

## **THE QUEST FOR AUTONOMY, SURVIVAL AND REVIVAL**

Most MDIs in the region were, until recently, departments or units or divisions in the Ministry of Public Service or Personnel. The management of human and financial resources was the responsibility of a permanent secretary, who was the accounting officer. The Director of an MDI was accountable to the permanent secretary. The recruitment and promotion of staff were controlled by the ministry which often did not have the expertise to select trainers or consultants at the Institute. All purchases, including the purchase of a fax machine, had to be approved by the Permanent Secretary. There was, therefore, little delegation of responsibility to the Head of the MDI as all routine tasks and decisions were referred upwards. As a result, the Permanent Secretary was over-burdened with responsibilities and operational duties, leaving little time for substantive training functions. The paucity of appropriate resources, facilities and infrastructure for executive training contributed to the deterioration of standards at the Institute, resulting in negative attitudes towards training for managers as a whole. The recruitment of inappropriate staff led to the design of poor curricula which were not based on the identification of the needs of the state.

Because of bureaucratic procedures and practices, hierarchical reporting structures, deteriorating infrastructure facilities, under-funding, under-staffing and being under-rated, the original image and importance of the MDI declined tremendously. Consequently, Institutes were unable to provide the required services or to function adequately.

An evaluation of the role of MDIs revealed that if their performance was to improve they had to extricate themselves from the bureaucratic procedures and re-examine the structures, the co-ordinating relationship and, above all, the control by the parent or responsible ministry of public service or personnel or human resources.

Civil service structures inherited from the colonial administration had many attributes that rendered MDIs unsuitable for the challenges of modern management. For instance, civil service posts were filled by administrators without adequate professional qualifications, excessively dependent on seniority rather than merit for promotion with negative implications for morale and efficiency of the staff.

The need for change in the status and direction of MDIs was facilitated by the nature and type of civil service reforms which can be broken into three:

1. The first generation of reforms related to the needs and demands of sovereignty with major thrust on localisation, Africanisation or indigenisation.
2. The second type of reforms was the results of Civil Service Review Commissions which stressed the need for the reform of policy-making and strategic institutions.
3. The third type of reforms was those related to Structural Adjustment Programmes which, in some instances, focused on the downsizing or right-sizing of the civil service (Nti 1996).

The result of achieving an autonomous status in some countries had negative implications. Most of the information in government was regarded as confidential and could not be made available to independent organisations such as MDIs. In still other countries, there was jealousy of the improved salaries and conditions of service for employees of public enterprises by the mainstream civil service. Some ministries preferred to send their staff abroad for management training rather than referring them to the local institute. Such managerial behaviour contributed to the marginalisation of MDIs.