PRIVATE *VERSUS* PUBLIC SECTOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE: DICHOTOMY OR SYNERGY?

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Abstract: The administrative management profession has been characterised recently by a paradigm that revolves around rapid and far-reaching changes in information and communication technology (ICT) developments. This led to an electronic economy (e-economy), driven by so-called e-commerce that inevitably resulted in a move away from the building of capital structures to e-environments. These are driven by the management of e-capturing, e-processing, e-storing and retrieval of e-information, as opposed to the management of manual administrative processes. Administrative management operations therefore centre more on knowledge work interfaced by ICT where innovation is a turnkey strategy of globalisation and international benchmarking.

The restructuring of the program and qualifications mix (PQMs) in the Higher Education sector has to address a comprehensive, industry aligned vocational program for management of the information administration profession irrespective of whether it serves the private or public sector. The investigation assesses existing dichotomies and/or synergies and subsequently aims to align it to relevant key performance indicators (KPIs). It has been structured into a generic conceptual model that can serve as a guideline for the present recurriculation of administrative management programs. The core strengths revolve around a strong focus on ICT interfacing, service delivery, managerial dimensions, multi-disciplinary, multi-skill approaches and research capabilities.

Key phrases: Public/private sector, information administration management, e-commerce, program quality mix

1 INTRODUCTION

Irrespective of either its public or private sector niche in industry, the position profile of an administrative professional encompasses four interactive roles and responsibilities in terms of management, interaction with peers, customer relations and service delivery. These apply to both internal and external business environments without

restricting its applications in either the public or private sector. Aligned to the background of the holistic nature of an **e-paradigm administrative environment** in both the private and public sectors, administrative management is ensconced within multi-disciplinary spheres (Marcus, Joubert & Hoffman 2009:4).

In its effort to monitor the relevance of program content, compulsory self-evaluations have to be conducted by universities on a regular basis. These reviews are monitored by the Higher Education Qualifications Council in South Africa concurrent with assessments of the program and qualifications mix (PQMs) allocated to universities. In addition to monitoring the content and quality of programs, these processes also aim to identify irrelevant or dated content and programs and prevent unqualified duplication and other discrepancies within specific disciplines (Swanepoel 2009:E-mail). These have to be tailored to industry needs as well as the specific nature of individual fields of specialisation. These processes are especially valuable in terms of the variety of programs offered to incumbents in fields such as Administration that differentiate between private and public sectors. For some reason, private sector administrative training programs do not feature in the PQMs of higher education in South Africa as would be expected.

This article focuses on the internal variables of generic roles and responsibilities of information administration professionals in both the private and public sectors aligned to the PQMs in **administrative management**. The approach revolves around dimensions that could either indicate a dichotomy or create value-adding synergies within the parameters of the administrative environment of organisations. The perceptions, findings, arguments, analyses and interpretations contained in this article should be viewed in terms of conceptualisation that aims to stimulate and foster deliberations regarding the restructuring of the PQMs pertaining to administrative management.

2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The roles and responsibilities pertaining to administrative professionals in the private and public sectors do not justify the separating parameters contained in the presently dated PQMs of Higher Education South Africa in order to prepare incumbents for the

realities of the e-workplace. Defined synergies and dichotomies in the private and public sector workplaces respectively are acknowledged and the perception exits that these could be accommodated in the restructuring of a generic administrative training program concomitant with relevant fields of specialisation that are presently lacking.

3 OBJECTIVES

3.1 PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The primary objective focuses on determining the holistic nature of the information administration executive within the private and public sectors ensconced within multi-disciplinary and e-business spheres. It evolves from the presently dated Administrative Management PQMs into a restructured, conceptual, generic and comprehensive e-paradigm, as ensconced in the following specific objectives.

3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Three specific objectives respectively focus on:

- reporting on the general *status quo* of the PQMs of Higher Education South Africa in the case of Administrative programs designed for public and private sector incumbents that should compliment and supplement an e-paradigm and general management efficacy in organisations;
- determining whether these programs are aligned to industry needs; and
- designing conceptual models of comprehensive and generic private-public sector profiles of an Administrative Management program.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Applied research within the parameters of a longitudinal approach, a hybrid design of exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, case study and historical approaches was followed. A purposive/judgement method comprises of several academia involved in administrative training programs with a collective of several decades experience in Secondary and Higher Education in South Africa. The holistic research framework

used secondary statistics generated by five previous studies as point of departure. For the purpose of this article, these have been supplemented with a primary investigation.

4.1 LITERATURE SURVEY

A survey of available literature conceptualised the constructs under investigation and has been obtained from sources such as professional bodies, Higher Education South Africa documents, academic journals, newspaper reports, online sources, books and secondary statistics from theses and dissertations.

4.2 GEOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHICAL DEMARCATION

The demarcation falls within the geographical and demographical parameters of Higher Education South Africa. Purposively selected administrative training programs have been assessed and analysed in order to establish existing dichotomies and/or synergies that cater for organisations in both the public and private sectors.

4.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS, DATA COLLECTION, CAPTURING, PROCESSING AND ANALYSES

Since reliable secondary statistics are used as baseline to ground the primary investigation, no codifying of the new collected data has been done because of the qualitative nature of the instruments used. A non-experimental and non-probability design included data collection of an historical nature using:

- prospectuses of universities in South Africa,
- mass media,
- official statistics and archival resources,
- group contacts,
- personal visits,
- communication,
- observation, and
- academic expertise (purposive/judgment approach).

4.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF FINDINGS

Validity and reliability of the findings are justifiable in terms of triangulation in the methods and techniques identified in the research framework that substantiate new evidence.

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The identities of the two universities included in the sampling are confidential and will be referred to as University A and University B, since the investigation may reveal shortcomings that the identified universities may find unsolicited or unethical.

5 CONCEPTUALISATION/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The findings and inferential analyses of a recent investigation (Marcus *et al.* 2009:20) clarified to some extent why the status of the administrative professional is often a cause of disagreement. The results confirmed that training programs catering for administrative professionals are a concern mainly because of the e-paradigm that completely and irrevocably reshaped the administrative environment in organisations. The important role of Administration Management in the economy cannot be argued or questioned. This fact is evident in the ratio of administrators employed in semi-state organisations in relation to the core business of the organisation, as illustrated in Figure 1.

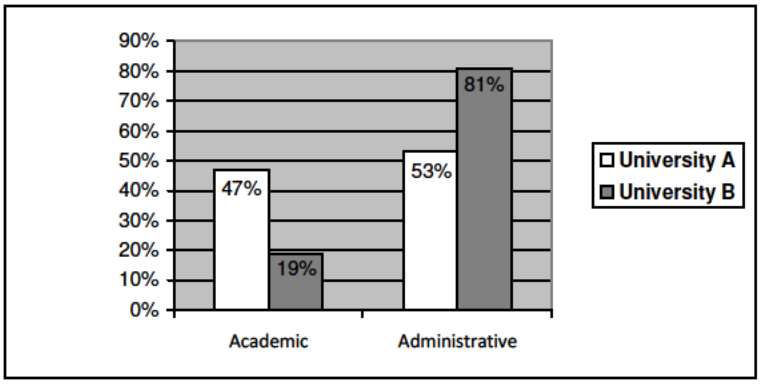

Figure 1: Ratio of administrators as opposed to other professions in organisations (Vermeulen 2010:ITS statistics; Viljoen 2003:ITS statistics)

Since universities are semi-state organisations, this evidence could be representative of the *status quo* in many other organisations, whether it be public or private sector. These figures clearly substantiate the importance of administration if it is taken into consideration that the core business of these organisations is of an academic nature (Vermeulen 2010:ITS statistics; Viljoen 2003:ITS statistics).

In order to substantiate the primary investigation, an extensive theoretical framework clarifies the constructs in expounding the dichotomies and synergies existing in the application of the administrative environment in the private and/or public sectors, visualising:

- the new e-economy,
- administration and administrator,
- holistic multi-disciplinary areas of administration,
- the public sector,
- public sector administration,
- the private sector and business administration/private sector administration, and
- data and information.

5.1 THE E-ECONOMY

Odgers and Keeling (2000:305) describe the e-economy as a business world in which:

- individuals are knowledge workers,
- ICT creates extensive global competition,
- innovation is more important than mass production,
- investment buys new concepts or the means to create them, rather than new machines,
- rapid change is a constant,

- virtual organisations (distributed e-workforces) replace traditional companies,
- organisations are outsourcing more functions in order to remain flexible in times of rapid change,
- lifetime jobs are something of the past, and
- "road warriors, the new ultra-mobile workforce, increasingly work out of 'brief-case offices'."

5.2 ADMINISTRATION/ADMINISTRATOR

According to Wikipedia (2010a:Internet), the word **administration** is derived from the "Middle English word *administracioun*, which is in turn derived from the French *administration*, itself derived from the Latin *administratio* – a compounding of *ad* ("to") and *ministratio* ("give service")". In business activities, **administration** consists of the performance or management of business operations that evolves into the making or implementing of major decisions. Administration is defined as "the universal process of organising people and resources efficiently so as to direct activities toward common goals and objectives".

Wikipedia (2010a:Internet) explains that the "title **Administrator** traditionally served as the title of the general manager or company secretary who reports to a corporate board of directors". Although the title secretary is viewed as being archaic, in many enterprises this function, together with its associated Finance, Personnel and Management Information Systems services, is what is intended when the term "the administration" is used. "In some organisational analyses, management is viewed as a subset of administration that specifically involves the technical and mundane elements within an organisation's operations and it stands distinct from executive or strategic work" (Wikipedia 2010a:Internet). In other organisational analyses, administration can refer to the bureaucratic or operational "performance of mundane office tasks, usually internally oriented and reactive rather than proactive".

It is therefore essential to identify the individuals who perform business information and administration duties. Traditionally, secretaries and other administrators have largely provided the administrative support system in industry. However, the advent

of e-commerce involves more employees in professions other than administration. **This means that every employee who occupies an office and works on a computer is involved in some kind of administrative activities.**

5.3 HOLISTIC MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AREAS OF ADMINISTRATION

Eight business or management functions have traditionally represented the holistic operations of an organisation. These functions are all intrinsically bound and known as General Management, Personnel/Human Resources Management, Operations/ Production/Manufacturing Management, Administrative Management, Public Relations Management, Financial Management, Purchasing Management and Marketing Management. These are outlined in Figure 2 that illustrates how administration permeates the entire micro-environment of an organisation with an outward rippling effect extending into the macro business environment.

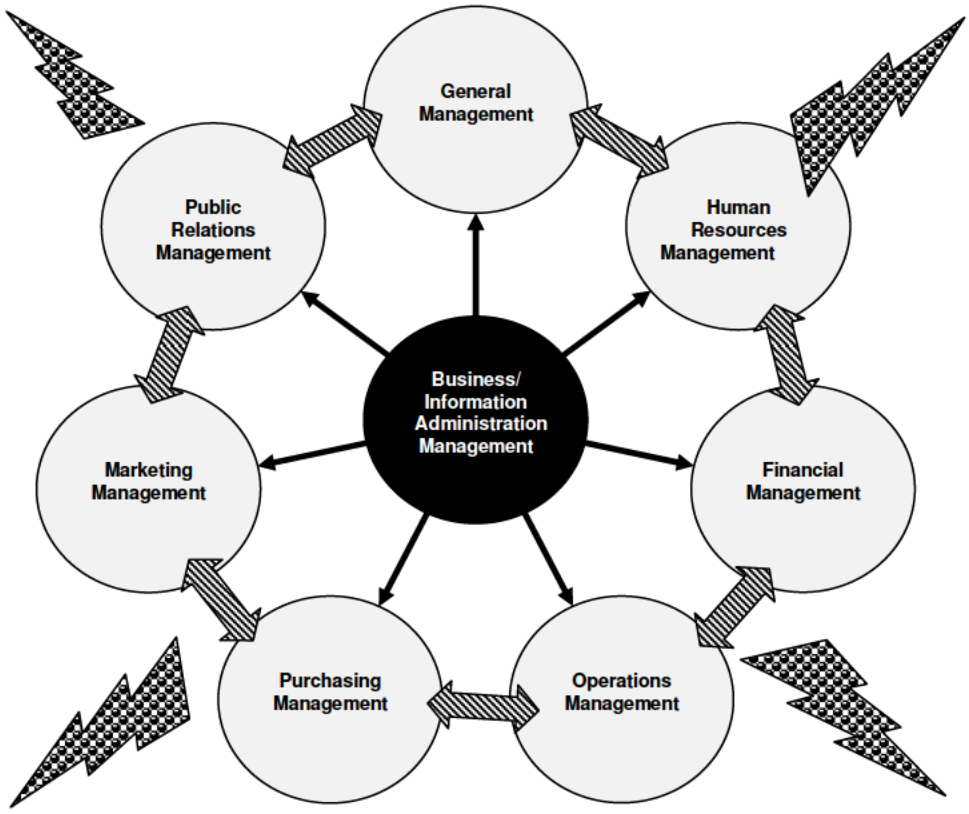

Figure 2: Administrative management in micro-environment (Hoffmann 2010:Flow diagram)

The eight areas of management in the micro-environment illustrated in Figure 2 support the opinion of Kallaus and Keeling (1991:3) that the quantum leap in the administrative environment is based on an increase in government regulations, a larger and more diverse work force and a growing global e-economy. They further state that the one-department-per-management-area concept gradually gave way to a broader, company-wide concept where **the role of administrative management expands to all the vital areas of work**.

5.4 PUBLIC SECTOR

The public sector is based on public ownership that is also referred to as the **state/government sector.** Investorwords (2010:Internet) defines the **public sector** as that part of a country's economy involved with providing basic government services to citizens. In most countries, the public sector includes the national government, regional and local (town/city) council services such as the police, military, public roads, public transit, primary/public education, social security, urban planning and healthcare, amongst others. The public sector also provides services that non-tax payers "cannot be excluded from, such as street lighting and services that benefit all of society rather than just the individual who uses the service (such as public education), and services that encourage equal opportunity".

5.5 PUBLIC (SECTOR) ADMINISTRATION

Public administration can be broadly described as the development, implementation and study of branches of government or organisations. The pursuit of enhancing the public approbation of civil society by ensuring a well-run, fair and effective public service, are some of the goals of the field. Public administration is carried out by officials employed in public departments at all levels of government, and they perform a wide range of tasks.

Public administrators collect and capture data that they subsequently have to analyse and interpret results (statistics), monitor budgets, assist with and draft legislation, develop policies and perform legally mandated government activities. **Public administrators** serve in many roles such as front-line positions in serving the public, **administrators**, analysts, managers and executives of government branches

and councils. In addition, public administration is also an academic field that signifies the term “pracademic” invented by Master (2009:E-mail).

In comparison with related fields, public administration is relatively new, having emerged in the 19th century. Multi-disciplinary in character, it draws on theories and concepts from a wide range of fields such as political science, economics, sociology, administrative law, behavioural science and management. The goals of the field of public administration are related to the democratic values of improving equality, justice, security and efficacy of public services usually in a non-profit, non-taxable approach (Wikipedia 2010b:Internet).

5.6 PRIVATE SECTOR ADMINISTRATION

The **private sector** consists of companies or organisations owned and managed by private individuals (employers) that are separate from the government and primarily involve taxable profit. Van Antwerpen (2003:33) found that “secretaries” (administrators) existed in Rome before the establishment of the empire. They were usually **educated male scribes** who took dictation and acted as trusted advisors. As world trade expanded during the 1500s and 1600s, secretaries often occupied an elevated status and held prominent positions. Subsequent to the Renaissance, the male scribes continued to dominate secretarial roles.

During 1870 to 1880, the role of the secretary was extended out of a natural need for prominent administrators to whom confidential matters could be entrusted and who could act as assistants for a “principal” (employer or line manager). During this period, administrative work was still done almost entirely by male administrators and such jobs were considered **important and prestigious**. However, at the turn of the century and the economic revolution from 1860 to 1880, organisations faced an unprecedented paperwork crisis. Female secretaries were then called in who solved the crisis by adapting well to new administrative technologies and the demand for their expertise eventually turned out to be so great that it surpassed the supply. By 1920, the vast majority of administrative employees were female, a pattern that has persisted to the present day. During these early times, no distinction was made between private and public sector administration (Van Antwerpen 2003:33-38).

5.7 DATA AND INFORMATION

O'Leary, Williams and O'Leary (1995-1996:254,258) explain that information is data "that has been processed by a computer system". Therefore, collected data represents the raw, unprocessed facts that are captured in a computer system and it only translates into a meaningful form that is useful in decision-making after it has been processed, saved and recorded in its new format, namely information.

5.8 SECONDARY STATISTICS

Secondary statistics and findings that are relevant to and supplementing the conceptualisation, are outlined in the following five investigations.

5.8.1 Investigation 1

Hoffmann (1992) first started enquiry into the experienced lack of prestige and acknowledgement of administrative management in the private sector by establishing a perspective that was obtained from employers, administrative professionals, students enrolled in administrative training programs and academics in the field. This investigation found that, although the employment figures of administrators in industry clearly substantiated the important role of administrative professionals, their remuneration packages, required qualifications and a general lack of top career opportunities did not reflect positively in terms of prestige in their position profiles.

5.8.2 Investigation 2

The second investigation in the longitudinal design (Hoffmann 1999:137) reported on opinions of two populations in South Africa – administrative employees and employers – pertaining to the necessity and types of training required by industry in order to operate effectively in administrative e-environments. The investigation revealed that a significant number of administrative employees (a cumulative 84.2%) in the South African workforce experienced a need for additional training in administrative practices and related information and communication technology competencies.

It was found that the area in which additional training is most required pertains to e-communications, and a need for combined training exists in ICT and general

Administrative Management. The study also reflected more or less the same significant result as expressed by managers (a cumulative 88.5) as to the additional areas of training that their administrative employees might require (Hoffmann 1999:138). The area of training most required is concurrent with the opinion expressed by administrative employees, indicating e-communications and combined training where all administrative management proficiencies are included.

Of great concern is the opinion of managers/employers on the question of the relevance of administrative training programs offered by universities in South Africa, as illustrated in Figure 3.

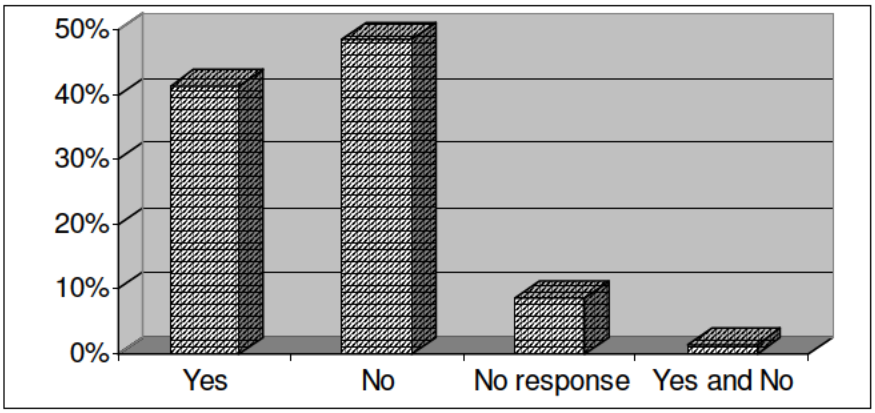

Figure 3: Relevance of administrative training programs: managers/ employers (Hoffmann 1999:140)

Half of South African managers indicated that they were not satisfied with the relevance of training offered at universities in the field of administrative management concomitant with ICTs. This could clearly reflect negatively on customer service, productivity levels, competence, performance and many other areas of concern, such as e-work. Of even greater concern, was the opinion of academics as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Relevance of training: academics in administrative training programs (Hoffmann 1999:140)

Variable	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
No response	2	4.3	4.3	4.3
Yes	18	39.1	39.1	43.5
No	26	56.6	56.6	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Nearly 60% of academics supported the opinion reflected by managers. This clearly proves a serious concern where, about a decade ago, both academia and employers agreed that training programs offered did not conform to required industry subject matter.

5.8.3 Investigation 3

A third investigation revolved around profiling gender controversies of administrators. This investigation established that male administrators started operating in the fifteenth century and that this situation was reversed to a significant female presence in the late 1880s (Van Antwerpen 2003). However, in addressing gender equity, the findings of this investigation ascertained that the situation is again reversing and that male administrators are steadily entering universities and industry.

5.8.4 Investigation 4

Marcus (2003) focused his investigation on the changing role of the administrative professional in the corporate environment. Amongst a wide variety of required job specifications, the findings of this investigation emphasised industry requirements of administrators that should include competencies in general business management, human resources, ICT, administration, public relations, marketing, project management, emotional intelligence, financial management and accounting.

An important result of this investigation established that female administrators have become so accustomed to the lack of prestige that they experience in their jobs, that they find it difficult to comprehend being required to possess a postgraduate

qualification. This raises the question as to whether the tasks that are expected of them are in essence **professional**.

5.8.5 Investigation 5

A gap analysis (Marcus *et al.* 2009:4) investigated the KPIs required of administrative professionals in the public sector focusing on the three top administrative management profiles, namely secretary/administrative officer, assistant administrative director and administrative manager (Anon 2007:8-13). It was established (Marcus *et al.* 2009:21-23) that 69 KPIs were required of incumbents as advertised in the media by public sector offices. The highest required qualification has been indicated as a degree/diploma, followed by certificate/diploma and the lowest, a national senior certificate (Grade 12) – no postgraduate requirement even at the highest level.

Especially analysing the required KPIs that include top management duties and responsibilities such as organisational, supervisory and leadership qualities in addition to working without supervision, doing research and advising management on policy issues contained in this profile, it clearly delineated the managerial sphere of the administrative profession (Marcus *et al.* 2009:23). The generic nature of the administrative management profession was clearly depicted whereby only four out of the 69 KPIs are exclusively public administration related of which three could also be generic to the private sector. This inferentially concluded that private and public sector administrative management discrepancies are significantly limited (Marcus *et al.* 2009:11,24).

6 PRIMARY RESULTS

The primary investigation covered two dimensions, namely the issue of gender equity and prestige in the administrative profession in organisations and secondly, the *status quo* of administrative training programs in the Higher Education sector.

6.1 GENDER EQUITY

The first primary result pertains to gender equity in the field of administration in organisations (refer to Section 5.6) that has been a controversial issue for quite some time. Van Antwerpen (2003) ascertained that the administrative environment

has traditionally been a female domain, but proved that this aspect has been changing concurrent with gender equity legislation in South Africa and that male administrators are steadily entering the field. Marcus (2003:128) found that 98.2% of the population studied in private and public sectors inclusively, consisted of female administrators employed in industry. Substantiating this evidence, Figure 4 depicts the gender distribution in one University in administrative training programs for a period of three years from 2007 to 2009 (TUT 2010).

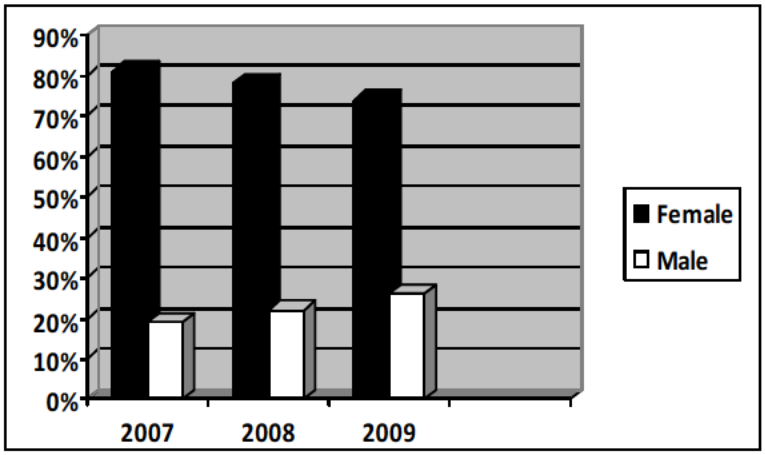

Figure 4: Gender specific student headcounts in administrative programs: undergraduates and postgraduates (TUT 2010)

The statistics in Figure 4 substantiates a steady change in terms of gender equity in administrative training programs. Female enrolments decreased steadily whilst male enrolments increased to the same extent. It would be of great interest to establish whether this situation is reflected by employment figures in industry.

6.2 S*TATUS QUO* OF ADMINISTRATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SOUTH AFRICA

Secondly, and in order to interpret and analyse the concerns reported on in the secondary statistics (refer to Section 5.8), an online search (refer to Section 4.5) revealed the following programs that cater for candidates in administration for the public and private sectors. The five programs have been purposively selected and profiled at graduate level and are as follows:

- **Bachelor of Arts with specialisation in Public Administration and Communication Facilitation**, of which the targeted professions at which training is aimed have not been indicated in the Prospectus as per the outlined three-year program (refer to Section 4.5), although a wide spectrum of areas of specialisation are specified.
- **Bachelor of Administration, General**, of which the targeted professions at which training is aimed have not been indicated in the Prospectus as per the outlined three-year program (refer to Section 4.5).
- **Public Administration**, targeting "every person" who "will benefit from the study of Public Administration" and "caters for the individual needs and interests of both student and employer". It is a three-year course aimed at equipping "the student with both knowledge as well as practical and academic skills (refer to Section 4.5).
- **Business Administration**, catering for candidates interested in professions as "Consultant, Financial Manager, General Manager, Human Resources Manager, Management Strategist, Marketing Manager" and "other career opportunities as determined by optional second major subject" (refer to Section 4.5) in a three-year program.
- **Office Management and Technology**, targeting candidates for a three-year qualification in preparation for employment as Personal Assistants, Executive Secretaries and Administrative/Office Managers (refer to Section 4.5). This program is unique in terms of it being offered nearly exclusively by the six Universities of Technology in South Africa, with the exception of only one traditional university that also offers the program, mostly up to Magister level.

The individual Prospectuses of two universities (refer to Section 4.5) revealed that the first four programs offer subjects that outline the complete electives and outcomes packaged in a three-year period for the qualification/program specified. These four programs are perceived to be training incumbents for administration in the public sector, although graduates are employed in both private and public

sectors. Some of the programs outline modules as a breakdown of subjects that consequently covers semesters within a three-year period.

The fourth program covers a wide spectrum of employment opportunities, also in both the private and public sectors. The fifth program provides training primarily for private sector employment, although incumbents are employed by both sectors. Subject and module descriptors are often confusing, since it is perceived that individual universities often use a variety of deviating descriptors that refer to the same field/discipline, for example, Administrative Management, Business Administration, Public Administration and Administrative Practice. These could cause confusion as it covers a conglomerate of duplicated program content. Therefore, generic and specialised program content that could be clustered together respectively as identified per discipline from the five programs analysed, are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of administrative programs (refer to Section 4.5)

Combined generic program content
1. Administrative Management/Business Administration/Public Administration/Administrative Practice
2. Business Management
3. Communication
4. Personnel Function and Management/Human Resources
5. Accounting/Financial Accounting/Auditing/Costing/Taxation
6. ICT/End-user Computing/Information Administration
7. Statistical Methods and Quantitative Techniques/Research
8. Logistics
9. Labour and Industrial Relations
10. Public Relations
11. Customer Relations Management
12. Project management

Combined specialised program content
1. Development Studies
2. Behavioural sciences
3. Interpretation of Statutes/Policies
4. Anthropology
5. Politics, International & African politics
6. Criminology and Administration of Criminal Justice
7. General Education
8. Geography
9. Health sector modules
10. Sociology & Social Work
11. Economics
12. Philosophy & Psychology/Industrial and Organisational Psychology

In the five programs analysed, the subjects and modules identified allow for compulsory subjects/modules as well as optional choices as per field of specialisation. Table 3 depicts 60 *verbatim* public sector KPIs (Marcus *et al.* 2009:21) mostly concurrent with the identified program content (refer to Table 2) that are categorised into twelve possible disciplines specified in the vertical column headings.

Table 3: Conceptual model: public sector administrative key performance indicators categorised in disciplines (Marcus *et al.* 2009:21)

Key performance indicators	Management & leadership	Administration	Information and communication technology	Research	Legal	Financial	Public relations	Customer relations	Human resources	Project management	Communication	Logistics
1. Extensive administrative management competencies		1										
2. Private & public sector networking experience							2					
3. Knowledge of executive office management		3										
4. Relevant legal knowledge					4							
5. Labour relations					5							

Key performance indicators	Management & leadership	Administration	Information and communication technology	Research	Legal	Financial	Public relations	Customer relations	Human resources	Project management	Communication	Logistics
6. Service delivery options and activities								6				
7. Promote, showcase & collate best practice case studies				7								
8. Organise awareness campaigns										8		
9. Self-motivated & motivational skills									9			
10. Assertiveness								10				
11. Innovative thinking	11											
12. Delegation skills	12											
13. Reliable/trustworthy									13			
14. Function efficiently under pressure – stress management									14			
15. Excellent organising, supervisory & leadership skills	15											
16. Monitoring & evaluating abilities									16			
17. Manage financial resources & processes						17						
18. Thorough knowledge of budgeting and strategic planning						18						
19. Good written & verbal communication skills											19	
20. Good report writing skill											20	
21. Sound interpersonal relations									21			
22. Computer literacy essential (MSOffice, internet, e-mail, etc.)			22									
23. Exercise control over objectives and activities	23											
24. Events coordination skills										24		
25. Travel and transportation												25
26. Determine work procedures & methods												26
27. Advise management on policy matters							27					
28. Interpret and apply prescripts	28											
29. Liaison with government & non-government departments							29					
30. Compile memoranda & submissions		30										
31. Monitor & evaluate strategic/operational plans	31											

Key performance indicators	Management & leadership	Administration	Information and communication technology	Research	Legal	Financial	Public relations	Customer relations	Human resources	Project management	Communication	Logistics
32. Deal with and manage difficult clients								32				
33. Manage production & control of document flow		33										
34. Experience in customer relations								34				
35. Experience in client liaison								35				
36. Good telephone etiquette		36										
37. Time management skills		37										
38. Able to work without supervision									38			
39. Understand core functions of line management									39			
40. Manage diary		40										
41. Receive & screen telephone calls		41										
42. Handle telephone enquiries		42										
43. Arrange internal & external meetings		43										
44. Arrange catering, venue bookings, programs, etc.										44		
45. Prepare documents for meetings		45										
46. Manage correspondence		46										
47. Draft correspondence											47	
48. Manage records		48										
49. Distribute incoming & outgoing correspondence		49										
50. Receive & assist clients		50										
51. Make travel & accommodation arrangements		51										
52. Manage equipment & stationery		52										
53. Process subsistence & travelling claims						53						
54. Deal with procurement issues											54	
55. Research				55								
56. Management information services			56									
57. Archiving		57										
58. Maintain confidentiality								58				
59. Analytical, innovative and creative thinking				59								
60. Conflict management								60				
TOTAL	**6**	**18**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**7**	**7**	**3**	**3**	**3**
Mean	**10%**	**30%**	**3%**	**5%**	**3%**	**5%**	**5%**	**12%**	**12%**	**5%**	**5%**	**5%**

In categorising the KPIs according to present PQM content in administration, evidence of duplicity and similarities in fields complicated an unambiguous distinction between disciplines. In order to avoid duplications, KPIs that could have relevance to more than one field, have been categorised into only one specific field that seemed to be the most appropriate (refer to Figure 4 and Table 2). One such example refers to #59 identified as analytical, innovative and creative thinking that could be categorised under Management, Human Resources or Research (cognitive skills). However, the following inferential analyses and interpretations are of significance:

- Jobs advertised in the media for Secretary/Administrative Officer, Assistant Administrative Director and Administrative Manager (Marcus *et al.* 2009:23) stated categorically that a qualification in "Public Administration **or related field**" is a requirement. This clearly indicates a generic ambiguity followed in structuring of training program content as opposed to industry needs.
- At the highest level of Administrative Manager, applicants are not required to be in possession of a postgraduate qualification, although "**extensive administrative management"** competencies are required (Marcus *et al.* 2009:23).
- In terms of ranking, the required disciplinary content required by industry (public sector) according to the means relevant to competencies required (refer to Table 3), these are illustrated in Figure 5 as follows:

Visualising a conceptual model, the generic competencies that have been identified in most recent public sector requirements, Figure 5 outlines the program electives that could be considered for a possible generic program outline in administrative management. Table 2 and Figure 5 indicate that most of the program content should revolve around administrative competencies (30%), with Human Resources and Customer Relations (both 12%) identified as the second, equally important categories, and Management third (10%). Fourth, equally important categories (5%) have been identified as Financial, Logistics, Public Relations, Project Management, Communication and Legal competencies. Lastly follow equally important competencies in ICT and Research (3%).

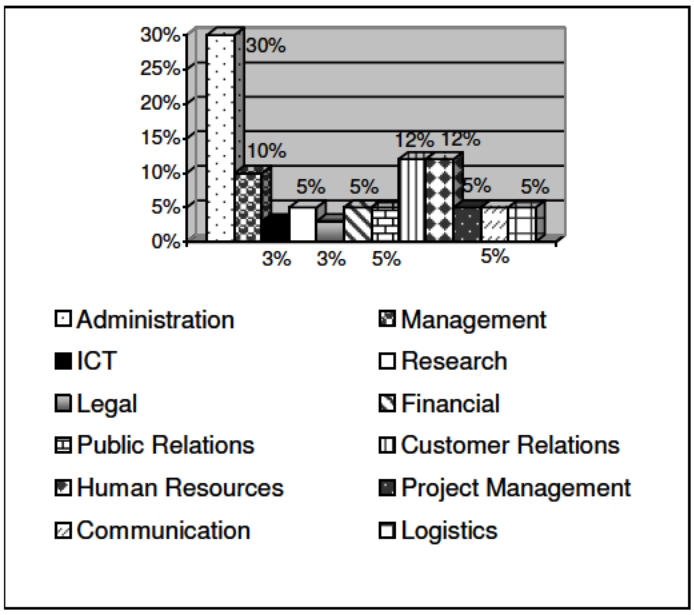

Figure 5: Conceptual model: generic competencies in administrative training programs

The Office Management and Technology program is the only program that could be identified that caters for administrative candidates in both the private and public sector. This interpretation is grounded in the fact that students in this program are placed in both private and public sector organisations during the period of their required industry placement for work-integrated learning, as listed (Henning 2010):

1. Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation
2. Department of Building and Environmental Planning
3. Department of Education
4. Hospital
5. South African Police Department
6. Health Clinics
7. Bus Services
8. Tourism
9. Department of Justice

10. Attorneys
11. Insurance Company
12. Chemical and Metallurgical Engineering
13. University

It is significant that the first 9 out of 13 are public sector, 3 are private sector and 1 is a semi-state employment organisation. These students quite often find employment in the organisations where they have been placed and they report that they consequently do not find it difficult to adapt to the public sector administrative environment.

Since the scope of this article does not provide for a complete discussion on all the identified KPIs, four have been identified that need to be singled out in terms of its being identified as key success factors (majors) in any administrative training program. These are Administration, Management, ICT and Research, the last two featuring significantly low in industry requirements.

It is a concern that management and leadership competencies required by public sector organisations rank fairly low (10%), whilst the media frequently reports on a lack of management skills in the South African industry (refer to Figure 5, Tables 1 and 2). In the case of the program Business **Administration**, the six professions mentioned (refer to Section 6.2.4) do not include any administrative professions. It categorically states that it caters for candidates in “other career opportunities as determined by optional second major subject” (refer to Section 4.5), whilst Administration is clearly a major and not an optional second major subject – significantly representing a dichotomy. In the case of Public Administration, it states categorically that the program targets “every person” who “will benefit from the study” and “caters for the individual needs and interests of both student and employer” (refer to Section 4.5). This argument is also interpreted as reference to a generic approach in the program structure, therefore a synergy.

An e-environment equals **information**, **communication** and **technology** that ground its cohesion in data capturing, processing and information management as critical success factors. Not only in terms of software and Management Information

Systems, but also featuring other competencies such as both theory and practice of ICT, database design and maintenance, e-archiving and desktop publishing, website design, publication and maintenance, knowledge of hardware such as printers, scanners, copiers and data projectors, to name but a few. To add even more of a challenge, hardware and software houses regularly upgrade the versions and administrators have to make sure that they are informed and competent to use the latest versions. Although it should not be required that administrators do programming and maintain e-systems, they also have to be able to identify and solve technical problems (hardware and software) to a certain extent. Substantiating this synergy, four out of the five programs analysed merely offer End User Computing that only provides a candidate with the most basic ICT competencies whilst **information management** requires copious subject matter, as discussed above.

If taken into consideration that the Microsoft Office software contains nine different programs (refer to Table 3 #22), the significance of its being a key success factor is self-explanatory. Substantiating this interpretation, the South African government is finalising the establishment of a completely new state department that will be tasked to manage an “e-revolution” in local governing structures countrywide. This forms part of the government’s “turn-around strategy” for municipalities that has been approved recently. For this reason, a South African government delegation has been tasked to visit Belgium where they will be observing best practices as to how Belgium state governing councils apply “extremely advanced” ICTs (Steenkamp 2010:2) in order to improve strategic management and service delivery.

Furthermore, South Africa’s global ranking in terms of research capacity has been a serious concern for quite some time and a 5% research competency requirement for graduate studies is clearly ringing ominous bells (refer to Table 3, #7, #55 and #59). Several of the Bachelor programs offered at universities in South Africa includes Statistical and Quantitative Techniques, with a marked absence of other fundamental research methodology skills that need to be introduced to candidates in undergraduate programs as well. It is quite often evident that Universities in South Africa do not prepare students effectively for postgraduate levels early enough in their training programs. This results in postgraduate candidates being overwhelmed with research

methodology in a period of one year and consequently leads to incompetence in designing realistic research frameworks for their research projects.

7 INTERPRETATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings, analyses and interpretations of this investigation have been addressed in terms of triangulation that substantiates the problem statement and objectives, based on the findings of secondary statistics used in the theoretical framework. The secondary statistics proved that a decade ago, employers, academics, administrative professionals and students operating within administrative environments in industry already asserted that training programs in Higher Education were not satisfactory. The foci of interpretations and recommendations therefore centre on present curricula as opposed to KPIs specified by public sector organisations in South Africa.

The theoretical framework expounded the history of private and public sector administration. It has been established that administration originated from the period of the Renaissance **as a male and prestigious domain**. In the late 1880s, it evolved into a female domain and during the 1900s a clear distinction was made in Higher Education as to specific public sector administrative programs exclusively. Since then, programs that catered for administrative management in the private sector in its undergraduate, graduate or postgraduate programs have been significantly absent in traditional universities in South Africa. It makes sense that the Magister and Doctorate programs in Business Administration (MBA and DBA), cater as postgraduate programs for executives. Since there are no other obvious conclusions behind this exclusion of private sector administrative programs, it could indicate a gender stigma that unlawfully clings to this domain.

Several Higher Education programs do not specify the targeted professions in industry for these programs in its online prospectuses. If administration is so important to the public sector and universities to justify the variety of programs and areas of specialisation in public sector programs that are evident, the following questions arise:

- Why the exclusion of administrative training programs in Higher Education that should cater for the private sector?

- Should any training program not primarily and explicitly specify its target population/market?
- Why does a dichotomy exist as to a bare minimum of administrative programs that cater for the private sector (primarily at Universities of Technology), as opposed to public administration training programs?
- Why is a significant synergy subsequently evident in the fact that graduates inclusively find employment in both sectors irrespective of whether they followed a public or private sector training program?

8 CONCLUSION

The synergies that exist in private and public sectors evidently do not justify the dichotomies that exist in terms of Higher Education training programs in administrative management. It is clear that industry requirements could also necessitate strategic reviews in terms of the reality, efficacy and productivity levels in an e-interfaced administrative environment. Seriously expounding this element in a new program will undoubtedly supplement and address the digital divide that still pertains to the South African population compared to global trends.

Any preconceived and unjust perceptions regarding private sector administrators need to be urgently erased and they should be afforded the prestige that has previously been allocated to their male counterparts. This should be reflected in PQMs, career opportunities, remuneration, job descriptions and job specifications. It will therefore be essential that the restructuring exercise should be a combined effort instead of an effort that stakeholders approach in isolation.

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