to provide comprehensive, relevant and enticing learning and development opportunities for the members of the SMS, informed by the Thinking and Learning Style preferences of the SMS, aligned to the needs presented by the motivational factors involved in the professional development of members of the SMS, considering not only the need of the organisation, but infusing learning and professional development with the needs of the individual SMS member. The current practice is that curriculum designed for SMS learning and professional development is customarily informed by the policy frameworks of South Africa, the vocational competencies specified in the SMS Handbook (DPSA, 2003:Chapter 5) and related determinations. The Curriculum is knowledge heavy and practice based, and strongly influenced by policy and practice. Programmes are expected to be accredited. The nature and content of such skills courses result in accreditation of most such offerings accredited at the lower levels of the NQF, ranging between NQF levels 4 and 6. This conflicts with the needs expressed by the SMS members that learning and development opportunities should be cognitively stimulating, exciting and advancing professional development. A renewed focus is needed to review what informs curriculum and instruction, wisely incorporating individual needs and preferences to advance learning and develop an effective and competent SMS.

### **5.3. Theoretical Implications**

Central to the study, is the definition of learning, adult learning and professional development. These definitions inform the study extensively in relation to style, structure, findings and proposals. Traditionally learning is contextualised within subject and object, the subject being the individual who learns and that is unconnected to the content to be taught (Dall’Alba and Sandberg, 2014:280). In contrast, adult, practice

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based learning is related to the life world of the adult learner, permeating attitude, transformation of experiences and visionary development, responding to the need to acknowledge the individual (Charters, 1992:5-8). Mezirow (1990:10) notes that all adults are imprisoned by our personal understanding, connotations, and perspectives. For this reason, Mezirow (1990:10) argues that any we can never really elucidate experiences free of preconception and prejudice, thus objectivity is only possible when ideas are considered from both the realistic and philosophical position. The importance of pervading the curriculum and instructional design with the SMS and their needs and preferences, is the only way to design a new, successful future for learning and professional development for the SMS cadre.

A motivated individual will effortlessly engage with a learning opportunity, supported and guided by the “enquiring mind” (Houle, 1961:25). Meaning cannot be found in work related learning where there is no relationship between the professional learner, and the work. This motivates for the provision of a curriculum that provides opportunities to engage with the work from both the thinking - and feeling perspectives (Kolb, 1984). The life world of the adult learner has to some extent been incorporated in the curriculum of opportunities offered to members of the SMS, but has been ineffective due to the inconsistent application in theory, method and instruction.

Impartiality cannot be expected from the SMS members. The diverse experiences, backgrounds and belief systems create a complex phenomenon that through learning and professional development should be guided towards a non-judgemental approach to lead and develop the Public Service irrespective of personal conviction and belief. The need exists for a curriculum that assists the SMS to reconceptualise their relationship with the world and accept the responsibility to lead.

Curriculum development involves the methodology for planning, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum, including determinations of the people, processes and procedures involved (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2009:15). Curriculum models provide for a systematic and transparent record of the rationale for the use of particular teaching, learning and assessment approaches. Although it tends to be technically useful, it in many instances overlook the human characteristics such as attitudes, values, feelings, values and other factors (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2009:15).

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To achieve a successful professional development of the SMS cadre, the design of the curriculum cannot only focus on vocation, policy and practice. The emotional development of the SMS member becomes a critical factor to allow for a “change of heart”, to lead with conviction, to design new and innovative solutions and redesign the future for the South Africa Public Service. The solution proposed is:

- Vocational content must be presented in a way that not only focuses on the policy and practice, but considers the wider, social contexts and objectives of the South African Government. An example of such an integrated approach would be in the design of a curriculum for financial management in the Public Service. This is a very well defined, policy guided field, expecting a non-emotional learning experience. This subject should however be taught in a way that, even when teaching a strictly left brain orientated subject, feelings, the life world and social aspects are promoted and included when learning outcomes are determined. This balance can be achieved by incorporating the broader context of the responsibilities of the Public Service such as the provision for the development of women and girls, the need to provide for the elderly, the necessary focus on the youth, youth development and provision of jobs intrinsically in the curriculum and content of the course. The subjects should not be presented merely as theory, but should be developed and instructed in a way that requires an emotional and / or social response. Developing curriculum and instruction that actively promotes the interpersonal responsibilities in all areas of work, specifically aiming at teaching vocational theory and interpersonal practice, provides not only for a more holistic, relevant learning outcome, but provides for various thinking and learning styles. It thus creates opportunities for members of the SMS to engage with Style Preferences that they are less prone to do within typical curriculum and instruction methods.
- The Thinking - and Learning Style preferences of the SMS potentially present a leadership emotionally unresponsive and mostly focussed on practice, process, structure and resources. This profile is further defined by the need for development to enhance social well-being and interpersonal relationships. The Public Service offers services to the citizen, individuals from different

backgrounds and experiences, having different needs. Public servants cannot engage with the citizen from a policy perspective, even in instances where policy overrides personal needs. It remains a key attribute for the SMS to engage successfully with individuals, being respectful, considerate and supportive, both inside and outside of the Public Service. These attributes must be taught by example and the SMS members need to lead all public servants towards this level of inclusive, needs -based service. To achieve this result requires that emphasis will be placed on the emotional and interpersonal development of the SMS cadre. The need for emotionally wise and sensitive SMS members is present in the daily lives of all Public Servants when engaging with a troubled service delivery environment. Not only must the member of the SMS be able to engage with and lead public servants, but also the general public. It is of the utmost importance that members of the SMS develop and promote a shared vision among all public servants that is linked to the programmes and objectives of the South African Government, irrespective of personal belief, while managing effectively managing resources effectively, efficiently and appropriately. There is no option of “either / or”. Therefore, curriculum must be designed that focusses on personal development, attitudes and conduct. These areas of development have been severely undermined by the vocational - and accreditation heavy orientation of learning and professional development. Restoring the field of interpersonal relations in the curriculum and instruction of the professional development of the SMS, will contribute to the advancement of professionalism and a well-defined, well skilled, competent, wise and willing SMS.

- Considering that professional advancement, escape and stimulation are the main motivational factors contributing to the members of the SMS identifying learning and professional development as a necessity and willingly participating in learning and professional development opportunities, the current state of the curriculum and professional development opportunities increasingly demotivate the SMS members, as it limits their participation in much needed initiatives. An immediate change is needed and the typical accreditation and assessment prescribed by the NQF should be replaced with a professional development



system, comprising of prescribed professional development interventions, endorsed by the NSG and offered by approved institutions, contributing to a professional development points scale, with a prescribed minimum score to be achieved as part of the performance management cycle and performance standards. These interventions must be aimed on continuous development and the updating of relevant policies. Practice-orientated methods and - approaches within these interventions will keep the SMS members up to date with the theory and trends in the fields of leadership and management in Public Administration.

#### **5.4. Policy implications**

Since the democracy in 1994, the Public Service of South Africa has not yet made sufficient inroads in the level and standards of services delivered to the citizens. This study brings to the fore the need of understanding the reasons underpinning this reality. A problem cannot be solved by only treating the symptoms; the only solution is to treat its origin. Subsequently the first point of entry must be the leadership. This study presents empirical evidence that the provision of learning and professional development opportunities has not been designed from a holistic perspective, has not considered the needs and preference profile of the SMS, and was not designed to provide the development opportunities members of the SMS need for professional advancement and cognitive growth.

The SMS members are the appointed leaders and managers for the Public Service, and have been mandated to ensure that the Public Service delivers services to the citizens, as it is required by the Constitution (1996), towards a better life for all. One specific policy programme promoting the professional development of the SMS is the EDP. The EDP is termed a flagship programme for the professional development of the SMS, and was designed to specifically include the competencies specified by policy to enhance the performance of the SMS and the Public Service.

Contrasting the well-designed curriculum and instruction, perfectly aligned to the prescribed subject areas, including comprehensive knowledge and practice, and requiring evidence of practice based implementation and application, are the evidently



unsuccessful implementation and the lack of results achieved by the programme. Only a limited number of members of the SMS opted to participate in the Programme, and even fewer (an estimated 4%) of the SMS completed the six (6) core modules of the Programme since its implementation in 2006. Evidently the curriculum and instruction have not provided for what is required to entice the SMS. This lack of interest, together with the theory and knowledge heavy curriculum, need an urgent review and redesign.

The national norms and standards for curriculum and professional development instructional design should be reviewed to identify and consider the characteristics and profile of the members of the SMS, underlining the concept of the SMS as a holistic being, providing for the significant differences between individuals portrayed by mature adult learners (Cretchley and Castle, 2001:487-501). It is required that Public Service Learning Systems be developed aimed at the professionalising of the SMS, providing the platforms and opportunity for continuing transformation (Schön 1973:28).

The prescripts and policy contexts for the professional development of the SMS must be complemented by the inclusion of the emotional and personal development needs for an effective and successful SMS. These traditionally known as the soft skills and competencies should not be considered as an accidental add-on, or presented factually and policy -oriented (gender, youth, disability and others), but must have a humane, emotional approach to facilitate the improved emotional intelligence and professional demeanour of the SMS corpse. The usefulness of conventional education and training has been placed under the spotlight, especially with regard to the learning and professional development of the SMS. The traditional instruction paradigm must be questioned, and major shift in mind-set must occur to enable members of the SMS to move away from a purely vocational and instructionally based training sessions, to a real, enhanced learning experience in support of professional, qualified leaders.

### **5.5. Recommendations for further research**

There is a dire need for inclusive professional development of the SMS. The field is a wide and challenging field, and this study touches only the tip of the iceberg. The field

lends it to interesting and much needed research to contribute to the current knowledge. Some possibilities are:

- To investigate how professional development can be linked to a career pathway for the SMS, building on the excellent qualifications in a way that still promotes learning and development, but that is not linked to any known accreditation frameworks.
- The notion of leading for change, the need for a commanding contribution of the SMS to improve public service delivery by unequivocal leadership.
- The role of the SMS in the development of the Public Service into a learning organisation, within the context of South Africa as a developmental state.
- Development of leadership and professionals across all levels of the Public Service to serve as change agents for improved service delivery.

These possibilities mentioned are but a few in a very long list of opportunities. The debate on the continued professional development of the SMS is a comprehensive and attested field in the policy domain, but limited in research and theory. Case studies, in-depth comparisons between public and private sector professional development strategies will allow for improved and achievable policy strategies.

### **5.6. Limitations of the study**

The study provides a perspective on SMS's learning and professional development considering the Thinking- and Learning Style Preference profile of the SMS, as well as the needs and motivations that influence the decision of SMS to participate in developmental opportunities on offer. The study focussed mainly on the participants in the EDP, and specifically those members of the SMS who completed at least the six (6) core modules of the programme. A direct consequence of the methodology is that the exclusion of SMS members who had not participated in the EDP may not be fully repetitive of the SMS due to sample size. Further research for a wider sample may be needed to confirm this finding. Even so, the triangulation of data, the comprehensive literature review, and inclusion of the extensive policy regime for the professional development of the SMS, provided substantially to the value and validity of the findings made by the study.

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## **5.7. Conclusion**

The Thinking and Learning Style Preferences of the SMS, the adult learner, are equally (if not more) important than content requirements when curriculum and instructional design is done. This study highlights the need for change and identifies opportunities to greatly enhance training and development methodologies, as well as the development of curriculum and instructional design, to maximise learning outcomes.

Further to the obvious proposals from the evidence presented, the study contributes to the field by presenting a new perspective for development interventions, not only from a vocational point of view, but inclusive of the preferences and learning needs of the SMS. The study contributes to the body of knowledge in the field of Public Service professional development and shows that, irrespective of the typical policy approach to learning and professional development design for the SMS in the context of the Public Service, the strict policy and vocational approach requires a renewed vision and an immediate paradigm. The benefits of the broad, people focussed approach are undeniable as evident from the empirical findings. Proposals to enhance and improve learning and professional development opportunities, provides the means for quality, effective and well training and professional development solutions made available to the SMS.

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## ANNEXURE A

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**Informed consent for participation in an academic  
research study  
Dept. of Social and Government Studies**

***A Public Service perspective on senior management thinking, learning and training delivery methods***

**Research conducted by:**

Marisa Labuschagne (22513329)

Cell: 0832611544

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study, conducted by Marisa Labuschagne, a Masters student, from the School of Social and Government Studies at North West University, Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa. The research is approved by the principal.

The research aims to create a better understanding of the thinking and learning style preferences of the Senior Management Cadre of the Public Service, explore the possibility of the relationship between these preferences and the influence that this may have on the executive development, professional development methodologies and methods. It will add value by making recommendations regarding the structuring of professional development initiatives that not only fit the need of the Public Service but is packaged in a way that also considers the preferences and needs of the SMS. The study meets all ethical requirements.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an **anonymous** survey. Your name will not appear on the questionnaire and the answers you give will be treated as strictly **confidential**. **You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.**
- Your participation in this research is extremely important and will provide **invaluable information in the field of training and development** in a South African public service context. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- The results of the study will be used for **academic purposes only** and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
  - Please contact my supervisor, Prof Gerda van Dijk (Contact number: 018 285 2214 and/or e-mail: Gerda.VanDijk@nwu.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.
- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaire as **completely and honestly** as possible. It should not take more than **45 minutes** of your time.
- You may complete the survey electronically, or print it out, scan and email the completed questionnaire.

***Thanking you in advance for the important contribution you are making to research in our country!***

\*\*\*\*\*

**CONSENT**

Please circle the appropriate response:

I hereby confirm that I have been adequately informed by the researcher about the nature, conduct, and benefits of the study. I have also received, read and understood the above written information. I am aware that the results of the study will be anonymously analysed in a research report. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study. I had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and of my own free will declare myself prepared to participate in the study	Yes	No
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	2015/____/____
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***Please continue to Part A: Biographical Information***

# **PART A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Please indicate your response by circling the applicable answer, unless a different response is specified:

<b>1. Please indicate the Sphere of Government where you are currently employed</b>											
National Government	0 1	Provincial Government	02	Other (Please specify) _____					03		
<b>2. Please provide the name of the department/institution that you are currently employed at</b>											
<b>3. Please indicate your gender</b>											
Male	0 1	Female	02	Other (Please specify) _____					03		
<b>4. Please indicate your home language</b>											
Afrikaans	0 1	English	02	Sepedi	03	Sesotho	04	Setswana	05	siSwati	06
Tshivenda	0 7	isiZulu	08	isiNdebele	09	isiXhosa	10	Xitsonga	11		
<b>5. Please indicate your race (for statistical purposes only)</b>											
African	01	Coloured	02	Indian	0 3	White	04	Other (Please specify) _____			05
<b>6. Please state your age (in years)</b>											
18 - 25	01	26 - 35	02	36 - 45	0 3	46 - 55	04	56 - 65	0 5	66+	06
<b>7. Please state your highest level of education / qualifications prior to enrolment into the EDP</b>											
Grade 12 / Matric	01	Certificate / Diploma	02	Advanced Certificate / Diploma	03	Bachelor's Degree	04	Honours degree	05	Master's degree	06
Doctorate	07	Other (Please specify)	08	Please provide the name of your certificate/diploma/qualification:							
<b>8. Please state your salary level</b>											
Level 13	01	Level 14	02	Other: (please specify) _____					0 3		
<b>9. How many years have you been working in the Government Sector?</b>											
0-5 years	0 1	6-10 years	0 2	11-15 years	03	16-20 years	04	21 - 25 years	0 5	25+ years	0 6
<b>10. How many years have you been working in your current job?</b>											
0-5 years	0 1	6-10 years	0 2	11-15 years	03	16-20 years	04	21 - 25 years	0 5	25+ years	0 6

Please continue to Part B: Training and Development profile – Experience and Exposure

## PART B: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROFILE – EXPERIENCE AND EXPOSURE

The purpose of Part B is to determine your past and current experience and exposure to training and development interventions.

<b>12. How many training days do you participate in annually?</b>										
0-1	01	2-3	02	4-5	03	6-10	04	More than 10	05	
<b>13. What is your level of satisfaction of training and development interventions attended?</b>										
I have always been satisfied			01	I have sometimes been satisfied			02	I have never been satisfied		03
<i>Please provide reasons for your response. Be as detailed as possible:</i>										
<b>14. How have you experienced training and development interventions in the past and have these taken your personal needs into consideration?</b>										
I have always been satisfied			01	I have sometimes been satisfied			02	I have never been satisfied		03
<i>Please provide reasons for your response. Be as detailed as possible:</i>										
<b>15. At which training providers have you attended training and development offerings in the past 3 years? (Select all relevant options AND provide the reasons for making use of the training provider in the space provided. Be as detailed as possible)</b>										
My Department	01	Government Providers	02	Universities	03	Private Providers	04			

*Please continue to Part C: Learning Style Profile*

### PART C: LEARNING STYLE PROFILE

The purpose of this part of the questionnaire is to obtain an accurate picture of your personal preferences with specific regard to how you learn best. Please read each statement carefully and decide if the statement applied to you from (1) Strongly Disagree (5) Strongly Agree.

Indicate your response for each question by placing a cross over the most applicable answer on this 5-point rating scale.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I like to deal with my <i>feelings</i> when I learn	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I like to be <i>doing</i> things when I learn	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I like to think about <i>ideas</i> when I learn	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I like to <i>watch and listen</i> when I learn	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I learn best when I trust my <i>instincts and feelings</i>	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I learn best when I work hard to <i>get things done</i>	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I learn best when I rely on <i>common-sense/logic</i>	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I learn best when I <i>listen and watch carefully</i>	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I learn best when I experience strong feelings and reactions to the material	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I learn best when I am responsible for the outcome of the learning experience	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I learn best when I have to reason things out	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I learning I learn best when I am not required to engage in discussion while learning	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I learn by <i>feeling</i>	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I learn by <i>doing</i>	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I learn by <i>thinking</i>	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I learn by <i>watching</i>	1	2	3	4	5
17.	While I am learning, I like to <i>get involved with how things are done</i>	1	2	3	4	5
18.	While I am learning ,I like to actively participate in how things are done	1	2	3	4	5
19.	While I am learning ,I like to <i>evaluate</i> how things are done	1	2	3	4	5
20.	While I am learning ,I like to <i>observe</i> how things are done	1	2	3	4	5

*Please continue to Part D: Thinking Style Profile*



#### PART D: THINKING STYLE PREFERENCE

The purpose of this part of the questionnaire is to obtain an accurate picture of your personal thinking style and how you experience and interact with you work and home life on a daily basis. Carefully consider each word or phrase describing a typical response to a situation. Prioritise each of these and number each word or phrase from 1 – *this is mostly how I would react* and 4 - *this least describes how I will react*. Please respond to all Statements. Each priority can only be used once per question. The same priority cannot be allocated to options in a question.

#### EXAMPLE

**PLEASE USE EACH PRIORITY ONLY ONCE LIKE IN THIS CORRECT EXAMPLE**



When I prepare to go to the office in the morning...			Priority (1,2,3 or 4)
1.	A	I am focussed on getting ready	1
	B	I spend time on the detail of what I will wear	2
	C	I always leave at exactly the same time	3
	D	I share my thoughts with my partner of friend while getting ready	4

**PLEASE DO NOT REPEAT A PRIORITY LIKE IN THIS INCORRECT EXAMPLE**



When I prepare to go to the office in the morning...			Priority (1,2,3 or 4)
2	A	I make sure that I understand the <b>essence</b> of the project	1
	B	I develop a <b>step by step plan</b> to ensure that I know what I how to execute the project	1
	C	I <b>move between various activities</b> on the project and complete these simultaneously	2
	D	I make sure that I become <b>involved with all aspects</b> of the project	2

**Now please continue with the responses to the questions as per the example:**

When I have a task to perform...			Priority (1,2,3 or 4)
1.	A	I <b>focus</b> on the task at hand	
	B	I gather as much <b>detail</b> as possible	
	C	I am <b>flexible</b> and engage in other activities	
	D	I <b>express</b> my thoughts and ideas on the task	
When I am travelling			Rating (1,2,3 or 4)
3.	A	I am <b>precise</b> about where I will go, the routes I need to know, the schedule and the venues	
	B	I start <b>planning</b> weeks before the trip takes place	

Before I start on a project...			Priority (1,2,3 or 4)
2	A	I make sure that I understand the <b>essence</b> of the project	
	B	I develop a <b>step by step plan</b> to ensure that I know what I how to execute the project	
	C	I <b>move between various activities</b> on the project and complete these simultaneously	
	D	I make sure that I become <b>involved with all aspects</b> of the project	
My budget is			Rating (1,2,3 or 4)
4.	A	100% accurate and I know how every cent is spent	
	B	Organised sequentially to ensure that I meet all responsibilities	

	C	I <b>speculate</b> about what would be	
<b>I am best at ...</b>			<b>Rating (1,2,3 or 4)</b>
5.	A	to ensure that all team members are considered and comfortable	
	B	Responding to planned activities	
	C	Being aware of the big picture	
	D	Picking up on body language and non-verbal queues	
<b>I perform at my best when...</b>			<b>Rating (1,2,3 or 4)</b>
7	A	I work in a logical manner	
	B	I work in a structured environment	
	C	I work in an unstructured environment	
	D	I work with people (one on one and in groups)	
<b>When I engage in the development of my team members I remind them that...</b>			<b>Rating (1,2,3 or 4)</b>
9.	A	It is important to do it right	
	B	It is important to work in an organised and orderly fashion	
	C	It is important to look for alternatives to the way in which they work	
	D	It is important to remind them of the significance of the people in their work environment	

*Please continue to Part E: Motivation for Learning*

	C	Done in such a way that all ideas for	
<b>I regard one of my more valuable characteristics as...</b>			<b>Rating (1,2,3 or 4)</b>
6.	A	develop the budget as a group	
	B	Being results driven	
	C	Being a strategic thinker	
	D	Being co-operative with others	
<b>In my daily routine when I am challenged with a problem I...</b>			<b>Rating (1,2,3 or 4)</b>
8.	A	Analyse and dig deeper into the problems to resolve them	
	B	Solve problems quickly to make sure that tasks are completed	
	C	Think about problems and use my intuition to find solutions	
	D	Provide support to resolve the problem	
<b>My colleagues and seniors think I am...</b>			<b>Rating (1,2,3 or 4)</b>
10.	A	Critical	
	B	Reliable	
	C	Curious	
	D	Approachable	

### PART E: MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

The purpose of this part of the questionnaire is to obtain an accurate picture of your personal preferences with specific regard to thought processes, thinking and your experiences in the work and home world around you. Please read each statement carefully and decide if the statement applied to you from (1) Strongly Disagree (5) Strongly Agree.

Indicate your response for each question by circling the most applicable answer on this 5-point rating scale.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I want to learn to fulfil the need for personal relationships	1	2	3	4	5
2	I want to learn to make new friend	1	2	3	4	5
3	I want to learn to meet members of the opposite sex	1	2	3	4	5
4	I want to learn to comply with requirements	1	2	3	4	5
5	I want to learn to comply with the expectations of someone with a formal authority	1	2	3	4	5
6	I want to learn to carry out recommendations from someone with authority.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I want to learn to improve my ability to serve others	1	2	3	4	5
8	I want to learn to prepare myself for community service	1	2	3	4	5
9	I want to learn to improve my ability to participate in the work of the community.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I want to learn to improve my job status/be promoted	1	2	3	4	5
11	I want to learn to secure my advancement as a professional	1	2	3	4	5
12	I want to learn to compete or keep up with competition	1	2	3	4	5
13	I want to learn to create an opportunity to be challenged	1	2	3	4	5
14	I want to learn to change the routine at work	1	2	3	4	5
15	I want to learn to provide a contrast that is different from the rest of my life	1	2	3	4	5
16	I want to learn to gain more knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
17	I want to learn to satisfy my enquiring mind	1	2	3	4	5

*Please continue to Part F: Learning and Development needs*

## PART F: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

This part of the questionnaire tries to obtain a better understanding of your personal needs for future learning and development opportunities that may become available to you.

Please read each statement carefully and decide if the statement from (1) Strongly Disagree (5) Strongly Agree. Circle the relevant response.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The time allocated for training and development is sufficient to cover the content.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I enjoyed the classroom and the interaction with other learners	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I prefer one-on-one training or training on-line where I can work at my own pace and I am not bothered by others.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I need to spend time on training and development to ensure that I keep abreast of goings-on my line of work and area of expertise and be up to date and able to lead my team.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I prefer to learn on the job when dealing with day to day activities at the office	1	2	3	4	5
How will you describe your training needs going forward?						

Please respond to the following questions as honest and comprehensive as possible:

11. With which training providers will you prefer to attend future training and development opportunities with? (Select all relevant options AND provide the reasons for selecting the training provider in the space provided. Be as detailed as possible)				
Learning and development opportunities offered by my Department	Learning and development opportunities offered by a Government Provider	Learning and development opportunities offered by a university	Learning and development opportunities offered by a Private Provider	I will choose not to participate in any learning and development offerings
01	02	03	04	05
12. Please rate your preference towards the following types of learning and development opportunity in <b>priority of (1) Most preferred to (6) Least preferred.</b>				
Type of opportunity	Preference			
Short Courses 1-2 days (face to face)				
Short Courses 3-5 days (face to face)				
Distance Learning (mixed mode)				
eLearning courses that are supported by an online facilitator				
Seminars and Conferences				
eLearning courses that are fully technology mediated				

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

