A CALL TO ACTION: ESTABLISHING THE SOUTH SUDAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE ™

CRITICAL NEED

The statistics are well known to anyone who works in development or public policy in South Sudan: less then a third of the adult population is literate, fifty-one percent are living below the poverty line, economic and health indicators are in the bottom quartile of nations, and the country has very little infrastructure.

Although not the exclusive domain of government, solving the above challenges will require effective government leadership -- and effective public servants. Building a cadre of professional public servants is essential to the long-term success of the country. In addition to the technical skills they bring to the job (for example, medical skills in the Ministry of Health, engineering skills in the Ministry of Transport, Roads, and Bridges) those working in government need strong leadership and management skills, regardless of the sector in which they work.

FROM THE FRAGMENTED TO THE STRATEGIC

Currently, there are only a few management training programs within and for government, and they are fragmented. Even fewer training programs exist for NGO and IO staff – although they do much of the country's development work. Moreover, many partners/funders are keen to invest in programs that develop public servants, but there is no shared vision for what that means. A more strategic approach is required.

PROPOSED: THE SOUTH SUDAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

I propose the creation of the *South Sudan School of Public Service (SSSPS)* to build a new generation of public servants, while at the same time improving the skills of those currently serving in government. In addition to government, SSSPS should support the staff of both non-governmental and international organizations.

There are a number of options vis-à-vis housing the *School of Public Service*. It could be housed at one of the existing universities in Juba (the University of Juba or the Catholic University of South Sudan), or it could be established as a stand-alone institution. Regardless of where it is housed, SSSPS needs to be self-sustaining, using a mix of tuition, revenue-generating "special programs," fundraising, and long-term endowments.

SUGGESTED OPERATING PRINCIPLES

In addition to being self-sustainable, I propose the following principles guide the work of the school:

- **Flexible**. SSSPS needs to offer courses in a variety of ways to meet the needs of students and partners. In addition to semester-long courses for full-time students, SSSPS should offer week-long intensive courses, as well as evening and weekend programs for partner organizations and part-time students. To meet the needs of state and local governments, courses should also be offered periodically in the ten states and through distance learning.

- **Relevant**. Guided by experience, vision, and the needs of its stakeholders, SSSPS must keep courses relevant. They should include a mix of theory **and** practice, with a heavy dose of applied exercises.
- **Collaborative**. SSSPS should foster a wide network of partners and closely collaborate with government, NGOs, IOs, the private sector, and academia.
- **Excellent**. SSSPS programs should be held to high standards. They should be regularly evaluated using students and partner feedback, and they should be regularly refreshed drawing on emerging research and effective practices**.**

POSSIBLE PROGRAMS

I believe SSSPS should focus on three primary groups: future leaders, current leaders, and thought- leaders (see picture below). In addition to offering a 2-year masters degree, SSSPS should allow students to take single courses for a course certificate. Upon the completion of five courses, students can be awarded a certification/diploma. I envision at least two such certifications one in Leadership, the other in Development Management.   SSSPS should also offer mid-career and executive-level programs for students who are already employed. Whenever possible, these programs should be given in partnership with government ministries, legislatures, NGOs, and IOs at their offices, through distance-learning, or at the school's campus. SSSPS should also work with these partners to provide internships for students earning their degrees. Many lecturers from international universities, as well as practitioners, are interested in working in South Sudan. Eventually, SSSPS can facilitate these requests through a Visiting Scholars / Visiting Practitioners Program. It can also promote thought-leadership through a world-class Research Center.

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOUTH SUDAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
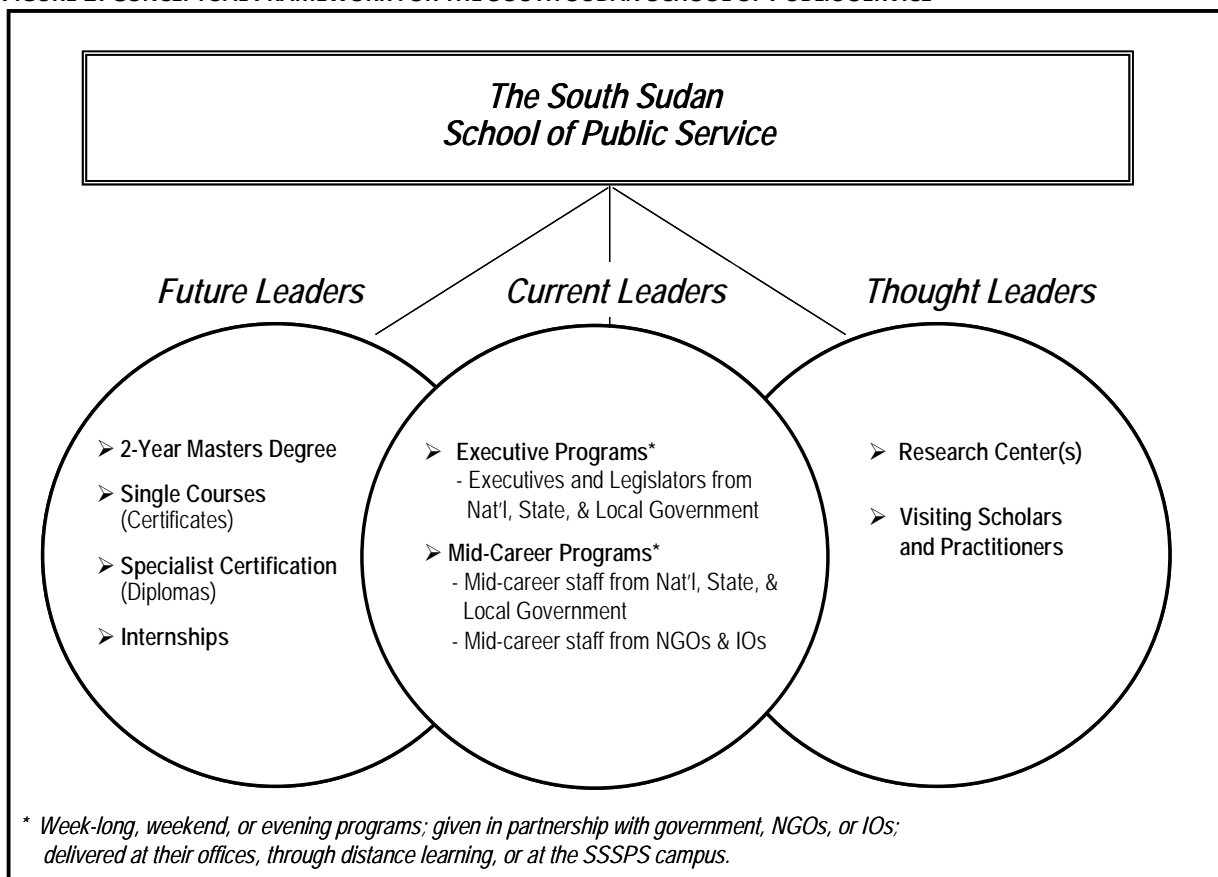
PROPOSED COURSES

Based on research, hands-on experience, and scores of interviews with both practitioners and academics, I propose the following preliminary list of courses. As noted above, these courses should be part of a Masters

degree program, but they should also be available to government organizations, NGOs, and IOs as week-long, weekend, or evening programs. On-site instruction and a robust distance-learning component will be essential for officials working at the state and local level. Each course should incorporate a range of instructional approaches, including case studies and practical exercises.

MPS 101 Introduction to Development
This course gives students a comprehensive overview of development, particularly in fragile states. It is organized around the following six endstates: security, rule-of-law, good governance, sustainable economy, social well-being, and sound infrastructure. The course introduces a strategic framework students can use to plan and implement development programs. It also provides a toolkit of resources, as well as a set of critical leadership responsibilities for those leading development efforts.

MPS 102 Leadership Fundamentals
Students in this course study the fundamentals of leadership by studying notable leaders of the past. Areas of inquiry include: character; courage; emotional intelligence; asking tough questions; mobilizing for action; and overcoming adversity.

MPS 103 Strategic Planning and Budgeting
In this course, students learn how to develop a 3-5 year strategic plan and associated budget. The focus is on how to collect key data to inform planning, as well as how to set outcome goals with cascading objectives and strategies. There are also modules on performance measurement and converting strategic plans to operating plans and budgets.

MPS 104 Fiscal Management in the Public Sector
Whether with a Ministry, payam, or NGO, sound fiscal management is essential. In addition to learning the fundamentals of budgeting, accounting, and financial management in the public sector, this course covers the financial policies and processes currently being used by the Government of South Sudan. Other topics include: performance-based budgeting, activity-based costing, cost accounting, and capital budgeting.

MPS 105 Conflict Management
Often sectarian conflicts hamper development efforts. Individuals working with or for developing countries need to acquire a conflict management toolkit. This course explores the tools that make up that toolkit, including conflict analysis, conflict mapping, conflict mitigation planning, mediation, and negotiation.

MPS 106 Procurement and Contracting Fundamentals
This course is designed for managers at all levels, not just logisticians and contracting officers. By the end of the course, students will have a good understanding of procurement best practices, as well as the skills they need to plan procurements, manage risks, write specifications/terms of reference, run competitions, monitor performance, manage contract modifications, and handle procurement disputes.

MPS 107 Managing People and Teams
This course provides practical techniques (and tools) that managers can use to build high-performing teams. Topics include: recruiting and hiring; goal-setting; performance appraisals; incentives systems; HR record-keeping; team-building; and professional development programs.

MPS 108 Project Design and Management
Students learn about all the phases of project management in this course (initiating, planning, implementing, monitoring, and closing projects). Specific topics include managing: scope, schedules, budgets, evaluations, project teams, stakeholders, risks, and procurements. Students also learn about donor requirements; results frameworks; work breakdown structures; Gantt charts; and the contract modification process.

MPS 109 Ethics and Public Service
Through case studies and small group exercises, this course examines ethical decision-making, codes-of-conduct, and the importance of transparency in public service.

MPS 110 Communications
This course covers key communications techniques including: business writing, public speaking, briefings and presentations, and report-writing.   Other topics include body language, one-on-one communications, active listening, communication styles assessments, and communicating with customers/constituents.

MPS ENG (optional)
An optional "English-booster" course will be available to students who need to improve their written and spoken English. Topics include grammar, punctuation, and syntax. The primary instructional method for this course will be conversation and writing exercises.

MPS 201 Policy Analysis
This course provides students with a toolkit for analyzing, formulating, and advocating public policy. Students learn from cases involving both advanced and developing countries.

MPS 202 Building Local Capacity: Advising, Training, and Mentoring
The role of development professionals is often to build local capacity -- to teach not to do. In this course students develop the skills they need to build local capacity: to mentor, to advise, to build relationships, to obtain buy-in for reform, to design and conduct training programs, and to understand and manage partner expectations.

MPS 203 Quantitative Analysis and Public Policy
Developing countries are in particular need of leaders who understand and can employ quantitative tools. This class introduces students to a set of quantitative tools that are commonly used to inform public policy. Topics include: descriptive statistics, basic probability, conditional probability, Bayes' rule, decision-making under uncertainty, sampling design, statistical inference, and hypothesis testing. The course also introduces students a to computer software used in analyzing quantitative data.

MPS 204 Working Group Management
Successful organizations understand the value of cross-department working groups, particularly when it comes to planning and problem-solving. During this course, students learn how to lead a working group (e.g., a commission, board, task force). Specifically, they learn how to create charters, plan meetings, and manage meetings. They also develop presentation skills with an emphasis on briefings and formal presentations. Finally, the course includes an intensive module on the roles and skills of a facilitator.

MPS 205 Program Evaluation
Through this course, students develop the skills they need to design and run monitoring & evaluation (M&E) systems. Specifically, they learn how to frame goals and corresponding indicators; use logic models; develop theories of change; collect data; analyze data; and report results.

MPS 206 Leading Development
This course covers the functions that are critical to successful leadership in fragile states. Topics include: building unity of effort; integrated planning; securing resources; building legitimacy; deploying effective strategic communications; addressing drivers of conflict; collecting and using information; building capacity; and managing stakeholders.

MPS 207 Public Institutions
This course is designed for both current and future public sector leaders. It provides an in-depth treatment of the three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. Students learn about the structures, staffing, authorities, and responsibilities (both shared and distinct) of each branch. Centralized and decentralized models of governance are also studied, as is the relationship between national, state, and payam governments.

SPECIALIZED COURSES

Eventually, I suggest SSSPS also develop courses focused on more specialized skills. These courses should be designed to supplement the technical training students received as undergraduates. For example, a government lawyer with a law degree may benefit from supplemental training to understand the challenges of building the rule-of-law in a developing country, or a ministry engineer may need supplemental training on how to oversee government construction projects. Specialized courses could be offered in the following areas:

- Security Sector Development
- Governance and Public Administration
- Infrastructure Development
- Legal Development / The Rule of Law
- Economic Development
- Social Development (e.g., education, healthcare, reconciliation)

CONCLUSION

A vast amount of money is being invested in South Sudan's development without a robust cadre of professional public servants to administer it. The mission of the South Sudan School of Public Service will be to help build that cadre of professionals. There is no time to waste. But the vision for this project goes beyond South Sudan. All of the countries in the region, and indeed the continent, need capable public servants. I challenge South Sudan's leaders - from all sectors - to work together to build Africa's preeminent school of public service in South Sudan.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patricia Powers Thomson currently teaches at the University of Juba and the Catholic University of South Sudan. She has over 25 years of international development experience, including service in the military, government, NGO, and private sectors. She has served as the Chief Operating Officer of Relief International, Executive Vice President of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and Senior Governance Advisor with the State Department in Iraq. Thomson also spent 10 years working in the private sector as an Associate Partner with PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting where she advised a range of clients in the United States and abroad. She served four years in the U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps, and earned a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Public Policy from Harvard University. She can be reached at *PatriciaPowersThomson@yahoo.com*.

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