



Feature Address by:

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ACCELERATING THE G2D REFORMS:
**The Public Service
Academy's Role**

**Strategic Framework Workshops for the Public
Service Academy, facilitated by MIND of Jamaica**
Old Fire Station, Abercromby Street, Port of Spain.
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PSA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK WORKSHOPS

SALUTATIONS [ALL PROTOCOLS OBSERVED]

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen...

I am tossing down the gauntlet today for the Public Service Academy, and I am doing so for a very pertinent reason. We are running out of time...

It has been roughly three years since we launched the G2D “Journey From Gold To Diamond” or Public Service Modernisation Initiative. Three years on, I am concerned that those who have been tasked with the responsibility of making the transformation happen, seem the least prepared to do so. It is evident that our public officers are neither ready nor equipped to face the demands of the 21st Century workplace; much less the Diamond Standard of Excellence in Public Service Delivery that is at the core of G2D.

We know what we are up against... Our citizens continue to view the public service negatively, and some might argue, justifiably so. Fifty-three percent of the population feel that the service rendered is poor; forty-nine percent see it as slow; thirty-three percent believe the system is corrupt, and down the scale we go on to unsatisfactory, impolite, inadequate, unaccountable and inefficient.

The reality is that there are still a number of untenable practices and circumstances that make progress difficult, if not totally impossible. These include protracted delays in recruitment and appointments; irrelevant organisational structures with an imbalance in favour of lower level positions; and an inequitable pay system. The performance management system is poorly and inconsistently managed. Our public officers are frustrated and demotivated; and there are gaps and holes in our HR management function and development strategy.

We should have been further along in creating those new posts and job descriptions for the new breed of Public Officer we need to take the Service forward, fitting them into the new Diamond Shaped Human Resource Management (HRM) Architecture, which allows for a new management cadre and more professional streams instead of the old top-down, hierarchical pyramid.

When we had launched G2D, that is what it was all about – moving away from the Pyramid to this Diamond, where there is a wider stream of professionals at the centre of the organisation. These are people whom we expect would be empowered, capable, creative, innovative, accountable... And at the end of the day, who could drive the transformation themselves.

We have created at the bottom of the Diamond, the Management Support Series for those people who are multi-tasking, technology savvy, empowered as well, and perform some innovation at the frontline, at the customer service desk, customer oriented... And throughout the organisation from top to bottom, those who can engage citizens and make them feel as though they are partners in this whole process.

We should have been further along in capturing and establishing with the Service those technical competencies we have acquired over the years via contract officers. The fact that for so many years we have been forced to bring these skills into the Service via contract is a clear indication of the critical overhaul necessary for the HR and operational structures within the Public Service.

And most importantly, the Public Service Academy should have been further along in its strategic planning to ensure that these new Public Officers can access the critical training and professional development opportunities, to keep them sharp and focussed on delivering the best quality service to the



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citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago, as efficiently and cost effectively as possible, and with the highest integrity.

At this juncture, I must bring up a couple of issues that I have raised at various fora, again and again, concerning the Public Officer of Tomorrow. Why are we in a situation where we are awarding so many scholarships, and yet still the productivity of our nation continues to fall? The Public Service is the largest employer. Therefore, whatever you do – we do – in the Public Service will drive the rest of the Private Sector and the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. If it is that people have no trust in our Public Officers, then they will have no trust in employees; if people feel that: “I cannot trust my public Officer. I don’t feel they are operating honestly with me...” Therein, we recognise we now have to re-distill the value system in our Public Officers. We also see that some of the behavioural competencies that we need are missing. While ministries would embark on the technical training and technical competencies of their Public Officers, what the Public Service Academy should be treating with is how to bring back those competencies to build the new Public Officer of the 21st century. Is that person technology savvy? Can that person engage the citizen effectively? Does that person understand value for money? For tax payers’ money? Does that person understand time management? Do these public officers understand that we need to have a continuous learning environment? What does “continuous improvement” mean to them? Are they trained in these areas? Do they understand communication? Team effort? Innovation and creativity? These are the kinds of competencies we have to bring back in every Public Officer. And we have to grow them from the bottom of the organisation right up to the top of the organisation, increasing the competencies in these areas.

Today, in February 2015, as we partner with the Management Institute of National Development (MIND) of Jamaica to develop the Strategic Planning process for the Public Service Academy for the next five years, we find ourselves at a fork in the road. We are 15 years into the 21st century, but the Trinidad and Tobago Public Service, and by extension, the Public Service Academy, continue to function and operate according to what was considered best practice in the mid-20th century. A harsh reality check, I know – but perhaps, a necessary one...

Each year there are about 40,000 public officers to be trained and the number is growing. In 2012 - 2013 for instance the Public Service Academy, this institution, was only able to train 1,205 officers in a limited range of new skills and competencies, or about 58 programmes in all. Last year, 2013 - 2014, one thousand and sixteen people received training in 63 areas. If we look at the growing numbers of persons needing training and the limited number who receive any at all, it is clear that we are going backwards instead of forwards. We are being swamped by our own incapacity and inability to manage the present and the future. If, as the architects and custodians of institutional change and transformation, we cannot transform or modernise our own institution, how can we inspire others to change, to transform and to lead? Unless we change ourselves, unless we change how we approach and conduct our own business, we will get nowhere and will transform no one.

We know what is required. We know the competencies which must be harnessed and encouraged in the new Public Officer who must now – and into the future – populate the Public Service: technology savvy, value-for-money, professionalism, creativity, innovation, risk-taking, adaptability and teamwork.

We are running out of time for our modernisation efforts. We run the risk of the Public Service’s Diamond Jubilee coming upon us without very much transformation taking place. To ensure this does not happen, we need the Public Service Academy to up the ante with its own internal transformation initiatives. The Academy must make that critical paradigm shift and take a quantum leap – embracing and exploiting the tools, techniques and technologies of the 21st century, in order to ensure it can do its part effectively to help produce and support the new Public Officer.



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That need was yesterday; not even today...

During the Icebreaker Session earlier this morning, my colleague Ms. Ramsarwan and I observed: “We hope that what is achieved out of today is something tangible...” Dr. Sutherland and I were discussing the cost of planning at this stage. In the 21st century, you can’t afford to get that perfect plan. The time you take to get the perfect plan, opportunities that are lost are so costly for our country and our citizens. Therefore, you may find that as we advance further into the 21st century, and because of the dynamics of the environment, the need to respond to those dynamics, and the fact that the dynamics change so rapidly, you have no other choice that while you are planning, you also are implementing and doing. In fact, there is a whole new Masters’ Programme launched in that area called “Strategic Implementation”, which teaches how to get that general plan done, and as you go along, how to fine tune it while you are implementing it.

The Public Service Academy must see itself as multi-dimensional – going beyond its physical location and in-person training options which can reach only a few at a time, to the virtual, multi-media world, which has been proven to reach multitudes almost simultaneously. In other words, no longer can the Academy think only in terms of getting the courses, teachers, students and seating together in one location. It must be beyond the classroom as we know it and look at the problem from virtual reality, exploring the different realities that education as an ongoing, never-ending and perpetual development process now occupies.

The good news is that ICTs – information and communications technologies – are here to help, to turn day into night and to provide 24/7 service and support. Every day, an increasing number of ICTs are emerging that increase our reach, build our capacity and provide new solutions to our problems. With these tools, we can reach 40,000 people a year or 80,000, or even 120,000 and beyond! And we would be able to do this in the shortest possible time and at minimum cost. We have nothing to lose but our mental chains of self-doubt and fear of technology.

E-learning and e-based learning can be the extension of hands and minds that we need to reach out to the thousands of public officers with new skill sets, new visions of the future and new opportunities to grow and develop. If we continue at our present pace of dealing with one in every thirty public servants per year, by 2022, instead of reaching the Diamond Standard, we probably will be back in the Bronze or Stone Age.

Is that one of the reasons that many outside of the Public Service Academy know nothing about the Public Service Academy? Because the PSA is not reaching wide enough, and with the breadth and depth, to our Public Officers? So almost immediately we know we have to employ technology to help us reach out to all Public Officers. I have spoken with many of them and they are expressing an urgent desire to be trained. They are ready to meet and to step up to the challenges.

We need to explore solutions to these issues which other countries have developed. Let us consider partnerships and alliances with countries like Singapore and Canada where the civil service has made that quantum leap; and leadership training institutions such as the Caribbean Leadership Programme, the Harvard Leadership Programme at which many of our PSs and Directors are being trained, and the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business, as well as Civil Service Colleges and Public Service Academies in other jurisdictions. We have access to excellent study tours. For example, the Civil Service College of Canada, and the Lee Kwan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore – they are ready to partner with us. We simply need to define where we want to go, in terms of those partnerships.



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There is light shining through the darkness, however. Our citizens, including our public officers, recognise the urgent need to transform the public service into a more efficient and citizen-centric organisation. For those of you here today, I must tell you how heartened we are by the responses of our Public Officers to the opportunities which will come with full implementation of G2D. They are ready. They just need the tools and the skills to rise to the challenge.

They know that the solution is to modernise the human resource function of the entire government, including the systems and processes for human resource development. I must add at this juncture that today's exercise cannot only be about how to develop training programmes for Public Officers. We could equip and develop them, and they would be raring to go, but if we put them in the wrong systems and they must continue to work with archaic processes, they cannot perform. It would be a case of pouring new wine into old bottles! We need those very Public Officers to learn how to change their own environment, revamp their own processes, improve their own systems, and to be part of that continuous improvement process. So even in that whole issue of developing the New Public Officer, we have to train that Public Officer to be the driver of the change that we need.

Indeed, we have seen in our pilot projects under the Diamond Standard Certification Programme that John and Jane Q Public not only are willing, but quite able to partner with Public Officers in an effort to bring about meaningful change in the quality of delivery of government services. In fact, this Diamond Standard, the flagship of the transformation, will provide the hallmark and the benchmark simultaneously for the future.

A few years ago, I tried to introduce a new approach to the Public Service Academy. I suggested that the learning here should be a three-step or a three-phase process in which the First Phase starts online. Thus, we would use technology to reach out to our Public Officers; the material they would use would be available online; and they would do their tutorials and online assessments online. They would have the freedom to complete this section of the training programme at their own pace, during their personal time. As such, there would be no need to go to Chaguaramas or any location to be able to get a grasp of the work to be done.

Based on the online assessment, the mark obtained would determine whether you are ready to go to the Second Phase, which would bring you to a classroom setting in which you work on a series of case studies and projects. The focus would be student-centred, active learning and the rationale here is to encourage networking among officers, and strengthen their team work skills and competencies. Officers from all areas of the Public Service would be brought together in this classroom setting, in order to take advantage of the natural synergies inherent in the tremendous diversity to be found among our Public Officers, namely professional disciplines, age, gender, culture, religion. Anywhere you go in the world, wherever diversity exists, there is innovation. That classroom environment allows you to build bonds, build teams and would inspire the development of a Community of Practice. Just a reminder, PSA is responsible for developing the Community of Practice principle, which has been agreed to by Cabinet. We have Communities of Practice for HR, IT, Monitoring and Evaluation, etcetera. That is the way the Public Service is moving, towards Communities of Practice. By having those teams, you start the Community of Practice which allows them to continue, after they leave the classroom, the sharing of new ideas and improvements. You now become the body responsible for improving in this particular area, setting new standards and continuous improvement of that particular area of study.

In the Third Phase, to internalise what you've learnt, you go back into your environment. You are appointed a Supervisor and you implement the project. Allow me to add here an important fact we learnt from the Lee Kwan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore. We discovered that one of the case-writing methodologies we are using right now at the PSA is a Business Model, and does not really apply to the



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Public Service. This is another area we wish to develop. From this type of Community of Practice, you would be able to develop the type of case-writing techniques you require for a public service academy.

Only after these three Phases are successfully completed would you be able to obtain your Certificate of Achievement in this particular area of study or training. If you think about it in terms of the ten competencies we have identified and the behaviours we are seeking for every Public Officer, then we are talking about building a rich Public Service, and the Service itself would become a continuous learning environment.

Thus, all these would help in planning, team-building, the development of communities of practice and better workplace applications. It has not gone very far in our system. This needs to change. I hope you would take the opportunity to discuss these issues while you are here on training, because it can be used as a pilot and help inform your own planning process going forward, since your strategic planning process does not come to an end for several months.

I am not saying this is the only approach or it is the be-all and end-all of training. I agree that there is no “cookie-cutter” approach to training. I agree there is no “one size fits all” methodology. I believe that we must have an open MIND – and this is why MIND is here working with us since we are not too proud to look for solutions and options, ideas and suggestions, from within our region and among our peers.

But the days of the old classroom setting have gone. The delivery systems have multiplied – not just a teacher with a whip, a piece of chalk or even a mouse. There are different and multiple delivery systems that provide options for education, especially adult learning. Right now, we are redefining this classroom and even questioning its effectiveness or the necessity of its traditional model.

As Shakespeare said in “As You Like It” any environment can be a learning environment and we can find:

“Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,

Sermons in stones, and good in everything...”

To me, this is the future of learning and our pathway to that future.

Our consultants and public service leaders need to critically analyse all the different variables and come up with a strategy that is innovative; processes that are engaging; and methodologies that are simple and effective. Unless we do this quickly and put them into practice immediately, the Public Service Academy will find itself relegated to being an obsolete paradigm, as opposed to the modern, state-of-the-art facility that we need it to be, as we journey towards excellence in service delivery, and a global model for best practices in public service modernisation.

I wish you all the best in your workshops. I know I have given you a tall order, but I am confident you are up to the challenge in achieving this.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I THANK YOU...

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