

AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND  
MANAGEMENT (AAPAM)



ASSOCIATION AFRICAINE POUR  
L'ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE  
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the dpsa

Department:  
Public Service and Administration  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and  
Management Sciences

Fakulteit Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Disaense tša Ekonomi le Taolo

## 7<sup>th</sup> Edition AAPAM/ DPSA / SPMA Research Seminar

### on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and African Union (AU) Agenda 2063

*Theme:*

Leveraging Sustainable Human Resource Management to Enhance Africa's  
State Resilience in Times of Crises

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023

**Venue:** Stellenbosch University, School of Public Leadership (Bellville,  
Cape Town – South Africa)



## INTRODUCTION

1. State capacity and capability building is undoubtedly central to the attainment of the Agenda 2063. The Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing Ukraine - Russia war have exposed countries to unprecedented value chains disruptions and risks. This onset of multiple crises has highlighted the importance of resilience as a mechanism for recovery and adaptation that can underpin the survival of the state in Africa.
2. As such, the theme of state resilience has been brought into sharp focus with researchers and practitioners alike keen to understand the implications of state resilience and how, in particular, African countries can and should absorb the tough shocks, from global incidents, that hit them, not in a linear, but in multi-coloured fashion.
3. Research has established that the capacity for resilience can be developed and managed. This implies that human resources (HR) professionals could and should facilitate the public sector effectively to analyse and respond to environmental conditions by communicating a strong and clear organizational purpose to encourage decision-making and action that is consistent with the country's core values. In this sense, public sector managers carry the important obligation to develop HR principles, policies, and practices that actively beef up state capacity for resilience in order for state functioning to remain sustainable in the face of a multitude of crises.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

4. The overlapping crises of the subsisting Covid-19 pandemic, the onset of the War in Ukraine and the resultant surge in food and fuel prices are painful reminders that governments need to be prepared to manage massive, unexpected shocks that rapidly unravel and assume an overwhelming burden for statecraft.
5. Lessons learned from the corrosive Covid-19 pandemic are instructive for policymakers to build, both soft and hardware, state capacity, put in place

systems that are adaptive and inclusive to effectively address both short-term shocks to the economy, and the longer-term trends that transform societal interface, including demographic trends, technological innovation, the impacts of climate change and climate action and generally global integration.

How African Countries commit to resilience and respond to a crisis may determine their level of success, which, in this context, relates to their capacity to bear the strain while still operating, pull through after the situation is over, and learn from the crisis situation they went through. If this is not done, and they simply emphasize business-as-usual, they may find themselves in a downward spiral, thereby undermining the well-being of society, as they do not address sustainability challenges.

6. The Covid-19 pandemic experience moved states to develop a multitude of policy interventions to achieve service delivery continuity and recovery. COVID-19 calls attention to the importance of resilient institutions to navigate this and other crises and support a sustainable recovery in developed and developing countries.

These interventions included, but were not limited to:

- a) Guaranteed minimum income support designed to protect individuals and households from adverse shocks,
- b) Regulatory reforms that gradually remove restrictions on firms' hiring and dismissal practices, and ultimately support the creation of formal jobs in the private sector and a reduction in informality;
- c) Enhanced coverage of and protection for vulnerable groups; and
- d) Scaled up digitalization for improved quality and quantity of service provision.

In all these frenetic actions to wade off the corrosive effects of the pandemic, sparse attention has been paid to re-tooling to capacitate the human resource component that is critical to state resilience and sustainability.

7. Sustainable human resource management (HRM), which builds on strategic HRM (SHRM), has been evolving for more than 15 years. Sustainable HRM is anchored around broad organisational goals in several areas, not just 'business' goals. Central to this approach is the link between HRM and sustainability. Sustainable HRM seeks to achieve positive economic, social, human, and environmental outcomes simultaneously, in the short term and the long term.
8. The 2030 and 2063 Agendas provide strategies, goals, activities, and management practices that human resource practitioners can apply to further sustainability outcomes. This link with sustainability has contributed to studies in areas very different to SHRM and required consideration of additional theories for insights into Sustainable HRM. The space and season are right on schedule to dedicate a discourse on deploying strategic HRM to achieve state resilience in times of a crisis.

## **THE ESSENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE**

9. While the construct of state resilience has some elements in common with organizational attributes such as flexibility, agility, and adaptability, there are also important distinguishing elements. Flexibility (the ability to change on relatively short notice and at low cost (Ghemawat & del Sol, 1998)), agility (the ability to develop and quickly apply nimble and dynamic competitive moves (McCann, 2004)), and adaptability (the ability to re-establish fit with the environment (Chakravarthy, 1982)) are all often associated with resilience. However, these organizational attributes reflect different origins and outcomes.
10. First, a need for resilience is triggered by an unexpected event. Flexibility and agility are often part of a firm's on-going repertoire of strategic capabilities leading to increased manoeuvrability. Second, resilience incorporates renewal, transformation, and dynamic creativity from the inside-out. Adaptability, in contrast, emphasizes the need for environmental fit from an outside-in perspective and often presumes a new, externally determined equilibrium is the

desired state. Third, while characteristics such as flexibility, adaptation, improvisation, and agility may contribute to an organization's capacity for resilience, none of these capabilities is sufficient on its own to achieve it. Finally, the limited empirical work examining resilience and other associated organizational attributes use different measures to operationalize the constructs (Crichton, Ramsay, & Kelly, 2009; Grote, Weichbrodt, Gunter, Zala-Mezo, & Kunzle, 2009; Jamrog et al., 2006; Somers, 2009) demonstrating that distinct phenomena are being examined.

## **THE STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE AND STATE RESILIENCE NEXUS**

11. Understandably, global crises create disruption, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in all organizations. People are the primary asset of any organization and help achieve their goals. Accordingly, to manage human resources sustainably, the organizational strategy review is an appropriate tool. HRM could and should play an important role as an intermediary in furthering societal and environmental sustainability outcomes.
12. The link between sustainability and HRM has the potential to transform the role of HRM. At a broad level the purpose of HRM is to manage people in such a way that the organisation furthers sustainability goals through a multi-stakeholder, multi-layered, collaborative approach (Stankeviciute and Savaneviciene 2018). To do this, HRM practitioners could be directly or indirectly involved in the process of collaboration at the national, regional, organisational and individual level.
13. Human resource reliability refers to the ability to anticipate and detect potential risks and problems, prevent disruptions in the performance of IT systems, maintain adequate performance, solve problems to promote effective performance and learn through experience.

14. The public sector manager's key responsibility is the ability to anticipate and detect potential risks and challenges that inhibit the state's capacity to achieve its goals, change in the management system to prevent disruption, restore the organization's performance to its natural state in case of disruption, and learn from mistakes. This level of flexibility promotes work motivation, job satisfaction, organizational values, commitment, and interaction, and improves the managers' abilities and interpersonal relationships.
15. The 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Research Seminar will demonstrate that to create the behavioural elements that support the development of resilience, desired for service delivery sustainability, it behoves public sector managers to devise unconventional, yet robust responses to unprecedented challenges, combining originality and initiative to capitalize on an immediate situation, sometimes following a dramatically different course of action from that which is the norm for the organization.
16. The 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Research Seminar will further show that the achievement of state resilience entails practicing repetitive, over-learned routines that provide the first response to any unexpected threat, and taking actions and making investments before they are needed to ensure that an organization is able to benefit from situations that emerge in a crisis.

## JUSTIFICATION FOR THE THEME

17. The Theme for the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Research Seminar is: ***“Leveraging sustainable human resource management to enhance Africa’s state resilience in times of crises”***. With the growing concern over global crises and the attendant social economic meltdown, research focusing on building resilience in the African public sector is critical. As the bulwark of state resilience, the public service deserves special attention to retool it through strategic human resource interventions that should shape it into an all-season apparatus that can survive

global shocks and keep the state machinery running to guarantee service delivery continuity during and post the crises.

18. It is trite that resilient organizations thrive despite experiencing conditions that are surprising, uncertain, often adverse, and usually unstable. The discourse on the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Research Seminar theme seeks to reinforce the persuasion that an organization's capacity for resilience is developed through strategically managing human resources to create competencies among core employees, that when aggregated at the organizational level, make it possible for states to achieve the ability to respond in a resilient manner when they experience severe shocks like the now active Covid-19 pandemic and the War in Ukraine.

## **SUB-THEMES**

19. The 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Research Seminar will be guided by the following sub-themes:

- a) Developing the Capacity Toolkit for Resilience through Strategic HRM which is complementary of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) Competence Principle;
- b) Sustainable HRM as a way of contributing to sustainability outcomes: A focus on Agendas 2063 and 2030 SDGs perspectives;
- c) Strengthening the theoretical linkage between HRM capacity and smart cities;
- d) Leadership development as the key anchor for State Resilience and sustenance;
- e) The role of 4IR in presenting multiple HRM capacity avenues for State resilience and sustainability;
- f) Deploying HRM as a tool for the intergenerational cooperation and sustainable service delivery continuity in time of crisis; Selected Country
- g) Case Studies.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR

20. The main objective of the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Research Seminar is to continue the dialogue discourse established at the six (6) previous seminars namely, in the main, bring together African practitioners and academicians, to encourage them to undertake research on selected topical cross cutting inter-disciplinary issues, dialogue and inform policy proposition in building state capacity and capability for the actualization of the twin goals of Agendas 2030 and 2063.

Other objectives are to:

- a) Provide a framework for policy position on building State Resilience through Strategic HRM;
- b) Demonstrate how sustainable HRM contributes to the realisation of Agendas 2063 and the 2030 SDGs outcomes;
- c) Showcase how holistic human resource management is a veritable tool for the intergenerational cooperation and sustainable business continuity in times of crises;
- d) Strengthen theoretical linkages between HRM capacity and smart cities;
- e) Demonstrate how HRM policies and practices within a strategic human resource management system influence individual attitudes and behaviours;
- f) Further develop leadership capacities to better anchor State Resilience;
- g) Unleash the enabling effect of the 4IR to achieve State Resilience and Sustainability

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

21. At the tail end of the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Research Seminar, delegates will come out with a new insight on;

- h) Developing a framework for policy position on building State Resilience through Strategic HRM;

- i) How sustainable HRM contributes to the realisation of Agendas 2063 and the 2030 SDGs outcomes;
- j) How holistic human resource management is a veritable tool for the intergenerational cooperation and sustainable business continuity in time of crisis;
- k) Strengthening theoretical linkages between HRM capacity and smart cities;
- l) How HRM policies and practices within a strategic human resource management system influence individual attitudes and behaviours;
- m) Developing leadership capacities to better anchor State Resilience;
- n) How to unleash the 4IR as enablers to achieve State resilience and sustainability.
- o) Strengthening human resource management at regional and local level in Africa through an Observatory dedicated to HRM.

## **Target Participants**

Participants will be drawn from the following categories:

- a) Public and Private Universities (Masters and PhD students across the continent);
- b) Public and Private Sector Practitioners;
- c) Academicians/ Scholars/ Researchers;
- d) Non-Governmental Organisations etc.

## **Seminar Methodology**

The Seminar will be held in a physical format. The preferred methodology shall consist mainly of the paper plenary presentations and discussions facilitated by selected experts/ speakers. Participants will have the opportunity to engage speakers in plenary discussions.

## **About the Hosting Institutions**

## **The African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM)**

The African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) is an international professional organization that promotes best practice, excellence and professionalism in public administration and management in Africa through research, publications, training, seminars, consultancy, conferences, and awards. AAPAM draws its membership from sectors including governments, corporate bodies, private sector, civil society, international organizations, individual members, and students. The Association provides its members with a platform for articulation and dissemination of ideas on capacity building and development of Africa. AAPAM operates mainly but not exclusively in Africa.

## **Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) - South Africa**

The mission of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) is to establish norms and standards to ensure that the state machinery functions optimally, and that such norms and standards are adhered to; implement interventions to maintain a compliant and functioning public service; promote an ethical public service through programs, systems, frameworks and structures that detect, prevent and combat corruption; and contribute towards improved public administration in Africa and internationally through dialogue and sharing of best practices. The Department is required to facilitate and support efforts that seek to, among others, improve service delivery quality and access; human resource management and development; business processes; systems and accountability management; anti-corruption and integrity; and effective public participation.

## **School of Public Management and Administration (SPMA) – University of Pretoria**

Domestic and global challenges demand that professionals be multidisciplinary in approach. The location of SPMA in the University of Pretoria (UP) Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences exposes students to a multidisciplinary education, allowing for cross-fertilization between fields and the holistic development of our graduates. However, over the past few years, the SPMA has

transformed itself into an entity that does more than just provide students with a tertiary qualification. Its programs extend beyond the confines of formal fulltime study programs, and it is currently the frontrunner in the presentation of short courses by an academic institution. Through the campus enterprise, Enterprises at UP, the SPMA can share the knowledge and experience of its academic staff with thousands of employees in the public sector.

## **Visa Requirements**

Delegates are expected to make their Visa arrangements early enough for more information kindly see the information sheet on <https://www.aapam.org>

## **Venue: South Africa – Cape Town**

***Registration Fees: Local delegates: USD 500***

***International delegates: USD 550***

**AAPAM A/C FCY 1103297694**

**Kenya Commercial Bank Milimani Branch**

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Those paying by bank transfer are expected to show evidence of payment on the day of the conference. Delegates may pay the equivalent of the participation fees indicated above in other convertible currencies such as the Euro, British Pound Sterling (GBP), Canadian Dollar (CND), and South African Rand. The equivalents of the participation fees in these currencies shall be indicated in a schedule that will be available at the registration desk.

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