



Public Service Leadership: Emerging Issues

A REPORT FOR THE AUSTRALIAN
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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National Institute for Governance

University of Canberra

December 2003

Initialisms

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| ANZSOG | Australian and New Zealand School of Government |
| APEX | Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada |
| APS | Australian Public Service |
| APSC | Australian Public Service Commission |
| CCMD | Canadian Centre for Management Development |
| CMPS | Centre for Management and Policy Studies (UK) |
| DVC | Department for Victorian Communities |
| GVT | Growing Victoria Together |
| HRDC | Human Resources Development Canada |
| ILS | Integrated Leadership Strategy |
| LAPP | Learning Advisory Panel on Policy (Canada) |
| LCP | Leadership Capability Profile (New Zealand) |
| LDC | Leadership Development Centre (New Zealand) |
| MAC | Management Advisory Committee (Commonwealth) |
| MAC | Management Advisory Committee |
| MDC | Management Development Centre (New Zealand) |
| n.d. | No date |
| NPM | New Public Management |
| OECD | Organisation for Cooperation and Economic Development |
| OPSME | Office of Public Service Merit and Equity (Queensland) |
| PCI | Policy Community Initiative (Canada) |
| PIU | Performance and Innovation Unit (UK) |
| PSA | Public Service Agreement (UK) |
| PSCC | Public Service Commission of Canada |
| QPS | Queensland Public Service |
| SELC | Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework (Commonwealth) |
| SSC | State Services Commission (New Zealand) |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared for the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) by the National Institute for Governance at the University of Canberra. It is based on a study of public services in five jurisdictions (the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Victoria and Queensland) to identify the current high-priority and emerging challenges facing those jurisdictions' public services. The report also provides an overview of the leadership skills and behaviours needed to meet these challenges. The research consisted of a survey of recent relevant literature, which allowed the research team to identify public sector leadership trends and issues. Against that background the jurisdiction-specific literature was surveyed and a series of discussions and interviews conducted with relevant personnel in each service under examination.

The research team identified a set of common themes in all five jurisdictions, including: declining public trust in government and its institutions; improving educational standards and communications, thereby facilitating active debate and criticism of policy and its implementation; and the trend towards globalisation of the economy and ideas. Against this background, four major themes or challenges in the five jurisdictions were identified:

1. Policy capacity and strategic thinking
2. Connections for policy and delivery (horizontal)
3. Integration and alignment for performance (vertical)
4. Management fundamentals.

In different ways, each of the five jurisdictions is responding to these challenges by looking to improve the leadership capacities of their public servants. In the UK there is a focus on competencies that reflect the Blair government's emphasis on joined-up government. In Canada there is a particular concern about declining policy capacity, with efforts oriented towards intellectual, future-building, management, relationship-oriented and personal competencies. New Zealand's extensive application of some of the more far-reaching aspects of new public management (NPM) in the 1980s and 1990s has seen something of a reaction in that country, with a focus on integration, the citizen, alignment, and enhancing the people and the culture of the state sector. Victoria—another jurisdiction well known for its pursuit of NPM-related reforms—is moving under its Labor administration to engender stronger connections with the community, and (like many governments around the world) is facing significant generational problems, with a need to develop skills, aptitudes and outlooks among its new leaders that differ significantly from those that were engendered in earlier generations of senior executives. Lastly, Queensland, especially through its governance committee, is looking to its public service leaders to better understand and respond to the needs and requirements of government through the application of a performance-focused system of strategic management.

Drawing out the lessons of this examination of the five jurisdictions, the study has found that each is looking to ensure that senior public servants are capable of thinking strategically and of providing informed and innovative advice to the political executive. Each jurisdiction acknowledges the fundamental importance of whole of government approaches as a prerequisite of better policy advice and improved service delivery. All case studies reveal a desire for greater integration between the values, missions and objectives of senior public service leaders and officials at lower levels within organisations. Furthermore, there is acknowledgment in every jurisdiction that it is necessary to develop technical and managerial skills and expertise at all levels within the public sector.

These findings have implications for the Australian Public Service (APS), in that there is clearly a good deal of commonality in the broad challenges being faced in similar systems around the world, but each is responding to these in ways that are shaped and guided by the specific historical and institutional

circumstances that apply in each instance. It is also apparent that leadership as a quality is something to be engendered at a systemic level, with the needs of government and the community as a starting point in designing and adapting leadership programs and activities. While individual, innate qualities are clearly crucial to effective leadership, the structures, processes and standards of the wider system are equally germane to the individual leader's qualities being fully developed and expressed in effective performance of the individual and the organisation.

2. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This part of the report outlines the purpose of the study, the methodology applied and the broad definition of 'leadership' used by the project team.

2.1 Purpose

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) commissioned this report by the National Institute for Governance as part of its efforts to continually improve the leadership capacity of senior executives in the Australian Public Service (APS). In particular, the APSC is developing an Integrated Leadership Strategy (ILS) which will establish the Commission's role in ensuring the APS has leadership that is sustainable, innovative and values-based, equipped to meet the challenges of the immediate future and those that will emerge over the next fifteen to twenty years.

Within that context, this report aims to draw on evidence from the public services of five jurisdictions (three national jurisdictions and two Australian states) to identify the current high-priority and emerging leadership challenges facing those jurisdictions' public services. The report also provides an overview of the leadership skills and behaviours needed to meet these challenges.

2.2 Methodology

The aim of the project was to examine five other jurisdictions (Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Queensland and Victoria), but to do so in such a way as to make the findings relevant to the APS environment. Therefore, the primary reference point for this research was the APSC's Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework¹.

In terms of scope, the research was organised to go from the general to the particular, in that public sector issues in general were first examined (especially with reference to the five jurisdictions), providing a context for the specific study of public sector leadership in the five jurisdictions. Within this methodological framework, the research involved:

- a survey of the recent relevant literature, with a focus on international material
- identification of trends and issues in the literature
- a survey of jurisdiction-specific primary sources
- discussions and interviews with contacts internationally and interstate, including academics and senior officials.

2.3 'Leadership' in a Public Sector Context

There is little shared understanding of the qualities required for effective leadership in today's public services.

Leadership theory is driven by conflicting interpretations, in a full spectrum from those who emphasise the primary importance of personal qualities to those who say that systems are all-important.

Leaders themselves often do not understand the reasons for their own effectiveness.

There is a lack of the most basic information about leaders and leadership in the public sector: data on career progression, turnover, wastage rates, and systematic tracking of the career moves of individuals.

Performance and Innovation Unit (UK) (2001: 1)

¹ Available at: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/selc/index.html>.

'Leadership' is a hotly debated concept. There is a plethora of commentary and advocacy for various approaches; much of it grounded in various forms of pop philosophy or psychology.² It is a subject that has been studied across a range of academic disciplines, including political science, management, psychology, sociology, public administration and defence studies. Advocacy ranges from strident claims that individualistic, heroic leadership is *the* crucial element in organisational and personal success, through to deep scepticism that leadership is anything more than an inherent quality that can be found to varying degrees in some individuals who seem to have the capacity to inspire others to pursue a particular strategy or realise a particular vision (Lord 2000). In this intellectual environment it is useful to have a working definition of 'leadership' that is as clear as possible without narrowing or distorting the focus, and that relates to the specific area of study, in this case the public sector.

Because this study is aimed at examining leadership development in the context of public sector challenges in a number of jurisdictions, we have worked with a definition of the term that places leadership in an organisational and institutional context, while also reflecting the notion of leadership as an individual quality. For the purposes of this study, then, 'leadership' is defined as:

The capacity at both the individual and institutional levels to: identify and define organisational goals and desired outcomes; develop strategies and plans to achieve those goals and deliver those outcomes; and guide the organisation and motivate its people in reaching those goals and outcomes. This requires energy, commitment, persistence, integrity, intelligence and a capacity to inspire from the leader and the encouragement of these attributes from the organisation.³

The value of this working definition is that it focuses on leadership in its organisational context, while also emphasising the individual's capacity to achieve observable, tangible action in an overall management framework of analysis, planning and action (OECD 2001: 12). By working with this definition we have sought to focus this study on how these characteristics are encouraged and developed among public service leaders in the five jurisdictions under examination (the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Victoria and Queensland).

Observations about leadership in the public sector

A specific point to note about the above definition is that it does not seek to draw an artificial distinction between 'management' and 'leadership'. While it is clear that the two qualities or activities are conceptually distinct, in practice they share many characteristics (Halligan 2003; OECD 2001). While it is certainly possible for an individual to be a good manager—through harnessing and organising resources and action to deliver already determined outputs—without necessarily being a good leader, it is unlikely that an effective senior manager would be able to operate without evincing at least some degree of leadership. Similarly, a good leader does not necessarily need to be a highly accomplished manager of resources, projects or programs, but it is unlikely that such an individual (especially in the context of government administration) would be able to effectively identify and define organisational goals and desired outcomes without having a reasonable understanding of the managerial possibilities and constraints in delivering on those goals and outcomes. Particularly in the framework of government and public administration, it is important to see leadership in its managerial and organisational context, rather than as a factor independent of that context.

² A search under 'leadership' on the Amazon.com site found 13,593 books on the topic. A similar search of the Library of Congress catalogue exceeded the catalogue's return limit of 10,000 records (searches conducted 3 September 2003).

³ This working definition is consistent with (and partly inspired by) the Australian Public Service Leadership Capability Framework. The Framework emphasises leadership as a capability oriented towards achieving results, strategic thinking, communication, cultivation of effective relationships, and demonstrating personal qualities of drive and integrity (APSC 2002).

It has been observed that in some respects the notion of 'leadership' in a public service context might be considered antithetical to the fact that public servants—however senior—serve the political leadership in helping them realise their policy program (Halligan 2003: 101). It is clear, however, that bureaucratic leadership is integral to the administrative and managerial task of providing quality policy advice and delivering effective public programs (OECD 1996, 2001; Terry 1995; Theakston 1999). While political oversight of the work of public servants is a critical factor that shapes and constrains the exercise of bureaucratic leadership, it by no means supplants it, much less renders it redundant.

The APS itself has been the focus of close academic scrutiny from those who research and write on leadership and management in the public sector (Halligan 2002). Korac-Kakabadse and Korac-Kakabadse (1997, 1998), for example, carried out an extensive study of leadership in the APS in the mid-1990s. Among other things, they noted the crucial interplay between organisational culture and individual leadership qualities in dealing with the paradoxes created by an environment that calls for organisational qualities of trust, openness and cooperation in circumstances of tight controls of costs and persistent demands for efficiency gains (1998: 221).

A common observation about leadership is the degree to which it is seen as an innate quality or a set of behaviours that can be learned. Based on the observations made during the course of this study, it seems reasonable to argue that there are indeed certain characteristics which are necessary preconditions for an individual to be able to be an effective leader, such as energy, commitment, strong personal values and well developed interpersonal skills, especially the capacity to inspire. Collectively, these aspects can be seen as the emotional intelligence elements in leadership. Personal qualities, however, are not in themselves sufficient as the basis for leadership. Effective leaders also need to have acquired a good knowledge of the organisation they are working in, the various tools and techniques of strategic planning and analysis, communication techniques and processes, and the fundamentals of management including, for example, human resources, financial and project management. Such knowledge and aptitudes can be learned, whether on the job or through structured training. It is for this reason that all five jurisdictions examined in this study have put considerable effort into leadership development activities, albeit in different ways.

Measuring leadership and its impact on organisational performance is particularly problematic. Most means by which individual leadership is assessed—e.g. evaluations by peers, staff, superiors, customers, etc.—are prone to subjective bias and generally do not have a clear objective standard or benchmark for comparison. Leadership is also resistant to measurement because it tends to be situational. The opportunity to exhibit certain leadership qualities—especially those that might come to the fore in a crisis or a time of extreme threat—may never arise in an individual's career. Similarly, an individual may have a style of leadership that suits some situations (e.g. handling politically sensitive issues) more than others (e.g. strategic planning or motivating people towards a goal), but the circumstances where that person's particular capacities might shine may not arise. This, perhaps more than for any other reason, is why 'Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth' (Burns 1979: 2). This report, therefore, is focused not so much on measuring leadership and its impact in the public sector, but on how researchers and, especially, practitioners look to understand its characteristics in a public sector context and to develop these in civil servants.

3. EMERGING PUBLIC SERVICE ISSUES

Effective public sector leaders identify and respond to the issues and challenges of the institutions they operate within. This part of the report therefore discusses the major issues in contemporary public sector management, in order to give a context to the discussion of leadership in the public services of the five jurisdictions under study. The analysis is a synthesis of information gathered through the primary research for the study and the wider international and academic literature on public sector management and the future of government.

3.1 The Context: Contemporary Public Sector Management

Despite the range of constitutional, institutional and administrative traditions that can be found throughout the developed world, there are many aspects of contemporary public sector management that are common to most systems of government in, for example, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Among the five jurisdictions that are the focus of this study there is considerable commonality at the level of institutional frameworks and in terms of the experience of reform. All five:

- are within the Westminster tradition of parliamentary democracy (although there are significant variations: Queensland and New Zealand have unicameral parliaments, while Victoria, the UK and Canada all have bicameral arrangements; and Canada, Victoria and Queensland all operate with a federal system, while the UK and New Zealand both have unitary systems)⁴
- have strong traditions of professional public service, with legal and other frameworks that serve to shape and define the civil service in terms of employment arrangements and standards of behaviour and performance
- are recognised in the academic literature as innovators in the area of public sector management reform
- have in varying degrees sought to put into practice the set of approaches that have collectively come to be known as 'new public management' (Christensen & Laegreid 2002; Hood 1995; Lane 2000; Jones & Kettl 2003).

It is this last broad trend—that of new public management, or NPM—that gives rise to many of the dynamics and challenges of public sector management internationally, and especially among the five jurisdictions under consideration. On the one hand, NPM (or local variants) has served to focus public sector reform in countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK. In particular, it has strengthened managerial competence and generally invigorated the public sector by drawing on many of the management techniques and approaches of the private sector (e.g. outsourcing, purchaser–provider models, performance management, contract employment, etc.) in order to deliver more efficient and effective services (Lane 2000; OECD 1993; Peters & Pierre 2003: 4–5). On the other hand, NPM has also tended to see civil service structures and systems fragment, with researchers and practitioners expressing concerns about a concomitant reduction in coherence and consistency in policy, administration and delivery (OECD 1996; Peters 1994; Peters & Savoie 1996; Weller, Bakvis & Rhodes 1997).

The issue of leadership in civil service systems has become a particular focus of attention in recent years, both among researchers (e.g. Boyett 1996; Campbell 1997; Halligan 2003; Lindquist 2000; Terry 1995; Theakston 1999), and among practitioners (e.g. Cappe 2001; OECD 2001; PIU 2001; SSC 2003a). It has become clear that a major component of success is the capacity of government administrative systems to foster and deploy leadership as a quality of the institutions of government, and not merely treating it as a serendipitous quality in individuals in positions of power and authority.

⁴It is important, however, not to overstate the 'federal' versus 'unitary' constitutional divide. Devolution of some self-government powers to Scotland and Wales has made the UK more decentralised than in the past, and regional government is relatively strong in New Zealand.

The question of public sector leadership falls into particularly sharp focus at a time when the broader environment is in a state of change and development. In particular, governments and societies around the world are experiencing variations on several common themes:

- The general community is less inclined to implicitly trust governments to 'know what's best'.
- Improving educational standards and communications are allowing non-government agents and individual citizens to become more active in the business of government, both at the level of policy development and in implementation issues.
- Globalisation of the economy and ideas is creating new challenges and opportunities for policy and its implementation.
- The rate of technological and communications change continues to facilitate (and demand) increased rates of data generation, knowledge development and cross-sectoral dialogue and debate.

Against the background of these broad international trends in public administration, government and society, we have identified the following major themes or challenges in the five jurisdictions in this study:

1. Policy capacity and strategic thinking
2. Connections for policy and delivery (horizontal)
3. Integration and alignment for performance (vertical)
4. Management fundamentals.

These represent the major environmental and situational factors that make leadership—its identification, nurturing and effective deployment—a central concern in all five government systems. This concern with leadership, what it consists of, and how it can contribute to better government is very evident in the Australian Public Service (e.g. Shergold 2003a; 2003b).

3.2 Policy Capacity and Strategic Thinking

As governments focus increasingly on difficult, 'wicked' policy problems that demand creative solutions supported by an evidentiary base and sound arguments, there is a growing need for very high-level cognitive skills in the bureaucracy. Both policy capacity (in the form of analytical skills and the capacity to manage the data, consultation and coordination functions in particular) and strategic thinking (in the form of planning and anticipation, innovation, and seeing the bigger picture) are in high demand in this environment. This is not to suggest that skills associated with implementation are not valued. Indeed, one of the key policy skills is having a sound understanding of the constraints and capacities of implementation.

A number of Canadian commentators, for example, have observed that the policy capacity of their nation's public service has diminished in recent decades (Armstrong, Mulder et al. 2002; Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002). Armstrong, Mulder et al. (2002) argue that '[c]oncerns about policy capacity developed in the mid-1990s' in Canada. This diminished capacity manifested itself through a 'lack of attention to long term and strategic issues', a tendency to operate policy processes within agencies and to neglect issues requiring input from several departments, and insufficient or inappropriate 'financial and human resources for policy work' (Armstrong, Mulder et al. 2002). Wong, Kunimoto et al (2002) suggest that a lack of strategies for dealing with long-term and horizontal issues, and insufficient resources for policy making, have 'contributed to a decline in the policy capacity of the federal government'.

This study has found similar concerns in all five jurisdictions under examination, either in the literature or through interviews with senior officials, or both.

There is a specific need for more robust technical policy skills and knowledge in particular areas, to complement generalist capacities that have tended to be favoured by the requirements of NPM. The tendency for NPM to emphasise technical efficiency and the maximisation of outputs for a given level of inputs has sometimes diminished the value attached to policy knowledge and analytical skills. There has been a tendency for long-term, broad-range policy thinking to be down-played in favour of shorter-term tactical

capacities that deliver efficiencies at a managerial and operational level (OECD 1997). This was a point stressed by interviewees in Victoria, for example.

There is an argument to be made, too, that an increased focus on being responsive to the needs of the government of the day has tended to lock strategy and policy analysis into a time cycle more closely aligned with the political cycle. Although this point was not made explicit by most interviewees, it is an observation that is to be found in the literature, especially commentary and studies concerned with the use of evidence-based policy (e.g. Nutley 2003).

The challenge, then, is to develop, resource and maintain leadership capacity that can organise thinking and analysis around the difficult, cross-cutting and persistent policy problems of contemporary government. Further, leaders in this context need to be able to apply the skills of strategic planning, analysis and forecasting to both policy matters and the organisational and performance issues of program design and delivery. It is rare for such a range of abilities and experience to be found in a single individual. It is therefore mostly a question of identifying, developing and deploying these capacities across the leadership cohort, rather than expecting each individual leader to be able to perform across the full range of policy and strategic activities. In this sense policy capacity and strategic thinking are factors to be developed in the system as a whole.

3.3 Connections for Policy and Delivery (Horizontal)

A major dimension of policy and administrative complexity is the fact that an increasing number of issues and activities require sophisticated coordination across agency boundaries within the public sector, and increasing engagement of community groups, business and citizens outside government (Lindquist 2002; OECD 2000; Peters 1998, 2001; Shergold 2003a and 2003b; Weller, Bakvis & Rhodes 1997). This requires government systems and structures that are flexible, adaptive, open, and able to build and deploy networks of interested parties around policy development action as well as in the implementation and in evaluation of policy and programs.

This is a particular challenge because of the 'agencification' effect of NPM (Halligan 1998) and the tendency for resource management and performance management systems to be constructed around vertically oriented frameworks of outcomes, outputs and inputs arising from within organisational 'silos'. Devolution and decentralisation of authority have contributed to these developments by emphasising line responsibility and vertical accountability within organisational boundaries. Compounding the silo effect in some contexts is the broader socioeconomic emphasis on technical expertise and the norms of the professions (e.g. medical, engineering, and economics). This tends to create exclusive groupings and patterns of intra-agency relationships that 'outsiders' can find difficult to penetrate or influence.

In the NPM environment, inter-agency relationships have often been couched in terms of purchaser-provider arrangements (Smith, Corbett & Davis 1998; Stewart 1999), where the relationship is contractualised through service-level agreements and payment (real or notional) for services. Similarly, relations with external agents tend to be contractualised through competitive tendering and outsourcing arrangements (Rimmer 1998). A major Australian example is the creation of a market-based framework for the delivery of employment services through the Job Network (Considine 2000). As a result, the emphasis in both inter-agency relations and engagement with non-government players tends to be on performance management and service delivery, relying on market forces to encourage innovation and quality.

The leadership challenge is therefore to develop and maintain flexible relationships across the whole of government and into the community and business sectors. The aim is to motivate and coordinate activity and deliberation to address policy and implementation problems and tasks. This requires a participatory approach to governance, which includes sharing power, authority, information, knowledge, responsibility and accountability, as well as the development of relationships that are based on mutual trust and transparency (Edwards 2001, 2002).

There are clear political dimensions in this task. 'Big P' political issues arise particularly because engagement outside government necessarily brings in considerations of the government's political agenda, constituency and tactical preferences. Similarly, whole of government or cross-agency policy and implementation requires public sector leaders to be sensitive to and have a capacity to act within the 'small p' political world of organisational relations and power structures. Both aspects can create significant tensions and conflicts that require subtle judgement and adjustment to circumstances.

A further challenge is to maintain clear accountabilities in circumstances where power, information and responsibility for action are shared not only across agency boundaries but also with non-government players. This is a key aspect of horizontal coordination that remains a challenge in most reformist government systems around the world (6. Leat et al. 2002: 189–93).⁵

3.4 Integration and Alignment for Performance (Vertical)

Improving leadership capacity in horizontal coordination and collaboration does not mean that traditional bureaucratic strength of vertical alignment of goals, resources and structures can be disregarded. A major focus of public sector reform in most Western nations has been an effort to organise resource management frameworks such that they identify the desired outcomes (impacts) of government, and facilitate the design and delivery of outputs to best achieve those outcomes (Pollitt & Bouckaert 1999). In many systems this has tended to reinforce silo effects and agencification.

However, NPM also emphasises purchaser–provider models, the creation of organisationally distinct policy and implementation functions, and devolution of decision making and resource management. These initiatives have tended to sometimes over-stretch the vertical alignment and integration of policy deliberation, decision making and implementation, resulting in disconnects between policy intent and program design and delivery (Hill & Hupe 2002). The result in some cases has been a focus on cost and efficiency at the expense of delivery and action that is targeted so as to achieve effectively government's desired outcomes and policy objectives.

Another aspect of the vertical alignment issue is the linkage between corporate goals and objectives and individual officers' plans and actions. Performance management approaches are often organised to align individual performance plans and incentives with the organisational goals. Anecdotal and case evidence suggests, however, that these initiatives can have variable impacts. A particular risk is 'goal displacement', whereby attention is focused on meeting specific and measurable performance indicator targets rather than operating more broadly in the interests of achieving outcomes.

In leadership terms, this calls for a capacity to identify and articulate strategic objectives and outcomes, framing these in a way that serves to motivate staff and organise resources, structures and systems to work in a coordinated way towards those objectives and outcomes. This requires a capacity to maintain a strategic overview while attending to the specific details of plans, performance monitoring frameworks, incentives, and review and evaluation.

It is perhaps in this aspect of public sector leadership that the classic conception of leadership being an attribute of rank or position comes most into play. While the softer (i.e. socially rather than organisationally constructed) forms of leadership influence can be found at all levels of a modern organisation, it is unlikely that vertical integration and alignment will be realised without effective leadership from the top. In this sense vertical management is a prerequisite of leadership in senior positions. An example of this can be seen in the integrated framework put forward in the Management Advisory Committee's *Performance Management in the Australian Public Service*, which stresses the importance of leadership from the chief executive in shaping and aligning performance management frameworks and activities (MAC 2001: 22).

⁵ Of course, NPM approaches also provide challenges to traditional forms of accountability, especially because of the emphasis on managerial autonomy (Barberis 1998).

3.5 Management Fundamentals

What I suppose I want to share with you are my concerns about leadership and the way we have sometimes in these last few years tended to separate leadership from management ... Because it seems to me that leadership without management is no leadership at all.

Dr Peter Shergold (2003a)

There is a risk that a conception of leadership that is not adequately grounded in management fundamentals will tend to emphasise the heroic or charismatic leader, exercising individual will over collective action. While there is a place for this form of leadership, it is generally most effective in exceptional circumstances, such as crises or times of high risk. Day-to-day operations generally require a form of leadership that is more situational, grounded in the circumstances and managerial norms and practices of the organisation in question. Any examination of public sector leadership therefore needs to recognise the importance of management knowledge and experience.

Management (or, more pejoratively, 'managerialism'—Considine & Painter 1997) is, of course, a central value of NPM. In the course of this study, however, it became apparent that, in most of the jurisdictions under examination, over the past decade or more there has been a diminution of management capacity. This has occurred particularly as a result of tendencies to 'hollow out' public services, leading to a loss of corporate knowledge and expertise, and a relatively high turnover of staff at management and executive leadership levels.

Generic management skills that remain of ongoing importance—including the management of human resources, finances, organisational development, projects, contracts etc.—continue to be of central importance to public service effectiveness. Specialist management skills can also be called for in particular areas, such as management of research activities, media and public relations management etc.

The management skill that is particularly central to effective leadership is, of course, people management. Several senior executives interviewed for this project suggested that in the pursuit of results and efficiency there has sometimes been a tendency to undervalue people management and the human element of organisations. This is a particular concern in the context of leadership development, because in systems where the current senior executive group has not acquired strong people management skills there is a significant risk that those who might otherwise aspire to leadership positions will be demotivated and ill prepared for such positions. Many may well leave the public service altogether.

There is one further aspect of management that is key to the development and exercise of leadership that can be overlooked: self-management. The individual's capacity to organise and maintain the very high workload demands of executive positions in the contemporary public service establishes a foundation for their capacity to exercise influence and shape organisational action. It is unlikely—although not impossible—that a highly disorganised individual who is overwhelmed by their in-tray is going to be able to contribute effectively or consistently to the leadership of their organisation.

4. RESPONSES IN FIVE JURISDICTIONS

This part of the report addresses each of the five jurisdictions in turn, placing their initiatives in the area of leadership in the context of the particular challenges and issues arising in the prevailing circumstances in each case.

4.1 United Kingdom

Public Sector Challenges

The Blair government is well known for its initiatives in modernising the UK Public Service. The modernisation agenda is wide ranging and has as its centrepiece 'joined-up government', but it is focused, in particular, on meeting the demands of the public for better service delivery.

A recent research study by the Cabinet Office's Performance and Innovation Unit identified unprecedented challenges facing Britain's public services at the start of the 21st century, including:

- demands to modernise public services and orient them more closely to the needs and wishes of customers
- higher expectations on the part of the general public, who expect public services to keep up with private ones
- increased opportunities, and requirements, for partnerships both across the public sector and with private and voluntary organisations
- pressures to harness new technology and deliver government services electronically. (PIU 2001: 4)

In addition, a lack of capacity for long-term thinking and strategic policy work has been recently recognised and has resulted in the setting up of the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. Related deficiencies in the policy-making process have been identified by the Cabinet Office, in particular that policy analysis skills are in short supply, relative to demand (Cabinet Office 2000b). One consequence was the setting up in 2002 of an office of the Chief Social Researcher in the Strategy Unit, to share basic practice in policy making and evaluation across government departments (Strategy Unit 2003: 14).

The Cabinet Office is giving considerable attention to what works as these reforms unfold and to improving policy capacity across agencies in their joined-up activities. Public Service Agreements (PSAs) are emphasising alignment or 'line of sight' from strategic priorities agreed by Cabinet, through to departmental objectives and targets, unit objectives and targets, and to personal objectives and development plans:

Every individual or team should have stretch objectives for which they are clearly accountable, linked explicitly to the outcomes sought in their organisation's business plans ... (Cabinet Office 2000a: 19)

Role of Leadership

In line with the modernising of government agenda, there are increased demands on public sector organisations (over 20 departments and over 100 executive agencies) for new leadership skills, particularly to provide 'horizontal' leadership within and across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

In 2001, the PIU found that:

- the public services are not attracting or keeping the best leaders, and do not have sufficiently robust strategies for recruiting them to the posts that matter most ...
- there are many leadership development initiatives and new leadership colleges being set up. But there is little evidence so far as to their effectiveness. And too little attention is paid to the growing importance of leadership across organisational boundaries, or to learning between different sectors

- public service leaders are often unable to lead effectively because others fail to give them the freedom, the support systems or the challenges that will permit them to do so (PIU 2001: 4).

Up until two or three years ago, improving leadership was driven more by agencies themselves. Now, alongside agency programs, there is a more centralised approach, driven by the Cabinet Office, including ‘a research programme to underpin work to increase the pool of public service leaders’ (PIU 2001: 5). Most recently (September 2003), the Secretary of Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service, Sir Andrew Turnbull, has written to his senior colleagues suggesting that what is needed is a ‘step change in the quality of leadership to ensure we deliver on PSA targets, improve the quality of our strategies and policies, and our success in delivering major programmes and projects’ (Turnbull 2003a: 1). A consultation paper seeking views on how to implement actions proposed is currently out with departments.

The Head of the Civil Service has distinguished between traditional strengths that need to be reinforced—such as integrity, neutrality, management competence—and newer approaches such as focusing on outcomes, risk management, creativity and innovation (Turnbull 2003a: 1). Leadership effectiveness is being closely associated with performance management.

The Civil Service Management Board (chaired by the Head of the Civil Service) has identified seven areas for improvement (Turnbull 2003a: 2):

1. offering more and better quality training and development opportunities to staff at or approaching senior levels
2. introducing a new high-potential development scheme to equip the best for top posts
3. improving the approach to performance management, by simplifying the process, using better evidence, and adopting a more systematic approach to improving the lowest performers
4. improving the reward and incentives package
5. introducing time-limited postings
6. developing more flexible employment patterns in the senior civil service by encouraging new career options
7. developing more active exit strategies.

In the new cross-cutting environment, much attention has been paid to promoting greater mobility within and interchange outside the Civil Service (Cabinet Office 2000c: 9). In examining ways to strengthen leadership, the PIU identified the need for a more mobile workforce to gain a wider pool of leaders, and the important role of secondments from outside the civil service. It also proposed a sponsors group to meet regularly to spread best leadership development practice across the sectors (PIU 2000:6—see also p.59.ff for more details of these suggestions) and stressed the value of cross-sectoral training initiatives.

The UK Civil Service is placing a lot of emphasis on what works in leadership development. It acknowledges it does not yet have a good diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of its leadership (PIU 2001: 9), but what analysis does exist suggests good leadership remains too rare a quality. Questions are being asked about what lessons can be learnt and shared about good recruitment practices, how to identify and develop leadership talent and how to make the most of leaders. Work is also being undertaken on how the skills and experiences from the private sector and the wider public sector can be effectively applied in different types of public sector organisations (PSLS 2003: 1).

Leadership Initiatives

While there has been an upsurge in leadership development within government departments over the last few years—many have set up their own academies, foundations or links with business schools (for more details see PIU 2001 Annex F)—the Centre for Management and Policy Studies (CMPS) is now playing a central role in the development of leadership across the service (Cabinet Office 2001a: 9). It brings together representatives from all public sector leadership programs across agencies in the Public Sector Leadership Development Forum (PIU 2001: 100). The CMPS runs a suite of Top Management programs. While using a variety of learning modes, these all attempt to translate concept and theory into practical action.

The *Top Management Programme* (TMP)⁶ covers the above range of skills and is for directors/senior managers from public, private and not-for-profit sectors who have the potential to reach the highest leadership positions. It is a four-week course and contains many learning tools, but it always includes one case study on an issue from the government's top ten current priorities. In other case studies, private and not-for-profit participants act as clients. There is also a two-week program, *Developing Top Management*, designed for deputy directors (one layer below the Top Management Programme target group), with a focus on strategic leadership issues. Both these programs have recently been overhauled with more emphasis on strategy, delivery and resilience (Turnbull 2003b: para 17).

Recently launched (September 2003) is the CMPS *Preparing for Top Management* program. It is aimed to equip those with high potential to lead the delivery of public services and to enhance their chance of promotion to senior positions more quickly. It forms the entry level of the Top Management suite of programs. Participants undertake training for one year with core modules covering leadership, strategy and delivery (CMPS 2003: 1).

The last program to be announced is a high-potential development scheme (see Turnbull 2003b: para 20) aimed at those competing for board-level posts—top leader positions which are based on competitive selection and highly tailored to need.

All these activities are part of a larger program of work, the *Improving Leadership Programme*, aimed at strengthening the leadership of the Senior Civil Service.

The CMPS introduced in 2002 a flexible e-learning initiative—'PRIME'—specifically to develop the leadership capabilities of public sector managers. It has been designed for people in or about to enter senior management positions and includes participants from the private and not-for-profit sectors.

Finally, the Public Service Leaders Scheme (PSLS) was launched in 2001 and is currently under evaluation. It is the only scheme that embraces the whole of the public sector.⁷ It is based on action learning, with each participant drawing up their own individual learning contracts for one to three years, depending on need. The scheme includes a virtual centre and has a mandatory interchange element.

The Policy Studies Directorate within the CMPS, with its focus on best practice, also has a range of seminars and other mechanisms to transmit knowledge about what works for senior managers, for example:

- Top Managers' Forum (a set of monthly seminars)
- Network for Excellence in Policy Making
- Joined-up Solutions series of seminars (including non-government attendees)
- Joint minister and senior civil servant seminars and discussion forums.

Three-quarters of ministers in the UK Government had attended at least one CMPS event as of 2001 (Cabinet Office 2001a: 9).

⁶ For details see: <http://www.cmps.gov.uk/courses>.

⁷ Details at: <http://www.publicserviceleadersscheme.gov.uk>.

Competencies

The emphasis on joined-up government is reflected in current UK leadership competencies. After considerable consultation and trialling, the *Senior Civil Service Competency Framework—Leadership for Results*—was launched in 2001 (Cabinet Office 2003b). It contains six elements of desired behaviours:

1. giving purpose and direction
2. making a personal impact
3. thinking strategically
4. getting the best from people
5. learning and improving
6. focusing on delivery.

These key elements form the basis of the new performance management system and are used to identify areas of strength as well as personal development needs. They have been mapped back to public sector-wide values and modernised government themes.

4.2 Canada

Public Sector Challenges

Aucoin (2002) identifies several imperatives for contemporary public administration in Canada. Using the 'new public management' paradigm as a starting point, he suggests that aspects of the NPM approach are perhaps less influential in Canada. Ministers, for example, seem more reluctant for government to withdraw from delivery or operational functions than is the general pattern in other systems. In this context, Aucoin (2002) suggests that the Canadian Public Service is facing growing needs in the areas of: policy capacity (especially in the wake of trends towards the separation of policy and implementation leading to policy processes tending to lose touch with implementation); citizen-centred service delivery; improving people management to enhance accountability and leadership capacity; and reinvigorating the public service as an institution of governance.

Diminished policy capacity is also at the forefront of concerns expressed by other researchers and practitioners (APEX 2000; Dunn 2002; Lindquist 1998; Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002). Some of the general pressures that are perceived to have contributed to this diminished policy capacity include rising deficits, managerialist reforms, external and contextual pressures such as globalisation, new information technologies, the decline of traditional forms of scientific and bureaucratic authority, and rising citizen expectations about participation in policy making and service delivery.

Several more specific factors have been identified as leading to the decline in policy capacity. The increasing frequency and scale of government budget deficits in recent decades is a trend that has encouraged members of the political executive and public service leaders to shift resources away from policy-making functions. Governments have also responded to budget deficits by instituting managerialist reforms (Lindquist 1998: 4). The managerialist response to deficits has involved substantial reductions in program funding and the downsizing of the public service workforce, which may have enhanced the efficiency of existing administrative activities, but at the same time undermined the capacity of the service to respond to new demands. This downsizing may have also reduced the quantity and quality of substantive expertise in the Canadian Public Service, and with depleted resources there is also recognition that the Canadian Public Service may not represent an employer of choice and may not be able to attract necessary talent (APEX 2000). Aside from resource deficiencies, deficit reduction and managerialism arguably also encouraged a shift in the public service away from concern about the long-term goals of policy and towards increasing the efficiency of existing administrative processes and resolving short-term managerial problems (APEX 2000; Dunn 2002; Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002).

Broader social, economic, technological, cultural and political changes also present challenges for the Canadian Public Service. The information and communications technology revolutions create citizen expectations of improved access to information and more rapid delivery of services (Rossell 2000). The general decline in the deference to the authority of experts feeds into this demand for more information, and also into claims for greater citizen participation and input into policy making and service delivery, embodied in the suggestion that policy and services should be 'citizen-centred' (Rossell 2000). This trend also promotes competing knowledge claims, and a decentring of the knowledge required for effective policy making. When combined with diminished policy expertise in the public service, this development increases the need for governments to engage external perspectives, to create networks linking official decision makers with non-government actors, and to ensure that the latter connect with the agendas of the former (Lindquist 1998; Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002).

Despite the fact that managerialist approaches and emphases are decreasingly fashionable in the Canadian Public Service, there is nevertheless concern to ensure that new public service executives are capable managers as well as visionary leaders. The combination of downsizing and demographic shifts has meant that some individuals are promoted rapidly to positions of leadership, sometimes without obtaining basic operational management expertise. The promotion of management abilities is regarded as an important component of leadership training in the Canadian Public Service (APEX 2000).

Finally, the emergence of issues that cross over traditional boundaries challenges the capacity of the Canadian Public Service to develop effective policy solutions. 'Wicked problems' such as environmental degradation and terrorism do not respect the jurisdictional boundaries of nation states (Cappe 2001). These problems also overlap sectoral, departmental and organisational divisions (Dunn 2002). Effective responses require increased horizontal coordination and collaboration between agencies, sectors and jurisdictions (Dunn 2002; Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002).

Role of Leadership

What is the role of public service leadership in responding to the challenges identified for the Canadian Public Service? Canadian commentators commonly identify four ways in which leadership needs to be reoriented to contribute to improved policy capacity:

1. **The need for strategic thinking**

Commentators accept that a more strategic focus is needed in the bureaucracy (Lawrence 1999).

As part of this, the public service must become attractive and supportive to new graduates (Cappe 2001). Leaders must play an important role in fostering and mentoring new leaders (Cappe 2001).

2. **The shift from specialisation, silos and hierarchies to coordinated approaches and shared visions**

The bureaucratic specialisation encouraged in Canada through managerialism separated policy domains and fragmented the administrative activities of government. This impacts on leadership, because horizontal fragmentation can reduce high-level awareness of the connections between different policy activities. Furthermore, the separation between policy making and policy implementation creates immobilities in the public service and threatens the capacity of implementers to think strategically. Consequently, it also undermines the ability of policy makers to understand the demands of implementation. Hence, the Canadian response emphasises the importance of combining these different competencies in leaders, to ensure that they have both leadership capability and substantive expertise. Leaders must also be capable of developing relationships that assist in the horizontal coordination of policy activities. Furthermore, in the context of the increasing diversity of values and perspectives, leadership activities should foster shared visions within and between institutions (Cappe 2001; Lindquist 1998).

3. From neglecting succession to fostering leaders

If there has been a neglect in recent decades of the issue of maintaining the long-term human resources of the public sector, current commentary recognises that this trend is unsustainable. Demographic factors exacerbate the gaps in human resources, because they mean that some officers are promoted rapidly, acquiring decision-making responsibilities without the necessary understanding of policy content. Public service leaders must consider the problem of succession, and contribute to the creation of new leaders. They can assist by mentoring new leaders and creating the conditions that are congenial to the attraction, retention, development and promotion of potential public service leaders (APEX 2000; Cappe 2001; Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002)

4. From rigid to flexible, risk-managing structures

Existing organisational structures in the Canadian Public Service are sometimes characterised as inflexible and unresponsive (APEX 2000). Canadian commentators point to the reactive and risk-averse orientations that often resulted from the implementation of the new public management. In the current environment, public services must be capable of rapidly creating, reorganising and abandoning structures in order to respond to changes in demands, expectations and priorities (Rossell 2000). Leaders must not only be capable of coping with change; they also need to be able to initiate and guide change in their agencies.

It should be noted that this discussion is not meant to suggest that leadership reforms are sufficient to address the substantial challenges facing the Canadian Public Service. However, most writers accept that without these new leadership orientations, it will not be possible to rebuild policy capacity in Canada.

Leadership Initiatives

The Canadian Public Service has initiated a number of processes in response to concerns about policy capacity. In 1995, Learning Advisory Panels were formed 'to look at unique and unaddressed needs of professionals' in the public services and to 'create a learning governance structure that would define the values of a modern public service including competencies' (Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002). The Learning Advisory Panel on Policy (LAPP) was created in 1998 and worked for two years at devising strategies for improving recruitment, skills development, mobility and management (Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002). In 2001, the Policy Community Initiative (PCI) was set up to extend the work of the LLAP. The PCI also sought to establish the nature of senior officials' demand for policy product, and the extent to which this demand would aid or inhibit the strengthening of policy capacity in the Canadian Public Service. The PCI surveyed senior officials and found that many believed that 'insufficient or poorly articulated demand' for policy advice from the political executive restricted the development of policy capacity in the Canadian Public Service. However, some respondents also suggested that senior officials had the 'authority and responsibility to create the necessary demand, and must take the leadership role in improving policy processes and support' (Wong, Kunimoto et al. 2002).

Wong, Kunimoto et al. (2002) argue that as a result of these initiatives, there has been a shift in thinking about the causes of deficient policy capacity in the Canadian Public Service. Whereas in the mid-1990s the remedy was thought to involve promoting the competence and capacity of lower-level staff and attracting and retaining staff, recently the focus has shifted to 'leadership and management of policy processes, including mobilising the relevant staff effectively'. Issues surrounding the maintenance of human resources are still regarded as extremely important, but attention is increasingly focused on the strategic activities of senior leadership (or lack thereof).

The Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD), which is responsible for assisting with the development of management capabilities in the Canadian Public Service, has developed a framework of leadership competencies, complemented by leadership training programs. CCMD's objective is to assist in the training of public service leaders who are capable of ethical insights and committed to upholding ethical values, able to develop staff to ensure that leadership capacities are sustained, and dedicated to serving

Canadian citizens. CCMD recognises that these leaders must also understand the requirements of adhering to the mandate of government, and that they must accept the need for institutional change. The CCMD is careful to distinguish between leadership and management, noting that leadership is essentially about the facilitation of change, whereas management is concerned with securing consistency. As part of its online suite of leadership resources, the centre provides several definitions of leadership, which highlight the need for public service leaders to secure the commitment of staff to new perspectives and objectives. In this way, CCMD's approach to leadership coheres with the new leadership orientations outlined in Section 3 of this paper.

The CCMD has developed five 'mastery', which are critical components of leadership in the Canadian Public Service. 'Contextual mastery' concerns the ability of public service leaders to understand the policy environment and how it impacts on governance. 'Organisational mastery' involves an understanding of the cultural dynamics of the institutions within which leaders work and the ability to flourish in them. CCMD suggests that leaders must also display 'managerial mastery', by being capable of steering policy processes to consistently achieve results. 'Interpersonal mastery' requires leaders to be skilled in relating to others at various levels within the policy system, while 'personal mastery' reflects the capacity of leaders to develop and adhere to values and to be aware and in control of their skills and weaknesses. CCMD offers foundation courses on leadership, including a program on 'Leading for Results' and a unit in 'Leading Scientific Teams', as well as 'strategy-specific' leadership courses, including programs about diversity, service innovation, leadership in indigenous affairs and a course on values and ethics for leaders. Additionally, the CCMD has produced the *Personal Learning Plan*, which helps public servants to develop their own individualised approach to learning. The plan requires them to set out necessary competencies, learning goals, specific learning actions and deadlines. The plan also encourages officers to reflect with their superiors on barriers which might prevent them from learning, including lack of confidence and lack of resources (CCMD [n.d.]).

The CCMD's work on leadership competencies draws on the *Leadership Profile for Senior Executives and ADMs* developed by the Canadian Public Service Commission (PSCC 2003). This latter profile includes the following competencies:

- Intellectual competencies
 - include the cognitive capacity to understand complexity, and see and make order out of chaos
- Future building competencies
 - hinge on the ability to develop a vision for the future of the Canadian Public Service
- Management competencies
 - include: 'action management', meaning that leaders are able to translate ideas into concrete actions; 'organizational awareness', which involves an understanding of the 'structure, processes and key players' in their organisation; 'teamwork', which refers to their capacity to work as part of a collaborative team and minimise competitive impulses; 'partnering' which involves horizontal integration across organisations; and fostering relationships with parties external to government
- Relationship competencies
 - include skills for managing 'interpersonal relationships' incorporating persuasion and assertiveness, and 'communication', which involves the capacity to convey ideas and to adapt styles of articulation to suit particular audiences
- Personal competencies
 - include: 'stamina' and a capacity for 'stress resistance'; a commitment to treating people fairly and with dignity according to the 'ethics and values' of the public service; a 'personality' that is ambitious, focused and which possesses stability and self-control; 'behavioural flexibility', which entails an ability to 'adapt the expression of their competencies to different situations and respond quickly to emerging opportunities and risks'; and finally, 'self-confidence', and the capacity to be 'self-directed rather than other-directed'.

These competencies are intended to apply to assistant deputy managers and senior executives in the Canadian Public Service.

This list of competencies has been extended and adapted in various parts of the Canadian Public Service. The *Leadership Network*⁸, which resides within the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, has expanded these competencies in its Competency Profile for Middle Managers. The Leadership Network's competency profile covers each of the competencies developed by the Public Service Commission and adds a detailed discussion of the knowledge bases that contribute to each competency, the specific skills that are required for leaders, the courses offered by Canadian government agencies relevant to the competency in question and self-learning opportunities. For example, as part of the 'cognitive capacity' competency, the Leadership Network proposes:

'[t]heories on mindsets, mental models (such as paradigms, learning styles, individual filters) ... Systems thinking ... Planning & Plan Analysis processes ... [and t]heories on thinking patterns, systems, habits and preferences' as important knowledge bases. Specific skills required for this competency include the ability to [a]nalyze situation[s] ... Do environment scans ... Do organization analysis ... Use appropriate individual or group processes [and t]ranslate analysis into sound applications. (National Managers' Community 2003)

The profile lists relevant courses offered by Statistics Canada and Training and Development Canada, and various self-learning models.

Other agencies have developed versions of the Canadian Public Service Commission leadership profile, including Human Resources Development Canada, which incorporates serving Canadians, providing purpose, engaging people, building alliances, taking responsibility and leading by example. This profile is intended to complement, rather than substitute for, the Canadian Public Service Commission profile (HRDC 2003). Similarly, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has developed a complementary profile as part of its Leadership and Learning Guide, which includes the following competencies: communication, team building and facilitation, flexibility and innovation, risk taking, and seeing the big picture (INAC 2002).

4.3 New Zealand

Public Sector Challenges

Background

The public sector challenges currently facing New Zealand have their origins in its unique history of public sector reform over the last 15 to 20 years, during which New Zealand became well known for going further than other jurisdictions in adopting new public management features.

In the late 1980s, state sector reforms encouraged the emergence of independent practice across the public service including the creation of a 'diverse set of "brands"' emerging from each agency (SSC 2002a: 2).

By the early 1990s, New Zealand was being described as a 'contract state'. It had:

- clear separation of policy and delivery agencies governed by a purchaser-provider relationship
- more than 30 public service departments (excluding Crown entities)
- heads of agencies delivering specified outputs to ministers
- agencies as silos, providing their own professional development to staff (the attempt by the State Services Commission (SSC) to set up a senior executive service failed)
- power gravitating to Wellington with regions starved of funds for effective delivery of services
- staff losses occurring with hollowing out of the public sector and increased reliance placed on contracting outside experts to assist the government especially with policy-related tasks

⁸ Details at: http://leadership.gc.ca/menu_e.asp.

- an enterprising public service culture prepared to take risks at least until the second half of the 1990s when some crises (e.g. the Cave Creek disaster) caused the public service to become more risk averse.

Resulting Challenges

The Government's Review of the Centre in July 2001 was set up to examine how well the public management system responded to the needs of citizens and ministers. Its report in November 2001 highlighted the need for 'significant shifts in emphasis' to respond better to the needs of the future (SSC 2002b: 7).

The three priority areas for change identified by the Review of the Centre and accepted by the government were (from SSC 2002: 8):

1. achieving better integrated, citizen-focused, service delivery
 - particularly for complex social problems dealt with by many agencies, ensuring a system focused on the outcomes and services that citizens and governments wanted
2. addressing fragmentation and improving alignment
 - particularly through more emphasis on outcomes; developing more effective, higher-trust ways of working together; harnessing technology; re-examining the large number of agencies; and emphasising a whole of government approach alongside vertical accountabilities
3. enhancing the people and culture of the state sector
 - particularly by building a strong sense of values, staff and management development and ways of collective engagement in organisational decisions.

In adopting these directions the government added the need to pay attention to the needs, priorities and interests of Maori in a whole of government context.

Recent discussions with the Leadership Development Centre (LDC) identified 11 high-priority and emerging leadership issues:

- managing for outcomes—sectoral and whole of government management
- improving capability
- responsiveness to Maori—consultation, self-determination, diversity
- demographics, immigration—needs and expectations, styles
- globalisation—the economy, labour market, organisations, knowledge
- fiscal restraint—the baby boom effect
- complexities under proportional representation—increased politicisation
- technology—extended use and management of risk
- different service delivery configurations—partnerships with local authorities and iwi, integration solution, facilitation and empowerment rather than control
- increased public expectations—customer service
- increased stakeholder expectation—transparency and involvement in decision making.

Other issues raised both by those interviewed and in recent relevant reports include:

- moving from *delivering outputs to delivering outcomes*—departments are now required to produce 'statements of intent' indicating priority outcomes, including outcomes that are 'boundary crossing' and are to be shared with other agencies
- more emphasis on *performance rather than risk averse behaviour*—a challenge is to take the stated outcome plans (statements of intent) and to deliver tangible results
- conscious efforts to *integrate policy and delivery* through collaborative cross-agency initiatives and to bridge the gap between policy determinations in Wellington and delivery agencies in the regions—recent budget restrictions have made it more difficult for public sector leaders to deliver policy intent created by ministers into regions

- *engaging stakeholders in a diverse society* where citizens want to participate in different ways
- *more coordinated service delivery in the regions*—with current trialling of a ‘circuit breaker’ approach to obtaining coordination around domestic violence initiatives.
- *Maori issues*—a constant challenge, particularly meeting commitments under the Treaty of Waitangi, which places obligations on government to treat Maori as partners in development.

More generic challenges

The task of ‘keeping out terrorists’ as distinct from ‘expanding tourism’ will call for qualitatively different world view, thinking processes and official behaviours.

State Services Commission (NZ) (2003b: 3)

In terms of public sector challenges that might be classified as generic across jurisdictions:

- The focus on whole of government or horizontal connections was the most commonly mentioned in interviews and is a significant driver of current reforms. How to collaborate across agencies and out to citizens, and how to share outcomes and budgets in that context are at the centre of these concerns across the service.
- *Basic management skills* are lacking because of the hollowing out in recent years. There is heavy reliance on outsiders to provide expertise. There has been a reluctance to develop and train inside agencies because of a past culture of buying in services or poaching from other agencies.
- *Policy capacity*, as such, is not currently a substantial issue, although some suggest it could become one. Internal policy capacity is lacking in many places. The growing emphasis on evidence-based policy—noticeable in social policy areas—is more an attempt by line agencies to regain some policy authority *vis-a-vis* Treasury, rather than an indication of an absolute lack of capacity. However, up until now, there has been considerable reliance on contracting out policy development, and on outside experts more generally. As a result, internal departmental policy capacity is now becoming a concern.
- The emphasis on *aligning government objectives* to implementing stated outcomes has gained high profile recently with an evaluation of progress on managing outcomes. An identified issue is the difficulties being faced in aligning outcomes set to business plans, outputs and performance measures (SSC 2003d: 2).

Role of Leadership

We take the view that leadership is not a stand-alone concept but exists alongside accountable management.

State Services Commission (NZ) (2003b: 3)

What do these future challenges mean for the requirements of future leaders? A recent SSC document explaining its new leadership capability profile identified the following context for leadership development:

The NZPS needs to consult with and engage with the community, to understand their needs, and to focus more on achieving results in: improved social, economic and environmental outcomes for individual, and communities. (SSC 2003c: 2)

New Zealand leaders, therefore, if they are to bring about change in the public service, need to:

- work more closely with people and communities to conduct their business;
- work together better, through better cooperation, collaboration, learning and, where appropriate, integration of processes and structures ...; and
- maintain high values and standards to maintain integrity and consistency in volatile and complicated circumstances (SSC 2003c: 2).

In relation to the above challenges, LDC staff identified at interview the following skills as being expected of public service leaders:

- more leadership with continued management expertise—leaders who can tap into ‘discretionary labour’ and motivate, inspire and enthuse rather than simply manage and control
- building teams and cooperation
- delegation and participatory styles to deal with increasing complexity
- dealing with ‘cognitive complexity’, given the number of difficult issues which have no obvious solution in a context of an increasing pace of communication
- ability to engage with a complex set of stakeholders constructively—local bodies, iwi, business leaders, etc.

Recent interviews suggest the following relevant areas for leadership development:

- *Building capacity in senior staff* to fill the gap created by the hollowing out of policy and management staff—especially chief executive competencies, long-term strategic thinking capacity and identifying future trends.
 - The focus is too much on day-to-day agency issues. Some senior managers consider that strategic thinking is the role of ministers and not of public servants. Where strategic thinking is quite strong, it lacks the benefit of a whole of government approach.
- *Leadership and management skills required to head large organisations*—most chief executives have headed relatively small agencies and so tend to have either policy or delivery expertise but not both
 - Related is the need to move from the technical trough to a more strategic view, gaining soft skills and managing relationships
 - More generally there is a need to grow our own rather than recruit from overseas, which has been a tendency until now, including some New Zealanders with special expertise (e.g. tax/social security) who left some years ago. There is also a need to have officers gain experience across a number of agencies on rotation or secondments.
- *A cultural adaptation to new government demands*
 - Culturally many senior public servants have come through the previous regime and have not fully adapted to the government’s agenda and lack of responsiveness to it (need for political nous). The second cultural aspect is to get acceptance of an outcomes (including shared outcomes) approach rather than a focus on outputs.
- An understanding by leaders of how to *manage human resources strategically* (e.g. demographic issues) and how human resource issues relate to managing outcomes and organisational performance
- *Identification of stakeholders* and managing complex external relationships—A recent survey indicated that stakeholder identification and its management was a complex leadership task and took up to 50 per cent of chief executive time, hence its importance in leadership development.

From the above it is clear that there are many gaps to fill if the New Zealand public sector is to grow a pool of competent leaders who can manage complex organisations.

Two supply factors of particular concern to those who wish to strengthen senior leadership initiatives were evidence that public servants are more mobile and increasingly looking overseas, and the demographics, with post-war baby boomers due to retire soon and the expected shrinking in the size of the pool of senior leaders.

More broadly, the quality, quantity and diversity of talent to meet the increasing demands being placed on public service leaders were seen to be inadequate (see SSC 2003a: 3).

Leadership Initiatives

The leadership instinct you are born with is the backbone. You develop the funny bone and the wishbone that go with it.

Elaine Agather, quoted in SSC (2003b: Issue 2, p. 2)

Background

The Management Development Centre (MDC) was the predecessor to the recently established LDC. The MDC was the creation of chief executives in 1990 who wanted to remove the role of the SSC in providing professional development and training across the sector. But after a few years there was evidence that it was not meeting departmental needs and did not have a sufficient collective mandate (Wintringham 2003: 5) or resources to establish effective public sector leaderships.

When interviewed in 2001 by the State Service Commission, chief executives identified developing future leaders as one of the key issues for collective attention by them (SSC 2002a: 1). This led to a request to the State Service Commissioner to produce a report proposing ways to increase the pool of public service senior managers and leaders (SSC 2002a: 2). The government subsequently committed to fund a new senior leadership development strategy of \$NZ9.8m over four years (SSC 2003b: Issue 1, p. 1) and in this process the LDC emerged.

The Leadership Development Centre

The emergence of a more collaborative approach to development and training consistent with the government's emphasis on whole of government created the environment for a successful launch of the more centralised LDC in July 2003. The LDC is the main delivery organisation for senior leadership management and development in the public sector. Its flagship program is the Executive Leadership Programme.

The LDC has three main goals: to identify future leaders; to build personal development programs for those potential leaders; and to increase the quality, quantity and diversity of people available for leadership roles.

Leadership Competencies and Profile

Public service chief executives have agreed, in the context of the sector wide Leadership Development Programme, to develop sector-wide competencies. There has recently been developed a Leadership Capability Profile (LCP). Owned by the State Services Commissioner, this is a new standard making clear the qualities that are expected of future public service leaders (SSC 2003b: Issue 2, p. 1):

It establishes a transparent standard that signals the required attributes, relevant abilities, experiences and pathways for leadership roles in the NZPS now and into the future. (SSC, 2003c: Part 2, p. 3)

The LCP has four components:

- personal attributes
- depth and breadth of pathways and experiences
- leadership abilities
- results for New Zealanders.

Personal attributes are regarded as essentially 'givens' or 'preconditions' when people are assessed by the LDC for their leadership potential. In other words there is a distinction between those attributes that can be learnt and those that may be regarded as less open to change (for further detail, see LDC 2003: 6).

The LCP has taken its final form after much research, including examination of overseas practices and through extensive consultation. As well as being a standard, the LCP is considered to be the basis for planning of organisational capability and for enhancing service-wide capability at senior levels (LDC 2003: 6). These are not simply prescriptive but acknowledge a number of pathways to leadership (LDC 2003: 5).

4.4 Victoria

Public Sector Challenges

Background

During the 1980s and into the mid 1990s, Victoria was seen as one of the leading jurisdictions in terms of developing and testing new approaches to public sector management (Hess 2003). In particular, the Kennett Government (1992–1999) pursued a series of reforms to the core public service, local government and various government utilities. These reforms tended to have as their dominant themes:

- contract forms of organisation, including through outsourcing and competitive tendering (Proust 1997), the application of various forms of user-pays arrangements within the bureaucracy, and the use of contract employment arrangements, especially for senior officials and chief executives
- a strong focus on accountability to the political executive
- a drive for efficiency and cost reduction
- a preference for smaller government and withdrawing from sectors of the economy where there was or could be private sector sources of supply.

While many of these reforms were well regarded internationally (influencing, for example, researchers and practitioners in New Zealand and United States), there were strong critics of the Kennett approach to public administration, especially (but not only) in academia. In particular, Victoria was seen as suffering from a hollowing out of its administrative capacity, with the public service seemingly solely focused on reducing costs, contract administration and the provision of highly politically attuned policy advice (Alford & O'Neill 1994; Weller & Davis 1996).

In October 1999, the Bracks Labor Government took office with the support of independent members of the Legislative Assembly. Re-elected in 2002 with a significant parliamentary majority, the Bracks Government has sought to distinguish itself from its Liberal predecessors by emphasising the role of government in community building, engaging stakeholders in key policy issues, managing 'place' (i.e., local community issues), managing environmental sustainability, and generally strengthening the legitimacy of the public sector in the Victorian economy and society.

Resulting Challenges

The most comprehensive statement of the Bracks Government's agenda can be found in the November 2001 statement entitled *Growing Victoria Together* (GVT).⁹ This was produced as an express alternative to the 'economic rationality, market decision-making and organisational managerialism' that characterised the Kennett era (Adams & Wiseman 2003).

The GVT package articulates the values and aspirations of the Bracks Government and identifies 11 specific areas for policy action over the coming ten years (examples include 'valuing and investing in lifelong education', 'building cohesive communities and reducing inequalities', and 'government that listens and leads'). As such, GVT is a blueprint for the Victorian public sector in its policy development, program design, planning and organisational development. It also presents a significant challenge to its capacity to deliver innovative social, economic and environmental programs, provide leadership and guidance for the community and business sectors, and offer strategic, creative policy advice for government.

A particular challenge that is being addressed in Victoria is that of policy capacity, including the application of good practice in policy processes and evidence-based policy.

A more structural issue arising in the Victorian Public Service is that of demographics. The average age of the senior executive group is almost the same as the feeder group. This raises significant questions about succession planning and leadership development for the service.¹⁰

⁹ Available at: <http://www.growingvictoria.vic.gov.au/homepage.html>.

¹⁰ A similar demographic pattern can be found in the Australian Public Service (APSC 2002).

Role of Leadership

As a general observation, the current leaders in the Victorian public sector face a particular challenge: selecting, preparing and nurturing future leaders who will be expected to operate in a very different environment and in very different ways from the environment and behaviours they themselves have faced and exhibited. Whereas most senior officials are used to operating in an environment with a very strong focus on cost efficiency, contract management and a performance management framework tightly focused on individual agency outputs and deliverables, their successors will be moving into a world characterised by cross-government collaborations, community engagement and a greater concern with horizontal linkages and processes. These themes emerged especially in the interviews conducted for this study.

Leadership Initiatives

Leadership as a specific quality is not strongly apparent in the documentary evidence in the relevant coordinating agencies in Victoria. There is no specific equivalent, for example, to the APS Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework. Interviewees suggested that there are plans to develop a more coherent and concerted approach to the development and nurturing of new ways of managing and operating in the public sector, but such organisational renewal processes require careful planning and sustained support and leadership. These take time to materialise and apply.

There is no centrally endorsed statement of leadership competencies in the Victorian system.¹¹ The Office of Public Employment published the *Capability Framework* in August 2000 (OPE 2000). This statement provides guidance for developing all staff in the context of an organisational capability framework. The focus is on systemic improvement through a range of training packages structured so as to be relevant at various levels in the Victorian public sector. In addition to 'core foundation capabilities', 'core skills' and 'specific expertise', there is a category in the competency matrix called 'management accountabilities', which 'convey the executive management and governance responsibilities across the organisation and primarily apply to team leader positions and above' (OPE 2000: 6). Leadership-related examples in this part of the matrix include: 'Manage Change', 'Design and Implement Organisational Design', 'Manage Policy Process'. The general focus of the *Capability Framework* is on management capacity rather than explicitly addressing leadership qualities and capabilities.

Leadership is, however, a focus (either explicitly or implicitly) in various actions and initiatives in the Victorian system. The following is a discussion of several specific examples that were found during this research or were raised by interviewees.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct for the Victorian public sector was issued by the Commissioner for Public Employment in August 2003. The Code outlines standards and expectations in relation to personal and professional behaviour, the use and release of information, conflicts of interest, financial probity and accountability, outside employment and employment after leaving the public sector. While it does not expressly detail leadership standards or characteristics, the public sector core principles can be seen as implicitly identifying those behaviours and values leaders are expected to evince and to encourage in others. They include impartiality, integrity, accountability and responsive service. Similarly, the public sector employment principles identify the employment and people management values expected of public sector managers: merit, fair and reasonable treatment, equal employment opportunity, and avenues of redress.

The Code is a broad-ranging but not detailed document. The specifics of its application are devolved to agencies, especially through industrial agreements and awards.

¹¹ One interviewee referred to a document entitled 'Executive Officer Management Competencies', but this is about ten years old and does not appear to have any particular bearing on current approaches.

ANZSOG

Victoria is not only one of the participating governments in the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) but has been the main driver behind the idea. The School is seen as a significant vehicle for developing the skills and abilities of staff who have been identified as having the potential to undertake leadership roles. As ANZSOG has only recently commenced teaching its first cohort of students, it is perhaps too early to assess its value as a means of developing leaders for the future. A great deal will depend on the specifics of the curriculum, including the balance between management-related skills and knowledge and the development of policy skills.

Graduate Recruitment

Graduate recruitment was mentioned by several interviewees as a vehicle for influencing the leadership of the future. Recent rounds of graduate recruitment have emphasised skills and characteristics that fit with community engagement and collaborative trends. As a result there is a tendency to draw less from the traditionally strong disciplines such as economics or management, with a greater proportion of graduates being recruited from arts and humanities disciplines.

The challenge that interviewees identified in this context is the question of retention. It is recognised that bringing in young potential future leaders who have outlooks and expectations that may differ from the dominant values and behaviours that were developed under the previous approach may present challenges. For this reason it will be necessary to have opportunities for experiences outside the Victorian public sector that allow prospective leaders to observe different approaches and test other ways of operating.

Leadership and Management Competency Model (Department of Justice)

The Department of Justice provides an example of agency-specific efforts to develop a framework and systematic approach to leadership issues. Its *Leadership and Management Competency Model* (Department of Justice [n.d.]) was developed as a result of a consultative process in 1999. It identifies 11 'core leadership and management competencies', grouped in three clusters: 'defining the future', 'working together', and 'performing as a public business'. Under each competency a set of 'behavioural indicators' is identified. Under 'Future Focus', for example, the competency is described as 'Develops and defines the mission, vision and direction of the Department of Justice in the context of the role of the Public Sector in the delivery of Government Services'. Behavioural indicators include: 'Determines the future direction of DoJ after extensive consultation and research into social trends, the changing political landscape and client needs and expectations'; and 'Translates the mission, vision and directions of DoJ into achievable outcomes that are readily understood by members of the work unit' (Department of Justice [n.d.]: 5). Interestingly, under the cluster entitled 'Performing as a Public Business', the first competency is 'Political Astuteness: Understands the political environment and manages the quality and efficiency of advice and service provided to the Government of the day' (Department of Justice [n.d.]: 14).

Department for Victorian Communities

A major structural change in Victoria was the creation of the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC). Established in December 2002, DVC is an ambitious amalgam of a range of programs that have a general focus on 'people and places'.¹² As observed by Hess:

The ambition is to achieve an integrated, whole-of-government approach to areas of need for which the fragmented approaches of competing policy silos have no answer. These are the so-called 'wicked problems', which have eluded solution internationally and are major sources of public dissatisfaction with government service. In administrative terms, the task is to achieve a joined-up approach on particular issues through focusing attention on the communities of interest and location, which represent the people directly affected by those issues. So a focus on community strengthening replaces a focus on social exclusion as the core issue facing government. (Hess 2003)

It is still too early to assess the impact of the DVC approach, but in terms of how it relates to the question of leadership, the Department's creation and its mission are strong signals of the expectations of government in terms of how leaders in the public sector are expected to operate in the future. The emphasis is especially on policy capability—putting resources and effort into dealing with major and long-running policy problems at the community level—and on horizontality, including community engagement and coordination across organisational boundaries. These aspects represent major adjustments to the leadership models and behaviours favoured under the NPM-oriented framework that had been developed in the 1980s and especially the 1990s.

4.5 Queensland

Public Sector Challenges

In 1997, the Office of the Queensland Public Service Commissioner (now the Office of Public Service Merit and Equity, or OPSME) released a report into leadership issues in the Queensland Public Service (QPS).¹³ Before addressing leadership issues, the report provided an account of the underlying challenges confronting the QPS. The report described these challenges as 'future requirements of the public service'. They included the need for increasingly flexible, responsive service delivery, with greater emphasis on commercialisation, contracting out and purchaser-provider splits; increased accountability; the need for more whole of government initiatives; and the need to provide more client-centred services with less funding. Many of these issues are consistent with the 1996 Queensland Commission of Audit and the State's Strategic Plan, both of which were produced under a National Party administration (OPSME 2002).

The Beattie Labor Government has subtly reformulated these goals. In August 2001, the government created the Governance Committee, comprised of chief executive officers from departments of state, to advise 'on the challenges, opportunities and future directions of the Queensland Public Service' (OPSME 2003d: 1). According to Premier Beattie, the Governance Committee has discovered that the governance challenges facing Queensland are broadly consistent with those in other OECD jurisdictions:

The governance committee has undertaken extensive research into the challenges for the public service. It consulted widely with public servants. It also reviewed experience across regional and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, and found strong parallels with Queensland's experience. (OPSME 2003d: 1)

To inform the work of the Governance Committee, the current government has articulated five key priorities, which include:

- more jobs for Queensland—skills and innovation
- safer and more supportive communities
- community engagement and better quality of life
- valuing the environment
- building Queensland's regions (OPSME 2003d: 3).

The Governance Committee produced a report in May 2003 outlining the ways in which the QPS must be reoriented for these goals to be achieved. The proposed reforms are organised into six categories. Firstly 'Smart Government' is needed, which involves a rejection of 'one size fits all' approaches and requires 'purposeful leadership' and 'shared direction' (OPSME 2003d: 5–6). Smart government is associated with integration between departments and collaboration with other sectors. As part of this, the government should shift from 'controller' to 'enabler' (OPSME 2003d: 6). The report notes that the standard of performance management in the QPS must be improved, and new models of accountability

¹³ An updated version of the 1997 report is available online at: http://www.opsme.qld.gov.au/leadership/project_report.htm (OPSME 2002).

that accommodate 'multi-agency' initiatives must be developed (OPSME 2003d: 8). Secondly, the objective of 'Seamless Government' attempts to directly address the value of whole of government coordination. The report acknowledges challenges to integration, including the traditional departmental structure of accountability and resource allocation issues, the problems associated with linking vertically the different tiers of government, and the problem of trying to foster new, flexible approaches to policy implementation while preserving desirable elements of the traditional, professional ethos of the public service (OPSME 2003d: 9–10).

The third objective—'Managing Information'—requires the development of standardised information systems and the operationalisation of the idea of government as a single entity (OPSME 2003d: 11–12), while the fourth—'Partnering Communities'—requires public servants to develop skills such as stakeholder and network management, contract and partnership management, and the ability to balance different community preferences (OPSME 2003d: 13–15). The fifth objective highlights the importance of 'Policy Shaping', including developing skills that enable a long-term, flexible, whole of government perspective and the creation of stronger links between policy making and service delivery (OPSME 2003d: 16–17). The report acknowledges that while it is important to develop a long-term evidence base for policy making, this must be balanced with the increasing need for rapid responsiveness in policy making (OPSME 2003d: 17). Finally, the report acknowledges the challenge of maintaining an 'Innovative Workforce' in the context of the rapid ageing of staff, and the threat of loss of substantial amounts of 'intellectual capital' (OPSME 2003d: 19). The report suggests that the traditional organisation of the QPS into occupational groupings within departments may hamper the mobility of officers at lower levels (OPSME 2003d: 19). The report pronounces familiar concerns about ensuring that the QPS becomes an 'employer of choice' (OPSME 2003d: 21).

Role of leadership

Leadership is seen as crucial to achieving these public service objectives and imperatives, since '[s]taff at all levels experience frustration in service delivery if leadership at the upper levels is not developed to its potential' (OPSME 2002). While the OPSME report suggests that leadership is important at all levels in the QPS, it also assumes that it is best to start by training senior executives and to exploit a 'positive cascading effect' (OPSME 2002). The report claims that leaders in the QPS must:

- understand the needs/requirements of Government;
- 'sense' policy/program opportunities;
- design and manage performance-based service contracts;
- evaluate the effectiveness of contract performance levels; and
- deal effectively with the political issues associated with such arrangements (OPSME 2002).

According to the report, leaders must also be visibly involved in changing the public service, and they must enjoy the support of the Premier and the Cabinet (OPSME 2002).

Leadership initiatives

To date, the focus of leadership initiatives in the QPS has been on senior executives. Since 1997, the OPSME has provided leadership training programs for senior executives through the Leadership and Development Unit. The Leadership Network was created in 1997, comprised of 'Chief executives, SES, Senior Officers (SO) and some near SOs' as well as a limited number of executives from the private sector (OPSME 2002). The 1997 OPSC report proposed a series of specific leadership training programs, including an 'external experience' opportunity for 'small numbers of senior managers' to work for a time in private sector, interstate and overseas government organisations. The report also proposed seconding senior managers to 'whole of public service projects', which would be responsible for making decisions on coordinated initiative and setting up 'strategic scenario development' exercises. The report proposed a nine-day, off-the-job 'experiential' leadership program, to help senior managers to understand their roles in their organisations, and a 'leadership foundation

program', which would involve five days of off-the-job training in basic leadership concepts. An orientation program was also proposed, as well as mentoring or coaching cells with chief executives, forums with leading practitioners, briefings on the impact of technology for leaders, and a health and personal effectiveness program (OPSME 2002).

In an interview with a senior officer from OPSME involved in the Leadership Development Unit, we learnt of the current status of these initiatives. It appears that the principal focus over the last six years has been on the nine-day 'experiential' leadership program. According to the OPSME officer, these programs were personalised, took a 'relational leadership' perspective, and sought to get participants to think about the effects of personality and explore their own attitudes, orientations and styles. Participants were provided with individualised feedback. Over 1800 QPS staff took part in this program, which was aimed at the senior management level within the service. The primary aim, according to the interviewee, was not to create a mass leadership skills program, but rather to equip a 'critical mass' of leaders with the requisite skills.

In 2003 the OPSME wound back this leadership training program for several reasons. The agency feels that many of the officers who were likely to undertake these leadership courses have already done so and that this partly explains the low number of new recruits. Furthermore, demand for the program varies throughout the year. In combination, these factors make it difficult to justify offering regular scheduled training programs. In place of this, the agency has assembled the 'Panel of Providers', made up of non-government organisations that OPSME feels possess expertise in leadership training. Queensland government agencies may approach the OPSME with a proposal to conduct leadership training in their organisation and the OPSME selects and refers the most appropriate provider(s) for the task (OPSME 2003a).

Nevertheless, the OPSME continues to run several leadership programs. One of these, the 'Leadership Lounge', is principally organised by graduates of OPSME's leadership training programs and is intended to encourage participants to remain in contact with each other. It is also designed to promote links between agencies, and to 'model leadership behaviours' (OPSME 2003c). The Lounge was set up because some of the graduates of the OPSME's leadership program were having difficulty with their own leadership development and finding it difficult to connect with fellow graduates. The Lounges are held twice a month, and involve invited guests speaking on relevant topics.

In 2002 the OPSME piloted a mobility program for senior executives and senior officers. The aim was to inculcate a whole of government perspective in senior management, in order to reflect the government's assumptions about the integrative role of the senior executive service:

The Government views the public service as a single entity, with executives who are capable of performing a variety of leadership roles across government. Therefore, employment in the SES is to be directed towards ensuring that senior executives develop a whole-of-government perspective and contribute to and lead whole-of-government initiatives directed at creating Queensland as a Smart State. (OPSME 2003b)

The Senior Executive Mobility Program was launched in 2003. The program is largely restricted to the SES, although senior officers may participate in exceptional circumstances. As part of this initiative, most government agencies are required to offer a position within their executive and release one of their senior executives for the program. The participants work in their external placements for six-month periods, and the Public Service Commissioner monitors the progress of individual placements. 'Home departments' meet the costs of the placement and leadership instruction where required. Placement positions must be 'real' and must permit the participant to make a significant contribution to the agency. Participants must have a record of strong executive performance in the QPS (OPSME 2003b).

A number of Queensland government departments have developed their own leadership training programs for staff. Queensland's Department of Main Roads operates a Leadership and Learning Centre to emphasise career management, organisational learning, network style organisations, and the 'development of a leader-manager

style' (Queensland Department of Main Roads 2003). Unlike the OPSME's leadership work, which is largely focused on senior executives, Queensland Health has adopted a more inclusive approach. The agency has developed a broad definition of leadership, encompassing 'anyone who is required to establish direction, align, inspire, motivate or model behaviours' (Queensland Health 2003). The agency outlines several fundamental principles of leadership within the health portfolio:

- Global perspective on service delivery
- Committing to action required in increasingly commercial environment
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Whole of state approach
- Use of diversity to promote creativity
- Enthuse people and encourage learning of new habits
- Manage interaction with community and media (Queensland Health 2003).

From this list, Queensland Health has derived five key leadership behaviours, which include fostering and communicating a 'shared vision', empowering and supporting staff, inspiring colleagues, demonstrating 'determination' and publicly committing to and acting consistently with a set of values (Queensland Health 2003). The framework also outlines the kinds of leadership styles that Queensland Health staff would like to operate under, including participatory decision making, performance feedback, consistency of goals between different parts of the organisation, and professional development. These broad behaviours are further specified and tailored to suit leaders at different levels within the agency, including district managers, state managers and directors, unit managers, senior clinicians, project officers and coordinators, core team leaders and supervisors. For each of these groups, the agency's leadership framework not only specifies the desirable leadership qualities, but also outlines the relevant funded leadership training services offered and the self-development opportunities that are available.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 General Findings

In this report we have attempted to identify the current and future challenges for public services in a number of jurisdictions and to describe the state of the art of public service leadership development in each of these governments. In the United Kingdom we found considerable emphasis on the need to reform the public service to meet citizen expectations of improved service delivery with greater customer focus and increased use of information technologies. We argued that in Canada, fiscal restraint and new public management initiatives have undermined policy capacity, exacerbated coordination problems and potentially limited the scope for strategic thinking in the federal public service. New Zealand's enthusiastic embrace of NPM may have caused fragmentation of public sector activity, diluted desirable traditional public service values and reduced the value accorded to staff expertise. In Victoria, the focus on cost cutting, contracting out and responsiveness to the political executive in the last decade or more has hollowed out the public service and arguably reduced its capacity to respond to new policy challenges. Finally, in Queensland, the public service is confronted with the need to increase the responsiveness of service delivery and to enhance the mobility of senior officials between agencies.

While the perceived issues differ subtly between jurisdictions, each is concerned about the four major governance challenges identified in Section 3 (Emerging Public Service Issues). Each is trying to address the need to ensure that senior public servants are capable of thinking strategically and of providing informed and innovative advice to the political executive. Each jurisdiction acknowledges the fundamental importance of whole of government approaches as a prerequisite of better policy advice and improved service delivery. All case studies reveal a desire for greater integration between the values, missions and objectives of senior public service leaders and officials at lower levels within organisations. Furthermore, there is acknowledgment in every jurisdiction that it is necessary to develop technical and managerial skills and expertise at all levels within the public sector.

In most of the jurisdictions, leadership issues have been explicitly linked to these challenges, and leadership development is seen as a necessary response to current difficulties. However, the public sectors of the jurisdictions studied have developed different foci in their leadership development initiatives. The Canadians, who are particularly concerned about high-level policy capacity, rank highly the promotion of capacities for strategic thinking and 'big P' policy making. In the jurisdictions where the influence of new public management and fiscal rectitude has been strong, such as New Zealand and Victoria, basic managerial competencies are currently emphasised. In the Queensland Public Service—which arguably has experienced more stable administrative arrangements in recent times—flexibility, responsiveness and mobility are highlighted as key concerns.

It is not surprising that we found variety in approaches to the design and implementation of leadership development initiatives. There are jurisdictional differences in the structure of programs and the amount and content of material distributed on leadership, which may to a certain extent reflect the size of the jurisdiction, the level of government and the history of challenges and responses for current and previous governments. Canada and the United Kingdom have established comparatively elaborate schemes and institutions devoted to leadership training, including virtual information networks and dedicated organisations within central agencies. New Zealand has created a centre to assist in leadership development, while an arm of the Queensland Public Service Commissioner's office is charged with implementing leadership development initiatives. Victoria has not developed an explicit, centrally driven focus on public service leadership, but has identified competencies for senior public servants.

The target group for leadership development also varies between the jurisdictions. Queensland shows an almost exclusive interest in training leadership in senior executive positions. The emphasis in the United

Kingdom and New Zealand also tends to emphasise the training of senior executives. In contrast, Canada has chosen to focus on leadership training at all levels, assisted by flexible, personalised learning plans. It is also clear that in each of the jurisdictions, some line agencies display more enthusiasm than others in setting up their own leadership development initiatives. Usually these independent initiatives are linked to the central leadership development programs and competency tables, although in some cases, such as Victoria, agencies have developed their own frameworks independently of efforts at the centre. Nevertheless, it is more typical for agencies to embrace the generic competency frameworks proposed by central agencies, and to adapt these to their own contexts by adding detail and substituting local nomenclature.

There are substantial general similarities between jurisdictions with respect to the leadership competencies that have been promoted in recent initiatives. These include the capacity to enthuse others and convince them to share a vision, to think strategically, to understand the detail of implementation, to manage interpersonal and inter-agency relationships, and to develop and use one's own personal strengths. These general traits have been elaborated to the greatest extent in central leadership development initiatives in Canada and the United Kingdom, while relatively detailed specification of leadership competencies and skills has also occurred within some line agencies in the other jurisdictions.

5.2 Implications for the Australian Public Service

While this study has not been *about* the APS, it has been carried out *for* the APS, or, more precisely, to assist the APSC in its leadership initiatives in the APS. As such it is appropriate to provide some general observations on the possible implications of this study for the APS.

First, it is clear from this study that there is a good deal of commonality about the general challenges facing the five jurisdictions under examination. However, the specific dynamics of the challenges—which might appear more or less significant or urgent—and how they might be described and understood can vary. The history, structures and constitutional arrangements of a given jurisdiction are key determinants of the issues at play. It is therefore important for any initiatives in the area of leadership development to be undertaken within the context of a sound and deep understanding of the dynamics of the APS and how it relates to other major institutions and the community in general.

Second, leadership as a quality is something to be engendered at a systemic level, with the needs of government and the community as a starting point in designing and adapting leadership programs and activities. Work in this area is more likely to succeed if it is conceived as part of a larger picture that relates to the purpose, goals and values of the APS as an institution.

Third, leadership initiatives are not 'once and for all'. In a number of the jurisdictions we examined for this report, there is a clear sense of adjustment and change in response to developments in the wider system. A factor of particular note seems to be the age and preferences of the government of the day. Reinvigorating the leadership theme seems to be an approach favoured where the government has been in power some time and may be looking to invest in the capacity of the public service as part of a wider strategy of keeping government in general on the ball.

Finally, leadership is a quality (or a set of qualities) that is resistant to straightforward measurement. It is multifactorial in character and often its impacts are tangential or deferred. There is little evidence of a rationalist cycle of planning, implementation, review and adjustment in the areas we have examined. This is presumably because many of the most important aspects of leadership are intangible, or can only be measured by observing their effects (e.g. on staff morale, on rates of strategic failure, or on attrition rates at senior levels) rather than directly. Just as leadership (especially as an individual quality) itself is as much art as it is science, organising institutional arrangements so that leadership is identified, nurtured and effectively deployed is as much about subtle judgement and 'feel' as it is about gathering data and evidence to inform that judgement and confirm (or otherwise) that 'feel'.

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