

Towards a project-based service delivery approach: Uncovering organisational tensions

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ABSTRACT

In line with the modernizing, re-inventing and alternative service delivery paradigm, governments increasingly utilise project-based methodologies to improve service delivery. There is general agreement that projects are becoming increasingly important for government institutions to operationalise strategic objectives and policy programmes. This approach is commonly known as 'Management-by-Projects'.

To adopt this approach requires of public institutions to adjust their existing structures to accommodate projects. The challenges associated with this, however, range from cultural, to technological, to organisational. It requires public officials to be both managers and individual role-players on a variety of projects. Establishing a successful project-based or matrix structure requires a formal, planned approach designed to suit the requirements and context of the specific department. In efforts to facilitate interfaces between projects and hierarchical, bureaucratic structures, mechanisms such as Steering Committees, Project Directors, Project Sponsors, and Project Coordinators are utilised. Based on a literature study and empirical investigation by means of focus group interviews and frequency response ratings, it is the contention of this paper, however, that these attempts are superfluous and that the rapid movement towards matrix, project-based, flat hierarchical structures with more delegated authority to Project Managers, is potentially a more permanent solution to fully utilise a project-based service delivery approach in the South African Public Service.

INTRODUCTION

The influence of the New Public Management (NPM) and 'reinventing' movement on public institutions and practices resulted in what some observers view as a shift from bureaucratic ethos of the public service to a managerial regime (Newman 2004:17). It is argued (see Clarke and Newman 1997) that senior public bureaucrats were 'captured' by new business-like ideologies and practices that both brought a measure of freedom (from old hierarchical controls), but also subjected them to new forms of power. They are both empowered (think new) and disciplined (act within the confinements of existing structures, policies and regulations). New conceptual frameworks are necessary that involve a shift from traditional bureaucratic models to contingent and emergent conceptions. The conceptions should translate into changing organisational structures, culture and functional processes.

Since the 1990s attention has shifted to the impact of new forms of governance. Not only did the ethos and practices change, but pressure is increasingly put on traditional organisational structures and hierarchies to adjust to more matrix-like, project-based structures. A shift towards the utilisation of projects as vehicles for service delivery brought about a networked form of governance within public institutions. This shift leads to serious questions: How should public institutions adjust themselves structurally to these changes, and what are the key tensions between traditional structures and more matrix, or project-based structures? This article aims to explore current applications of project management in the South African Public Service, and, based on a literature survey and qualitative research, to uncover current organisational tensions. It should be noted that a multitude of variables could influence successful project-based service delivery such as strategy, governance, maturity, resources, leadership, and so forth. This article, however, only focuses on the structural - broadly referred to as 'organisational' - variables that could impact on project-based delivery.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS IN THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT

Public institutions operate in multi-project service delivery environments where traditional project management tools and practices, which focus on individual projects, are not adequate. Partington (1996:15) and Crawford et al. (2003:2) for example drew attention to the dualism in emerging trends in Public Management. The first top-down view follows a rational, hierarchical model that emphasises control, order and structure. The second emerging (NPM) bottom-up model recognises a non-linear, political and irrational process. Associated organisational forms are characterised as dynamic, interconnected, and informal systems and are expressed through formal structures and systems. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, public managers may feel threatened by new organisational structures and processes.

Recent reports (2003) by the United Kingdom Government, titled "*Better Policy Making*" and "*Identifying Good Practice in the use of Programme and Project management in Policy-Making: Transforming Public Services; a Civil Service that Delivers*", identified a number of good practice examples in the development and implementation of policy. These reports clearly reflect that Project Management is a proven approach to effective service delivery. Project Management should be the focal point for policy-makers in that they should think through the so-called "end-to-end" process to translate a particular policy into operational plans and desired outcomes. End-to-end policy-making is important to consider implementation, resource allocation and delivery from the outset. There is thus general agreement (see Willson-Murray 1997; Nickson and Siddons 1997; Newbold 1998) that projects are becoming increasingly important vehicles for public institutions to reach their reason for existence.

Despite this trend towards project application, it is clear that existing management models focus too much on narrow technical aspects and increasingly there is pressure to develop a more comprehensive paradigm to incorporate especially political dimensions, change and transformation issues in project planning. In this regard Yeo (1993:113) argues for a soft systems approach whilst Crawford et al. (2003:2) in response developed a 'Soft Systems Thinking' (SST) model. This model incorporates ideas typified by the epistemology of soft systems in Project Management. Checkland

and Howell (1998) further contributed by their development of the systems thinking-like 'Processes for Organisation Meanings' (POM) model for conceptualising the way meanings are created in organisational contexts – in other words, a focus on a broader view instead of a narrow technical ('hard' issues) perspective. In line with exchange theory this perspective is particularly important in public sector context for the development of policy in response to societal issues.

Clarifying 'project-based' service delivery

A project can be regarded as a temporary organisation to achieve a specific purpose. Young (1996) and Kerzner (2003) define a project as any series of activities and tasks that have a specific objective to be completed within specification; have defined start and end dates; have funding limits; consume human and other resources and are multi-functional. A key factor in an organisational context is the time element. A project has a deadline and definable costs and standards within that time frame. Bresnan, Goussevskaia and Swan (2004:1537) emphasise that since projects are once-off, self-contained, temporary organisations, they do not easily fit into routine organisational processes and require dedicated modes of organisation and specific management practices and techniques. There is thus idiosyncratic aspects of projects as relatively short term and fluid activities set against a more permanent and static organisational setting.

Andersen and Jessen (2002) and Kolltveit, Karlsen and Grønhaug (2005:3) underline the fact that Project Management as discipline grows and matures and that this results in plurality, differentiation and fragmentation in perspectives. Artto (2001:5) states that the future development of Project Management will focus on the wider organisational context, and more specifically to the issue of project interrelations with other organisational structures such as other projects, line management, and a project's role in fulfilling the strategic objectives and appropriate procedures to achieve that.

As stated, public institutions increasingly utilise project methodology to operationalise strategic programmes and implement service delivery initiatives. Projects thus become part of the operations of the institution. DeFillipi and Arthur (1998:125) and Thiry (2002:2) call such organisations 'project-based' and regard them as organisations that manage operational functions within a temporary project setting. In other words, project-based organisations conduct the majority of their functional activities in project mode and privilege project dimensions over functional dimensions in their structures, policies and processes. Gareis and Huemann (2000:709) and Artto (2001:6) refer to 'project-based organisations' as those organisations that adopted project-oriented working methods in their functioning. It uses internal (functions) and external (delivery) projects to operationalise its strategic objectives.

To ensure the optimal utilisation of scarce departmental resources, projects should be aligned with programmes and existing organisational structures and arrangements. It is therefore necessary to establish and improve interfaces between the programme, individual projects and organisational arrangements. These interfaces generally fall into one of three categories:

- ◆ *Organisational interfaces* — formal and informal reporting relationships among different organisational units or directorates.
- ◆ *Technical interfaces* — formal and informal reporting relationships among different technical disciplines and functional areas. Technical interfaces occur both within project phases and between project phases.
- ◆ *Interpersonal interfaces* — formal and informal relationships among different individuals working on programmes and projects.

These interfaces often occur simultaneously and provision should be made to incrementally improve and maintain them. The use of steering committees or other mechanisms of ‘governance’ may significantly assist to facilitate these interfaces. A steering committee could, for example, ensure that a particular project obtain relevant resources from various functional directorates (organisational interfaces), get assistance from IT (technical interface), and bring all role-players (i.e. heads of directorates) frequently to the table to establish work practices and to foster relationships (interpersonal interfaces).

Thiry and Deguire (2007) demonstrate that mature project-based organisations need to adopt integrative approaches that will enable consistent structures, delivery of strategy and uniformisation of knowledge. Gareis and Huemann (2000:712) highlight the following characteristics of a project-based organisation:

- It defines management by projects as an organisational strategy
- It adopts temporary organisations for the performance of complex processes
- It manages a project portfolio of different project types
- It has specific permanent organisations to provide integrative functions
- It applies a ‘new management paradigm’
- It has an explicit project management culture
- It perceives itself to be project-oriented.

They (Gareis and Huemann) emphasise three key variables that should be incorporated in a project-based organisation, namely structure (temporary and permanent organisations), culture (Project management and new management paradigm), and strategy (management by projects).

THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE ON PROJECT-BASED DELIVERY

In a dynamic Public Service environment, traditional bureaucratic structures are usually not flexible enough to rapidly adjust to changing conditions. The opposite is true for programme and project-based or matrix organisational structures. With faster response to needs and demands, better utilisation of resources, and improved programme and project control and performance, programme and project-based organisations have the flexibility to maximise their efforts.

Creating a project-based structure requires public officials to be both managers and individual role-players and stakeholders on a variety of projects. This reality means that it requires a more informal or infrequent use of project management tools and principles since projects may be run on an *ad hoc* basis.

In the literature, the terms matrix management, project management, matrix organisation and project organisation are frequently used synonymously. These terms involve some type of cross-functional organisation since they invariably involve bringing resources together from different functional areas or units to undertake a task on a temporary or more permanent basis. Ford and Randolph (1992:268) define matrix simply as any organisation that employs a multiple command system that includes related support mechanisms and an associated organisational culture and behaviour pattern. These authors explain the mixed or overlay organisational form that characterise matrix organisation in which traditional, vertical hierarchy is 'overlayed' by some form of lateral authority. Ford and Randolph (1992:269) further accentuate another common characteristic, namely dual lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability that violate the traditional 'one-boss' principle of management. Typically the project manager reports to a higher level of executive or top manager. Team members report to their functional departments and maintain responsibility for routine work in their functional area (Campbell 2003:244).

An organisation's structure determines the division of power and authority in it. Since projects are traditionally defined within functional units, they are necessarily targeted within the scope and some specific unit, rarely going beyond the boundaries defining that specific unit. According to Combe (In Dietrich, Poskela and Arto 2003:9) this limiting, functional view typically causes the following problems:

- Unclear roles and responsibilities if projects cross departmental units
- Cross-functional projects may create conflicts with functional priorities and confusion over resourcing
- Without a strategic focus projects implemented in various functional units may not contribute to the achievement of strategic priorities.

In spite of the problems highlighted above, Turner and Keegan (1999) underscore the positive side to traditional structures on project delivery. In their research of project-based organisation structures they observe that there is a need to obtain or retain some special functions in organisation structure in addition to the project structure to maintain the career development of individuals and promote learning both the individual and organisational levels. Dietrich, Poskela and Arto (2003:11) support this observation and propose that responsibility should be divided to tie it to organisational structure. Each functional unit then owns a management unit for the coordination and status reporting of various cross-functional projects. They caution, however, that by creating additional structures to support multiple projects may result to unnecessary complexity and conflicts in responsibilities and resource allocation activities.

According to Hill and Hupe (In Newman 2004:25) bureaucratic arrangements in the public service were typically based on the institutionalisation of formal accountability upwards through the departmental hierarchy to ministers and Parliament. However, the dispersal of power and the creation of a network of multiple agencies responsible for service delivery initiatives, result in multiple, rather than single forms of accountability. Where power is shared, it has the additional challenge of responsibility that becomes fragmented and elusive.

Senior managers in the Public Service simply do not have the authority to unilaterally impose sweeping structural change. They are ultimately accountable to political heads for whom the internal organising of public institutions are rarely a matter of great concern. Furthermore, legislators are typically not concerned about structures because the variations in public institutions have been relatively modest. This concern could dramatically change if public managers suddenly shift to an organic or radical form of structure in which responsibility might be obscured and highly diffuse. Heads of departments are likely to spend most of their time on broad policy-making and policy implementation activities and attempting to please political superiors. Critical questions about organisation structure are therefore not high on the priority list. Bozeman (1981:109) draw attention to the fact that public organisation theory and practice have been much more attentive to the politics of public service restructuring or reorganisation (a much broader form of organisation design) than to conventional structural design.

The author is of the opinion that there is often a mismatch between organisation structure and policy intent. In designing policy policy-makers may have certain outcomes in mind, but the implementation of the policy is often hampered by an inefficient delivery structure. Furthermore, if policy programmes are ill-conceived, delivery structure will not remedy the problem. There could also be conflict or disjuncture between departmental objectives (administrative intent) and policy objectives (political intent). This is important to consider given the redesign and development of the South African Public Service since 1994. There is a focus on a statutory and regulatory framework to improve service delivery and hence the perceived quality of policies. But, the structural design of implementation agencies (government departments) often does not match the objectives of these policies. Departments should be structured in such a way that policy programmes are effectively implemented and scarce resources optimally utilised. A change in structure must be relevant to accomplishing policy programme goals. The scope of departmental redesign should also consider the role of the department and its mission in the broader political, governmental arena of the country.

A literature survey reveals that there is currently no consensus over which factors influence structural choice. This is possibly due to the fact that several interrelated factors are involved such as organisational characteristics (type, size), nature of projects, environmental/political influences, the expertise (maturity levels) of project managers and team members, and so forth. The main school of thought about organisation design is known as “applied structural design” which focuses on choosing the most appropriate mode of formal organisation structure given the organisation’s mission and goals (Bozeman 1981:107). Design of the basic structure involves such central issues as how the work will be divided and assigned among positions, groups, departments, units, etc. and how the coordination necessary to accomplish total organisational objectives will be achieved. Decisions made about these issues are usually published in organisation charts and job descriptions. Ford and Randolph (1992:280) and Gareis and Huemann (2000:718-719) highlight variables for consideration regarding organisational structure which posit that the optimal organisational form is that which best suits the organisational environment, the organisational characteristics (structure, culture, growth, centralisation, technology), the skills and behaviour of people involved, and the task to be accomplished.

TOWARDS MATURITY: EVOLVING FROM TRADITIONAL TO PROJECT-BASED ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

As the title of this article suggests, public institutions cannot change their organisational structures rapidly. An incremental maturity process is recommended where organisational structures gradually evolve to accommodate best practices associated with successful project delivery. Andersen and Jessen (2003:457) warn that a successful project-based structure must be “grown instead of installed”. An organisation simply cannot ‘plug’ a matrix into its existing structure and expect success. Such structures should be uniquely developed for a particular application in a particular organisation, and this development will likely follow an evolutionary path. Bozeman (1981:112) also proposes a conservative approach since a change in structure often produces significant “power shifts”. The direction and intensity of shifts are often unpredictable.

Project maturity simply refers to the fact that an institution gradually becomes conditioned to successfully deal with all projects (Andersen and Jessen 2003:457).

The so-called *Project Management Maturity Matrix* is extremely helpful to assist departments to improve the ‘maturity’ (level of structure and system integration, and support for project practices) of their project management processes, in terms of an evolutionary path from ad-hoc, disorganised processes to mature, disciplined project management processes.

The Maturity Matrix describes four levels of maturity in project management (Gareis and Huemann (2000) and Andersen and Jessen (2002) developed a 5-point scale maturity model, but are similar to the Maturity matrix). The first level involves the introduction of a project management methodology. On this level it is important that all project managers have a framework within which to work and that the organisation has the necessary structures to support them. The second level of project maturity (or organisational integration) is characterised by an agreed methodology to be followed that helps repeat earlier successes from similar projects. Courses and training can help at this level. The key process area at level 3 focuses on the benefits of the projects for the organisation. These benefits should not only measure whether projects have delivered against cost, time and quality criteria, but should measure the systems value and the long term positive benefits of projects. It is necessary to revisit the project after a period of time to see if the benefits have accrued. If there are no real benefits senior management should seek to identify why not and whether any action is required.

At level four typically portfolios of projects (such as programmes) are managed to ensure that collectively they deliver the organisation’s strategies. Portfolio management is about ensuring the right projects are carried, that processes are aligned, and that resource utilization is optimized. Practices and processes need to be in place so that all new project proposals can be reviewed and decisions made about whether they contribute to the overall strategy of the organisation.

By applying the Maturity Model it is argued that projects will be successful when the right departmental conditions (i.e. supportive structures, systems and processes) exist.

Creating a conducive environment - and mindset - that supports programmes and projects success is a major step towards helping project teams succeed. All units and directorates in the department need to work together and support each other. To facilitate this support, it is important that everyone understands the department's strategy, plans, programmes and current priorities. It is also important for everyone to know where their particular unit or department fits into the operationalisation of these plans through programmes and projects.

In line with 'maturity-thinking', Ford and Randolph (1992:271) and Modig (2007:808-809) propose a continuum or sliding scale to analyse organisational structures. On the one end of the continuum is a "pure stationary" (permanent) organisation, and on the other end is a temporary (project) organisation. These writers argue that matrix structures evolve over time and that this evolutionary process typically covers five stages. In the first stage the organisation begins as a traditional or functional type hierarchy (most government departments are currently in this phase). As that structure becomes inadequate to deal with the complex, dynamic conditions associated with projects, the organisation moves into the next phase, 'project-based organisation'. In this phase, the traditional functional hierarchy remains the foundation of the organisation's structure, but project management is added as a secondary, temporary overlay to deal with new demands. If organisations make this overlay permanent, it moves into the third phase labelled 'matrix organisation' or 'permanent overlay'. In this phase, project management assumes a permanent form in the organisation, although the functional hierarchy is still considered the primary organisational form. The fourth phase of evolution is called, according to Ford and Randolph (1992:272), the "mature matrix" where a balance of authority exists between the functional hierarchy and the project organisation. The last stage, labelled "beyond the matrix", may entail organisational forms that are unique to the functions of the particular organisation. Bozeman (1981:108) refers to such structures as "floating" structures which adjust to changing conditions. Conner (1998) also contributed by explaining how organisations should become "nimble" to adjust to such changing conditions. An organisation may stop evolving at any point in this five-stage process if the appropriate precipitating factors are not present. It could be argued that large scale policy imperatives and service delivery initiatives could be the stimulus for government departments to gradually move towards a more organic organisational form such as a project-based or matrix structure.

One should note that different functional areas in departments and different departments working together on Government projects or in partnership with the private sector, may be at different stages of maturity. This could complicate service delivery because of complex interrelationships, coordination, administrative and managerial systems, and contractual conditions.

METHODOLOGY

To explore the inherent organisational tensions that senior public managers experience to 'juggle' functional and project responsibilities, the author drew on a number of focus group interviews, group discussions, and assessment exercises held during the presentation of the Executive Development Programme (EDP) for the senior management service (SMS) hosted by the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI). The author was responsible for the facilitation of the

module on 'Programme and Project Management' during November and December 2007 to SMS-members in Gauteng ($n=34$), and Mpumalanga ($n=13$), and also to evaluate the assessment exercises completed by groups in the Western Cape ($n=12$), Limpopo ($n=22$) and KwaZulu Natal ($n=19$). These exercises tested, inter alia, the challenges that managers currently experience in the application of project management for service delivery. Senior managers who attended these training sessions had to "...uncover existing challenges in their departments to utilise projects and to make recommendations to improve programme and project interfaces with existing departmental strategies, structures, systems and processes." Based on best practices uncovered during a literature survey, current practices associated with project management in Government were tested.

The 100 respondents whom attended the EDP are typically on Director-level from 27 different national and provincial government departments and other Government agencies. The sample can thus be regarded as representative. The responses included their frustrations with projects, bureaucratic practices, and the growing complexities associated with functional responsibilities. It also echoes their advisory role to politicians, and the challenges associated with partnerships (PPPs) and community participation in projects. This exposed them to greater 'visibility' and 'vulnerability'. They sense more risks in their role as the boundaries between administrative, managerial and political roles weaken.

All respondents had to submit written assignments/projects for assessment purposes. Challenges emanating from these assignments were used for purposes of analysis. The response rating therefore is 100%. The frequency rating of their respective responses in the assignments was used.

A potential limitation of the analysis is the fact that respondents could have been influenced by the facilitator and their colleagues from different departments during contact sessions. In other words, respondents could have indicated challenges that are actually not present in their department, but that were identified during the contact session. A further limitation of the research is the lack of biographical detail of the respondents - notably the number of years of experience in the department in general, and in project settings specifically. It is known, however, that 62 of the 100 respondents were male, and as far as ethnicity is concerned, 68 were Black, 13 White, 10 Coloured, and 9 Indian.

The responses obtained could aid in policy, structural and procedural discourses on this issue. The accounts describe how SMS-members are struggling to negotiate organisational tensions between accountability for project outcomes, functional responsibilities, limited authority, and bureaucratic practices. Added to this is the creation of networks to 'joined-up' government, social inclusion, and legal ramifications. Managers overwhelmingly expressed their willingness to shape the policy agenda and to build a 'critical mass' to alter traditional structures to better accommodate project management practices.

Mechanisms and measures to cope with project applications: Examples in the South African Public Service

From data obtained from the assignments and group sessions, it is evident that most Government departments on national and provincial spheres already on various degrees utilise mechanisms and measures to effectively utilise projects as vehicles for service delivery (output focus) as well as for internal functional re-engineering (process focus). Typical mechanisms and measures include the implementation and appointment of dedicated Programme Management Offices, Project Management Units, Project Support Offices, Project Executive Committees, Project Steering Committees, Project Review Committees, Project Reference Groups (SAMDI), Project Managers, Project Directors, Project Sponsors, and some other specialised mechanisms to cope with the demand for sound project applications. Below, a snapshot of some examples towards project maturity is provided.

From the review of the responses it is clear that the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has relative mature project management applications in place - arguably the most project-matured department currently in the Public Service. It has established programmes aimed at providing strategic support interventions and partnerships to Government departments and provinces. Some 120 diverse large-scale projects were undertaken during the 2005/2006 financial year. For this purpose a Programme Management Office (PMO) was established in the Office of the Director General to oversee progress in the relevant programmes in the Department. The PMO ties individual projects to a broad business goal, and monitoring their interdependencies. The department also implemented Project Management Units, and appointed Project Directors and Project Sponsors for these units who report to the respective Programme Directors. DPSA also utilises technology to facilitate web-enabled project management to communicate and exchange information within the department. Tools such as templates, tables, diagrams and checklist are in the process of development to ensure uniformity in the department. They are also in the process to develop a Project Management Information System that will be used to support all programmes and projects in the department. In addition, the department is also in the process of establishing the “Public Management Watch”, which will serve as an early warning system on management and service delivery failure.

The Departments of Agriculture and Land Affairs are in the process of establishing a National Project Management Unit (NPMU) situated within the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Affairs as well as nine Provincial Project Management Units (PPMU) that will report to the national unit. The National PMU will ensure that adequate budgets, resources, systems and procedures are in place for PPMUs to meet their stated objectives. The NPMU will report directly to the Minister and a Ministerial Committee, consisting of senior managers from both the Departments of Agriculture and Land Affairs.

In Mpumalanga the Department of Local Government and Housing is busy with the establishment of a dedicated Project Management Unit to drive the ‘Water for All Flagship’ project. The PMU will submit regular progress reports on its implementation to the Cabinet Executive Council through the Cabinet Governance and Criminal Justice Technical Cluster Committee in line with the accountability arrangements pertaining to all flagship projects.

The Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC) currently is responsible to evaluate the overall performance of “one stop service centres” or multi-purpose

community centres (called “Thusong” Centres) in implementing procedures that are intended at providing regular and systematic consultation with clients at local level about their products and services.

The Department of Home Affairs’s Civic Service Branch (Gauteng) established a formal governance structure for project coordination within the Transformation Programme. This structure comprises a PMU, and a Provincial Intersectoral Steering Committee.

The Companies and Intellectual Property Registration Office (CIPRO) of the Department of Trade and Industry (dti) makes extensively use of Project Review Committees in conjunction with their Project Management Office which act as steering committees to foster partnerships with businesses. It is also in the process to institutionalise an active awareness programme to instil a project management culture. The dti is also in the process of developing a Programme Management Unit to facilitate integration amongst the different departmental interfaces to install a proper programme management culture and a managing-by-projects approach. One respondent from the dti highlighted the fact that the dti’s structure is a combination of hierarchical, matrix and specialisation. He emphasised that one should differentiate between the depth and complexity of the hierarchy to make meaningful judgements about the most appropriate structure of the department.

Probably the main driver on municipal sphere is the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Programme (MIG) which compels municipalities to implement Project Management Units (PMUs) to coordinate infrastructural projects.

Towards project-based service delivery: Key organisational tensions uncovered

Table 1 below indicates the most common tensions or challenges associated with project applications that respondents identified. The percentage indicates the frequency of responses – and therefore, also their relative significance.

Table 1: Key tensions identified	Frequency rating (%)
1. Difficult to manage project and functional responsibilities simultaneously	71%
2. Lack of skills in Project Management (especially technical expertise including impact assessments, feasibility studies, risk analysis, procurement, contract management, legal ramifications, and stakeholder analysis)	70%
3. Conflict between project managers and functional managers (especially over resource and staff allocations)	63%
4. No clear role and responsibility clarification of project managers, steering committees, functional managers, stakeholders, etc.	62%
5. No clear interfaces between projects and functional activities (not clear how to successfully align temporary organisations with the existing, permanent departmental structure)	60%
6. Political interference in large departmental projects and constantly shifting priorities; often ‘bad’ projects are not	55%

	stopped, because of political reasons resulting in wastage of resources	
7.	Lack of resources, including time to successfully complete projects	53%
8.	Bureaucratic, hierarchical departmental structure is not flexible enough to accommodate project teams	42%
9.	Lack of a project culture (narrow bureaucratic perspectives of senior managers; central control; do not delegate adequate authority and responsibility to project managers - Project managers do not have enough authority to make key decisions)	39%
10.	Lack of a proper governance structure for coordination, strategic linkages, and reporting	35%
11.	Lack of a strategic mechanism such as a Project Management Office that could act as a pool of experts to guide, assist, monitor and facilitate project development and implementation	34%
12.	Lack of administrative arrangements (i.e. templates, format of reporting, etc.)	25%
13.	Lack of stakeholder management (i.e. participation mechanisms and incorporating conflicting perspectives)	22%

From the above, the question could arise: In general, where does the Public Service as a whole feature on the maturity continuum? It is the opinion of the author that although there are pockets of excellence as far as project applications are concerned (i.e. DPSA, dti, and SAMDI), the Service current lies on level 1 (initial). There is thus a long way ahead towards full maturity (level 5).

The tensions emphasised below are based on the literature survey and the data obtained from the 100 respondents. There are numerous other tensions that can not be covered in the limited scope of this article.

‘Two-bosses’

Departmental structures are characterised by the fact that every subordinate is assigned to a single supervisor (‘boss’). A project structure violates this ingrained principle, creating problems for both the department and its individual members. Officials find themselves working across various projects under different managers. This situation creates multiple reporting relationships, confusing expectations, and excessive demands. Typically an official is still responsible for functional activities whilst acting as a team member on a project.

Authority and responsibility

Newman (2004:19) states that in a project-based structure the boundaries of authority and responsibility are often split or shared between functional and project managers. This characteristic creates ambiguity and conflict over areas such as resources, technical expertise, salaries, promotions, and the assignment of personnel (De Laat 1994:1091). This ambiguity results in power struggles as each side attempts to clarify and define its responsibility and accountability (Ford & Randolph, 1992:276). The most common authority conflicts are those between functional and project managers over project

priorities, administrative procedures, technical considerations, performance standards, staff assignments, cost estimates, scheduling, and personalities (Huberman et al. 1981:13).

***Departmental
interfaces***

De Laat's (1994:1109) research on the influence of matrix management on organisations indicates that project managers are often frustrated about the assignment of personnel to projects. They would like to see semi-permanent assignment to bigger projects: personnel should be assigned for a fixed period of time. Within this period any redeployment of personnel would be forbidden since it would allow for rescheduling projects in progress whenever necessary. Personnel seconded to projects would report to the project manager alone. Some respondents reported the fact that too many project teams are set up as a semi-permanent branch within the department merely to avoid the personnel management and staff reporting problems created by proper project resourcing. This often means the team then acquires its own self-perpetuating momentum within the department and work which is not appropriate to the project is added merely to keep team members occupied. This in turn results in project work suffering, the project losing definition and impetus, and progressive disillusionment on the part of project team members.

***Working conditions
and job satisfaction***

Chien (2004:428) illustrated how organisational structure influences employees job satisfaction and coined the so-called "good soldier syndrome" which describes the fact that a flexible, conducive organisational structure will move employees to do things beyond their job description. Chien (2004:431) cautions that a careful balance should be struck between clear, fixed procedures and regulations on the one hand and dynamic reality on the other to establish a conducive working environment for employees. According to Ford and Randolph (1992:277) individuals are expected to take more personal initiative in defining roles, negotiating conflicts, taking responsibilities, and making personal decisions, but the downside of such freedom is stress. The dual authority can negatively influence motivation and job satisfaction. The fragmented nature of multiple roles makes job descriptions, performance agreements, and contract management extremely complex.

***Bureaucratic
culture***

Every organisation has its distinct culture which unites individuals under a set of principles and standards to work by (Cleland 1988:47). Organisational cultures characterised by a rigid bureaucracy, and strong vertical reporting lines (such as government institutions) are typically not receptive to project-based or matrix structures. Ford and Randolph (1992:282), and Andersen and Jessen (2002:458) conclude that unless the

culture can be changed, resistance or open hostility to project-based structures may occur. Moore (1992:1052) refers to the “bureaupathology” of public institutions depicting them as “self-defining” and “self-organising” which sustains organisational culture and structure even without managerial intervention.

Clarke and Newman (1997:29) argue that public officials are both empowered and disciplined by the inherent tension between traditional and managerial practices. This was echoed by one respondent from Gauteng who remarked that “we have to think outside the box (new paradigm), but act inside the box (confined by existing structures and culture)”. They are subject to pressures to conform to rules, regulations and norms implicated in the structural forces to which they are subject, but in the same token, they are subject to forces that ask of them to be innovative change agents, transformational leaders, and a ‘networker’.

Political influence Often the most feasible structure (project-based) is not politically feasible due to the inherent culture of the bureaucracy. The amount of change required may be too costly – both politically and monetary. A department with very strong hierarchical structures and highly authoritarian styles, may inhibit the flexibility that project managers require to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. In such a rigid, bureaucratic work environment it would be problematic to obtain approval to secure additional funding and other resources.

This concludes the brief synopsis of typical organisational tensions associated with project applications.

CONCLUSION

Project management practices evolve rapidly, and therefore organisational structures should be adjusted to accommodate the new demands placed on project-based service delivery. It was established that the South African Public Service is rapidly moving towards project maturity through the utilisation of typical governance and coordination structures associated with project applications. There are, however, still significant organisational challenges that need to be addressed to ensure adequate interfaces between temporary project structures and permanent departmental structures. It is proposed that departments should rapidly move towards project-based structures with more delegated authority to project managers, as the only true permanent solution to fully utilise a project-based service delivery approach in the South African Public Service.

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