

Disability management in the South African Public Service

Redress or tokenism?

Ernest Ababio

Department of Public Management and Administration
North-West University

Lindi Mahlangu

Department of Public Management and Administration
North-West University

ABSTRACT

Cabinet has on two instances set specific transformation targets to be achieved by Public Service departments as part of its transformation agenda. A 2% target was set for the employment of people with disabilities in the Public Service by March 2010. In order to assist the process, various legislations, regulations, framework documents and other relevant resources were promulgated. Structures such as the Department of Public Service and Administration, Department of Labour, the Public Service Commission and the recently established Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and people with Disabilities, have all been tasked with a responsibility of ensuring that departments achieve these targets. It is however not clear what informed the 2% versus the overall population statistics of people with disabilities in South Africa. This would be imperative as it would possibly further explain the inability of Public Service departments to achieve this target.

Public Service departments are, by virtue of legislation, required to develop employment equity plans that will specify disability targets within a specific time-frame. The key objective of this article is to assess the performance of the Public Service on disability management in South Africa. It is argued that despite the provision of elaborate legislative framework to redress the rights and employment of the disabled, implementation thus far is mere tokenism. In pursuance of the discourse, the conceptual and legislative frameworks for disability management are discussed. Challenges that confront the implementation process are

identified. Recommendations are offered for consideration by departments as strategies for effective disability management.

INTRODUCTION

Disability Management in the Public Service is a key transformation issue of the government. The Public Service as an employer must lead by example on issue of transformation. This, amongst other things, means that the employment practices in the Public Service must be such that there is fair and equal representation of race, gender and disability at all occupational levels. Government has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring disability equity through profound legislation, infrastructure, and most recently, a fully fledged Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities that facilitates employment equity in the Public Service. The achievement of disability equity in the Public Service is clearly still an enormous challenge as per the recent statistics that will be analysed further in this article.

It is of paramount importance to also ensure that disability equity and disability management are not only about numbers and reaching specific numerical targets but more about a paradigm shift and creating a culture of equality and fairness in the workplace. Indeed this may begin with numbers but the buck does not stop there. The purpose of this article is to assess progress made on disability management and engagement in the Public Service, an area that is virtually ignored in Public Administration literature and on which this article contributes to the limited body of knowledge.

CONCEPTUALISING DISABILITY MANAGEMENT

Disability Management cannot effectively take place in a vacuum; it takes place either within, or in proximity to other management processes in an organisation. The concept *disability* refers to the loss or elimination of opportunities to take part in the life of the community equitably with others that is encountered by persons having physical, sensory, psychological, developmental, learning, neurological, or other impairments, which may be permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, thereby causing activity limitations and participation restriction with the mainstream society. (DPSA 2007:3).

The different types of disabilities as classified by Disabled People South Africa, are: **Physical Disability** (includes cerebral palsy, quadriplegia, paraplegia,

hemiplegia, and post-polio paralysis); **Visual Disability** (loss of sight that is total or partial); **Hearing Disability** (hearing loss that is mild, severe, or total); **Mental Disability** (includes cognitive, psychiatric and learning disabilities as well as physical head trauma); **Intellectual Disability** (e.g. Down's Syndrome); **Psychiatric Disability** (this includes people who experience difficulties in perceiving or interpreting reality, coping with some aspects of daily life, forming and maintaining relationships, coping with difficult feelings, fears and anxieties, or often see and hear things that do not exist); **Multiple Disabilities** (having two or more disabilities); **Epilepsy** – this is not a disability per se but often causes physical and/or mental disabilities; **Albinism** – is also not a disability per se but most people with albinism identify with other disabled people due to the nature of discrimination they experience and some often develop visual disabilities that impact on their levels of participation (Disabled People South Africa 2008).

Blake (2009:56) defines Disability Management as a proactive, employer-centered process that coordinates the activities of labour, management, insurance carriers, healthcare providers and vocational rehabilitation professionals. These are for the purpose of minimising the impact of injury, disability or disease on a worker's capacity to successfully perform his or her job.

Measures meant to redress disability include affirmative action which has been a controversial issue since its inception in the transformation agenda of government. Horwitz *et al.* (1995:677) are of the view that affirmative action is based on the following four premises. Firstly, that white men make up the business mainstream. Secondly, a growing economy requires skilled, managerial and professional people. Thirdly, blacks, women and other groups should be integrated into organisations as a matter of public and ethical policy. Fourthly, pervasive ethnic, racial and gender prejudice is at the root of social and occupational exclusion and, finally, legal and social measures are necessary to bring about institution building. In concurring with this view, Erasmus *et al.* (2005:164) explain that the concept of affirmative action refers to various processes of making bureaucracies more representative of the societies that they serve. Missing in this discourse is analysis on protection of the disabled who seem ignored from even academic debates.

Underpinning disability management are the concepts diversity management and employment equity. Diversity Management in practice is based on the understanding and accepting the unique flavour and potential contribution of different cultures and traditions and how this heterogeneity can be allowed to add value to organisational life and productivity. (Charlton & Van Niekerk in Mello 2002:3). The Public Service as one of the largest employers with a workforce exceeding one million is inevitably characterised by a diverse workforce.

Employment equity is a term coined by the *Employment Equity Act 55* of 1998 to address the disparities in employment, occupation and income that were created by the apartheid laws and policies. Basically this would imply that employment equity seeks to create equal employment opportunities. Ricucci (2002:11) defines equal employment opportunity as referring to policies aimed at preventing employment discrimination.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

For disability management to be an effective and life-changing exercise there must be legislative enactment. In this manner the government has since 1994 introduced various statutory and regulatory frameworks that govern and promote disability management in the Public Service.

In terms of the White Paper on the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), 1994 government made and undertook to design, in consultation with disabled people, a comprehensive programme for the disabled which will enhance their engagement in society and remove discriminatory practices against them, especially at the work place. Government undertook to also discuss means to reintegrate mentally and physically disabled people into their communities. Where people were entitled to disability grants, these should be paid to them. Special attention was to be given to mental illness and physical disability arising from trauma and violence, which could prevent people from functioning normally in society.

The purpose of the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995, was to establish a policy framework to guide the introduction and implementation of new policies and legislation aimed at transforming the South African Public Service. The White Paper introduced the concept of affirmative action, which was a step towards corrective equity measures. The main target groups for affirmative action programmes were to be black people, women and people with disabilities. Section 10.6 of the White Paper identifies targets and time-frames for affirmative action in the Public Service. General targets that were set were then based on census information that indicated that women constituted 56% of the South African population and persons with disability constituted 10% nationally. Government then proposed the following:

- Within four years (by 1999) all departmental establishments were to have endeavored to be at least 50% black at management level
- During the same period (by 1999) at least 30% of new recruits to the middle and senior management echelons should have been women; and
- Within ten years (by 2005), people with disabilities should have comprised 2% of public service personnel.

The White Paper gives a further directive at the departmental level, all ministries will be required to define their affirmative action targets and present annual progress reports that will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. On 21 November 2005 the Cabinet revised the employment equity targets for persons with disabilities and approved that the 2% target for persons with disabilities in the Public Service remain and that it be achieved by 31 March 2010 (DPSA:2005). The implication here is that since the inception of the democratic government in 1994, the Public Service has dismally failed in its endeavors to employ and retain people with disabilities. This study will attempt to determine reasons for this enormous challenge facing the Public Service.

In its introduction, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service alludes to the fact that the government regards transformation as a dynamic, focused and relatively short-term process, designed to fundamentally reshape the public service for its appointed role in the new dispensation in South Africa. Transformation can be distinguished from the broader, longer-term and on-going process of administrative reform which will be required to ensure that the South African public service keeps in step with the changing needs and requirements of the domestic and international environments. Further, the goals of transformation are to be achieved within an anticipated timescale of two to three years, the process of administrative reform will be on-going. It is therefore to determine whether disability management is a transformation imperative or an administrative reform issue.

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* of 1996, (hereafter referred to as the Constitution), is the supreme law of the country, and as such has laid foundation for equality, fairness and representativity in the public service. Section 9 of the Constitution states that everyone is equal before the law and no one may be unfairly discriminated directly or indirectly on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. This indubitably protects the rights of people with disabilities. The Constitution, in section 195 (1)(i) further provides that " public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation". This provision is specifically focusing on ensuring representativeness in the public service.

According to the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:19), the objectives of a disability strategy include, amongst others, the facilitation of the integration of disability issues into government developmental strategies, planning and programmes; the development of an integrated management system for the co-ordination of disability planning, implementation

and monitoring in the various line functions at all spheres of government; the development of capacity building strategies that will enhance Government's ability at all levels to implement recommendations contained in the Integrated National Disability Strategy; and a programme of public education and awareness-raising aimed at changing fundamental prejudices in the South African society.

This White Paper further provides policy guidelines for disability management in general. These guidelines should form a basis for Public Service institutions to develop policy frameworks for themselves. Chapter four of the White Paper introduces a critical aspect of monitoring as an essential element in the upholding of human rights generally. It is expounded that monitoring can be used as a corrective tool against the violated rights of disabled persons. It can also be used to measure trends and patterns of discrimination on grounds of disability, both on an individual and systematic level. The act of monitoring primarily investigates and records the violation of people's rights. The process itself often provides the impetus for addressing disability. Monitoring can also be used as an educative tool, to create awareness.

Disabled People South Africa is of the view that the Integrated National Disability Strategy (the South African Government's official policy framework for disability equity) has therefore adopted a socio-political approach to disability, whereby disability is located in the social environment. This takes cognisance of disabled people's viewpoint that disability is a social construct and most of its effects are inflicted upon people with disabilities by their social environment. People with disabilities can therefore actively contribute to changing the social construct by fighting for improvements in their material and legal situation and, at the same time, taking pride in who they are and what they are fighting for, and proudly identifying themselves with their human rights struggle.

The purpose of the White Paper on Affirmative Action, 1998, on the other hand, is to set out mandatory requirements and guidance on the steps which national departments and provincial administrations should take to develop and implement their affirmative action programmes, and to sketch out the accountability, monitoring, coordinating and reporting responsibilities of various players within affirmative action programmes. The White Paper is primarily focused on the field of human resource management and targets the three groups: black people, women, and people with disabilities, who are identified as having suffered most from unfair past discrimination. Departments will obviously have to customise these programmes to their own specific situation.

Importantly from a disability perspective the White Paper states that affirmative action must strive to eradicate barriers to employment and advancement in the organisational and physical environment and provide

support to the target group. Affirmative action must also take into consideration the relevant needs of their target group and their relative disadvantaged status and as such reasonable accommodation must be provided. A target of 2% representivity of persons with disabilities was set by this White Paper (Public Service Commission 2008:20).

Section 2 of the *Employment Equity Act, 1998* describes the purpose of the Act in two-fold:

- promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and
- implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.

Tinarelli (2000:3) is of the view that the reasons for the necessity of employment equity legislation include among others, the need to eradicate the past legacy of discrimination that had led to major inequalities in the our (South African) society and labour market; the need for economic growth; the satisfaction of constitutional requirements; and the standards of the International Labour Organisation's Conventions that have been ratified by South Africa. Tinarelli (2000:14) further states that the rationale for the implementation of employment equity legislation centers around eradicating the legacy of discrimination in relation to race, gender and disability that has denied the majority of South Africans the opportunity for education, employment, promotion and wealth creation.

The implementation of employment equity legislation has numerous advantages for employers. Among these are the contribution of employment equity to business sustainability and future returns, an improvement in market share and a diverse workforce, which has advantages of its own. There are also potential problems and challenges surrounding the implementation of such legislation. These are, for example, the high costs of institutional and cultural change; the lack of resources to ensure proper compliance in every workplace; and the necessity to develop other strategies in conjunction with employment equity legislation in order to address inequalities that lie outside of the labour market.

The Code of Good Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities

The Code is a guide for employers and employees on promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment for people with disabilities as required by

the *Employment Equity Act*. It is intended to help employers and employees understand their rights and obligations, promote certainty and reduce disputes to ensure that people with disabilities can enjoy and exercise their rights at work. Furthermore, the Code is intended to help create awareness of the contributions people with disabilities can make and to encourage employers to fully use the skills of such persons. Employers, employees and their organisations should use the Code to develop, implement and refine disability equity policies and programmes to suit the needs of their own workplaces. (Department of Labour 2002:7) If the Code was enforceable, departments within the Public Service would have not been battling in managing disability issue, particularly in relation to crafting effective disability policies and programmes.

Technical Assistance Guidelines on Disabilities

The Department of Labour developed the Technical Assistance Guidelines (TAG) on the Employment of People with Disabilities which was aimed at assisting employers, employees, trade unions and people with disabilities to understand their rights and responsibilities under the *Employment Equity Act* 55 of 1998 and the Code of Good Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities. These guidelines address the following issues:

- reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities;
- recruitment and selection;
- medical and psychological testing and other similar assessments;
- placement;
- training and career advancement;
- retaining people with disabilities;
- termination of employment;
- worker's compensation;
- confidentiality and disclosure of disability;
- employment equity planning in respect of people with disabilities; and
- education and awareness

The TAG is not a law but just a guideline document that could also be useful in crafting disability policies/strategies or in developing a disability management framework.

Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000

The main purpose of this Act is to give effect to section 9 read with item 23(1) of Schedule 6 to the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996, so as to prevent and prohibit unfair discrimination and harassment; to promote equality

and eliminate unfair discrimination; to prevent and prohibit hate speech; and to provide for matters connected therewith. Section 9 of the Act specifically states that no person may unfairly discriminate against any person on the ground of disability, including-

- denying or removing from any person who has a disability, any supporting or enabling facility necessary for their functioning in society;
- contravening the code of practice or regulations of the South African Bureau of Standards that govern environmental accessibility;
- failing to eliminate obstacles that unfairly limit or restrict persons with disabilities from enjoying equal opportunities or failing to take steps to reasonably accommodate the needs of such persons.

The focus of this section is promoting that aspect of access and reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities. This places a responsibility and a burden on the Public Service (and any other employer) to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against in terms of accessibility, facilities, and resources that will enable them to perform their duties without any restraint.

The Public Service Regulations, 2001

The Public Service Regulations require executing authorities to develop affirmative action plans for their departments. According to the Regulations, these affirmative action plans shall contain the following:

- A policy statement that sets out the department's commitment to affirmative action, and how that policy will be implemented.
- Numeric and time-bound targets for achieving representativeness.
- Annual statistics on the appointment, training and promotion within each grade of each occupational category, of persons historically disadvantaged.
- A plan for redressing numeric under-representativeness and supporting the advancement of persons historically disadvantaged.

Although the regulations provide guidelines, they do not however address the question of what should be done to departments that do not implement affirmative action.

The Job Access Strategic Framework 2006–2010

As the policy-formulating structure of government, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) developed the Job Access Strategic Framework 2006–2010, which sets out a clear plan to create an inclusive

society and to give a new focus to tackling barriers and inequalities in the Public Sector. The strategy includes clear actions to promote and protect the rights and interests of people with disabilities by involving them in all aspects of society. Clearly here the inclusive approach is to ensure that people with disabilities participate in all public sector and service delivery activities without limitations.

The long-term aim of this framework is that persons with disabilities participate in society on the same terms as non-persons with disabilities. Provision for persons with disabilities will therefore be reviewed and a new mix of mainstream, specialist, and integrated provision derived from the Job Access and ASGISA strategies, so that employment and service delivery policies are re-adapted, and implemented to take account of the needs of persons with disabilities, alongside other employees. According to the DPSA (2006:15), there are strong grounds for government action to improve the life chances of persons with disabilities. Supporting and empowering persons with disabilities to help themselves will improve their participation and inclusion in the community, in the labour market and in society. This will deliver social and economic benefits for all society – and all society needs to be involved. The strategy also combines the following key elements:

- Employability: helping more people with disabilities into jobs;
- Equality of opportunity in the workplace;
- Improving health and well-being;
- Retention by creating better jobs, accessibility and developing skills; and
- Partnerships and capacity-building of disabled people's organisations.

The Handbook on Reasonable Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities

The Handbook on Reasonable Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities in the Public Service was also developed by the DPSA and serves as a tool that would enable government departments to create conducive environments for people with disabilities both as employees of the State and as clients of government's services. The Handbook is intended to be a source of easy reference for all Public Service officials, including Heads of Departments, Senior Managers, Disability Focal Persons, employees with disabilities, applicants, as well as consumers of government services. (DPSA 2007:3)

The focus of the handbook is an explanation of the concept of reasonable accommodation (this aspect will be discussed extensively in later chapters of the study), the different forms of reasonable accommodation, reasonable accommodation measures, and analysis of the physical environment as well as the different forms of communication.

STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT OF DISABILITY EQUITY

The statistics in Table 1 below were sourced from Vulindlela, which is an integrated information database of government that is a snapshot taken of the transactional PERSAL system (the government's personnel and salary system).

Table 1: Disability statistics as at September 2009

Province	Number of employees	Number of Employee with Disabilities	%
National	386 920	929	0,24%
Eastern Cape	141 936	333	0,23%
Free State	56 605	134	0,23%
Gauteng	142 257	171	0,12%
Kwazulu Natal	187 192	265	0,14%
Limpopo	115 857	288	0,24%
Mpumalanga	73 322	194	0,26%
North West	57 659	200	0,34%
Northern Cape	22 231	46	0,20%
Western Cape	76 671	251	0,32%
Total	1 260 650	2 811	0,22%

Source: This information was extracted from Vulindlela (www.vulindlela.gov.za) Accessed 25 March 2009.

The statistics above indicate that on average the Public Service has employed only 0,22% employees with disabilities, a meager 1,78% difference with the 2% target set by government. Nationally, the Public Service had only 0,24% people with disabilities in its employ. In all the provinces the statistics are at an appalling level that is less than even a quarter of the set 2% target. The Public Service would have to embark on an honest and practical introspection as to its

inability to employ more people with disabilities. The scenario paints a graphic picture of tokenism with regard to redress admonished by legislation.

DISABILITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Disability management in the Public Service can best be effectively implemented through, amongst others, the following enabling processes:

Recruitment

One of the most effective means of attracting people with disabilities into the Public Service is through recruitment and selection processes. It is therefore incumbent upon departments to ensure that their recruitment and selection strategies are specifically targeting people with disabilities. Grobler *et al.* (2002:136) outline the strategies used by South African institutions in response to the skilled labour shortage. The nontraditional recruitment strategies include disadvantaged training programmes; internships and mentoring programmes; career exhibitions; telerecruiting; diversity data bank; selection and placement; employee induction; training and skills development; promotion and transfer; as well as employee relations.

Succession Planning and Talent Management

Succession planning refers to the preparation for the replacement of one post holder by another, usually prompted by retirement or resignation (ANON 2009). Talent management on the other hand is perceived by Fisher and Pretorius (2009) as an all inclusive umbrella process that encompasses and includes the processes of career and succession planning that can be considered as sub processes within the broader process of talent management. It also involves revisiting human resource policies, procedures and practices such as recruitment, company orientation, job induction, training and development, performance management, transfers, promotions, employee relations and remuneration and reward systems in order to attract new talent to the organisation and retain existing talent within the organisation. Its ultimate goal is to ensure that an institution always has "the right people in the right positions at the right time".

Employee retention

The employment statistics of people with disabilities in the Public Service evidently signify a very small pool of the relevant skills required by the

various provincial administrations and departments. Invariably this means that the demand is much higher than the supply resulting in the scarcity of skills within the target group of people with disabilities. Departments would then be faced with the challenge of putting in place solid retention strategies that will complement disability management and sustain a culture of equal representation in the Public Services.

Occupational Health and Safety

A person can incur disability due to ill-health, accident, or an injury sustained on duty. Employees who incur a disability would instead be phased out of employment through the process of medical retirement or medical boarding. Disability management calls for a paradigm shift where disability sustained on duty would be reasonably accommodated through the modification of the work environment. Common OHS interventions include the Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) which according to Ferris *et al.* (2002:512) have been broadly defined as mechanisms that provide the workplace with systematic means for dealing with personal problems that affect employees' job performance. Occupational Health and Safety programmes can be effective in perpetuating disability management in the Public Service.

Performance Management

Performance Management could be an effective tool in the development and advancement of people with disabilities in the Public Service. It could however, if incorrectly and poorly managed, also be a barrier to the same course. Bennet and Minty (in Nel *et al.* 2003:475) state that there are generally three major purposes of performance management. These are: it is a process for strategy implementation; it is a vehicle for culture change; and it provides input to other human resource systems.

DISABILITY MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

The Public Service Commission (PSC) conducted a study during 2008 titled *Assessment on Disability Equity in the Public Service*. During the inquiries, the following practical challenges were identified: (Public Service Commission 2008:27)

- Lack of a clear definition
- Lack of employment equity plans
- Inadequate recruitment and retention strategies

- Links with organisations representing people with disabilities not optimised
- Rehabilitation of Public Servants disabled as a result of injuries sustained
- People with disabilities do not apply for posts
- Inability to attract suitably qualified and skilled people with disabilities
- Reluctance by people with disabilities to disclose their status
- Inadequate management information on persons with disabilities
- Job hopping within the Public Service
- Management implications associated with employing people with disabilities
- Marginalisation of people with disabilities by management
- Lack of disability awareness in departments
- Poor accessibility for people with disabilities

The above constitute an aggregate of structural factors and lack of awareness programmes, all of which contribute to the token nature of disability redress in the public sector, a situation which needs to improve through best practice application.

GOOD PRACTICES OF DISABILITY MANAGEMENT

The following are good practices observed by the PSC during the disability inquiries:

Intensive disability awareness campaigns

The Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, was singled out as a good example in this regard. Even though the Department has not yet succeeded in meeting the 2% target, they have implemented a comprehensive disability awareness and sensitisation campaign. The campaign comprised communication on disability through workshops and the distribution of pamphlets and posters which was run over three months to create awareness and sensitise staff about disability in the workplace. The department decided to brand their disability awareness project and called it *Operation REAKGONA* (Setswana word for “we are able”). The next chapter will be focusing on the qualitative research and specific focus will also be on this department as it forms part of the research scope of this study.

Audits of accessibility and accommodation

Audits could focus on the following accessibility issues affecting persons with disabilities:

- Building design
- Availability of disabled parking
- Size of parking bays
- Access to buildings
- Lighting car parks
- Identification signs
- Kerbs on edge of ramps
- Gradients
- Stairs
- Handrails
- Doorways
- Windows
- Toilets
- Light switches
- Signals and warnings
- Signs

Capacity building

A capacity development strategy that targets persons with disability for posts at the Middle Management level and through mentoring and coaching award them the opportunity to progress to the Senior Management level. Having persons with disabilities in the Senior Management level could mean that the process of disability equity was driven from management level thus ensuring its prioritisation within departments.

DISABILITY MANAGEMENT – QUO VADIS?

In May 2008, the disability statistics provided by Vulindlela stood at an average of 0,19%. In September 2009, the average was 0,22% an insignificant 0,03% increase. Clearly, the South African Public Service still has a very long way to meet the 2% target of employing people with disabilities. Clearly the task of achieving the mere 2% target is much more complex than initially thought to be. The Public Service must start prioritising disability equity in the Public Service in order to enforce employment equity compliance by other institutions and businesses. Conclusive indicators are that departments use tokens of disability employees to window-dress legislative imperatives.

The following recommendations are offered for improvement on disability equity employment targets:

- There should be disability-specific legislation that will enforce the employment of people with disabilities. Currently the issues of disability management are part of other legislation like the *Employment Equity Act* of 1998, which also lacks an element of enforcement. This is an area that could be further researched in terms of what the gaps are with regard to current legislation and also to explore enforcement strategies for the employment of people with disabilities;
- Disability Management must be a key performance indicator in the performance contracts of all senior managers. This could be elaborated further as a focus area of the performance management and development system of the Public Service;
- The use of virtual office or e-Work must be explored where people with disabilities can work from home which would be more accommodative than the office, especially given the challenge on the public transport system in the country. This could also trigger further research in future;
- In order to fast-track the employment of people with disabilities, the recruitment process must be short-circuited by ensuring that people with disabilities should be automatically short-listed when they have applied for positions and they should then be considered on the basis of potential when interviews are conducted;
- Accelerated disability awareness programmes must be put in place. This should be comprehensive and inclusive of all types of disabilities and how they can be accommodated. Departments must have disability management plans that are specific and focused. There must also be a monitoring and evaluation system that is put in place to ensure effective implementation of such plans. Meaningful partnerships must be established with organisations of people with disabilities, for example, some functions could be outsourced to these organisations. Departments can establish partnerships with institutions of higher learning where they can give bursaries to students with disabilities with an intention to recruit them on completion of their studies;
- The establishment of disability forums that consist of all key stakeholders could serve as an effective support structure. The inclusion of medical practitioners in these forums could be helpful in ensuring that all types of disabilities are understood and reasonably accommodated within departments;
- Departments within the Public Service could adopt a school for learners with special needs and get some of these learners into learnership programmes and other skill development programmes. In this way the departments will be increasing the skills pool from which they can recruit; and
- Cabinet should review the 2% target and develop a formula that will take cognisance of the overall population statistics as well as the statistics of people with disabilities that are economically active.

CONCLUSION

The South African Public Service has progressed considerably well with racial equity and seems to be progressing well with gender equity as well, although at a slower pace than racial equity. Disability equity is still an enormous challenge for the Public Service and perhaps even for other employers in South Africa. The Employment Equity legislation is lucid on what employer obligations are, and the Public Service needs to comply with such legislation. Irrespective of all these challenges and uncertainties that will either directly or indirectly impact on the performance of the Public Service, the fact remains that equality and fairness in the workplace is one of the cornerstones of democracy and it must be promoted and upheld in all employment practices. Public Service departments, at both national and provincial spheres, must prioritise the transformation of the workplace by ensuring the attainment of the employment equity targets. Failure to do so might result in difficulty for the Public Service to handle employment related challenges that could impact negatively on service delivery.

Effective implementation of disability management in the Public Service is the only means to ensure that the 2% target set by Cabinet is achieved and that there is fair representation of people with disabilities in the employ of the Public Service. Departments in the Public Service will not be able to achieve this cumbersome task single-handedly. Other social partners such as the labour unions, organisations of people with disabilities as well as other constitutional structures, each has a significant role to play in ensuring that people with disabilities are employed, retained and reasonably accommodated in the Public Service. Disability management should not be used as a political tool or tokenism to gain more votes but it must be treated as a tool for redress, a human rights issue that must be allocated the same attention and resources like all other human rights and constitutional issue.

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AUTHORS' CONTACT DETAILS

Prof E P Ababio
Public Management and Administration
North-West University
PO Box 1174
Vanderbijlpark 1900
Tel: 0169103460
Cell: 0824696098
Ernest.Ababio@nwu.ac.za

Ms L M Mahlangu
Deputy Municipal Manager (Corporate Services)
Emfuleni Local Municipality
PO Box 3
Vanderbijlpark 1900
Tel: 0169505151
Cell: 0835534653
lindiM@emfuleni.gov.za