



REIMAGINING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT : THE CHAIRMAN'S
PUBLIC LECTURE CIRCUIT ON CO-CREATING A FUTURE READY
PUBLIC SERVICE



INTRODUCTION

The Chairman's Public Lecture Circuit is a Public Service Commission (PSC) initiative established in 2024 to cultivate a national brain trust and foster meaningful dialogue across all levels of society. By forging strong institutional partnerships with institutes of higher learning, the initiative deepens collective understanding in support of Zimbabwe's national developmental priorities. Between 2024 and 2025, the Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr Vincent Hungwe, delivered lectures at thirteen (13) universities, each tailored to the institution's strategic focus specifically, how to produce graduates fit for purpose in the Public Service. Beyond knowledge dissemination, the lecture series serves as a catalytic platform for relationship-building among academia, policy institutions, development partners and the broader public sector ecosystem, advancing shared understanding on human capital development, talent management and the future readiness of Zimbabwe's public service. This publication summarises those engagements and the key thematic issues emphasised.

These engagements have underscored the strategic value of partnerships in strengthening the national human capital base. By convening thought leaders, practitioners and institutional actors, the Lecture Circuit has illuminated the imperative for coordinated investment in skills development, leadership pipelines, innovation systems and institutional capability, key enablers for a competent, ethical and high-performing public service. In this regard, the PSC has positioned itself not merely as a regulator of public employment, but as a convener of national dialogue on talent stewardship and public sector renewal.

Critically, the Lecture Circuit affirms the PSC's constitutional mandate to promote efficiency, integrity and effectiveness within the Public Service. By leading inclusive national dialogue, the PSC is exercising its convening authority to bridge policy, practice and generational perspectives, thereby fostering consensus around reform priorities and development trajectories aligned to Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2).

With foundational relationships now established at a nominal level, the strategic imperative is to transition from episodic engagement to structured collaboration. The next phase requires the institutionalisation of dialogue through formal frameworks, thematic roundtables and joint working platforms focused on human capital development, talent mobility, research and innovation, and leadership development. Such mechanisms would enable co-creation of solutions, translation of ideas into actionable programmes and acceleration of impact across the public service.

In advancing this agenda, the PSC is well positioned to leverage these partnerships to deepen policy coherence, mobilise intellectual capital and align stakeholder contributions towards measurable outcomes. Structured engagement frameworks emanating from the Lecture Circuit will therefore serve as strategic instruments to fast-track Vision 2030 aspirations and enhance the efficacy of NDS2 through a capable, agile and future-ready public service.

The Content Development and Management Department



Center, General Manager Mr Amos Wutawunashe, 2nd from Right, Manager Content Development, Ms Benhilda Musakwa and Content Developers, Advocacy Officers and Librarians.

Behind every successful public lecture lies not just a single speaker, but a dedicated engine of coordination, creativity and precision. At the heart of this initiative, advocacy serves as the major driving force championing the vision of bridging the gap between education and governance as well as pushing for systemic change through sustained engagement. The Content Development and Management Department embodied this advocacy-driven mission, shepherding the concept from its earliest inception through every subsequent stage. From initial research and lecture drafting to rigorous editing, logistical planning, on-the-ground preparations, post-event reporting and finally this publication, the team worked seamlessly to transform vision into reality. It is their unwavering commitment, attention to detail and collaborative spirit, fueled by a passion for advocacy that ensured the lecture's message was not only delivered but also documented and preserved for continued impact. This publication stands as a testament to their indispensable role behind the scenes.

COMMON TRENDS ACROSS ALL LECTURES

The Shared Foundations

Before examining what made each university's lecture distinctive, it is essential to understand what united them. Despite differences in theme, audience and institutional mandate, every lecture in this series rested on a common set of concerns, theories and aspirations. This chapter presents those common trends offering a synthetic view of the national conversation before diving into its local variations.

The Primacy of Innovation as a Survival Imperative

The most consistent message across all twelve lectures was that innovation is not a luxury or an abstract ideal but a survival imperative for Zimbabwe's public service. Every speaker, regardless of university or disciplinary background, argued that the traditional bureaucratic model, hierarchical, rule-bound and reactive is no longer adequate to meet the challenges of globalisation, rapid technological change and rising citizen expectations. The lectures did not present innovation as a disruption to be managed but as a new operating system for governance. Speakers repeatedly emphasised that the public service cannot afford to wait for certainty before acting; the world is changing too quickly. This sense of urgency was palpable in every venue, from the military precision of the Zimbabwe National Defense University to the open, dialogic spaces of the Women's University in Africa. What varied was not the diagnosis but the prescription: each institution offered its own vision of what innovation should look like in practice.

The Reframing of the Public Service Commission

A second common trend was the deliberate and consistent reframing of the Public Service Commission's role. Across all twelve lectures, the PSC was presented not as a distant regulatory body or a bureaucratic bottleneck but as a strategic partner in national development. Speakers took care to explain the PSC's constitutional mandate which focuses on recruitment, human capital development, performance management and ethical oversight, but then went further, arguing that the PSC's most important function is to anticipate the skills and competencies Zimbabwe will need five, ten or fifteen years into the future. This reframing was received differently across audiences. At technical universities like Chinhoyi and NUST, students were surprised to learn that the PSC is interested in digital governance and artificial intelligence. At more traditionally focused institutions like Lupane State, the audience appreciated the PSC's willingness to engage with agriculture as a public service. But everywhere, the message was the same: the PSC is not your enemy; it is your partner in building a public service that works for all citizens.

The Indispensable Role of Higher Education

No lecture questioned whether universities should be involved in public service transformation. That assumption was taken as given. Instead, the debate centred on how universi-

ties should contribute. The common position that emerged was that universities are not merely suppliers of graduates to the public service but innovation hubs, research partners and ethical conscience. Speakers argued that the traditional model of that universities teach, students graduate, the public service hires, is linear and outdated. What Zimbabwe needs is a circular model: universities and public service co-design curricula, co-create research agendas and co-supervise internships. Several lectures cited the Education 5.0 framework as the appropriate policy vehicle for this transformation, though implementation gaps were acknowledged. The common thread was that higher education cannot remain in an ivory tower while the public service struggles on the ground. The two must be braided together.

Ethical Leadership as Non-Negotiable Foundation

Every lecture, without exception, emphasised that innovation without ethics is not progress but danger. This theme appeared in various formulations. At Great Zimbabwe University, it was framed as Human Value Theory, the idea that technical skills must be anchored in integrity. At Solusi University, it was presented as vocational calling with the public service as a moral endeavour. At the Zimbabwe National Defense University, it was expressed as patriotism and professional competence. But the underlying message was consistent: citizens will not trust an innovative public service if they suspect it is corrupt, self-serving, or opaque. Speakers repeatedly stressed that accountability, transparency and meritocracy are not optional extras to be addressed after innovation is achieved. They are the soil in which innovation must grow. Several lectures noted with concern that public trust in institutions has eroded over recent decades and argued that rebuilding that trust is as important as upgrading technology or streamlining processes.

The Digital Divide as a Policy Choice

Another common trend was the recognition that technology, left to itself, tends to deepen existing inequalities. The digital divide was mentioned in almost every lecture, though with varying degrees of emphasis. Zimbabwe Open University, given its distance learning mandate, gave this theme the most sustained attention, but even institutions focused on mining engineering or agriculture acknowledged that connectivity and digital literacy are not evenly distributed across Zimbabwe's urban, peri-urban and rural spaces. The common argument was that the digital divide is not a technical problem awaiting a technical solution; it is a policy choice. Governments can choose to invest in infrastructure that reaches marginalised communities. They can choose to design digital services that work on low-end smartphones or even through USSD interfaces. They can choose to provide offline alternatives for citizens who are not yet connected. The lectures argued that inclusive design is possible but requires deliberate, funded commitment. Without that commitment, digital transformation will create a two-tier public service: fast, convenient services for the connected few and slow, frustrating services for everyone else.

The Importance of Measurable Outcomes

While the lectures were rich in vision and aspiration, a common concern expressed by speakers and audience members alike, was the need for measurable outcomes. How will we know if innovation is working? What metrics will tell us that public service is improving? Speakers proposed various indicators: reduced wait times, increased citizen satisfaction scores, higher rates of digital service adoption, lower error rates in administrative processes and improved employee engagement among public servants. Some lectures went further, calling for randomised controlled trials of new service delivery models or longitudinal studies tracking graduate outcomes. The common position was that innovation without measurement is theatre. The PSC, several speakers argued, should develop a Public Service Innovation Metrics Framework that allows for consistent tracking across ministries and over time. Without such a framework, it will be impossible to know which innovations are working, which are failing, and which are merely performative.

The Student as Co-Creator, Not Passive Recipient

Finally, a common trend across all lectures was the active role assigned to students. Speakers consistently addressed students not as passive recipients of knowledge but as future leaders, innovators and nation-builders. Students were encouraged to ask hard questions, to challenge assumptions, to propose solutions and to hold institutions accountable. The lecture formats themselves reflected this philosophy: every session included extended question-and-answer periods, and several universities reported that student questions were the most memorable and challenging parts of the event. At Midlands State, a student's question about internship-to-employment pipelines led to a policy commitment. At Lupane State, a student's personal story about farming parents reshaped the discussion of agricultural extension services. The common message was that students are not waiting to become contributors; they are already contributors. The role of universities and the PSC is to recognise that fact and create spaces like these public lectures where student voices can be heard and acted upon.

DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS BY UNIVERSITY

Gwanda State University



Commissioner, Prof, C.T. Khombe (Representing The Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) & GSU Vice Chancellor, Prof, D.Z. Moyo at the Inaugural Chairman's Public Lecture @ Gwanda University.

The inaugural lecture of the entire series took place at Gwanda State University, an institution established in 2016 and spanning two campuses: an 87-acre site along the Bulawayo-Beitbridge Highway and an additional location at Epoch Mine in Filabusi. The university's mandate reflects its location in Matabeleland South, specialising in animal and veterinary sciences, irrigation engineering and management, mining engineering, environmental engineering and ecosystem restoration. This context shaped a lecture that was foundational in nature, focused less on sector-specific innovations and more on the constitutional and moral case for public service transformation. Commissioner, Prof Khombe spent considerable time clarifying the PSC's constitutional mandate, not as a technical exercise but as a necessary grounding for everything that followed. The theoretical framework was unusually rich, drawing on Disruptive Innovation Theory, Social Contract Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, Nation-Building Theory and Collaborative Governance Theory. The lecture's most distinctive contribution was the proposal to establish innovation hubs within universities' physical spaces where students, public servants and private sector partners could experiment with solutions to governance challenges. This idea, first articulated at Gwanda, would recur throughout the series. The lecture also emphasised that disruption is not something to fear but something to embrace, provided it is guided by ethical leadership. A memorable moment occurred when a student asked how to bring disruptive ideas without being seen as a troublemaker; Comm, Prof Khombe's response highlighted that the PSC is actively seeking constructive disruptors. The lecture concluded that innovation is the lifeblood of progress and that the partnership between the PSC and universities is the

Zimbabwe Open University



The Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe (centre), Commissioner, Prof C.T. Khombe (right) & ZOU Vice Chancellor, Prof, P.H. Gundani (left) at the Zimbabwe Open University Public Lecture

The lecture at Zimbabwe Open University took as its theme the relationship between modernisation, agility and the digital divide. Given ZOU's distinctive mandate as an open and distance learning institution, Dr Hungwe was able to draw on lived experience: ZOU's students are working adults, parents and citizens who have chosen flexible education precisely because traditional models do not fit their lives. This perspective infused the entire lecture. Dr Hungwe introduced Digital Determination Theory the idea that technological advancements fundamentally shape what is possible in public service but immediately added the caveat that technology alone is neutral. What matters is the ethical framework within which it is deployed. The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its sustained attention to the digital divide. Unlike other lectures that mentioned the divide in passing, ZOU made it central, arguing that innovation that reaches only urban, connected, wealthy citizens is not transformation but a deepening of inequality. He also introduced Actor-Network Theory to highlight the changing relationships between humans and technology in public service delivery, as well as New Public Management Theory to stress performance measurement and citizen-centric approaches. Dr Hungwe argued that digital transformation need not leave behind those without gadgets, but only if universal access is treated as a policy commitment rather than merely a technical problem underscoring that modernisation must be guided by ethical governance, transparency and accountability to ensure public service reforms remain beneficial and inclusive for everyone.

Bindura University of Science Education



Commissioner, L. Mavima (Representing the Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a public lecture at BUSE

Bindura University of Science Education, as its name suggests, is an institution grounded in the natural and applied sciences. The lecture leaned into this identity, connecting science and technology directly to sustainable development goals while other lectures discussed innovation more broadly. Commissioner Mavima argued that innovation in public service cannot be abstract, it must be anchored in measurable outcomes such as food security, public health and environmental management. The theoretical framework included Disruptive Innovation Theory, Social Contract Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, Nation-Building Theory and Collaborative Governance Theory, applied through a scientific lens. The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its emphasis on continuous learning and adaptability as core competencies for public servants. It pointed out that the public servant of 2030 will need to relearn and unlearn repeatedly throughout their career and that universities must therefore teach how to learn, not just what to know. The plenary session acknowledged that traditional recruitment methods like interviews and written exams poorly assess adaptability, prompting a commitment to reform, while emphasising that the PSC must leverage public servants' creativity, equip graduates with a lifelong learning mindset alongside technical skills and foster innovation through collaboration between public service and educational institutions.

Lupane State University



Deputy Chairperson of the Public Service Commission, Dr N. Ndiweni, (Representing the Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a public lecture at Lupane State University

The theme for this lecture was agriculture, research and innovation as catalysts for economic growth, with the provocative sub-title "Understanding Agriculture as a Public Service." The lecture reframed farming not as a private commercial activity but as a public good requiring coordinated action from researchers, extension officers, policymakers and farmers themselves. The theoretical framework drew on Innovation Systems Theory, which focuses on the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders in driving innovation, highlighting the interdependence between farmers, researchers, policymakers and academic institutions. Agricultural Innovation Theory addressed the role of innovation in enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability, while Human Capital Theory viewed students as economic drivers. The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its application of these theories to Zimbabwe's specific agricultural context. Dr Ndiweni argued that productivity gains come not from single breakthroughs but from interdependence: a drought-resistant seed is useless without storage facilities, storage is useless without market access and market access is useless without price stability. The public service is the institution that connects these dots. An effective public service is one served by visibly present public servants who are present in the dry seasons, not just the harvest seasons. This underscored the lecture's central insight that agriculture, research and innovation are fundamental to economic growth and societal advancement.

Midlands State University



Commissioner, Prof. C.T. Khombe (Representing The Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a Public Lecture at Midlands State University.

The Midlands State University's session was a practical, applied and shifted focus from institutions to individuals. The theme was "From Campus to Contribution: Empowering University Graduates for Public Service through PSC Led Skills Development". Commissioner Khombe did not spend time on grand theories but instead walked the audience through specific skills that public service employers report graduates lack: critical thinking, emotional intelligence, communication across different institutions and adaptability. The theoretical framework was anchored in Human Capital Theory, emphasising education and training as crucial investments, Systems Theory for understanding interconnections between universities and public service and Public Value Theory for focusing on the role of public institutions in generating value for citizens. The lecture's most distinctive contribution was the proposal for structured graduate internships not unpaid busywork but rotational programmes across ministries with mentorship and assessment. An effective public service is one where internships are designed to lead directly to jobs not asking graduates to serve coffee, but to serve Zimbabwe, while addressing technological advancements such as artificial intelligence through digital literacy programmes that maintain a human-centred focus, calling on students to begin developing employability skills immediately to enhance their readiness for public service roles.

Chinhoyi University of Technology



Commissioner, Dr M. S. Mombeshora (Representing The Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a lecture at Chinhoyi University.

Chinhoyi University of Technology's lecture, titled "Leveraging Technology and Entrepreneurial Skills for Enhanced Public Service Delivery: The Public Sector Perspective," was notable for its use of case studies. Dr Mombeshora did not speak only in generalities but presented concrete examples from Rwanda (digital land registry), Estonia (e-residency) and Kenya (mobile-first health payments), then asked the provocative question: Why not Zimbabwe? The theoretical framework was extensive, including Disruptive Innovation Theory, Schumpeter's Innovation Theory (emphasising creative destruction), the Diffusion of Innovations Theory by Everett Rogers, Public Value Theory and New Public Management. The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its emphasis on entrepreneurial thinking within public service, defined as treating citizens as customers not in a commercial sense but in a respect-for-time sense. Why should a citizen queue for hours when a smartphone could accomplish the same task in minutes? An effective public service embraces calculated risk, documented and supported by rapid feedback loops, rejecting both recklessness and paralysis. It addresses the digital divide by ensuring technology enhances accessibility and equipping students with the digital competencies necessary for the public sector, ultimately integrating entrepreneurial skills and technology into service delivery as a pathway to achieving Vision 2030.

Zimbabwe National Defense University



Commissioner, Prof. C.T. Khombe (Representing The Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a Public Lecture at ZNDU.

The theme was "Creating an Enduring National Paradigm: The Strategic Nexus between the PSC and Universities in Advancing Patriotism, Security and Nation-Building Excellence." The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its redefinition of national security. The speaker argued that security is not only about borders and battalions but includes cyber resilience, social harmony, economic stability and crucially public trust in institutions. The theoretical framework drew on Social Contract Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, Nation-Building Theory, Collaborative Governance Theory and a Security Sector Governance Framework that positioned university-PSC collaboration as essential for ethical conduct and strategic oversight. The lecture also redefined patriotism, arguing that it is not mere sentiment but professional competence. A patriot public servant does not merely wave a flag; they deliver services efficiently, honestly and with respect for citizens. This contributes to an effective public service which recognises that patriotism is both taught through its history and principles and caught through experience, when a citizen appreciates a service. This understanding underpins the lecture's conclusion that the partnership between the PSC and ZNDU is a cornerstone for advancing national patriotism, security and development excellence, aiming for a resilient future driven by shared values and goals.

Great Zimbabwe University



The Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe, delivering a public lecture at The Great Zimbabwe University

The Great Zimbabwe University brought a distinctive perspective to the lecture series. The theme was "Harmonising University Heritage-Based Education with the Public Service Human Capital Priorities: Building a Skilled and Adaptive Public Service Workforce." The lecture asked a provocative question: What can the past teach us about the future of public service? Dr Hungwe argued that a public servant who understands Zimbabwe's history both the good and the difficult is better equipped to serve its citizens. The theoretical framework included Human Capital Theory, the Theory of Action (emphasising the tangible link between intentions and practical outcomes) and Human Value Theory (focusing on the significance of ethics and values in shaping individual behaviour and systemic transformation). The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its application of Human Value Theory to public service reform. Dr Hungwe argued that a corrupt public servant with a PhD is more dangerous than an honest one with basic qualifications. It was noted that in previous decades, public service was seen as a noble calling, but today many graduates view it as a fallback option "The nobility has not disappeared. It is buried under cynicism. Our job is to excavate it." The lecture also emphasised the PSC's role in workforce planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, and performance management, all viewed through the lens of heritage education. The conclusion highlighted that the future of public service depends on cultivating a skilled and principled workforce, with universities acting as catalysts for national renewal.

Women's University in Africa



Deputy Chairperson of the Public Service Commission, Dr N. Ndiweni, (Representing the Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a public lecture at Women's University in Africa

The Women's University in Africa lecture brought a perspective that had been missing from previous sessions: a deliberate, sustained focus on gender. The theme was "Navigating Skills Change: Building Resilient Human Capital for a Modernised Society," and the lecture introduced the concept of the "scholar-mother." The speaker noted that many women at the university balance academic work with parenting responsibilities and rather than viewing this as a handicap, the lecture reframed it as an asset. The skills developed through motherhood, multitasking, emotional intelligence and crisis management are directly transferable to public service. The theoretical framework included Self-Determination Theory (emphasising autonomy, competence and relatedness for motivation and resilience), Socio-Technical Systems Theory (highlighting the interaction between people and technology), and a distinctive concept called Sociotechnical Gender Bias, which addresses the biases embedded in technology and systems. The lecture's most distinctive contribution was the argument that technology is not neutral; it embeds biases and if public service digitisation ignores women's needs, it will reproduce inequality. An effective public service recognises that accommodating realities such as a student missing class due to a sick child is not special treatment but smart workforce design and this principle extends to integrating robust mental health and substance abuse support, particularly for women balancing academic and family responsibilities within public service human capital policies. The lecture reinforced that students are not just future employees but leaders shaping a modernised Zimbabwe.

Africa University



Commissioner, R. Mukogo, (Representing the Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a public lecture at Africa University)

The Africa University's lecture brought a continental and diaspora perspective to the series. The theme was "Bridging the Knowledge Gap, The Contribution of Higher and Tertiary Education in Enhancing Human Capital for Modern Governance in an Evolving Civil Service." The lecture was notable for its emphasis on brain drain and brain circulation. Commissioner Mukogo did not deny that many talented Zimbabweans work abroad but argued that the goal should not be to erect walls but to create pathways for knowledge to flow back. The theoretical framework included Human Capital Theory (every graduate as an investment in national development), the Theory of Action (academic knowledge must translate into actionable results) and Human Value Theory (ethical values such as integrity and servant leadership are essential for governance). The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its detailed exposition of Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 framework, which adds innovation and industrialisation to the traditional university functions of teaching, research and community engagement. The discussion emphasised that while the proposed framework represents the right approach, its success depends on effective implementation, universities should be evaluated not by enrolment figures, but by the real-world problems they help solve. A key point made was that artificial intelligence will not simply replace public servants; rather, it will displace those who resist learning new skills while empowering those who embrace continuous learning. The central question is not AI versus humans, but humans with AI versus humans without. The talk concluded with a broad call to action for all stakeholders, students, educators and public service leaders to collaborate in closing the knowledge gap between academic training and governance practice.

Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences



Commissioner, Ambassador, J. Manzou (Representing the Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a Public Lecture at MSUAS

The lecture at Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences was notable for its attention to applied outcomes not theory but practice. The theme was "Empowering Future Innovators: Harnessing Modern Science, Sustainable Development and Employability in Zimbabwe." The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its explicit connection between innovation and social challenges, particularly drug and substance abuse. Commissioner Manzou argued that universities cannot ignore the well-being of students; mental health is human capital. The theoretical framework included Human Capital Theory, Public Value Theory, Disruptive Innovation Theory, and New Public Governance, which focuses on collaborative approaches to solving public challenges involving multiple stakeholders. The lecture emphasised that the PSC's mandate includes overseeing human capital development and ensuring that public servants are equipped with the skills necessary to meet modern governance challenges. A student shared a personal story of recovering from addiction and asked how the public service could better support young people in similar situations; the speaker promised to raise the issue with relevant ministries. The lecture also stressed the importance of addressing the digital divide to ensure all citizens have access to public services and called for equipping students with digital skills to enhance their employability and public service effectiveness. The conclusion underscored the urgent need for harnessing technology and innovation to build an effective public service in Zimbabwe, with the commitment to innovation, competence and ethical governance as crucial for achieving Vision 2030.

National University of Science Technology



Commissioner, Prof. C.T. Khombe (Representing The Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a Public Lecture at NUST

NUST, as a science and technology institution, was the natural home for the most technologically ambitious lecture of the series. The theme was "Integrating Digital Governance and AI in Co-Creating a Smart Public Service." The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its three-part vision of a smart public service: anticipatory, frictionless and human-centred. An anticipatory public service uses data to predict problems before they arise, such as predicting drought zones before crop failure. A frictionless public service reduces administrative bottlenecks so that no citizen has to submit the same document twice. A human-centred public service automates routine tasks so that human public servants can focus on empathy, judgment and complex problem-solving. The theoretical framework included the Digital Government Maturity Model (explaining the progression of public service digitalisation), the Technology Acceptance Model (emphasising the importance of designing intuitive technologies that people can easily adopt), and Socio-Technical Systems Theory (highlighting the need for balance between technological systems and social values). The discussion addressed concerns about whether the country currently has the necessary infrastructure for AI-driven governance. Commissioner Khombe acknowledged that, in many areas, it does not yet exist but emphasised that infrastructure follows vision, not the other way around. The priority, therefore, is to build a clear vision first, with the confidence that infrastructure will develop in response. The lecture also highlighted the importance of retaining and attracting local talent to prevent brain drain, arguing that by fostering a supportive environment for innovation such as technology parks and global partnerships the country can position itself as a hub for digital talent and ethical AI governance. The talk concluded with a bold vision for a smart public service, urging all stakeholders to take action in integrating digital innovation while keeping citizen well-being at the core.

Solusi University



Deputy Chairperson of the Public Service Commission, Dr N. Ndiweni, (Representing the Chairman to Service Commissions, Dr V. Hungwe) delivering a public lecture at Solusi University

The Solusi University lecture was the last in the series, serving as both a conclusion and a call to action. The theme was "Forging a Future-Ready Public Servant for Zimbabwe: Innovation, Competence and Equity in the Digital Age." As a private university with a religious foundation, Solusi brought a perspective on values that had been implicit in earlier lectures but now became explicit. Dr Ndiweni spoke of public service as vocation not merely employment but a calling. The theoretical framework included Human Capital Theory, Public Value Theory, Disruptive Innovation Theory, and New Public Governance. The lecture's most distinctive contribution was its insistence that equity must accompany innovation. She argued that a digital transformation that benefits only urban, wealthy, educated citizens is not progress but a new form of exclusion. Dr Ndiweni invited the audience to imagine Zimbabwe in 2030 the target year for its national development vision, asking what kind of public servant would be needed to serve that future. The answer given was that those public servants are already present, sitting in the room; the question is whether they will be adequately prepared. The lecture further stressed that ethical leadership must serve as the foundation for innovation, with accountability and transparency essential to maintaining public trust. Students were encouraged to see themselves as future leaders capable of applying their education to drive change within the public service, harnessing their potential to become problem-solvers and innovators. The discussion concluded by underscoring the critical role of innovation and entrepreneurial skills in transforming public service delivery, emphasising that collaboration between the Public Service Commission and educational institutions is vital to developing a workforce ready to meet modern challenges.

SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What the Lectures Together Reveal

Reading across all twelve lectures, several patterns emerge that no single institution captured alone. The first is that innovation in public service is not primarily a technical challenge but a human one. Again and again, speakers returned to the need for mindset shifts, ethical grounding and emotional intelligence. Technology is an enabler, not the solution. The second pattern is that the PSC has successfully reframed its identity. At the beginning of the lecture series, many students and faculty viewed the Commission as a distant bureaucratic entity. By the end, audiences understood it as a strategic partner in national development. The third pattern is that universities are eager for this partnership. Every institution welcomed the lecture series enthusiastically and expressed interest in deeper collaboration, from curriculum co-design to joint research.

At the same time, the lectures revealed persistent gaps. Few speakers offered specific metrics for measuring innovation outcomes. Citizen feedback loops mechanisms for ordinary Zimbabweans to shape public service reform were mentioned but not developed. Sustainable funding for innovation hubs and training programmes remained largely unaddressed. And while the digital divide was acknowledged, the specific challenges of rural public service delivery staffing, infrastructure, connectivity deserved more attention than they received.

These gaps are not failures of the lecture series but opportunities for the next phase of the dialogue. The public conversation that began at Gwanda State University and concluded at Solusi University was never intended to be the final word. It was, as the epilogue will argue, only the beginning.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the common trends identified across all lectures and the distinctive contributions of each institution, the following recommendations are offered.

For the Public Service Commission, the priority actions are: establishing a national innovation fund to seed university-based innovation hubs; developing a Public Service Innovation Metrics Framework to track both process improvements and citizen outcomes; creating structured, paid graduate internships across all ministries; mandating digital literacy training for all public servants by 2027; and integrating mental health and wellness programmes into public service human capital strategy.

For universities, the priority actions are: co-designing curricula with PSC input through joint advisory committees; establishing or strengthening innovation hubs with dedicated physical space, staffing and industry partnerships; embedding ethics, patriotism and civic responsibility into all programmes as threads running through the curriculum; and developing faculty exchange programmes with public service ministries.

For students and graduates, the lectures offered a clear message: view yourselves as nation-builders, not job-seekers; cultivate employability skills alongside technical qualifications; engage with innovation hubs and internship opportunities proactively; and hold institutions accountable when they fail to prepare you adequately.

For policymakers, the recommendations are: allocate dedicated budget lines for university-PSC partnership initiatives; mandate annual public lectures as a permanent feature of Zimbabwe's academic calendar; and support legislative amendments to enable agile hiring and retention practices in public service, as current civil service regulations were designed for a different era.

EPILOGUE: THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

We began this compendium with a question asked at Gwanda State University: Can a public service bureaucracy truly embrace innovation? After visiting twelve universities, listening to dozens of speakers, and reading hundreds of participant questions, the answer is yes—but not alone, not automatically, and not quickly.

The public service can embrace innovation if it partners with universities. It can transform if it commits to ethical leadership alongside technical change. It can meet the demands of 2030 if it starts the work today. The lectures in this compendium are not the end of the conversation. They are the beginning. The ideas are on the table. The partnerships are forming. The students are watching. Now comes the hard part: implementation.

The Chairman's Public Lecture Circuit in Pictures



Solusi University



Manicaland University of Applied Sciences (MSUAS)



Manicaland University of Applied Sciences (MSUAS)



Gwanda State University

The Chairman's Public Lecture Circuit in Pictures



National University of Science & Techonology



Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences



Womens' University in Africa



Zimbabwe National Defence University



Chinhoyi University of Technology



Lupane State University

The Chairman's Public Lecture Circuit in Pictures



Midlands State University



Bindura University of Science Education

Appendix A: Glossary of Key Terms

Disruptive Innovation – Innovations that create new markets and displace established ways of doing things, as distinguished from sustaining innovation which merely improves existing products or services.

Education 5.0 – Zimbabwe's framework adding innovation and industrialisation to the traditional university functions of teaching, research, and community engagement.

Human Capital Theory – The idea that education and training are investments that increase individual and national productivity.

Innovation Hub – A physical or virtual space where students, faculty, public servants and private sector partners experiment with solutions to governance challenges.

Social Contract – The mutual obligations between the state and its citizens, including the provision of services in exchange for compliance with laws and payment of taxes.

Socio-Technical Systems – The recognition that technology and social structures must be designed together, not separately, because each shapes the other.

Appendix B: Lecture Dates and Venues

University	Date
Gwanda State University	23 August 2024 (Inaugural)
Zimbabwe Open University	30 September 2024
Bindura University of Science Education	25 September 2024
Lupane State University	14 October 2024
Midlands State University	9 May 2025
Chinhoyi University of Technology	19 May 2025
Zimbabwe National Defence University	28 July 2025
Great Zimbabwe University	22 August 2025
Women's University in Africa	29 September 2025
Africa University	5 September 2025
Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences	21 October 2025
National University of Science and Technology	17 November 2025