

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. REASON FOR CONDUCTING THE INVESTIGATION

In accordance with section 196(4) of the Constitution, 1996, the Public Service Commission is responsible for the following functions:

- To promote the values and principles of public administration as set out in section 195 of the Constitution, throughout the Public Service
- To investigate, monitor and evaluate the organisation and administration, and the personnel practices, of the Public Service
- To propose measures aimed at ensuring effective and efficient performance within the Public Service
- To report to Parliament and, where applicable, to provincial legislatures, in respect of its activities and the performance of its functions.

Against these functions the Public Service Commission considered it appropriate, in terms of section 8 of the Public Service Commission Act, 1997, that an investigation be undertaken into the Management of Probationary Appointments in the Public Service for the following reasons:

- Numerous labour law and common law principles are in place to inform the management of probation. These procedures are being sustained in the Public Service by means of new acts and White Papers
- A perception prevails that these principles have not been comfortably applied or adhered to in the Public Service and may have contributed to dissatisfaction in the work place which could have a negative impact on productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. All in all, this could also have a negative impact on the total process of transformation in the Public Service
- Apart from the foregoing, the importance of focusing on the management of probation becomes significant especially against the backdrop of the Government's policy on a shortened period of probation.

This investigation intended not only to analyse the management of probation but through identifying shortcomings, to inform the amendment and review of national norms and standards as well as departmental policy in respect of probation.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation focused on four important aspects of probation namely planning in respect of probation, capacity-building of probationers, monitoring probation as a process and monitoring the outcome of the probationary period. Each of these represents an important part of the overall management of probation.

3. SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation was confined to Public Service departments at national level (hereafter referred to as departments) and covered the period 1 April 1996 to 31 March 1998.

Departments of Provincial Administrations were not included since the investigation was undertaken prior to the adoption of the new Public Service Regulations and the appointment of the Public Service Commission on 1 July 1999.

4. METHODOLOGY

Information was obtained from departments by means of a structured questionnaire which had to be completed by the heads of departmental Personnel Offices.

Statistical information on probation was provided by the PERSAL Component in National Treasury on behalf of all departments, who on their part had to certify the correctness of the data.

5. LIMITATIONS EXPERIENCED

A number of limitations were experienced during the execution of the investigation of which the following are considered salient:

- Questionnaires were distributed to all depart-



ments and despite numerous follow-up enquiries, a number of departments did not return their questionnaires.

- Questionnaires were also distributed to all recognised trade unions within the Public Service to obtain their views on the management of probation. Not one of them responded, despite follow-up requests to this effect.
- The information on the Public Service's Computerised Personnel and Salary System (PERSAL) with regard to probation is incomplete and in many instances captured incorrectly and in conflict with existing prescripts. PERSAL provides for information such as the date of appointment, resignations and transfers, information on quarterly reports and date of confirmation. This information was not totally captured with the result that data essential for the investigation were not available. This delayed the investigation and corrective measures were undertaken. Departments, with the assistance of the PERSAL Component, had to update their data on PERSAL.
- Although raw data on probation were captured on PERSAL, albeit in many instances inaccurate, this could not be readily retrieved. A computer subprogram had to be written to retrieve this information. Many departments do not have the skills available to do this. The PERSAL Component assisted all departments by developing a program specifically designed for extracting information from PERSAL in a user-friendly manner. In this regard the investigation had an immediate positive spin-off since this program can now be utilised by departments for monitoring purposes.

6. KEY FINDINGS AND PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The following represent the key findings and proposals in respect of the investigation:

Dual provisions on the duration of probationary appointments

On analysis of the current regulatory framework pertaining to human resource management in the Public Service, it will be observed that there is an anomaly between the White Paper on Human

Resource Management in the Public Service, the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, and the Public Service Regulations, 1999 in terms of the laid-down probationary periods. Whereas in paragraph 5.4 of the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service a minimum of three and a maximum of six months of probation is stipulated, the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, provides for a probationary period that shall not be less than 12 calendar months. The Public Service Regulations on their part are silent on the duration of the probationary period. It is proposed that the Department of Public Service and Administration -

- obtain Cabinet's approval to deviate from the shortened probationary period prescribed by the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service and stick with the period directed by section 13(2) of the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, and
- amend the Public Service Regulations, 1999, to also reflect duration of the probationary period.

The management of information on PERSAL needs to be addressed in the majority of departments

The majority of departments do not administer probationary appointments effectively through PERSAL, in the process creating an inaccurate data base. As the accurate capturing of important data impacts directly on a department's ability to monitor adherence to prescribed procedures, to identify limitations and malpractices and simply to manage the process, it is proposed that this be rectified as soon as possible. The expansion of the information framework on PERSAL and the training of staff responsible for administering PERSAL information need to be looked into urgently. It is therefore proposed that the PERSAL Component in National Treasury review the existing information framework on the system as it relates to probation and conduct a training needs survey and address the training of PERSAL users.

Only 8% of departments have developed departmental policy on probation

In the absence of policy, role-players are uncertain about the objectives of the probationary period and their responsibilities in this regard. Managers and supervisors are subsequently also not committed to taking up their responsibilities. Another negative aspect is that training takes place in an unstructured

manner. Since it is essential for giving direction, providing for mentoring and ensuring that important principles are applied in practice, departmental policy is imperative. It is therefore proposed that policy be developed in consultation with organised labour (which is not currently always the case) addressing, amongst other things, the following aspects:

- Objectives with the management of probation
- Fundamental principles laid down by the regulatory framework for the management of probation
- The basic procedures to be adhered to in order to ensure fair and effective management
- Various role-players in the management of probation
- Formally structured orientation and in-service training programmes
- Mentoring techniques
- Monitoring of performance and the management of the probationary period.

More than a third of probationers only receive four week's training or less during the 12 months probationary period and more than 50% of probationers have inadequate job descriptions/ duty sheets

The majority of departments manage in-service training in an informal and *ad hoc* manner, with little evaluation of its effectiveness. If it is accepted that probation is also about learning, about acquiring skills and building confidence and self-esteem, then it is clear from the foregoing that many departments are doing an injustice to their new appointees and the Public Service at large. It is therefore proposed that departments should ensure that -

- job descriptions/duty sheets for all posts in consultation with organised labour are updated,
- minimum standards (quality and quantity) of training are defined in cases where they do not exist and control measures are introduced to ensure adherence to the standards that do exist,
- supervisory personnel are given training in men-

toring skills on the value of a properly managed probationary process,

- managers' and supervisors' perception of probation are brought in line with departmental philosophy and objectives by means of training,
- a process is introduced whereby the effectiveness of capacity-building is evaluated,
- a training needs analysis is embarked upon in respect of in-service training, and that such training needs be addressed, and
- training objectives are defined, orientation and in-service training as well as other forms of training are provided.

As a consequence of the indifferent management of probation, many departments neglect the monitoring of probationers' work performance and the management of probation as a practice

It is important to monitor not only performance but also processes and procedures. Departments need to know whether their objectives are being met and what obstacles are being encountered. To ensure that probation is managed in a professional manner it is proposed that -

- the process is structured and monitored in terms of its main constituent elements and moulded into policy and procedures, and
- managers and supervisors are trained to fulfill their responsibilities.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The importance of the probationary period cannot be overemphasised, nor the importance of ongoing performance assessment and the development of staff.

The legislative framework governing the management of probation not only reflects the reasons for managing the probationary period efficiently, but also represents a guide which, if incorporated into departmental policy and applied conscientiously, will ensure the attainment of the objectives of Government policy regarding human resource management.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR CONDUCTING THE INVESTIGATION

In accordance with section 196(4) of the Constitution, 1996, the Public Service Commission is responsible for the following functions:

- To promote the values and principles of public administration as set out in section 195 of the Constitution, throughout the Public Service
- To investigate, monitor and evaluate the organisation and administration, and the personnel practices, of the Public Service
- To propose measures aimed at ensuring effective and efficient performance within the Public Service
- To report to Parliament and, where applicable, to provincial legislatures, in respect of its activities and the performance of its functions.

Against these functions the Public Service Commission considered it appropriate, in terms of section 8 of the Public Service Commission Act, 1997, that an investigation be undertaken into the Management of Probationary Appointments in the Public Service for the following reasons:

- Numerous labour law and common law principles are in place to inform human resource management in general and the management of probation in particular. These principles, such as the rules of natural justice and the prerequisites for legitimate administrative action in terms of administrative law, fair labour principles and the Constitutional principles governing human resource management are being sustained in the Public Service by means of new or amended acts and White Papers.
- A perception prevails that these principles have not been comfortably applied or adhered to in the Public Service and may have contributed to dissatisfaction in the work place which could have a negative impact on productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. All in all, this could also have a negative impact on the total process of transformation in the Public Service.

- Apart from the foregoing, the importance of focusing on the management of probation becomes significant especially against the backdrop of the Government's policy on a shortened period of probation as contemplated by the White Paper On Human Resource Management in the Public Service. Management is on the one hand obliged to ensure adherence to the above-mentioned principles, yet on the other hand they will have less time at their disposal to properly manage the probationary period - e.g. to evaluate performance, provide training and guidance.

This investigation intended not only to analyse the management of probation against the backdrop of the foregoing legal framework but by also identifying shortcomings, to inform the amendment of national norms and standards as well as departmental policy in respect of probation.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation focused on four important aspects of probation:

Planning in respect of probation

As far as planning is concerned the emphasis was mainly on -

- whether departmental policy on probation exists,
- what the quality thereof is,
- to what extent organised labour was involved in the development thereof,
- to what extent national norms and standards are adhered to, and
- what the perceptions around responsibility allocations are.

Capacity-building of probationers

In terms of capacity-building the focus was on the -

- structuring of capacity-building,

- adequacy of capacity-building,
- availability of training programmes,
- time expended on training,
- effectiveness of training, and
- departments' ability to provide training.

Monitoring probation as a process and monitoring the outcome of the probationary period

In this regard the emphasis was placed on whether the management of probation as a process, as well as the outcome thereof, are monitored.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation was confined to Public Service departments at national level (hereafter referred to as departments) and covered the period 1 April 1996 to 31 March 1998.

Departments of Provincial Administrations were not included since the investigation was undertaken prior to the adoption of the new Public Service Regulations and the appointment of the Public Service Commission on 1 July 1999.

Cognisance needs to be taken that the investigation was conducted whilst the Public Service Staff Code was still applicable.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires:

Information was obtained from departments by means of a structured questionnaire which had to be completed by the heads of departmental Personnel Offices. These offices were targeted since they are responsible for policy formulation, monitoring the system and for providing an advisory service to line management.

A questionnaire was also distributed to trade unions admitted to the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council. The questionnaire addressed, amongst other things, the viewpoints of the unions on existing, as well as new policy applicable to the management of probation and their views on the present status of practices related to probationary appointments.

Statistics:

Statistical information requested on probation with regard to the variables population group, gender, salary level, personnel movements, etc. was provided by the PERSAL Component in National Treasury. A program was specifically developed for this purpose. The correctness of the statistics was certified by departments.

1.5 LIMITATIONS EXPERIENCED

While the purpose of the investigation and the methodology employed were intended to be as inclusive as possible, a number of limitations were nonetheless experienced. The following are considered salient:

- Questionnaires were distributed to all departments and despite repeated follow-ups, the following departments did not respond:
 - Central Statistical Services
 - Department of Constitutional Development
 - Department of Correctional Services
 - Department of Government Communications and Information Systems
 - Department of Trade and Industry
 - Department of Transport.
- Questionnaires were also distributed to all employee organisations / trade unions admitted to the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council to obtain their views on the management of probation. Not one of them responded, despite follow-up requests to this effect.
- The information on the Public Service's Computerised Personnel and Salary System (PERSAL) with regard to probation is incomplete as it is in many instances captured incorrectly and not in accordance with the data-capturing prescripts applicable to the system. PERSAL provides for information, such as the date of appointment, resignations and transfers, information on quarterly reports and date of confirmation. This information was not totally captured, with the result that data essential for the investigation were not available. This delayed

the investigation and corrective measures were undertaken, i.e. departments, with the assistance of the PERSAL Component, had to update their data on PERSAL.

- Although raw data on probation were captured on PERSAL, albeit in many instances inaccurate, this could not be readily retrieved. A computer subprogram had to be written to retrieve this information. Many departments do not have the skills available to do this. The PERSAL Component assisted all departments by developing a programme specifically designed for extracting information from PERSAL in a user-friendly manner. In this regard the investigation had an immediate positive spin-off since this program can now be utilised by departments for monitoring purposes.



2. PRESCRIPTS REGULATING THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Probationary appointments are regulated by the Public Service Regulations, 1999, the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997. Prior to the adoption of the Public Service Regulations, 1999 (PSR), probationary appointments were regulated by the Public Service Staff Code.

In addition to the above prescripts, each department in the Public Service is expected to formulate its own policy within the parameters set by these prescripts.

2.2 MEASURES RELATING TO PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENTS THAT EXISTED AT THE TIME OF THE INVESTIGATION

The following extracts of the provisions of the various acts and regulations existed at the time of the investigation and which had to be heeded:

The Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997

Section 10 of the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, stipulates that the probationary period shall not be less than 12 calendar months. It further stipulates that the period of probation shall be extended by the number of days leave taken by the officer during the period of probation or any extension thereof.

The Public Service Staff Code

Although applicable at the time of the investigation, the Public Service Staff Code was, as already alluded to, withdrawn by *Government Gazette* No. 20271 on 1 July 1999. It contained the following guidelines on the management of probationary appointments which had to be adhered to:

- In terms of Chapter B III, Part II, paragraphs 9,10 and 11, all appointments had to be effected after twelve calendar months' probation
- Probationary periods exceeding twelve calendar months may also have been imposed when per-

sons who had suffered from nervous diseases or mental disorders had to be appointed in a permanent capacity

- No limit was placed on the period with which probationary periods may be extended
- A system of quarterly reports was introduced with the objective of exercising control over the progress of probationers during the probationary period and was intended to form the basis upon which the confirmation, extension or termination of the probationary appointment was ultimately to be considered.
- In cases where an officer's probationary appointment, transfer or promotion could not be confirmed, the probationary period could either have been extended or the officer's services terminated, or otherwise action could have been taken as provided for in section 10 of the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997.

The White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service

The White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, in paragraph 5.4 of Chapter 5, stipulates a minimum of three and a maximum of six months of probation. It further stipulates that the only exception to the rule should be made in the case of student nurses and cadet technicians whose contracts require the completion of extended training periods before confirmation of appointment. During probation the employee should undergo an orientation programme which should provide the basic information that he or she requires in order to function in the organisation. In-service and induction training should also be provided to enable the employee to become productive as quickly as possible.

The White Paper further stipulates that clear criteria should be laid down on how the employee will be assessed during the probationary period and also that these criteria should be disclosed to the employee.

The Labour Relations Act, 1995

The Labour Relations Act, 1995, in paragraph 8 of



Schedule 8, stipulates that a reasonable probation period must be given in line with the circumstances of the job. The Act also stipulates that, when appropriate, an employer should provide an employee with whatever evaluation, instruction, training, guidance or counseling the employee requires in order to render satisfactory service. Dismissal during the probationary period may only be considered after the foregoing have been complied with and should also be preceded by an opportunity for the employee to state his/her case and to be assisted by a trade union representative or fellow employee.

tance, etc. are now enshrined in Public Service policy to serve as a basis and framework for any departmental policy and procedures.

2.3 MEASURES RELATING TO PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENTS THAT WERE INTRODUCED AFTER THE INVESTIGATION WAS CONDUCTED

The following are extracts of the provisions of the Public Service Regulations, 1999, that were introduced after the investigation, had been launched:

Chapter 1, Part VII, regulation E of the PSR, emphasises the role of managers/supervisors, viz. to ensure that the probationer -

- at the commencement of the probationary period, knows the performance and other requirements for obtaining confirmation of probation;
- on a quarterly basis, receives written feedback on his or her performance and compliance with other requirements;
- if necessary, receives training, counseling or other assistance to meet the requirements for confirmation;
- receives written confirmation of appointment at the end of the probationary period if he or she has been found suitable for the relevant post; and
- is afforded the opportunity to state his or her case when dismissal as a result of poor performance is considered, during which process he or she may be assisted by a personal representative, including a colleague or trade union representative.

With the introduction of the PSR, sound labour relations principles such as substantive and procedural fairness, openness, transparency, rendering assis-

3. FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As already alluded to, the investigation was designed to focus on the planning in respect of the probationary process, the capacity-building of probationers and the monitoring of both the process and the outcome of the probationary period. However, the investigation revealed that the administration of probationary information on PERSAL and the current regulatory framework in respect of probation also warranted attention.

3.2 DUAL PROVISIONS ON THE DURATION OF PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENTS

On analysis of the current regulatory framework pertaining to human resource management in the Public Service, it will be observed that there is an anomaly between the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, and the PSR, in terms of the laid down period(s) of the probationary period. Whereas in paragraph 5.4 of the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service a minimum of three and a maximum of six months of probation is stipulated, the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, provides for a probationary period that shall not be less than 12 calendar months. The PSR on their part are silent on the duration of the probationary period. The Commission will take this up with the Department of Public Service and Administration.

3.3 THE ADMINISTRATION OF INFORMATION ON PERSAL RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 1996 TO 31 MARCH 1998

3.3.1 Introduction

PERSAL provides documented proof in respect of the management of probation

PERSAL allows for the capturing of the following important information on the management of probation:

- The personal particulars of an appointee

- The organisational unit in which an appointee is placed
- The date of an appointee's appointment
- Assessment periods and dates
- Quarterly reports submitted and outstanding
- Information on the movement(s) of an appointee, e.g. transfer, resignation, termination of service, etc.

Apart from the above, PERSAL also -

- allows for the scheduling of quarterly assessments,
- enables departments to monitor and manage the process and monitor its effectiveness,
- provides the computerised framework within which Human Resources Management Information (HRMI) has to be encoded,
- requires departments to capture and update the information on the system, and
- provides ongoing training in the utilisation of PERSAL.

Extension of probationary periods

The extension of a probationary period is usually an indication that all is not well with the performance of a probationer or the manner in which the process is managed, or both. Extensions could therefore be as a result of poor performance or performance related problems. However, it could also be due to poor utilisation of probationers or poor managerial support of probationers or simply poor administration. High incidences of extensions of the probationary period should therefore always require closer scrutiny.

The investigation revealed that extensions on average did not exceed 10% of the number of probationers at the time of the investigation. However, there are quite a number of departments where this



figure was as high as 40% and even higher. See table 1:

Table 1:

EXTENSION OF PROBATIONARY PERIOD			
	Salary Levels 1 - 8	Salary Levels 9 - 11	Salary Levels 12 - 16
Lowest Incidence	0%	0%	0%
Highest Incidence	38%	45%	46%
Average	8%	5%	6%

Although the average percentage of extensions were in the region of “only” 10%, there are unfortunately too many incidences of probationers whose probationary periods have not been managed on PERSAL procedurally. In practice quarterly reports are not captured on PERSAL and the confirmation of many probationers’ appointments are recorded on PERSAL long after the duration of the probationary periods. There is also no indication that the probationary period has been extended.

Resignations and transfers

A high incidence of resignations and transfers during the probationary period may point to poor recruitment, selection and placement of appointees, or that probationers find it difficult, for whatever reason, to adjust to and perform optimally in their new work environment.

The number of resignations of probationers was on average below 10% for all three salary levels as grouped together (levels 1-8, 9-11 and 12-16). However, in some departments as many as 30 to 40% were recorded. This may be indicative of the fact that probation is managed with varying degrees of success by various departments. See table 2:

Table 2:

RESIGNATIONS			
	Salary Levels 1 - 8	Salary Levels 9 - 11	Salary Levels 12 - 16
Lowest Incidence	1%	1%	0%
Highest Incidence	24%	40%	33%
Average	8%	7%	10%

As is evident from table 3, the investigation showed

that the average number of transfers for all three salary levels grouped together, are exceptionally high (40 to 50%). However, the current poor recording of reasons for transfers does not allow for distinction between transfers as a result of rotation, poor performance, wrongful placement, restructuring, etc. This complicates the further analysis of the statistics and should be treated with circumspection.

Table 3:

TRANSFER OF PROBATIONERS			
	Salary Levels 1 - 8	Salary Levels 9 - 11	Salary Levels 12 - 16
Lowest Incidence	0%	0%	0%
Highest Incidence	94%	88%	96%
Average	51%	44%	45%

Termination of service

A high incidence of service terminations during the probationary period is usually indicative of performance- or behaviour-related problems to the extent that the employer no longer wishes to continue with the employment contract. It could, however, also point to poor recruitment and selection decisions and/or even poor management practices.

The termination of probationers’ services were on average relatively low (4 to 8%). However, on the higher levels (levels 12-16) it went as high as 50% in some departments. In general, this implies that 84% of probationers appointed have met all appointment and performance criteria. See table 4 for a detailed statistical breakdown:

Table 4:

TERMINATION OF SERVICE			
	Salary Levels 1 - 8	Salary Levels 9 - 11	Salary Levels 12 - 16
Lowest Incidence	1%	1%	0%
Highest Incidence	13%	32%	50%
Average	4%	8%	4%

Non-compliance with procedural steps

If the necessary steps applicable to the probationary period are not followed in sequence, a probationers’ appointment cannot be confirmed, or alternatively

cannot be confirmed on the basis of documented authority. If the appointment status of a probationer is amended on PERSAL without confirmation of probation, it is usually an indication that the correct procedure was not followed. It could furthermore also imply that a probationer was not assessed properly for purposes of permanent appointment. This may not only result in the appointment of a person in a permanent capacity who is not necessarily suitable for appointment, but could, when audited, also be found to be an *ultra vires* administrative action.

As table 5 indicates, the number of cases where the appointment status is amended without confirmation of probation is on average relatively high (15%). There are, however, a number of departments where such incidences were as high as 66%, especially on the higher salary levels (levels 12 to 16).

Table 5:

APPOINTMENT STATUS AMENDED WITHOUT CONFIRMATION OF PROBATION			
	Salary Levels 1 - 8	Salary Levels 9 - 11	Salary Levels 12 - 16
Lowest Incidence	0%	0%	0%
Highest Incidence	41%	50%	66%
Average	15%	15%	16%

Population group and gender composition

Against the backdrop of the Public Service's transformation, it is always important to establish who, in terms of population group and gender, is affected the most by negative administrative outcomes such as resignations, transfers, termination of services and the extension of probationary periods. High incidences of such outcomes again may be indicative of poor recruitment, selection and placement, poor managerial conduct and insufficient training and mentoring.

It is clearly evident from table 6 that Black males on all salary levels are worst affected by the extension of their probationary periods, transfers, resignations and terminations of service. For those still in the Public Service's employ, this impacts negatively on their development and integration into their new work spheres. The transformation and affirmative action initiatives introduced in the Public Service are somewhat hampered by this situation. The statistics can also point to a combination of poor recruitment, selection

and placement practices, as well as poor development practices. Departments will be well-advised to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices.

Table 6:

HIGH INCIDENCES OF PERSONNEL MOVEMENTS (EXTENSIONS OF PROBATIONARY PERIOD, TRANSFERS, RESIGNATIONS AND TERMINATIONS OF SERVICE) EXPRESSED IN TERMS OF POPULATION GROUP, GENDER AND SALARY LEVELS			
	Salary Levels 1 - 8	Salary Levels 9 - 11	Salary Levels 12 - 16
Population Group Most Affected	B	B	B
Gender Most Affected	M	M	M

3.3.2 Administration of information

Irregular assessment of newly appointed personnel

Although PERSAL adequately provides for the administration of probationary appointments in the Public Service, it is clear from the information obtained from the system that the majority of departments do not administer probationary appointments through PERSAL effectively. At the time of the investigation departments had to ensure that progress reports were completed quarterly on Form Z187 by supervisors. In as many as 9 departments, 35% to 60 % of reports were still outstanding. It is therefore clear that this requirement is in many instances ignored.

Mismanagement of information on PERSAL

Where the confirmation of a probationary appointment is long overdue, certain departments merely change probationers' employment status to permanent without following the prescripts and adhering to the applicable pre-programmed PERSAL sequence of data-capturing steps, e.g. by basing this on good quarterly reports and a formal recommendation to this effect. Consequently personnel are appointed in a permanent capacity regardless of competency and performance. This practice, which is done on HRM fields other than those specifically created for purposes of probation on PERSAL, inevitably distorts information on the system.

3.3.3 Implications of poor administration

Poor administration has serious HRM implications

Administrative neglect and the mismanagement of



information on PERSAL have an extremely negative affect on the management of probation. Not only is vital information sometimes not fed into the system, but in other instances it is fed into fields on PERSAL other than that created for probation in order to cover up incidences of neglect as pointed out above. As a result of this, information on the system cannot be utilised to assist managers in the management of probation, nor can oversight bodies such as the Commission utilise the information for monitoring purposes.

Furthermore, employees whose permanent appointment have not been effected, even though they have completed their probationary periods, could argue on procedural unfairness. Such employees' probationary periods cannot be prolonged indefinitely and departments cannot at this juncture commence with their quarterly assessments. In the absence of quarterly assessment reports, departments will most probably have to confirm appointments irrespective of the competency and level of performance of individuals.

If the administration of probation information on PERSAL itself is not dealt with timeously and correctly, it will be difficult for departmental Personnel Offices to -

- schedule quarterly assessments,
- monitor adherence to prescribed processes and procedures,
- identify problems in respect of the management process and address them effectively,
- identify and address malpractices and incidences of fraud and corruption, and
- effect the permanent appointment of probationers.

3.4 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND POLICY FORMULATION

3.4.1 Introduction

Sound departmental policy on probation is essential for effective service delivery

During the probationary period new appointees are introduced to their new employer and orientated on

their new job content with the overriding objective of rendering an effective and efficient service as soon as possible. From a Public Service point of view, probation needs to be managed with transformation objectives in mind. To ensure this, there should be consensus about the objectives and the strategies to be followed. The current legislative framework governing human resource management in the Public Service - as contextualised in the White Papers on the Transformation of the Public Service, Public Service Training and Education, Affirmative Action and Human Resource Management - provides many guiding principles to this effect which sets the table for optimal service delivery through good human resource management. However, to ensure that day to day human resource management practices are sound, empowering, fair, equitable and consistent, departments ought to provide policy guidelines and procedures devised in accordance with their own circumstances and conventions.

3.4.2 Developing policy on the management of probation

No policy on probation in the majority of departments

As is evident from **Figure 1**, only a very small proportion (8%) of departments have developed departmental policy on the management of probation. These policies have been scrutinised and do not in all instances give effect to important statutory principles and objectives such as empowerment, consistency and substantive and procedural fairness. In the absence of such guiding principles, managers and supervisors are left to their own devices which cannot be conducive to the effective and efficient management of probation.

As will be elaborated on in paragraph 3.5 on page 12, almost 50% of departments have no formal in-service training programmes in place for probationers. This, together with the fact that there are no proper policy guidelines in place, leaves the management of probation unstructured with no real plan or set of objectives. Linked to the fact that many departments are uncertain about the objectives with the probationary period - see **Figure 2** on page 11 - it stands to reason that the monitoring of probationers' progress is not done purposefully. If progress is not monitored, it is almost impossible to determine training needs and other objectives regarding probation. These are all issues that should be addressed by departmental policy.

Probationary period is not viewed as a period of learning

A number of departments (65%) are of the opinion that the primary aim with the management of probation should be to evaluate performance and to identify and address training needs. However, as is evident from **Figure 2** on page 11, which addresses the objectives of a probationary period as perceived by departments, there is concern that the probationary period is in too many cases not viewed as a period of learning. Furthermore, where learning is acknowledged as important, no purpose-designed courses are in place. Under these circumstances probationers can all too easily be denied training opportunities, especially where high workloads are prevalent. See **Annexure A** for more information on the profile of departments that do not have policies on probation and the subsequent negative impact this has on capacity-building.

3.4.3 Departmental policy and the PSR

Limited initiatives have been taken in aligning departmental policy and practices with the PSR

Less than a third of departments indicated that their policies and practices are aligned with the prescripts on probation as contained in the PSR. More than half of departments are furthermore of the opinion that the probationary period in its present form does not serve a useful purpose whilst two thirds view the existing prescripts (those prior to the Public Service Regulations, 1999) as insufficient for the effective management of probation. The main reasons advanced are strategic planning in respect of the management of probation is lacking, that the current process is rules-bound where managers and proba-

tioners go through the motions merely to comply with the prescripts. The impression is created that it is up to individual managers to decide what should be done and how to address the developmental needs and capacity-building of probationers. Further to this, it is equally apparent that supervisors' actions and the progress of probationers are not monitored.

The PSR address these objectives in a concise manner, which must be read in conjunction with the White Papers on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, Affirmative Action and Public Service Training and Education in order to form a thorough understanding of current thinking in this regard. It has emerged that more than 75% of departments indicated that the provision of a guide or a code of practice on the management of probation will be beneficial to them.

Against this backdrop, the development of departmental policy on probation, in collaboration with organised labour, is very important and necessary to ensure that probation is managed strategically and correctly.

Organised labour is only involved in policy formulation to a limited extent

Organised labour is only involved in the development of policy and procedures in respect of probation to a very limited extent - see **Figure 3** on page 12. It is important that organised labour is involved from the early stages of policy formulation as it needs to be negotiated in the respective departmental bargaining chambers before it can be implemented.

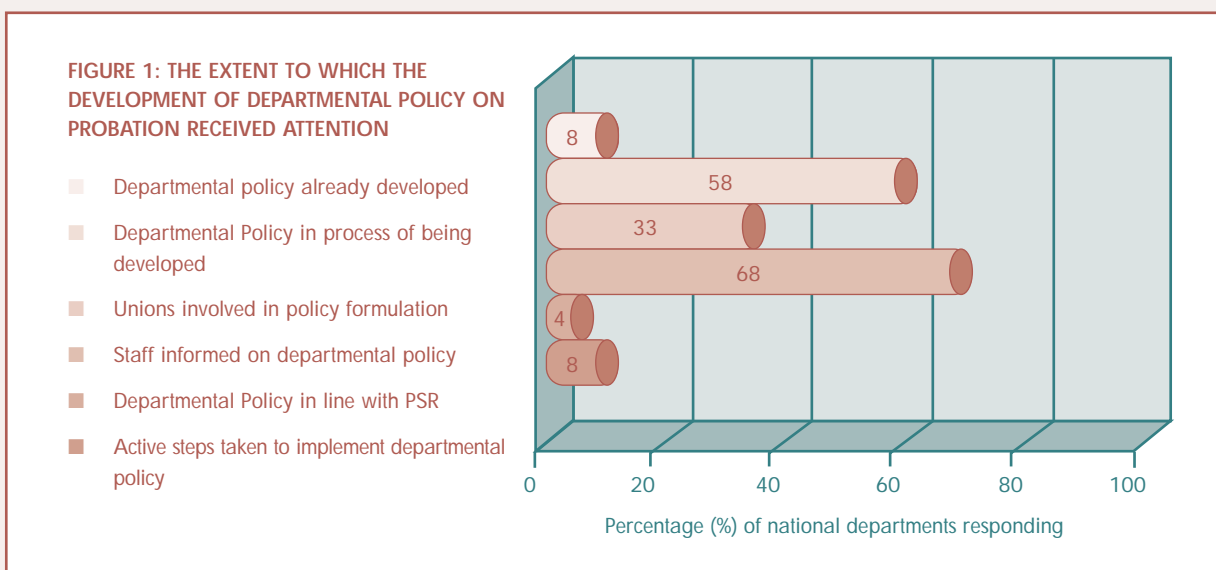
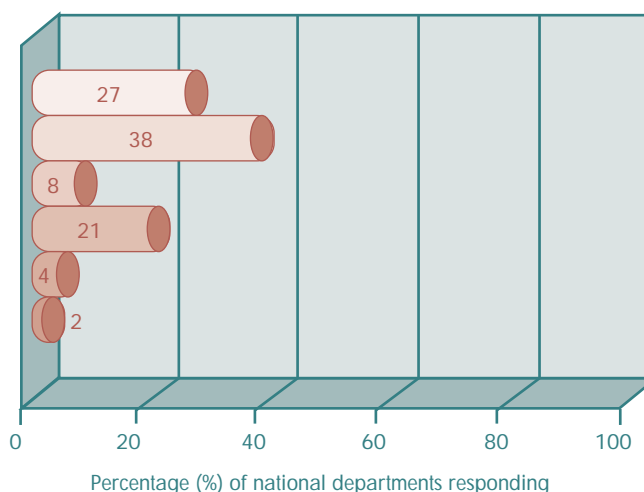


FIGURE 2: OBJECTIVES OF PROBATIONARY PERIOD AS PERCEIVED BY DEPARTMENTS

- To ensure that the performance of probationers are evaluated
- To ensure that probationers are trained and orientated
- To ensure that all aspects of probation are monitored
- To ensure adherence to principles of fairness and equity
- To ensure timeous processing of assessments of probationers
- Percentage of departments not responding



3.4.4 Adherence to procedures and accepting responsibility

Managers and supervisors are not following procedures

The investigation revealed that supervisors do not follow the prescribed procedures by regularly assessing probationers and in dealing with performance problems during probation. This corresponds with the finding in paragraph 3.4.3 that managers and supervisors do not view the probationary period as a period of learning.

A recurring limitation raised by many departments which also impacts negatively on the management of probation, is staff capacity and heavy workloads.

Current perceptions on responsibility for training leads to the neglect thereof

A high correlation was found between vague role/responsibility demarcation and the neglect of orientation and in-service training programmes. An important feature of any programme is clear role demarcation. This not only ensures role-player involvement, but also facilitates the monitoring of practice, policy and procedures, which is an essential component of policy maintenance and development. The perception of departments on responsibility allocation as far as the management of probation is concerned was tested and revealed the following - see **Figure 4** on page 13:

- It is evident that supervisors are, to a large extent, held responsible for the overall management of probationers during the probationary period

- Only a third of departments perceive that the responsibility of the supervisor is to -

- oversee the provision of orientation training and training in respect of labour relations and ethics, and
- ensure that training programmes are followed.

This raises some concern, since the supervisor is first and foremost responsible for the effective utilisation and development of subordinates. This responsibility cannot be left to staff functionaries such as personnel and training officers.

- In contrast to the foregoing, departments do however see it to be the sole responsibility of supervisors to provide job information, to monitor work performance and to provide guidance and assistance to probationers.

See **Annexure B** for more detailed information on current departmental perceptions on specific responsibility allocations.

3.4.5 Length of the probationary period

Departments are in favour of a longer probationary period

As a result of the anomaly between the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, which envisages a probationary period of between 3 to 6 months, as opposed to the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, which directs a period of not less than 12 months, it was decided to

obtain the viewpoints of departments on what is considered to be a workable arrangement in this regard. It was found that more than two thirds of departments are in favour of a longer probationary period. Departments as a rule argued that they need sufficient time for the proper assessment, training and mentoring of probationers.

3.5 CAPACITY-BUILDING OF PROBATIONERS

3.5.1 Introduction

On taking up their new positions, appointees are confronted with new work environments, rules, knowledge, skills applications and insights. Being exposed to all these in a supportive and constructive manner will not only enhance the learning experience, but will produce competent and confident public servants within a relatively short period of time.

Probation, however, is also about preventing individuals who, despite orientation and training, do not exhibit the necessary interest, dedication, aptitude and potential, from becoming public servants on whom the public has to rely.

Thus, the development and training of probationers should, for the above reasons, be aligned to departmental strategic service delivery and human resource development objectives. Probationers need to acquire insight, knowledge, skills and self-confidence, as well as sound work ethic values. Training remains the primary vehicle to attain these.

3.5.2 Structuring capacity-building

The training of probationers is not at an acceptable level

From **Figure 5** on page **14** the following findings in

respect of the capacity-building of probationers are evident:

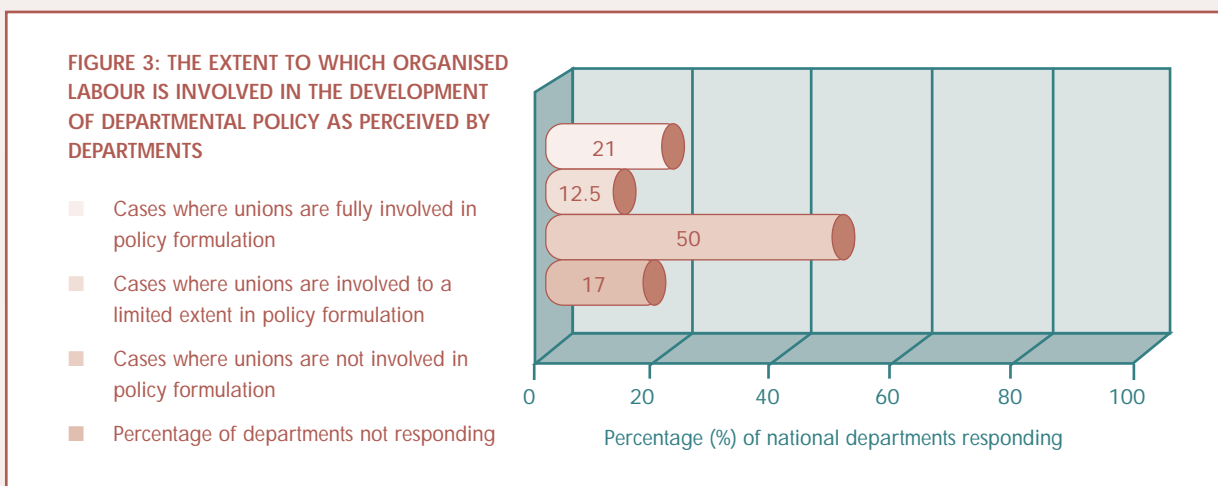
- Although formally structured orientation programmes are followed in basically all departments, an alarmingly low percentage of departments (25%) provide formally structured in-service training programmes for probationers
- More than a third of the departments devote four weeks or less of the entire probationary period to orientation and in-service training
- The majority of departments do however provide orientation and in-service training within the first three months of employment.

See **Annexure A** for more detail on the negative spin-offs of a lack of purpose-designed policy.

3.5.3 Adequacy of capacity-building practices

There are a number of personnel practices that impact either directly or indirectly on the capacity-building of probationers. Departments were subsequently requested to do a self-assessment as far as the adequate deployment of these practices are concerned. The following results are synoptically captured in **Figure 6** on page **14**:

- More than 50% of all departments acknowledged that probationers are provided with job descriptions/duty sheets that are inadequate. These instruments normally provide a newcomer with information on what tasks need to be performed, how and when. They also give an indication of specific standards and requirements that need to be met, as well as other relevant job information



- The same percentage of departments (50%) also acknowledged that inadequate assistance is provided to probationers who display poor work performance. This correlates with the earlier finding made in paragraph 3.4.5 that there is generally an over-reliance on probationers developing themselves.
- The practice of introducing formal mentors or so-called "buddies" is non-existent in more than 70% of departments. What is even more alarming is that the concept of mentoring or buddying is considered to be ineffective in 21% of the six departments that do utilise mentoring or "buddying".

See **Annexure C** for more detailed information on current departmental perceptions on capacity-building practices.

3.5.4 Availability of orientation and in-service training programmes

In-service training programmes exist in only a limited number of departments

Formal orientation training programmes exist in basi-

cally all departments. More than three quarters of the departments, however, manage **in-service training** in an informal and *ad hoc* manner (see **Annexure D** for topics addressed by such training). This means that the majority of in-service training is not purpose-designed, standardised and documented in training modules.

The quality of such training will be dependent on the knowledge, training skills and dedication of individual managers. Undoubtedly this is not a sound way of approaching the development of an employer's work force. In fact, 30% of departments were prepared to acknowledge this by admitting that their in-service training is inadequate. It is also important to note that 50% of departments rate their assistance provided to new appointees who display poor work performance to be inadequate.

3.5.5 Time expended on orientation and in-service training

The majority of departments acknowledge the importance of training

As is evident from **Figure 7** on page 15, more than 80% of departments provide probationers with orientation and in-service training within the first three

FIGURE 4: DEPARTMENTAL VIEWS ON SUPERVISORS' RESPONSIBILITY AS FAR AS THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION IS CONCERNED

- Informing a probationer on basic labour rights
- Providing a probationer with orientation training
- Ensuring that a probationer completes a training programme
- Informing a probationer on ethical conduct
- Introducing a probationer to other role-players in the work-place
- Acting as a formal mentor/"buddy" to a probationer
- Providing a probationer with functional in-service training
- Giving a probationer exposure to other functional fields
- Determining the training needs of a probationer
- Evaluating the work performance of a probationer
- Providing assistance to a probationer performing badly
- Providing a probationer with an updated job description/duty sheet

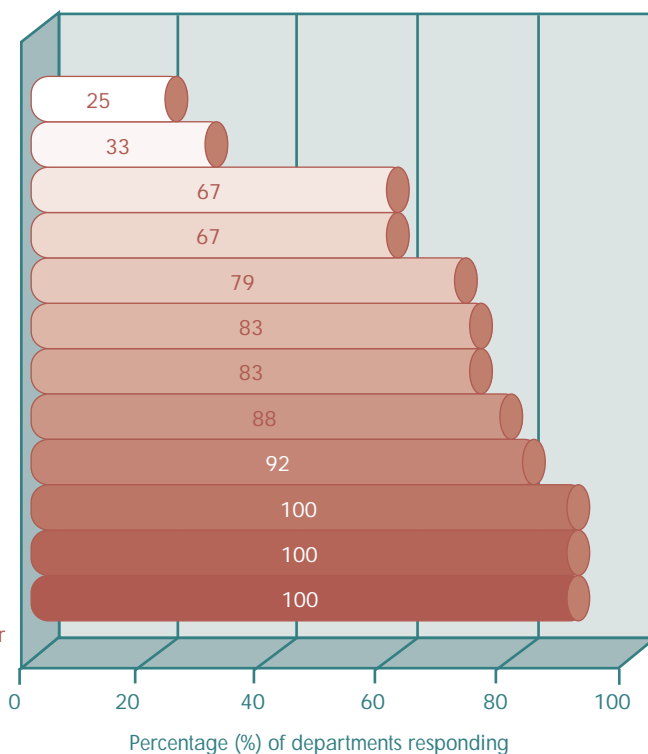
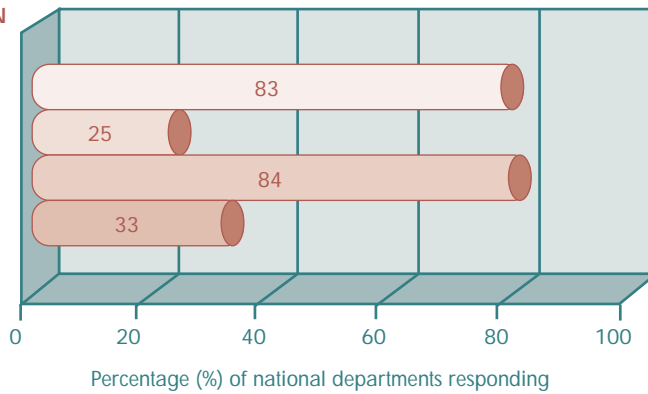


FIGURE 5: THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CAPACITY-BUILDING OF PROBATIONERS RECEIVED ATTENTION

- A formal programme for orientation training does exist
- A formal programme for in-service training does exist
- Both orientation and in-service training of probationers start within first three months of appointment
- 4 weeks and less of probationary period are expended on both orientation and in-service training



months of appointment.

Orientation and in-service training should ideally commence immediately. Within the first couple of months of employment, probationers should have received substantial in-service training. It should, however, be noted that if the probationary period is indeed shortened, this would not be achieved. Although training and especially in-service training is inadequate in a number of departments, the majority of departments acknowledge the importance of training and endeavour to attend to it as a

matter of priority.

Some departments do not devote enough time to training

A number of departments (30%) devote approximately four weeks to the orientation and in-service training of probationers. A further 17% of departments provide up to twelve weeks of training. See **Figure 8** on page 16 for more detail.

Considering that these figures include both orienta-

FIGURE 6: THE EXTENT TO WHICH CAPACITY-BUILDING PRACTICES ARE CONSIDERED TO BE INADEQUATE BY DEPARTMENTS

- Job description/duty sheets
- Assisting poor work performance
- Exposure to other functional terrains
- Training on labour relations
- Determining the training needs of probationers
- In-service functional training
- Assessing work performance of probationers
- Training on ethical conduct
- Consulting probationers and giving them feedback
- Orientation training for probationers
- Introducing a mentor/"buddy" system
- Introducing probationers to other role-players

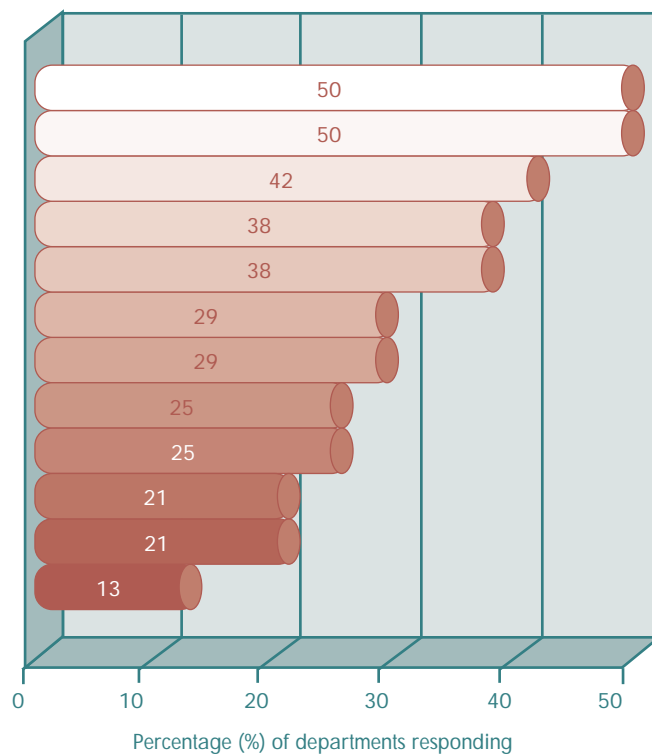
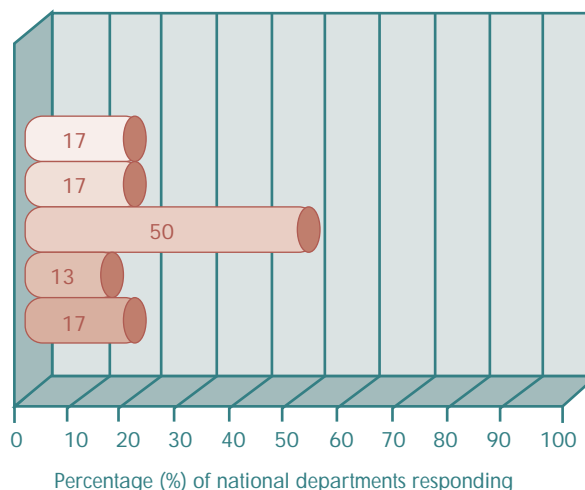


FIGURE 7: HOW SOON AFTER APPOINTMENT ARE PROBATIONERS PROVIDED WITH BOTH ORIENTATION AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING?

- Provided with training within the first week
- Provided with training within the first month
- Provided with training within 3 months
- Provided with training within 6 months
- Percentage of departments not responding



tion and in-service training, the findings clearly indicate an indifference amongst some departments to the development of their staff, especially new appointees, who are in many cases in need of far more training than that reflected in **Figure 8**. Departments are generally in favour of a longer probationary period for this very reason. It also follows that more formal training should be provided in order to justify a longer period. This will ensure that knowledge and skills are acquired timeously, which in turn will ensure the building of competence, confidence and self-esteem, provided that the training is of good quality and effectively empowers the new appointee.

3.5.6 Effectiveness of orientation and in-service training

The effectiveness of training is in most cases not evaluated

For training to be meaningful, it must be based on specific objectives. It follows that the attainment of such objectives should be monitored to ensure that the energy and money expended on training is well-spent and that the training content succeeds in establishing gains in learning.

The investigation revealed that the effectiveness of orientation and in-service training is not monitored by departments (see **Figure 9** on page 16 for more detailed information on the monitoring of probation), which certainly poses a problem. Providing quality training that really adds value to probationers' level of functioning is what is really required. To ensure that quality training is provided, its effectiveness should be monitored and the training content continually refined.

3.5.7 Departments' ability to provide orientation and in-service training

Line functionaries do not have the necessary skills to provide effective training

Effective in-service training is dependent not only on a first-hand knowledge of the subject matter but also on a basic understanding of training methodology. The majority of departments, however, expressed concern that managers and supervisors may not be properly equipped to offer the required training.

3.5.8 Implications of unstructured orientation and in-service training

Probationers are denied training opportunities

In an era where expanded optimal service delivery is a focus of attention, probationers are considered an asset to the Public Service.

Orientation and in-service training ought therefore to be designed to equip the probationer for his or her job and to instill self-confidence. In a situation where orientation and in-service training are neglected or approached in an *ad hoc* manner, employees, especially new appointees, are left with knowledge, competence and proficiency gaps posing as stumbling blocks in their optimal functioning.

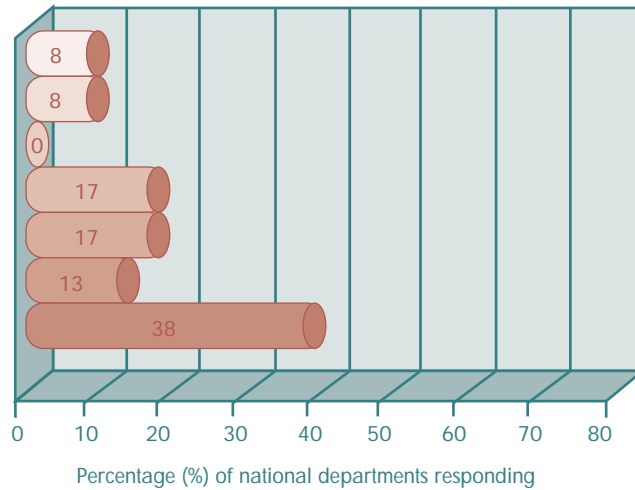
3.6 MONITORING WORK PERFORMANCE AND THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION AS A PRACTICE

3.6.1 Introduction

The management of probation, as well as the processes involved should be monitored on a continuous

FIGURE 8: THE TIME EXPENDED ON TRAINING OF PROBATIONERS DURING THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD

- 1 week + (2%) of probationary period
- 4 weeks + (8%) of probationary period
- 8 weeks + (15%) of probationary period
- 12 weeks + (25%) of probationary period
- 21 weeks + (50%) of probationary period
- 40 weeks + (75%) of probationary period
- Percentage of departments not responding



basis. This is necessary not only to ensure compliance with the regulatory framework governing human resource management in the Public Service but also the effectiveness of policy and procedures.

3.6.2 Monitoring probation

Poor monitoring is a consequence of *ad hoc* management of probation

From the responses received, it is apparent that the monitoring of probation as a process suffers especially in those departments where probation is managed in an unstructured manner, i.e. limited time is spent on training, insufficient support is given in respect of poor performers and the information in respect of probation is inadequately managed on PERSAL.

As is evident from **Figure 9** below, departments do,

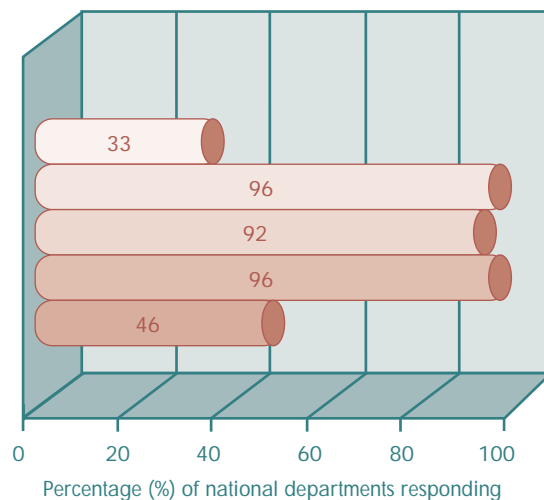
to varying degrees, monitor certain crucial aspects of the probationary process.

As many as 67% of departments do not have a formal scheduled time-frame for assessing the work performance of probationers, despite the fact that PERSAL has a facility to generate reminders. Given this situation, timeous remedial interventions in respect of poor work performance may be neglected.

More than 30% of departments do not invite union representatives to sit in on discussions between managers/supervisors and probationers with a view to looking after the interests of their members. In addition to this, over 40% of probationers are not informed regarding their right to representation. Apart from the fact that the principle of fairness may be compromised, this is not conducive to sound labour relations and staff morale.

FIGURE 9: THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION APPOINTMENTS IS MONITORED

- A formal programming for assessing work performance does exist
- Personnel Office monitors quarterly assessments
- Personnel Office responds to inadequate management of assessments
- Personnel Office responds to assessments with a negative outcome
- Staff are informed about the right to representation



4. PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Although a paradigm shift has occurred in the philosophy underlying the contemporary utilisation of the probationary process in the Public Service, the findings and proposals contained in this report, which stem from the era immediately prior to the adoption of the new Public Service Regulations, are still highly relevant. What is now no longer applicable to the probationary period in terms of the new regulatory framework, has however not fallen by the wayside and is still of paramount importance. It needs to be emphasised that human resource management practices are interrelated and that the various practices represent building blocks. Human resource management, of which the probationary process represents a small but important part, must not be approached indifferently.

4.2 AMENDMENT OF PRESCRIPTS ON THE DURATION OF THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Departments prefer a longer probationary period

Given the current ineffective management of the probationary process and the notable absence of purpose-designed policy as well as training and orientation programmes, departments' preference for a probationary period of up to 12 months is understandable. It also explains departments' need for a guide or code of practice.

Practical considerations lend support to departments' preference

Practical considerations obviously also play a part in the expressed preference. Sufficient time is required for the evaluation of performance and for probationers to improve their performance. In some cases the successful completion of specific training courses spanning over a number of months as a prerequisite for confirmation of appointment in certain occupational classes, also needs to be considered. However, within the new legislative framework a shift in emphasis has taken place. The probationary period is no longer viewed as an apprenticeship period. It is now viewed as a period during which broad orientation takes place and where confirma-

tion is obtained that the new appointee does in fact possess the necessary qualities to be successfully employed. It also affords the new appointee the opportunity to consider whether his/her choice of career and employer were correct.

Although probation is no longer regarded as an apprenticeship period, the fact remains that the concept of being empowered optimally in developmental terms, as the White Paper on Public Service Training and Education emphasises, is regarded as a career-long exercise. Training and development do not only extend far beyond the probationary period, but it is crucial to acknowledge that the notion of life-long training and development is actually set in motion in a purposeful and meaningful manner during the probationary period. For the probationary period to be managed appropriately, this needs to be thoroughly inculcated.

Prescripts need to be amended

It is therefore proposed that the Department of Public Service and Administration -

- obtain Cabinet's approval to deviate from the prescripts contained in the White Paper on Human Resource Management, i.e. not to limit the probationary period to six months as called for by the White Paper;
- retain the current wording of section 13(2)(a) of the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, since departments are generally in favour of a longer probationary period; and
- amend the Public Service Regulations to bring the provisions contained therein in line with section 13(2)(a) of the Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997, i.e. to reiterate the duration of the probationary period so as to leave no room for doubt.

4.3 MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION ON PERSAL

Management of PERSAL information needs attention

Since departments are solely responsible for the

administration of information on the PERSAL system, it is proposed that they establish and address both the extent and the real cause of the incomplete and incorrect human resource data currently captured on PERSAL.

The current insufficient recording of reasons for transfers does not allow for a distinction between transfers as a result of rotation, poor performance, wrongful placement, restructuring, etc. It is proposed that this be addressed by the PERSAL Component in National Treasury.

It is further proposed that the PERSAL Component conduct a training needs survey in respect of PERSAL users to address this matter from a training perspective.

Information on PERSAL needs to be utilised

As a result of the incomplete and inaccurate state of PERSAL data on probationary appointments, a program was developed by the PERSAL Component to assist the Commission with the extraction of information on probation from the system. It is proposed that departments utilise this program in order to monitor the management of probation in future.

PERSAL information requires updating

In order to timeously identify and address shortcomings in the management of probation, it is proposed that departments monitor this on a regular basis by utilising the following information on PERSAL:

- Extensions of the probationary period, the time periods involved and the reasons
- Probationers' performance and an indication of possible problem areas and developmental needs
- The type and frequency of movements that take place amongst probationers and the reasons
- The type and intensity of training received during the probationary period.

4.4 DEVELOPING DEPARTMENTAL POLICY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBATION

Implications of poor policy or a lack of policy

The investigation revealed that where departments do not have a departmental policy on probation, much

uncertainty exists about what has to be done and by whom. Consequently probationers are not utilised and trained optimally. This not only undermines probationers' confidence, but also negatively affects their morale. Low morale may contribute to an increase in personnel turnover, which is a costly exercise in view of present-day recruitment and resettlement costs and hidden costs such as poor productivity.

In addition to the foregoing, it is also important to consider that there can hardly be a link between important strategic service delivery and human resource management objectives if these are not covered by emphatic and unequivocal policy statements and procedures.

Policy needs to be developed

To ensure that probation is managed in a professional manner so as to provide the Public Service with competent and confident new appointees, it is proposed that the following matters be addressed as a matter of urgency by the departments:

- Departmental policy on probation needs to be developed to address at least the following:
 - Defining objectives with the management of probation with due regard to service delivery objectives
 - Incorporating the human resource management principles contained in all applicable White Papers
 - Standardising on fair and equitable processes and procedures
 - Allocating responsibility to all key role-players
 - Providing formally structured orientation and in-service training programmes
 - Providing mentoring techniques
 - Ensuring that ongoing assessment of probationers' performance and progress takes place
 - Ensuring that the management of probation as well as the processes and procedures involved are monitored.

- Departments should also ensure that organised labour is fully involved in the development of such policy
- Managers and supervisors must be fully conversant with departmental policy.
- Additional control measures must be introduced to ensure that managers and supervisors adhere to existing procedures and processes. This can typically be taken care of by -
 - establishing standard procedures to be adhered to,
 - monitoring that the above procedures are adhered to,
 - establishing a utilisation and development programme for probationers,
 - monitoring adherence to the foregoing programmes,
 - formalising quarterly assessments to be handed in at departmental Personnel Offices,
 - monitoring whether these are handled appropriately and are handed in, and
 - monitoring the recording of data on PERSAL.
- Departmental Personnel Offices should oversee the foregoing and conduct the monitoring as indicated.

4.5 CAPACITY-BUILDING OF PROBATIONERS

Training of probationers needs attention

In order to effectively address the capacity-building of probationers, departments need to pay attention to the following:

- The updating of job descriptions/duty sheets for all posts in consultation with organised labour
- Defining minimum standards (quality and quantity) of training in cases where they do not exist and introducing control measures to ensure adherence to the standards that do exist

- Defining training objectives, providing orientation and in-service training as well as other forms of training
- Embarking on a training needs analysis in respect of in-service training and addressing such training needs
- Introducing a process at departmental level whereby the effectiveness of capacity-building is evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Training of supervisors needs attention

- Supervisors ought to be trained in the basic skills of training and they should be educated on the importance of structured utilisation and development programmes, the ongoing assessment of performance, updated job descriptions and the value and methodology of mentoring.
- Supervisors also need to be made aware of the crucial role that they have to fulfil in the development of their subordinates, especially new appointees.

4.6 MONITORING PROBATION AS A PROCESS

Self-monitoring is required

In order to enhance the management of probation departments need to pay attention to the following:

- Establishing departmental policy and procedures to regulate the management of probation
- Establishing a structured probationary process with due regard to its main constituent elements, viz. orientation, performance-monitoring and corrective/supportive actions such as mentoring and training
- Consulting with organised labour
- Ensuring that the information on PERSAL in respect of probation is administered correctly and updated regularly
- Establishing specific procedures to ensure that the monitoring of processes and procedures is put into effect.

Monitoring of capacity-building is required

In order to ensure that orientation, in-service training

and the day-to-day guidance of new appointees are placed on a meaningful platform, departments ought to continually monitor performance, training needs and training outcomes.

4.7 PROVIDING A CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Department of Public Service and Administration should, as a matter of priority, establish a code of good practice in respect of the management of probation. There is not only a need for this, but an actual desire by departments to obtain such guidelines to assist them with their policy development and the management of probation.

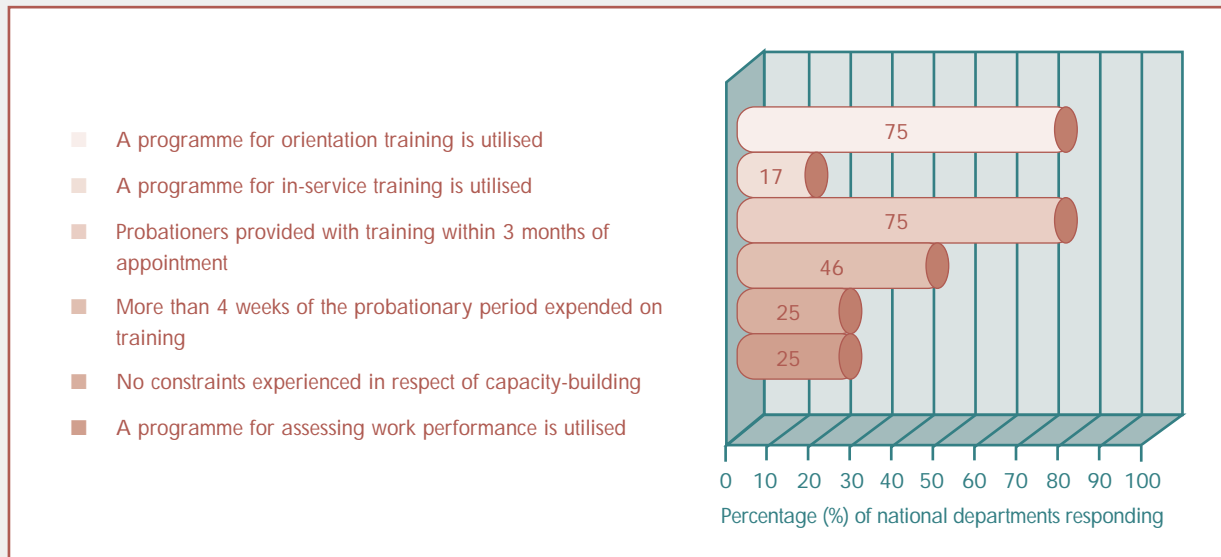


5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The importance of the probationary period cannot be overemphasised, nor the importance of ongoing performance assessment and the development of staff.

The legislative framework governing the management of probation not only reflects the reasons for managing the probationary period efficiently, but also represents a guide which, if incorporated into departmental policy and applied conscientiously, will ensure the attainment of the objectives of government policy regarding human resource management.

ANNEXURE A - PROFILE OF DEPARTMENTS WITHOUT DEPARTMENTAL POLICY ON PROBATION



Less than 10% of national departments have developed departmental policy on probation. It was decided to construct a profile on departments who do not have their own departmental policy on probation. From the above profile it is evident that there is a direct relationship between the absence of departmental policy on probation and the following:

- A lack of formal programmes for the in-service training of probationers
- Limited time expended on orientation and in-service training
- Various constraints experienced in respect of capacity-building
- A lack of a formal work performance assessment programme.

In the absence of clear and unambiguous objectives and guidelines, the foregoing is to be expected.

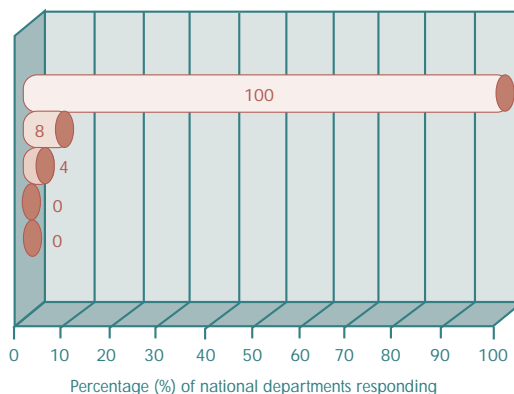
Factors negatively affecting the capacity-building of probationers at departmental level are the following:

- Limited budgets
- Limited training skills amongst supervisors to conduct orientation and in-service training
- Heavy workloads and staff shortages resulting in limited time for training
- The probationary period is not viewed as a period of learning by many supervisors
- Supervisors do not follow procedures
- Limited skills amongst supervisors in respect of monitoring and evaluating probationers' performance
- Lack of properly structured training programmes

ANNEXURE B - RESPONSIBILITY ALLOCATION

FIG 1: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PROVIDING A PROBATIONER WITH AN UPDATED JOB DESCRIPTION / DUTY SHEET

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

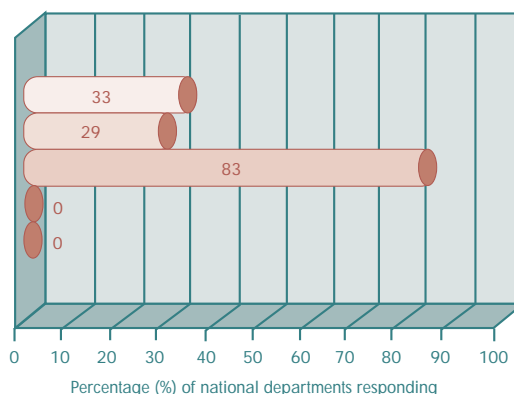


The Responsibility of Providing a Probationer with an Updated Job Description/Duty Sheet

Although a small number of departments see either the Personnel Office or the Training Component to have a co-responsibility, all departments are nonetheless in agreement that it should be the supervisor's responsibility to provide probationers with updated job description/duty sheets, which is indeed where the primary responsibility lies.

FIG 2: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PROVIDING A PROBATIONER WITH ORIENTATION TRAINING

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

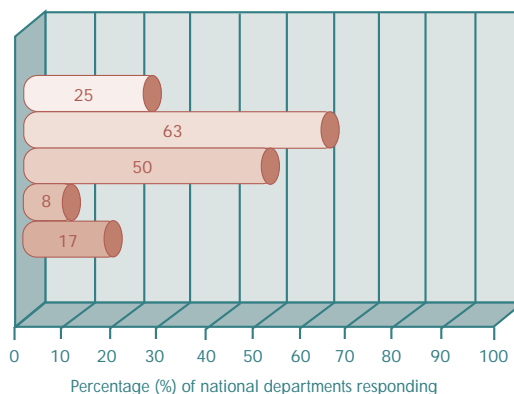


The Responsibility of Providing a Probationer with Orientation Training

The majority of departments are of the opinion that it is primarily the responsibility of the Training Component to provide probationers with orientation training. Apart from this, a number of departments also see a co-responsibility for the Personnel Office and the direct supervisor, which should be the case.

FIG 3: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF INFORMING A PROBATIONER ON BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

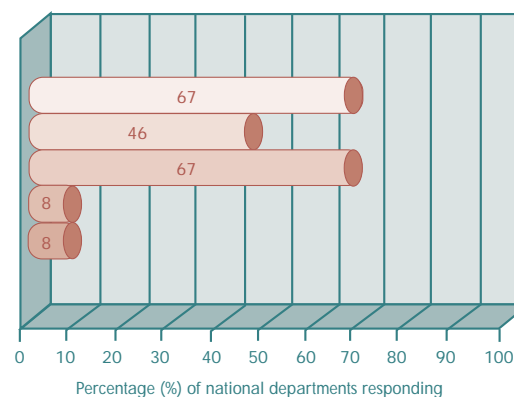


The Responsibility of Informing a Probationer on Basic Labour Rights

The responsibility of informing a probationer on basic labour rights is mainly considered to be a shared responsibility between the supervisor, the Personnel Office and the Training Component - a perspective which is fully endorsed.

FIG 4: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF INFORMING A PROBATIONER ON ETHICAL CONDUCT

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

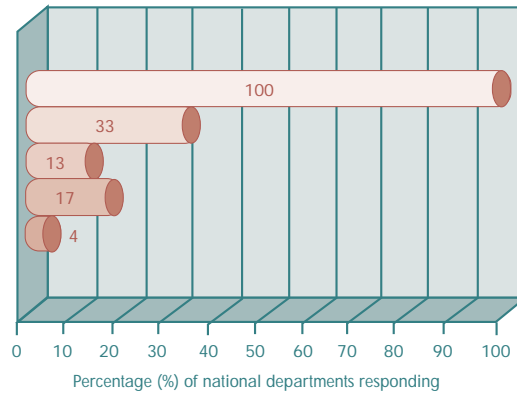


The Responsibility of Informing a Probationer on Ethical Conduct

The responsibility of informing a probationer on ethical conduct is considered to be a shared responsibility between the supervisor, the Personnel Office and the Training Component. What is of concern though is that 25% of departments are of the opinion that the supervisor has no responsibility in this regard.

FIG 9: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO A PROBATIONER PERFORMING POORLY

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

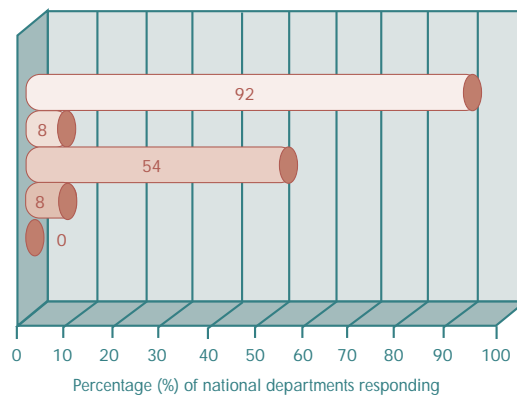


The Responsibility of Providing Assistance to a Probationer Performing Poorly

All departments are of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the supervisor to assist poor performing probationers. A small number of departments consider it to be a shared responsibility between the supervisor, the Personnel Office, the Training Component, etc. Although these other role-players do have a co-responsibility in advising and training probationers, the primary responsibility in this regard is vested in the supervisor.

FIG 10: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DETERMINING THE TRAINING NEEDS OF A PROBATIONER

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

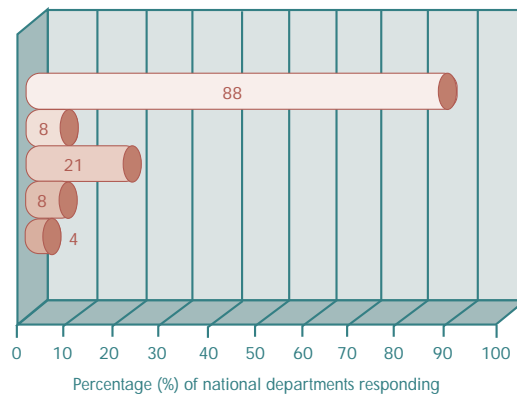


The Responsibility of Determining the Training Needs of a Probationer

It is gratifying to see that the majority of departments are of the opinion that it is primarily the responsibility of the supervisor to determine the training needs of probationers. More than half of the departments are, however, of the opinion that the Training Component, the Personnel Office and the mentor/"buddy" have a shared responsibility - a perception that definitely can do no harm.

FIG 11: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GIVING A PROBATIONER EXPOSURE TO OTHER FUNCTIONAL TERRAINS

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

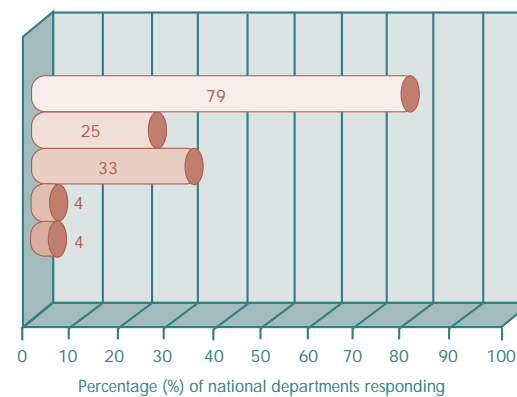


The Responsibility of Giving a Probationer Exposure to Other Functional Terrains

The majority of departments are of the opinion that it is primarily the responsibility of the supervisor to give probationers exposure to other functional terrains. A small number of departments, however, are of the opinion that the Training Component, the Personnel Office and the mentor/"buddy" too have a shared responsibility - a perception that does not really seem to be practical.

FIG 12: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF INTRODUCING A PROBATIONER TO IMPORTANT ROLE-PLAYERS IN THE WORK-PLACE

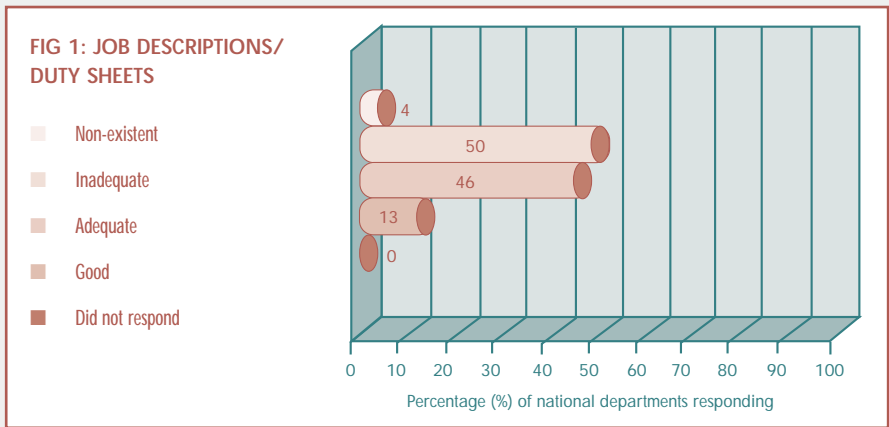
- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other



The Responsibility of Introducing a Probationer to Important Role-Players in the Work-Place

The majority of departments are of the opinion that it is primarily the responsibility of the supervisor to introduce probationers to important role-players in the work-place. Quite a number of departments, however, are of the opinion that the Personnel Office and the Training Component have a shared responsibility. The latter perception too is not really viewed to be practical.

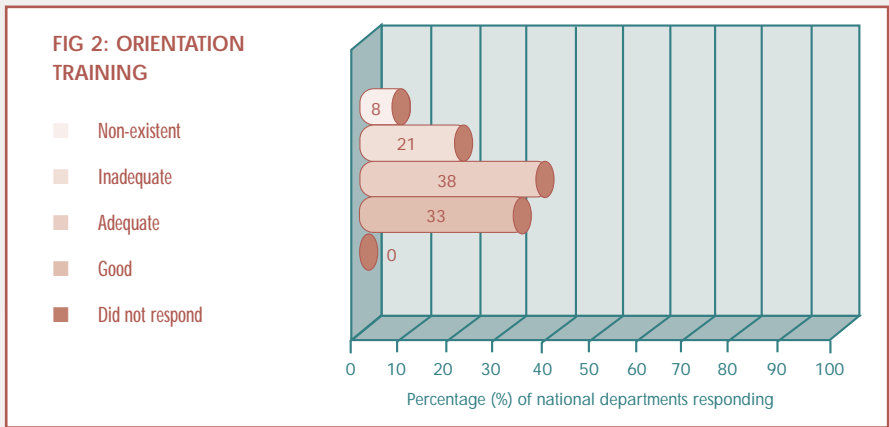
ANNEXURE C - CAPACITY-BUILDING PRACTICES



Job Description / Duty Sheets

It is interesting to note that job descriptions / duty sheets exist at basically all departments, but that as many as 50% of departments consider these to be inadequate.

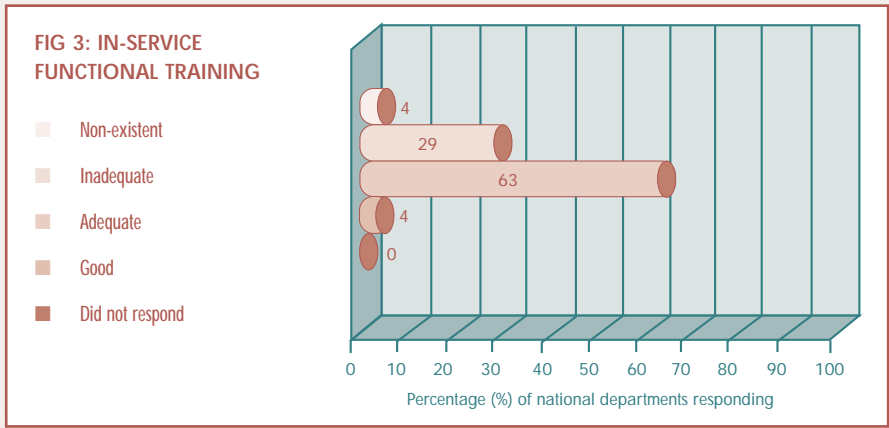
As reference material, job descriptions and duty sheets are invaluable to the effective development and utilisation of probationers.



Orientation Training

Two departments do not provide any form of orientation training whereas 20% of departments consider their training to be inadequate. For the rest, the adequacy/value of such training is also not monitored.

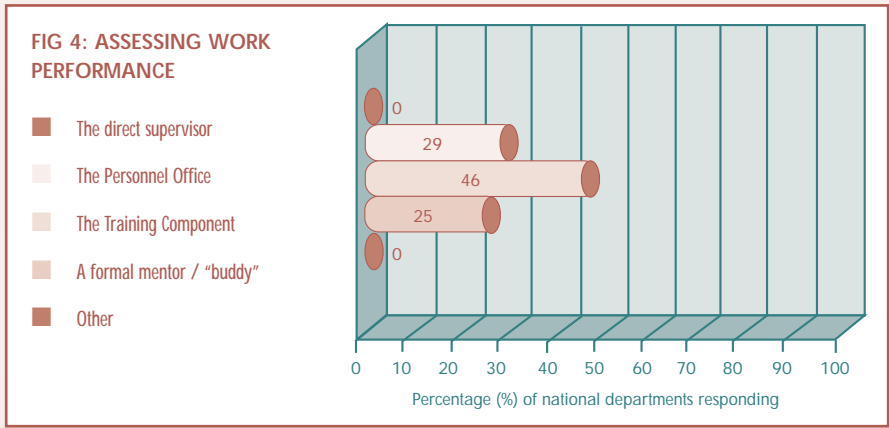
This state of affairs is not conducive to making new appointees feel at home and at one with their new employer.



In-Service Functional Training

Four departments do not provide formal in-service training. Although the majority of departments do provide in-service training, as many as 30% of them consider their in-service training to be inadequate.

Training is the single most important ingredient to ensure proficiency and productivity. If neglected the results are obvious.



Assessing Work Performance

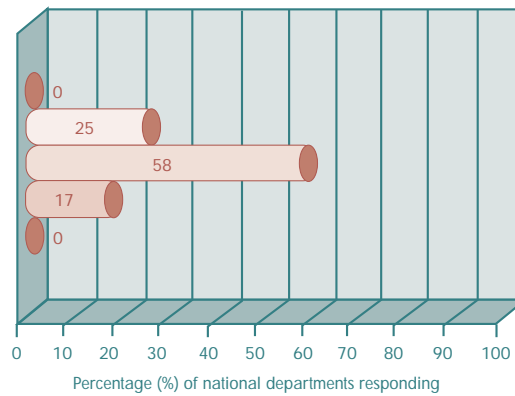
Almost 30% of departments consider the performance assessment of probationers to be inadequate.

The effective utilisation and development of all staff, and also that of probationers, are absolutely dependant on ongoing performance assessment. If neglected, so too will the effective utilisation and development of probationers be neglected.



FIG 5: CONSULTING PROBATIONERS AND GIVING THEM FEEDBACK

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other



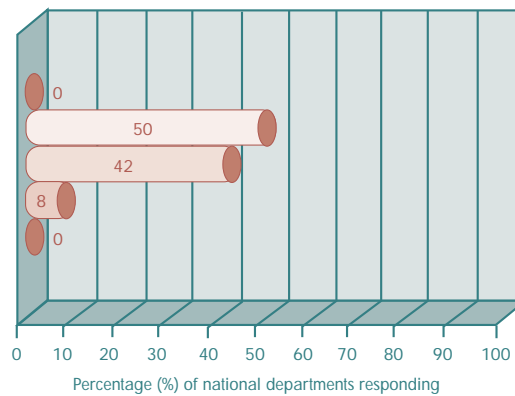
Consulting Probationers and Giving them Feedback

At 25% of the departments the process of consultation between supervisor and probationer is not managed satisfactorily leaving probationers in the dark and not availing them an adequate opportunity to improve on their performance.

This finding ties in with the assessment of work performance. Constant feedback is essential to ensure efficiency and sustained development.

FIG 6: ASSISTING POOR WORK PERFORMANCE

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other



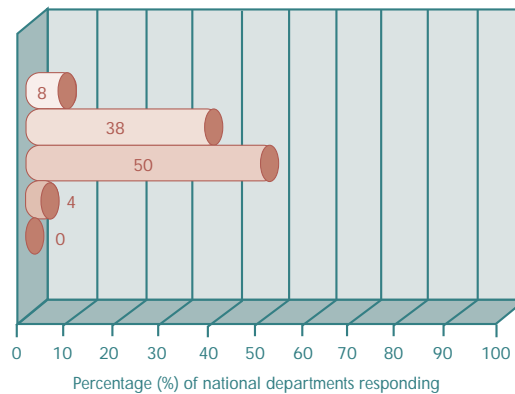
Assisting Probationers with Poor Work Performance

As high a number as 50% of departments do not address this issue satisfactorily. Large numbers of probationers are therefore left to their own devices in fending for themselves.

Proper development and effective utilisation is simply not possible without guidance and assistance.

FIG 7: TRAINING ON LABOUR RIGHTS

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other



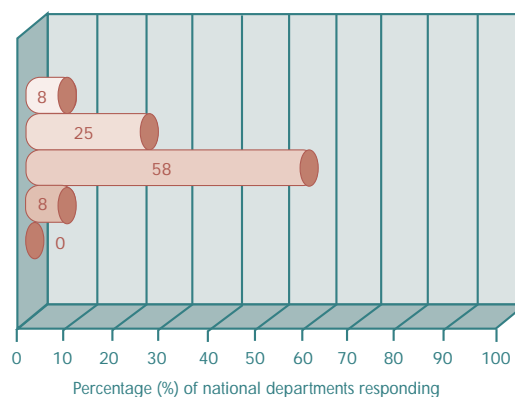
Training on Basic Labour Rights

Although only two departments were not providing probationers with labour relations training, as many as 40% of departments' training is considered to be inadequate.

The democratisation of the workplace becomes an unattainable objective in the absence of training in respect of basic labour rights.

FIG 8: TRAINING ON ETHICAL CONDUCT

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other



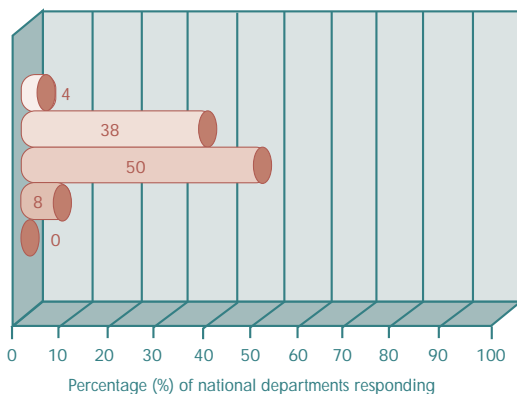
Training on Ethical Conduct

Whereas 92% of departments do provide training on ethical conduct, as much as 20% of this training is considered to be inadequate.

In the light of fairly widespread work ethics problems, awareness creation should in this regard be an ongoing effort.

FIG 9: DETERMINING TRAINING NEEDS

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other



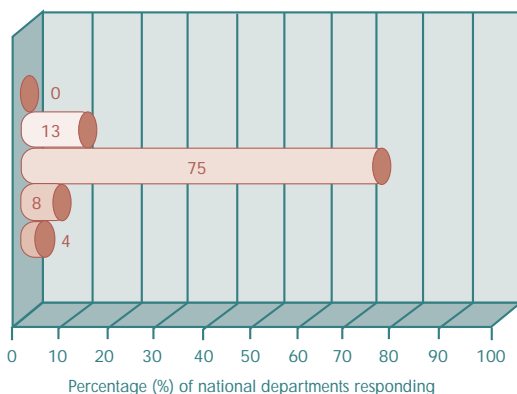
Determining Training Needs

Although almost all departments do determine training needs of probationers, in as high a number as 40% of cases, these are not of an acceptable standard.

In the absence of knowledge about real training needs, training can very easily take on a 'nice to have' form.

FIG 10: INTRODUCTION TO IMPORTANT ROLE-PLAYERS

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

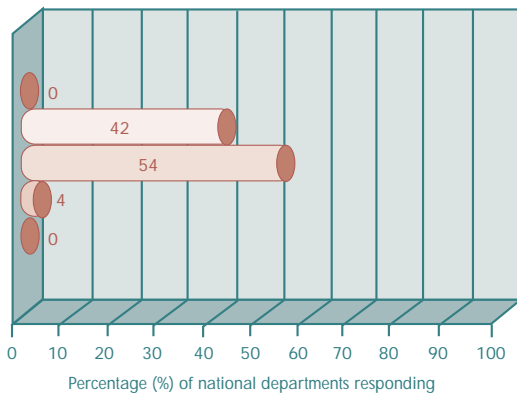


Introduction to Important Role-Players

All departments introduce probationers to important role-players in the work-place but in 11% of cases this is not done properly and meaningfully.

FIG 11: EXPOSURE TO OTHER FUNCTIONAL TERRAINS

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other

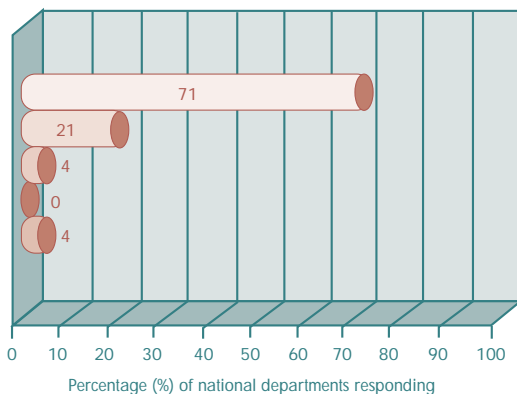


Exposure to Other Functional Terrains

All departments do introduce probationers to other functional terrains other than their own. However, in 40% of cases this exercise is not handled in an adequate and meaningful manner.

FIG 12: INTRODUCING A MENTOR OR "BUDDY" SYSTEM

- The direct supervisor
- The Personnel Office
- The Training Component
- A formal mentor / "buddy"
- Other



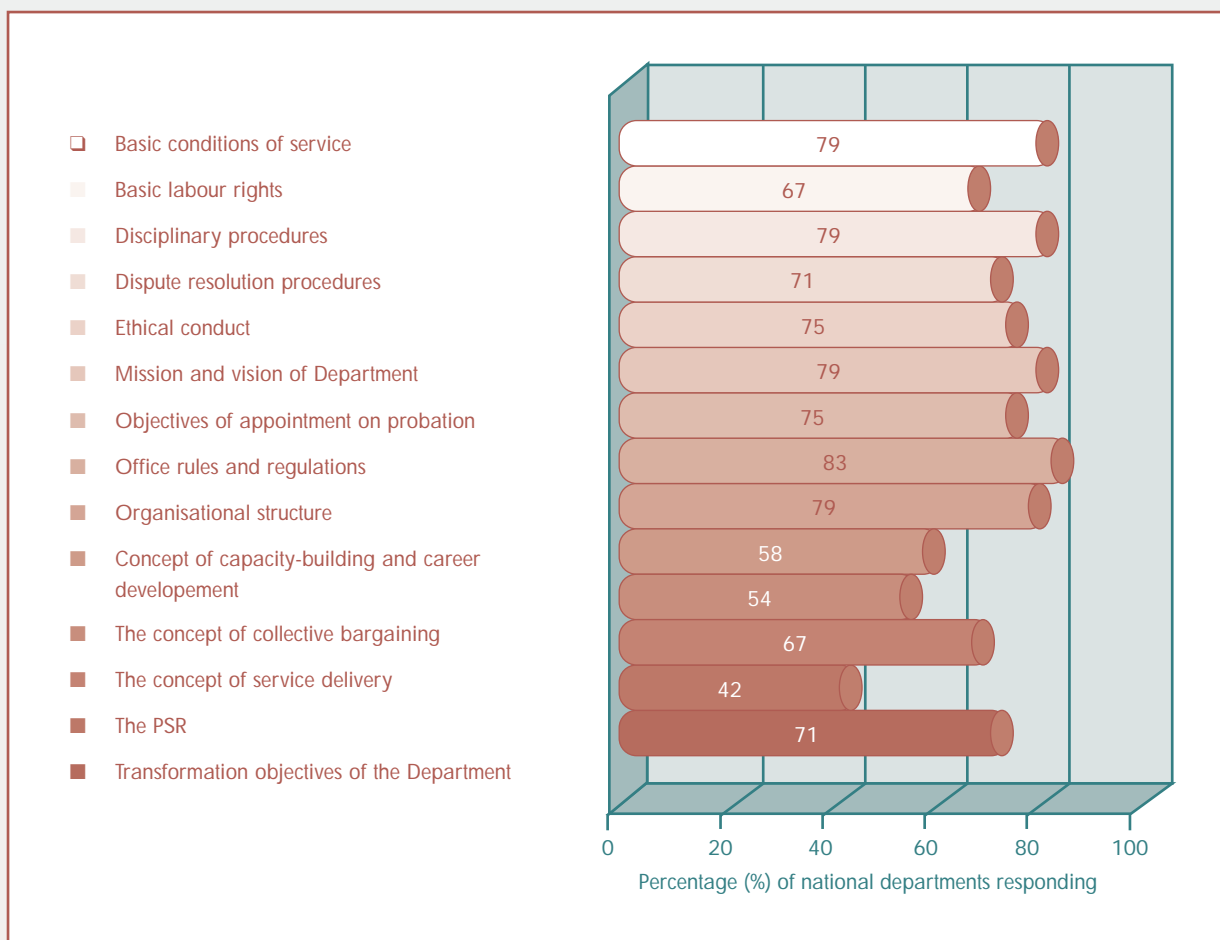
Introducing a Mentor or "Buddy" System

A mentor or so-called "buddy" system is basically non-existent and where it is practiced, it is considered to be totally inadequate.

Since mentoring and "buddying" are cost-effective and well-recognised tools to informally empower staff, departments can hardly afford to overlook these.



ANNEXURE D - TOPICS ADDRESSED BY ORIENTATION TRAINING



Topics currently addressed by orientation training

- Office rules and regulations are considered to be the most important topic by the majority of departments.
- The concepts of service delivery, collective bargaining and basic labour rights feature relatively low. The implications hereof have already been alluded to at Figure 7 of Annexure C.
- The Public Service Regulations, 1999, are addressed by less than half of orientation training programmes. Although disturbing, it has to be mentioned that the Regulations have only been adopted after the conclusion of the investigation, which will to an extent explain the phenomenon.

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