

CHAPTER 6

Innovative recruitment and selection processes: a key factor for leveraging public sector performance with reference to Eastern Cape Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

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Introduction

Public services around the globe consider the development of new ideas and innovations for improved organisational performance paramount and inevitable (Moussa, McMurray & Muenjohn, 2018). Powerful forces like globalisation, economic competition that cuts across national borders, social and political upheavals, technological change, threats of terrorism, and a rapidly changing labour marketplace put enormous burdens on the public service to recruit and retain staff with knowledge and innovation skills (Avigna & Hays, 2004). In an increasingly competitive market, the public sector will have to explore enhanced and innovative recruitment and selection approaches and technologies. This is attributed to the intense global competition and rapid technological advancement during the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Hence, creating a more innovative public service organisation is critical

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for ensuring the effective performance of contemporary governments (Daglio, Gerson & Kitchen, 2015:12).

Most organisations, including some government departments, especially in Western Europe, have long appreciated and used e-recruitment (Puls, Video, 2017). On these grounds, there has been a growing interest in the pursuit of innovation in the public service, particularly in the Western world (OECD, 2017). However, in South Africa, it is not clear if the notion of innovative public service recruitment is a concept whose utility for improving public sector performance is appreciated (OECD, 2017). The contention of this chapter is that South Africa can vastly improve its recruitment process and, therefore, its public sector performance if it adopts the innovative approaches proposed here. Currently, there is underutilisation of these tools in government, despite their ubiquity in the OECD member countries. It is against this background that the study sought to establish how the creation of innovative recruitment and selection approaches would leverage the performance within the South African public sector in general and Eastern Cape Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (ECCOGTA) in particular.

This study, based on ECCOGTA as a unit of analysis, is of immense significance because it was envisaged to influence the development of a culture of continuous innovation and improvement in the quality of recruitment and selection. Again, the study could catalyse the capabilities of the unit of analysis and the public sector in general to constantly undertake reviews to either modify the existing processes and systems or undertake reviews to either modify the existing processes and systems or undertake innovative measures that introduce new recruitment and selection processes, structures, and systems to improve performance. One of the pillars of the recent National Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector (The NSG, 2023) is the tightening of pre-entry, recruitment, and selection requirements that will inform meritocratic appointments. While the framework puts more emphasis on the training of candidates to be appointed, it is mostly silent about the quality of officials to form

interview panels and the infusion of innovative methods and technology to circumvent the often-human element involved in selecting and appointing qualified candidates.

The chapter shares a study undertaken to develop a conceptual model for promoting innovation in the recruitment and selection processes for the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (ECCOGTA). The model is not restricted solely to ECCOGTA; it has the potential to be embraced by the entire South African public sector. This adoption extends beyond benefiting organisations in enhancing their performance, as the model also holds the capability to enhance the performance and productivity of staff.

Literature Review

A literature review (Rowley & Slacke, 2004) investigates and summarises the existing literature in a subject field. As Rowley and Slacke (2004) state, a range of information sources, such as published peer-reviewed journal articles and books are used to inform the research question and design. Considering the study's nature and the specific problem under investigation within a government department (ECCOGTA), as emphasised by Knopf (2006), the scarcity of scholarly literature addressing the problem prompted the selection of predominantly official documents for review.

Recruitment and selection in the context of the ECCOGTA

Recruitment and selection play a pivotal role in ensuring the effectiveness of the country's national strategies, such as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 of South Africa. The NDP is an umbrella tool that is part of the strategy that will lead to a situation where the citizens of South Africa will "live in a country which they have remade" (National Planning Commission (NPC), 2013).

In the public service, recruitment and selection practices are decentralised to individual government departments. These practices must be implemented within the framework

of applicable norms and standards based on the applicable legislation and regulated by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA, 2008). One of the important principles underlying recruitment and selection relates to the development of policy guidelines to give effect to national objectives and principles. The ECCOGTA adheres strictly to this principle, with the purpose to regulate recruitment processes and provide guidance and procedures on the recruitment of suitably qualified candidates in compliance with provisions of the South African employment law (ECCOGTA Recruitment Policy, 2017).

The Department's Recruitment, Selection and Onboarding Policy (RSOP, 2017/18) emphasises a number of inherent principles that are outlined in the Toolkit for Recruitment and Selection recommended by the Public Service Commission. These principles are:

1. The recruitment and selection process of the Department is a tool to attract and acquire superior competencies from inside and outside of the Public Service.
2. The authority to appoint employees resides with the Executive Authority of the Department or any delegated official in terms of Section 9 of the Public Service Act 1994 (as amended).
3. The recruitment process shall be handled with the purpose of acquiring the best competencies for the benefit of the Department and shall be consistent with the values of the Department.
4. The Department is an affirmative action employer and all advertisements for placement in the newspapers must indicate specific Employment Equity (EE) targets in line with the departmental EE Plan.
5. The recruitment and selection shall be conducted in an open, fair and transparent manner.
6. The recruitment process shall be inclusive of all relevant stakeholders.
7. All role-players are bound by this policy and shall adhere to all provisions of this policy.

8. This policy replaces any other departmental regulations on recruitment in the Department prior to the approval of this policy to the extent that such a departmental regulation is in conflict with this policy (The Department's Recruitment, Selection and Onboarding Policy (RSOP, 2017/18).

To have a better understanding of the concept of innovative recruitment and selection in the context of the ECCOGTA, it is imperative to grasp the environment in which the department is operating. Institutionally, the nerve centre for recruitment, the Human Resource Directorate, is located within the Chief Directorate: Corporate Services. Its main purpose is to render human resource management and administrative services and ensure compliance with recruitment and selection policies (ECCOGTA, 2018). Before exploring how the ECCOGTA conducts its recruitment and selection approaches, it is necessary to understand the strategic drive and principles pertaining to recruitment and selection in the public service.

The ECCOGTA recruitment and selection philosophy is in line with the basic values and principles of public administration, where public administration should be governed by the democratic values enshrined in Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. This includes the principle of broad representation of the South African people, with employment and human resource management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation (The NSG, 2020; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). In order to identify any possible innovative recruitment and selection initiatives, or lack thereof, and the extent of technology utilisation by the ECCOGTA, it is fitting that the discussion distinguishes between social and technological innovation.

The role of innovation

According to Howaldt, Domanski and Kaletka (2016), the notion of innovation has for many years been viewed from

the technological innovation paradigm relating to products and processes that were regarded as almost the only hope for societal or organisational development. Innovation research has long raised questions about whether the technology-oriented innovation paradigm that was shaped by industrial society is not becoming increasingly dysfunctional. In the recruitment and selection space, innovation has always been seen through the lens of technology (Howaldt *et al.*, 2016), and this view is shared by Sellers (2014), who calls technology-based recruitment automated recruitment.

Technology is not always efficacious in managing people issues (Sellers, 2014). As such, in terms of technology-based recruitment and selection, the ECCOGTA is still modest. For example, it advertises positions on its website, but positions are processed manually by expecting candidates to fill out the Z83 application forms (job application forms used by government departments in selecting a candidate for an advertised post) prescribed in the public service (DPSA, 2003). On the contrary, Howaldt, Kopp and Schwarz (2015) argue for a fundamental shift in the innovation paradigm towards social innovations, which are considered 'new ideas, services, and models that simultaneously meet social needs and create new collaborations and better solutions. In addition, the view held by Kaederabkova and Moghadam-Saman (2013) is that social innovations meet urgent social needs and, at the same time, create social interactions. As is known, innovation in recruitment and selection processes in the public service is not different from other sectors. As in every other sector, it often occurs as a pressing need to deliver improved services to citizens with increasingly higher expectations.

Thus, following the mission of the ECCOGTA as an organisation focused on citizens' priorities and delivering quality services that are both consistent and sustainable, there is no doubt that innovative recruitment and selection measures would enhance the quality of public service to the citizens of the province. The ECCOGTA, as reflected in its recruitment, selection, and onboarding policies, has not given much attention to technological innovation. However, it can

be regarded as subscribing to social innovation (Makgopela, 2023). The departmental executive authority has identified an unprecedented opportunity, through recruitment and selection approaches, to improve the lives of staff members by effectively supporting them through appropriate training and development services (ECCOGTA Recruitment Policy, 2017).

As part of its recruitment approach, the ECCOGTA has incorporated behavioural testing into selection processes and developed a culture of periodically training recruiting managers in these techniques (ECCOGTA Recruitment Policy, 2017). Notably, there is literature to the effect that innovative recruitment and selection is based not only on selecting the right skill but also on the right balance of skills, competencies, and diversity of gender, ethnicity, age, experience, and educational background (OECD, 2017). To this effect, the ECCOGTA believes in diversity and its recruitment and selection are therefore conducted in an open, fair, and transparent manner with an advertised post that does not unfairly discriminate against or prohibit any suitably qualified person or employee from applying (ECCOGTA Recruitment Policy, 2017).

As Makgopela (2023) has argued elsewhere, the ECCOGTA lacks technological innovation in recruitment and selection. However, many of the recruitment and selection approaches practiced subscribe to social innovation, which is a new paradigm of adding value to resolving societal problems. As such, there is a need for more systematic research and evaluation on both the central and local levels to enhance bottom-up innovation rather than centralised innovation activities (Tucker, 2014).. Furthermore, the ageing and experienced human resources and consideration of people with disabilities are some of the challenges faced when procuring quality and effective workers in a region such as the Eastern Cape Province where there is an oversupply of unskilled workers (Louw, 2013).

Methods and Data Collection

The study employed a mixed methods approach, a combination of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. It was anticipated that a mixed method design would strengthen the findings of the study and provide adequate validation by means of both deductive and inductive research methods (Burns & Bush, 2013). The mixed methods approach was considered the optimal and effective means to investigate the perspectives, experiences, and comprehension of public servants regarding the presence or absence of innovative recruitment and selection approaches. This is not posited as an absolute truth but rather as an endeavour to gather insights into innovative efforts, especially within the framework of the ECCOGTA.

For this specific study, a combination of sampling techniques was used, namely cluster, convenience, and quota sampling. These are all aligned with the mixed method research approach. Firstly, employees of the ECCOGTA were clustered according to salary levels in the public service and the three different clusters were executive management, senior management/directors, and deputy directors. Secondly, the respondents earmarked for interviews represented each of these clusters, and lastly, in line with quota sampling, the researcher had to ensure that the chosen sample had a fair knowledge and understanding, and recollection of the process followed when they were recruited into the organisation. One other distinct characteristic was their ability to comprehend the notion of innovation in recruitment as defined and explained in the request for participation in the research survey.

The primary data was collected using questionnaires and open-ended interview questions. Furthermore, document analysis and literature reviews as secondary instruments of data collection were used. The questionnaire was translated into an online survey using the open-source survey tool, LimeSurvey (<https://www.limesurvey.org>). Ultimately, a survey link was created to enable respondents to complete the

survey online, and it was forwarded electronically to potential respondents.

Discussion of Results

The following nine themes were identified from the responses gathered during the survey and interview schedules. Ultimately, the researcher identified convergence or similar patterns of ideas related to each other from these generated themes.

Understanding of the notion of innovation in the public service

The understanding and definitions of innovation presented in the existing scientific literature (Dziallasa & Blind, 2019) vary greatly from one another, and therefore their use in the study warrant clarification. Therefore, the examination of the perceived understanding of the notion of innovation through the analysis of the index score revealed relative differences in perception (Dziallas & Blind, 2019). From the study conducted on innovative recruitment and selection processes with reference to the ECCOGTA, it emerged that within the organisation, innovation is something that can be understood in many different ways (Makgopela, 2023).

On the contrary, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines public sector innovation as “finding new means or the novelty to achieve public ends and create public value for individuals and society” (OECD, 2017:14). Furthermore, innovation is defined as the development and implementation by a public service organisation of a new idea to create or improve public value and change its relationships with all the partners in the ecosystem (Chen, Walker & Sawhney, 2015). Therefore, innovation is also about the creation, improvement, and development of new ideas that will bring improvements, better organisational performance, and add value to the delivery of public services.

The fundamental question that arises is, ‘How can an organisation, which fails to reach a consensus on the

definition of an innovative organisation and the concept of innovation, effectively promote innovative recruitment and selection processes?’

Insights derived from the ECCOGTA study indicate that innovative recruitment and selection processes must transcend the conventional approaches employed in traditional public service. Instead, they should catalyse positive organisational change by ensuring the recruitment and selection of the most qualified candidates. It suffices to say that, from a performance management perspective, a shared understanding of the meaning of innovation will align all officials within the organisation and encourage them to embrace innovative practices.

ECCOGTA recruitment tools/strategies or approaches

Traditional recruitment and selection tools or approaches mainly used by the ECCOGTA are those provided for in the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) (2021); which are local, provincial, and national newspapers; and the ECCOGTA’s departmental website (Makgopela, 2023). These avenues are, in essence, largely formal and traditional (Nikolau, 2014). Conversely, the adoption of innovative or unconventional recruitment by organisations entails the use of recruitment and selection tools like social media, artificial intelligence, virtual reality or predictive recruitment and gamification.

Consequently, technology-based recruitment approaches such as social media (Makgopela, 2023) are perceived to be both novel and useful because they can be used by public service as an effective recruitment tool. While technology might bring innovation to the employee recruitment space, Sanchez, Navarro and Losada (2019:3) argue that “innovative recruitment and selection is not just about technology but a new way and process to approach candidates and to adapt to their behaviour”. Furthermore, Slavic, Bjekic, and Berber (2017) assert that innovative recruitment and selection involve a process

where organisations proactively seek and identify potential candidates, with effective communication, collaboration, or interaction between parties being a key facilitating factor.

Identification, definition and prioritisation of innovative recruitment and selection initiatives in the ECCOGTA

The study conducted on innovative recruitment and selection initiatives in the ECCOGTA revealed that there appears to be no identification or prioritisation of innovative recruitment and selection initiatives within the Department (Makgopela, 2023). Notably, selection decisions are only useful if there is a solid pool of high-quality candidates entering the system (Cable & Turban, 2001; Ryan & Delany, 2010). Unfortunately, in general, job candidates with innovation skills and knowledge may be particularly rare, and if there are, they may be less interested in joining the public sector (Torr, 2008). Thus, the recruitment of innovative employees in any organisation stands as an important factor not only for hiring but also for retaining the same talents.

The key question is (Hunter, Cushenbery & Friedrich, 2012): what do innovative employees want, and how are these qualities promoted in order to improve effective recruitment and selection of these employees? To increase innovative performance in work settings, most scholars (Hunter *et al.*, 2012) agree that organisations, such as the ECCOGTA need both an environment that is supportive of innovation and employees with high levels of creative potential. It therefore suffices to state that there was no innovation strategy in the ECCOGTA, because it can be construed that organisations with innovation strategies are more likely to be innovative on a number of indicators, including recruitment and selection, than those without innovation strategies. Consequently, the elements of organisational life that appeal to an innovative and technologically advanced workforce encompass, yet are not confined to, fostering a culture supportive of risk-taking, embracing a diversity of expertise, and prioritising long-term strategy and innovation (Dziallas & Blind, 2019; Hunter *et al.*, 2012).

Linkages between innovative recruitment and selection processes and organisational performance

Organisations that have embraced innovation as a business strategy, be it in their recruitment and selection approaches or business overall, are likely to perform much better than those that have not done so (Gamage, 2014). Available evidence indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between innovative recruitment and selection and the performance of the organisation (Hamza et al, 2021; Matolo, Iravo, & Waititu, 2019; Gamage, 2014).

From the study on innovative recruitment and selection initiatives in the ECCOGTA, the dominant perception was that the organisation was sometimes seen by citizens as being responsive to their needs, while the minimal perception was that the organisation always responded to citizens' needs. It must, however, be emphasised that these are mere participants' perceptions and not based on or backed by any research evidence. Nevertheless, an organisation like Google succeeded, in large part, by attracting high-level talents, that is, talent that was drawn to the wide variety of content expertise (Hunter et al., 2012).

Looking at the relationship between innovative recruitment and selection and organisational performance, the study at the ECCOGTA (Makgopela, 2023) indicated that applying innovative recruitment strategies would afford the organisation an opportunity to even attract those candidates who would not have been able to see the advertisement or were not interested in the position. In this context, the pivotal nature of a direct connection between innovative recruitment and selection and organisational performance cannot be overstated.

This aligns with Gamage's (2014) assertion that the initiation of organisational success or failure hinges on innovative recruitment and selection, considering that organisational performance is intricately linked to the individuals hired, and the criteria employed in recruitment and selection play a facilitating role in this dynamic. In this

regard, a direct relationship between innovative recruitment and selection and organisational performance becomes critical, and this is in line with the assertion by Gamage (2014) that innovative recruitment and selection is the beginning to either the success or failure of organisations as organisations' performance depends on the people employed and the recruitment and selection criteria will facilitate this. Thus, organisations without a direct relationship between innovative recruitment and selection and organisational performance fail to have the right people with the right skills at the right time and in the right positions (Makgopela, 2023).

It emerged from the study at the ECCOGTA on innovative recruitment and selection initiatives that employ virtual platforms within the public service, such as posting vacancies for positions on platforms and websites like INFO Desk.co.za and the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) website as per government policy guidelines when recruiting employees, affords government departments the opportunity to have a wider pool of job applicants (Makgopela, 2023). It can be derived that innovative approaches to recruitment and selection of employees might bring about the appointment of people with the required skills, knowledge, and competencies, which are likely to lead to organisational performance improvements. Therefore, the emphasis on recruitment of the best candidates is in line with the government's quest to build a meritocratic state where economic goods and political power are vested in people on the basis of talent, qualification and achievement rather than wealth or social class (Andrews, 2013).

Investments in innovation activities and the recruitment and selection of employees

One of the key indicators of an organisation having an innovative strategy as part of the overall strategy is a dedicated budget (Makgopela, 2023). As noted by Vigoda-Gadot, Shoham, Schwabsky and Ruvio (2008), budget cuts or poor allocation of funds can be considered as one of the barriers to innovation in the public service. Overall, innovation

funds or budgets do provide organisations opportunities to innovate (OECD, 2017). It appears that when organisations have innovation strategies this could be due to innovation being part of the organisational strategy through the national innovation agenda. Regarding the ECCOGTA, the perception of investments in innovation activities (Makgopela, 2023) suggests a dedicated budget allocation for fostering innovation. This allocation encompasses staff training, procurement of new equipment and tools, research for innovation, and the engagement of external experts to mentor and coach staff actively engaged in innovation.

The role of leadership in the creation of an innovation culture

According to the OECD (2017), leaders drive organisations, set goals, mobilise, allocate resources, and have the power to influence organisational structures and select innovative employees. Thus, without the support and commitment of top leadership, successful innovation is unlikely. In the case of the ECCOGTA, senior leadership, in this case executive leadership and senior management, were expected to create an enabling organisational environment for innovation and provide support to staff and teamwork (Makgopela, 2023).

The ECCOGTA's survey results showed that the senior managers believed that they were driving the innovation agenda through communication with staff and engagement in innovation activities, while the deputy directors indicated that they expected senior management to drive innovation (Makgopela, 2023). It may be concluded that senior management and deputy directors had a common view on who should lead the organisational innovation agenda. While both believed it was the domain of senior management, they were uncertain on whether or not it was done.

Building the culture of innovative enthusiasm within an organisation certainly takes time, but once it is established, culture can be an attractive recruitment tool for innovative talents (Hunter et al., 2012). Hence, it is sufficient to state

that fostering an innovation culture appears more achievable within departments or organisations where both line officials and management exhibit enthusiasm for new developments, ideas, and innovative service delivery approaches. In this regard, employees who try to do their work in a novel way get support from organisational leadership (Makgopela, 2023). As Hunter et al. (2012:13) wrote, “innovative individuals know that the more they become entrenched in one content area, the more they lose their ability to see original connections across content areas”. Thus, the desire for new experiences and information is nicely illustrated by Google, which often brings in experts from largely disparate content areas simply to expose their employees to new ways of thinking (Vise & Malseed, 2005).

On the contrary, in the case of the ECCOGTA, the study findings revealed that management in particular seldom seems to be excited about new developments or thinking in the area of innovative recruitment and selection approaches (Makgopela, 2023). Indeed, this corroborates the perception that leadership, as alluded to, must show stability in guiding innovation within organisations like the ECCOGTA. Creative individuals want to try new and different things, and if their most original ideas are stifled before they can be adequately explored, they will simply find another organisation that allows them that level of exploration (Berkun, 2007).

Along these lines, recruitment teams should keep in mind that innovative employees often want to test their ideas quickly and should stress the opportunities for rapid exploration in their marketing materials (Hunter et al., 2012). This is not to say that they want to succeed quickly, but that innovative talent is keenly aware of the frustrations inherent to innovation (Hunt et al., 2012). As such, organisations that embrace cross-collaboration and sharing both within and outside the organisation will be attractive to creative employees rather than those that do not allow employees to fail in trying to implement new or innovative ideas (Dziallas & Blind, 2019; Hunter et al., 2012). In this regard, Wang, Rode, Shi, Luo and Chen (2013) argue that innovation within the

public service will be flawed if there is no leadership to balance its efficiency.

The culture of innovation initiatives within the organisation

Organisational culture can be thought of as the unspoken rules and values that exist in the heads and hearts of all those who are part of the organisation (Makgopela, 2023). Further, as Makgopela (2023) states, it can only be sensed and is not written down in organisational policies, regulations, or even employees' handbooks. "An innovation-oriented organisational culture would mean that employees see themselves as potential innovators and expect that the time and effort they devote to innovation-oriented activities would be valued and rewarded" (OECD, 2017:61). In such an organisation, employees would expect to be given space and tools to come up with new ideas that would be taken seriously (Makgopela, 2023).

Generally, the survey results on innovative recruitment and selection initiatives at the ECCOGTA showed that there was no culture of innovation initiatives within the organisation (Makgopela, 2023). According to Makgopela (2023), this situation appears to be linked to diminished collaboration and trust, along with a fear of making mistakes. These cultural elements functioned as barriers, demotivating public servants with a need to innovate. It is worth noting that the cultural elements acting as barriers to public servants' innovation were, in a way, reinforced by other previously mentioned factors, such as resource availability and the intricate legal and regulatory environment of public service (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2008; Beneito, 2003). Resources in this sense refer to employees, technology, tangible assets (e.g., machinery, tools, and materials), and time spent with innovation (Beneito, 2003). All these are inputs related to the financial situation of a business, which organisations must invest in when intending to successfully create a culture of innovation for recruitment and selection initiatives.

Strategies to cultivate the culture of innovation within organisations with reference to the ECCOGTA

Organisational culture can be an enabling or limiting factor in the context of innovation implementation (Makgopela, 2023). As such, the human resource management (HRM) tools used in recruitment and selection need to be aligned with the existing organisational culture to be effective. The selection of strategies to cultivate the culture of innovation within organisations therefore requires careful consideration of organisational goals as well as a strong commitment by organisational leaders to continually integrate efforts among these groups of employees (Hunter et al., 2012). Also, these strategies employed to cultivate the culture of innovation within organisations require a work culture built on trust where people are able to share ideas, support each other and have a common understanding of the set of skills, knowledge and competencies required when recruiting employees (Makgopela, 2023). As the desire for innovative talent grows, however, this approach may increase in use and popularity within organisations (Hunter et al., 2012).

With regard to the research study on innovative recruitment and selection initiatives at the ECCOGTA, it is worth noting that a wide range of intriguing recommendations or suggestions were made. Those recommendations include, but are not limited to, organisations having a focused leadership that places emphasis on innovation; more training on the concept of innovation; the provision of timely feedback to junior staff on the work that they do; the implementation of innovative employee recruitment and selection in accordance to good national and international standards to target educated and competent people; embracing the philosophy of meritocracy' making resources and funding for innovation available; as well as the use of group or team-based innovation incentives and rewards (Makgopela, 2023). These were some of the strategies (Makgopela, 2023) mentioned as applicable to accentuate the culture of innovation within public service departments like the ECCOGTA.

According to Hunter et al. (2012), one of the strategies that organisational decision-makers can use to attract innovative talent is to provide elevated levels of autonomy on high-profile projects. In short, leaders should be aware that innovative employees may possess heightened sensitivity to micromanagement, making increased levels of autonomy a sought-after asset for fostering an innovative workforce. Other strategies that leaders and managers may effectively use to cultivate a culture of innovation within organisations are support for risk-taking, encouragement of diversity of expertise, and public recognition of innovative efforts by leaders in their organisations (Hunter et al., 2019). In fact, rewarding innovative attempts can convey the sentiment that innovation and creativity are important and valued aspects (Mumford & Hunter, 2005). Thus, extrinsic recognition is an important factor in facilitating a climate that is attractive to individuals who want to engage in innovative work (Hunter et al. 2012).

One point that should also be borne in mind is that pay is not a singular driving mechanism for attracting innovative talent (Hunter et al., 2019). Therefore, Amabile and Mueller (2008) argue that an excessive focus on external rewards, such as monetary compensation, can impede innovation. They contend that recruiting employees motivated by factors beyond monetary gains is crucial, as an exclusive emphasis on financial incentives may undermine long-term innovation and innovative performance. This suggests that the relationship between innovative recruitment and selection approaches and organisational performance is mitigated by organisational development practices that support innovation use (Makgopela, 2023). Essentially, the fundamental strategies for cultivating a culture of innovation within organisations involve leadership that prioritises innovation; fostering collaboration between government departments and external innovation bodies; promoting a culture of innovation among both staff and management; and advocating for the effective management of knowledge within the department.

Identified diffusion tools or methods that are critical aspects of inter-organisational connectedness and are enablers of innovation in the ECCOGTA

The diffusion of innovation can be viewed as the process that occurs as people adopt a new idea, product, service, practice, philosophy, or even an initiative that has to be implemented and have a positive impact on reaching the goals of the organisation (Lundblad, 2003). Against this background, the existence of tools and methods, which are important aspects of internal connectedness, can be a game changer in encouraging innovation within the organisation.

In the case of ECCOGTA, the intranet, emails, newsletters, internal events like symposiums for innovation hosted by the department, and forums formed to discuss specific organisational issues like those driving the transformation agenda are the most tools listed as enablers of innovation. According to the study conducted by Mamane on tools for effective internal communications, the intranet and emails were also perceived by employees as having a short time and distance coverage and therefore more likely to foster a culture of communication than tools like events and forums that seldom took place (Mamane, 2013). In turn, this corroborates the survey results of the study conducted on innovative recruitment and selection initiatives at the ECCOGTA. As already mentioned organisations that embrace cross-collaboration and sharing both within and outside the organisation will be attractive to innovative employees (Hunter et al., 2012). Thus, internal connectedness is important because most ideas sourced both internally and externally can be communicated, and the sharing of ideas can also be improved within the organisation (Makgopela, 2023).

ECCOGTA, for instance, has the capability to tap into best practices sourced from external entities or fellow public service departments such as the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) and DPSA, both key players in driving innovation within South Africa's public service landscape. Consequently, individuals or organisations exposed to such

innovations - particularly those perceived to offer tangible benefits such as financial gains, time savings, reduced resource expenditure, enhanced effectiveness, simplicity, or ease of implementation - are inclined to adopt them, contingent upon the visibility of resulting outcomes (Dearing and Cox, 2018). It could be concluded that external connectedness is important to support innovation because the majority of ideas were sourced externally. However, there was no evidence to support this assertion. Ultimately, the research findings and literature review informed an innovative conceptual framework illustrated in the figure below, which could potentially act as a catalyst in illustrating the causal relationship between innovative recruitment and selection methods and enhanced organisational performance within the public sector.

This model is a by-product of the literature review and theoretical research, and thus empirical evaluation may be essential to monitor and assess the potential, practical application of the model. As such, the constructs emanating from research findings served as the building blocks for the development of an innovative conceptual framework. These constructs - the macro-, micro-, and technological environments, along with key stakeholders - were pinpointed as enabling factors facilitating the development of innovative recruitment and selection processes.

In terms of the proposed model for innovative recruitment and selection approaches, the appointment of a skilled, qualified, and committed workforce is possible, and innovation can be introduced and sustained in the public sector. As a result, a skilled, qualified, and committed workforce is identified as one of the critical success factors that may lead to improved and sustainable organisational performance. Thus, the innovative culture embedded within the organisation, which will be embraced by available skilled and qualified employees, will ultimately contribute to improved organisational performance.

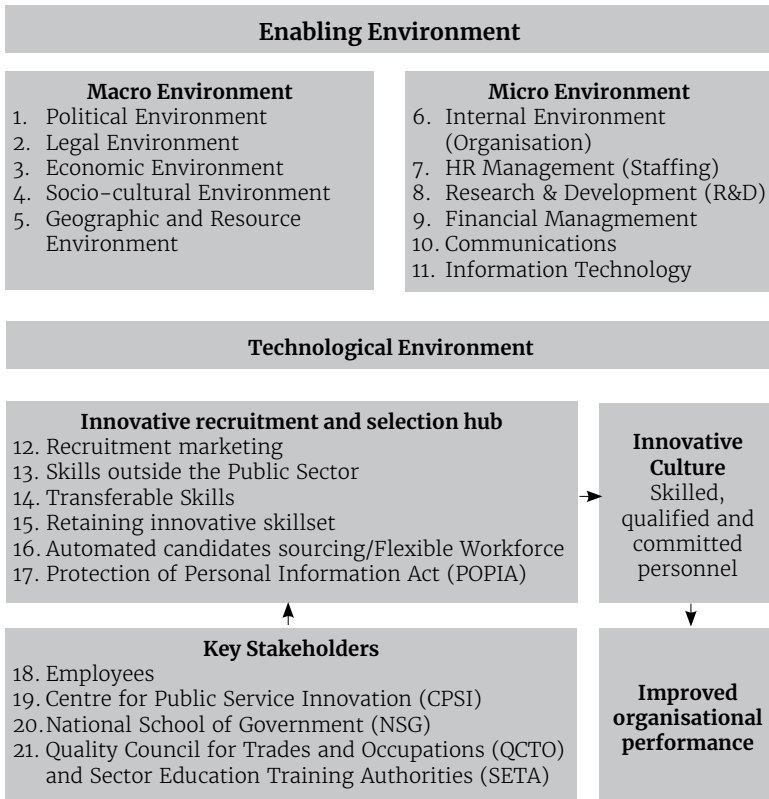


Figure 6.1: A Model for innovative recruitment and selection to improve organisational performance

Therefore, the constructs that emanated from research findings and served as the building blocks for an innovative conceptual framework developed are the macro-micro-environmental factors and include an innovative recruitment hub, key stakeholders, and innovative, skilled, qualified, and committed personnel. It is envisaged that with the appropriate implementation of the proposed model, organisational performance relating to innovative recruitment and selection within the ECCOGTA and other government departments can be realised.

Conclusion

The main objective of the study was to identify any possible innovative selection and recruitment initiatives or lack thereof in the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (ECCOGTA) and develop an innovative conceptual framework that depicts a causal relationship between innovative recruitment and selection approaches and improved organisational performance across the public sector.

The study embraced pragmatism as a research paradigm utilising a mixed-methodological design for the purpose of strengthening the research findings and for the provision of adequate validation by means of both deductive and inductive research methods. The study adopted the use of interviews and questionnaires as methods of collecting data. A semi-structured face-to-face interview schedule was used. To obtain the relevant data, non-probability sampling entailing the application of judgemental sampling was used to draw and interview personnel at the ECCOGTA offices.

The key findings of the study indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between innovative recruitment and selection and the performance of organisations. In addition, innovative recruitment and selection have a positive effect on customer satisfaction. The study makes some recommendations that since the proposed framework was premised on research conducted at the ECCOGTA, a provincial government. Thus, the proposed model for innovative recruitment and selection developed from the findings of the study by Makgopela (2023) is perceived as a significant contribution to the discipline of public management and it is suggested for adoption by public sector organisations in South Africa and abroad. It is envisaged that the model would be beneficial to explore the linkages between innovative recruitment and selection of appointed staff and their influence and effectiveness in terms of employee and organisational performance.

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