Analysis of the The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper) published in 1997 by the South African Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

Course: Public Policy Analysis & Management (MPA 812) Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Tapscott Submitted by: Benita Rose, Student No. 3698792 Submission Date: 25 September 2016

### Introduction

The South African Public Service has long been characterized by a number of inherited problems that have been recognized obstacles in effective public service delivery. Among numerous others, these include inequitable distribution of public services, lack of accountability and transparency, poorly paid and unmotivated staff, lack of a professional work ethic, and low productivity in terms of delivering services that meet the needs of the people. (Schwella 2001:373)

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper) published in 1997 had the purpose of dealing with transforming South African Public Service Delivery in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

### Theory of public sector management that informed the approach adopted

Evidently driven by the quest for democratization, which characterizes the post-Apartheid era after 1994, policymakers involved in the formulation of Batho Pele promote the adoption of public service standards that can be benchmarked against international standards. This indicates the orientation towards Western countries in the attempt to democratize the country. (DPSA 1997:10) Alongside with this goes the focus on costeffectiveness and the reduction of public expenditures, which points to a neoliberal approach to economic policy. (Ncube and Shime et. al. 2012:9)

Predominant elements of public policy theories and models that can explain and describe the adoption of the White Paper are Political Systems Theory and Institutional Theory.

Political Systems Theory, which focuses on how governments respond to society's demands on them, produce outputs that change how the system is organized in order to overcome negative changes of environment (e.g. a crisis). It emphasizes the larger political, social, economic and cultural context in which policy decisions are made to reach certain policy outcomes. Additionally, the theory develops systemic models to understand how different institutions and actors interrelate. (Kraft & Furlong 2010:71) Institutional Theory focuses on the formal and legal aspects of government structure and decision making rules. It stresses the importance of procedural rules and government structures and how they influence policy actors and therefore public policy-making and its outcomes. (Kraft & Furlong 2010:69)

In the context of the adoption of the Batho Pele White Paper, the political system responded to the publics "legitimate expectation" (DPSA 1997:10) to receive adequate public services from the government, as it had previously been outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994. The RDP White Paper highlighted that effective service delivery is a basic need of all citizens. (JMC 2003:5) This basic need was later enshrined in the Constitution. Another basis for the introduction of Batho Pele was the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy in 1996, which emphasized the need to reorient government institutions to reduce unnecessary consumption of public resources. Batho Pele sought to provide a policy framework that enables national and provincial departments to implement public service delivery strategies in line with the principles of the South African Constitution. Government therefore reacted towards the demands of the public, as well as institutional demands to comply with the Constitution of 1996, which specified that "people's needs [need to] be responded to", and services need to be provided "impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias" (DPSA 1997:10). This namely meant to especially focus on the redirection of resources to previously under-resources segments of the population. Batho Pele therefore had a redistributive function in government management, which reflects a developmental state approach to policy making.

# Policy theory that best explain the approach adopted in formulating the policy

Policy Formulation is defined as the design and drafting of policy goals and strategies for achieving them, with formal policy actors in government playing the most influential role. (Kraft & Furlong 2010:65) Active contributors to Policy Formulation are not only public officials, which have a lot of technical information needed to develop policy, but also legislators, executive branch officials, and interest groups.

The formulation of Batho Pele was based on the recognition that major reforms of the Public Service are urgent due to a number of shortcomings of delivery mechanisms. These are namely

Inequitable distribution of public services, especially in rural areas, lack of access [to] services, lack of transparency and openness and consultation on the required service standards, lack of accurate and simple information on services and standards at which they are rendered, lack of responsiveness and insensitiveness towards citizens complains and discourteous staff. (DPSA 1997:12) These go along with an "over-centralized, hierarchical and rule-bound system", in which it is difficult to hold officials to account. (DPSA 1997:12)

The Rational Model of public policy making can be used best to explain the formulation of the eight service delivery principles of Batho Pele, that were supposed to lead the way to the fundamental improvement of public service delivery. The Model entails the belief that policy problems could be resolved in a scientific way with the relevant information. Policy success can be guaranteed with the right input and procedures, for instance establishing a goal for solving a problem; exploring all alternative strategies; considering the consequences of alternatives; adopting the strategy which best solves the problem selected. The White Paper seems to suggest a rather rational sequencing (planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting) of the policy process, where any type of possible root constraints are not further laid out.

In a context where the institutional structure is simple and constraints are low, rational searches may result in the adoption of major changes and innovative options. In the context of South Africa, however, it is a much more complex task to stimulate such major changes. It is therefore questionable to what extent the application of a Rational Model is appropriate in the South African context, since it is assumed that networks and the structures in place might have been a great obstacle in achieving the improvement of public service delivery.

# Are the policy goals clearly articulated? Has the core problem been identified? Is the policy realistic considering the resources available?

The ultimate goal of the White Paper is improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery, with a special focus on welfare and equity, i.e. meeting the needs of those parts of the population that live below the poverty line. (DPSA 1997:9,11) The intention with this is to make South Africa "globally competitive" (DPSA 1997:16).

Provincial departments are required to specify according short, medium and long term goals and yearly as well as five yearly targets for the provision of specific public services. (DPSA 1997:11)

Government outlines the concept of providing the public and other service recipients (departments and institutions) with good "customer service" as a response to citizens, who have previously been left helpless and frustrated. Standards have not been defined clearly and service has been poor. (DPSA 1997:14) The term "customer" in this context is defined in terms of providing beneficiaries with quality services and responding to their requests sympathetically and respectfully. As recognized by government, the concept seems

inappropriate insofar as public services are not exchanged through a payment by the recipient, they do not underlie competition and can't go out of business. (DPSA 1997:13) Nevertheless, the concept of treating service recipients as customers serves an orientation regarding the objective of delivering quality of services.

The White Paper is supposed to set a practical agenda for all public servants. It is expected for all to agree to and apply the broad principles of:

1. Consulting citizens about the quality of services they receive

2. Informing citizens about the service standards they are entitled to receive

3. Providing all citizens with equal access to services

4. Treating citizens with courtesy and consideration

5. Providing full and accurate information about the services to the citizens

6. Providing citizens with open and transparent information on how national and provincial departments are run

7. Responding positively, speedy and effective, offering an apology upon non-delivery of a service

8. Providing public services economically and efficiently (best value for money)

(DPSA 1997:15)

With these guiding principles, government set very broad and high standards for the delivery of public services in the South African context. It is questionable to what extent policy implementers can be expected to simply internalize and apply all these principles, given that the culture of poor public services has previously been recognized as an obstacle in performance. The issue of changing this culture is not addressed in any of the principles.

Mandatory requirements as well as further recommendations as guidance for the practical application of these principles are also given by the White Paper:

1. <u>Consultation</u>: "[...] must cover the entire range of existing potential customers", whereby the views of previously disadvantaged must be included in the process. The results then must be widely publicized within the organization, and taken into account when decisions are made about provided services. (DPSA 1997:16) It remains at the discretion of provincial departments *if*, or to what extent, the "customers" view is incorporated in the service delivery programme. It is also not further indicated what consequences non-compliance with consultation processes may have.

It may have been useful in this context to further set out a consultation strategy to improve the quality of public policy. (JMC 2003:8)

2. <u>Setting Service Standards</u>: National and intra-departmental standards serve as the minimum baseline, whereby additional standards may be adopted. They must be "precise and measurable" as well as "demanding but realistic". (DPSA 1997:16) It is neither a requirement for them to be higher than the current, nor that they incorporate those issues that matter most to the public, which have ideally been revealed in the consultation process.

It also remains at the discretion of provincial departments to judge whether a certain standard is demanding on them or not, since no further entity is to approve or disapprove of them. Approved service standards by the Minister must be communicated to all beneficiaries, and performance results must be reviewed annually to increase the department's accountability. In case of non-compliance with a standard, a new target date for the achievement together with an explanation must be made public. (DPSA 1997:17) The White Paper does not mention, who will be responsible for the careful review (whether an independent authority may be contracted), nor whether sanctions apply in case of repeated non-compliance. For the sake of performance improvement and quality assurance, this would have been an important factor to include.

3. <u>Increasing access</u>: In the context of the disadvantages of access barriers such as lack of infrastructure of disadvantages of distance, Batho Pele seeks to rectify these disadvantages in order to increase access and provide a more equal distribution of existing services. (DPSA 1997:18)

4. <u>Ensuring courtesy</u>: So-called "Codes of Conduct" to ensure courtesy to the public and friendliness in responding to complaints must be formulated within all departments. Senior managers are supposed to include "customer care" in all future trainings, to regularly monitor the staff's performance and ensure compliance. (DPSA 1997:19) A crucial issue, which remains unaddressed is the question, what could motivate senior managers to change their current behavior. If there is currently a culture of poor customer care and unfriendliness in the public service existent, how is the change of this culture going to be addressed to eventually transform the attitude of all public servants? The White Paper does not set out any specific targets of motivating public servants to perform well in customer care.

5. <u>Providing more and better information</u>: In order to ensure inclusion of the previously disadvantaged, Batho Pele requires a complete transformation of communication with the public, so that "full, accurate and up-to-date information about the services" (DPSA 1997:19) is provided to all beneficiaries. The information is required to be provided in a variety of media and languages to reach all segments of the public. This is crucial due to the fact that the majority of South Africans do not speak English as a first

language. (Schwella 2001:370) Translated versions of the policy can be obtained from the Government Printer. (DPSA 1997:29) A name and a contact number must always be given for the public to receive further information. (DPSA 1997:19) The topic of provision for additional staff that may be needed to respond to the inquiries, and how the effective spread of full information is supervised, is not specified.

6. <u>Increasing openness and transparency</u>: For progress monitoring purposes, and to increase the public's confidence and trust in the government as a public service provider, an Annual Report must be published by each national and provincial department. (DPSA 1997:20) They must be written in plain language; however, it is not specified through which channel(s) the report should be published, or how copies can be obtained by poorer citizens in order to stay informed about the progress of the programme.

7. <u>Remedying mistakes and failures</u>: In order to address failure of compliance with service standards, complaint systems in place must be reviewed regularly by the head of departments and improved in line with the principles of accessibility for all citizens, speed, fairness, confidentiality, responsiveness, and training on complaint handling procedures. (DPSA 1997:22) Especially with regard to resources available and complex bureaucratic systems in place (partly due to linkages with other departments), this principle may not be realistic in the South African context, since it may not be possible for corresponding departments to be responsive at all times, and complaints to be handled quickly.

8. <u>Getting the best possible value for money</u>: Refers to the Government's GEAR strategy, which seeks to cut public expenditure to provide more cost-effective service delivery. The White Paper requires the identification of efficiency savings and their inclusion in the departments service delivery improvement plan. (DPSA 1997:22) For this task to be carried out effectively, a thorough analysis must be conducted in all departments. Who, when and how this will take place is not further specified in the White Paper.

A review of the objectives suggests that government had high aspirations when formulating the policy, and it was recognized that the institutional culture is characterized by poor delivery of public services. However, the necessity to change the institutional culture has evidently not been recognized as one of the root causes for poor public service delivery. An indication for this is the fact that strategies for a "fundamental change of culture" among senior officials and other implementers (DPSA 1997:11) in public service delivery are not specified. It must be noted that if fundamental "attitudes, beliefs, skills, structure, systems, and processes" are not integrated into the reform initiative, it is unlikely to be effective. (JMC 2003:13)

All in all, committed public servants are sought to simplify complex bureaucratic procedures and tackle inefficiency in the Public Service. Good customer care must be

recognized and rewarded, and performance assessments must be carried out benchmarked by the individual department's rates of Codes of Conduct-compliance as a key indicator. Furthermore, national and provincial departments are required to foster the capacity of public servants by providing "a conducive environment for the delivery of services" (DPSA 1997:23). Again, the issue of changing the current culture and transforming leadership is not addressed, and the principles outlined above are simply to be accepted and internalized by the implementers.

Consequently, the White Paper does not formulate tangible goals, especially when it comes to clear indicators that measure the set targets. This may be a problematic issue when it comes to effective implementation, since identified indicators must be measured on a regular and independent basis in order for them to lead to the desired outcome and long term impact.

# Policy coherence between Batho Pele and other policies mentioned

Policy coherence should be given to ensure changes through the policy. Ensuring policy coherence can become a complex issue, as it is a common difficulty in policy implementation to get departments and different spheres of government to work together.

RDP and GEAR are the two policies mentioned in the White Paper that served as the legislative basis for the adoption of Batho Pele.

As outlined in RDP as a growth and developmental strategy, the South African Government committed itself to gradually reduce fiscal deficits and to not increase government expenditure in real terms in order to build the economy. (ANC 1994:4) Meeting the basic needs of previously disadvantaged citizens in order to develop their economic and human potential is one of the basic principles of the programme. (DPSA 1997:8) Public Service is sought to be rebuilt by reducing consumption expenditure while increasing capital expenditure in order to ensure "accessible, transparent, accountable, efficient, free of corruption and excellent provision of quality of [Public] services" (ANC 1994:33)

GEAR was adopted two years later, in 1996, as more of a neoliberal macro-economic policy focusing on "faster fiscal deficit reduction [...] reduction in tariffs [...] tax incentives to stimulate investment [...] an expansion of trade and investment flows in Southern Africa [...] flexibility within the collective bargaining system", which promised a "growth rate of 6% per annum and job creation of 400.000 per annum by the year 2000" (DoF 1996:2). It aimed at restructuring the economy to "confront the related challenges of meeting basic needs, developing human resources, increasing participation in the democratic institutions of civil society and implementing the RDP in all its facets". (DoF 1996:1) With

regards to restructuring Public Service, the long-term goal is to provide more costeffectiveness in services. The idea is to strictly contain expenditure on other goods and services to allow an increase in RDP-related capital spending on developmental projects. (DoF 1996:8f)

Although the above mentioned policies are somewhat coherent in their basic principles with regard to public service delivery, as policies GEAR evidently focuses a lot more on macroeconomic objectives rather than equitable service delivery as one of the main objectives. In that regard, Batho Pele, RDP and GEAR and not completely coherent.

With respect to vertical policy coherence, questions that remain are especially directed towards challenges of inter-governmental relations. Batho Pele does not further outline how the policy may be integrated into the existing structures already in place through the above mentioned policies. In addition, it does not specify in how far unfunded mandates across different spheres of government may be co-ordinated.

# Institutional arrangements, resource requirements and responsibility for implementation

The White Paper seeks to apply a rather top-down approach, in which government provides broad, national strategies on how to improve public service delivery. These strategies are meant to be defined in more detail by national and provincial departments and ultimately carried out according to these strategies by their public officials.

Immediately after approval, national and provincial departments are expected to start working on their Service Delivery Improvement Programmes, which must integrate other departmental transformation priorities previously spelled out in their strategic plan. Transformation units within these departments play a key role in this process, especially when it comes to monitoring results. Furthermore, national and provincial "transformation coordinating committees" serve as focal points that ensure that the principles are being maintained. Institutional arrangements to ultimately implement the policy and put their Improvement Programme into practice, lies completely in the hands of the heads of departments. These are required to adequately communicate the concept and clearly assign responsibilities to a person or a group, which will be directly accountable to the head of department. (DPSA 1997:24)

The Service Delivery Improvement Programme must define short, medium and long term service standards, as well as monitoring mechanisms. Additionally, it must spell out how human resource training, the department's communication system, as well as their complaint systems will be arranged within the institution. (DPSA 1997:24) Monitoring will be carried out by the Public Service Commission, Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), Portfolio Committees, national, provincial and inter-provincial transformation coordinating committees, and departmental transformation units (DPSA 1997:26). An evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the policy is also carried out by DPSA. (DPSA 1997:29) In this process, heads of departments are held accountable for the implementation of the Programme, and progress reports must be submitted to Parliament on a yearly basis.

While the Programme is being formulated, service improvements can be carried out immediately where possible by individual components within the departments. (DPSA 1997:26)

As part of the implementation strategy, the White Paper outlines several steps to take in the process. Firstly, through a thorough stakeholder analysis, the "customers" and their different requirements must be identified. In this process, "systematic, regular consultation, using objective methods which ensure that views of all customers, including potential customers, are represented" is required. (DPSA 1997:26) As a third step, the current service baseline will need to be established through a thorough scrutiny of organizational arrangements and practices. (DPSA 1997:27) Considering the available resources, targets for systematic improvement can now be identified accurately, and service standards can now be set that enable departments to progressively close the gap between the public's needs and the current provision of public services. Meeting these standards may probably entail making significant changes in the department's organizational structure. The commitment of all implementers involved therefore plays a crucial role. In order to launch the Improvement Programme, all beneficiaries must be informed about the level and quality of service delivery they are entitled to, expected to receive, and what actions they can take if these standards are not met. Eventually, and to ensure Public Service accountability, the results of the programme must be announced to the public. (DPSA 1997:28) Practical models of pilot departments that have already started their improved programmes will demonstrate how the White Paper's principles can work in practice. (DPSA 1997:28)

The institutional arrangements and the implementation strategy outlined in Batho Pele raises a number of questions that the policy does not seem to address sufficiently.

First of all, DPSA, together with others, are said to ensure that staff is assisted in developing expertise to thoroughly analyze, to identify improvement targets, and to carry out the transformation exercises. How this conjunction is organized, and what assistance mechanisms are going to be put in place is not specified. It would be important to specify through what specific national mechanisms implementing staff will obtain expertise in the area. In addition, it remains unclear who will be part of the mentioned national and provincial transformation committees. How and through whom are they going to be assigned? It has not been considered to have an independent authority monitor implementation of the White Paper. With regard to policy implementation, the Principal-Agent-relationship between policy makers and public officials can become a great issue, as they may carry out their tasks differently as originally anticipated in the policy. Quality assurance mechanisms are therefore important, and can be a solution to this potential problem. (JMC 2003:4) However, allowing departments to set their own standards and monitoring strategies may foster inefficiency in long term improved service provision.

The White Paper does not consider the issue of availability of resources at all, which could be a major obstacle in the implementation process. When it comes to setting the current service baseline, for instance, accurate data may not be available, and it may take a while to get appropriate data to perform an analysis. Additional resources may be needed to perform this task. Bias may also arise due to staff's lack of honesty in providing accurate information about themselves, e.g. when their performance has been poor. By assigning complete responsibility for financing the implementation to the heads of departments, the issue of how improvements are going to be financed, and what options there are to obtain further funding is completely left out of the picture. Departments may simply not be able to finance the targeted improvements with the available resources. It remains questionable, to whet extent the needs to provide public services, especially to the previously disadvantaged, can be realistically met. Resource re-distribution may be necessary to tackle the problem, and further provision for resources must be made available.

In order for improvements to be effective, inter-organizational cooperation is essential. Through which structures, cooperation and conjunctions cooperation is going to be fostered, is not further explained in the White Paper.

Additionally, pilot departments are supposed to serve as good practice models to other departments. If their progress has been monitored and if implementation has proven to be effective, remains unclear.

# Time frame spelt out for implementation of the policy

The White Paper recognizes that "the process of implementation will vary from department to department across the Public Service according to local conditions and capacities". (DPSA 1997:29) A first Statement of Public Service Commitment is required to be submitted by departments during 1998. No clear time frames are spelt out with regards to the implementation of the policy.

#### Provision to communicate the objectives to the public and to the implementers

The issue of providing sufficient information to the implementing officials is particularly crucial, for instance, when it comes to the participation process in formulating implementation strategies. In order for the policy to be effective, democratic and inclusive, adequate inclusion of the beneficiaries of public services and their needs have to be addressed. This process can result ineffective if it is not carried out properly, i.e. if beneficiaries are not differentiated based on their different needs and no adequate representatives are included in the participation process. Implementing officials need to be provided with sufficient training to carry out this process.

With regards to communicating the policy's objectives to the public, no provision has been made to do so on a national level. As outlined above in Point 5 "Providing more and better information", the public is meant to be sufficiently informed about the set service standards that each provincial department has decided upon. This implies that the public will most likely be informed about the services they are entitled to receive in their correspondent province, once they have been decided on. However, there is no provision on a national level, to inform all citizens about the objectives of the policy, e.g. through national television or other forms of national media.

According to DPSA, a "communications pack" is provided to assist departments in communicating the concept of Batho Pele to all staff levels. The White Paper will also be available in several different languages. In addition, the DPSA project team, in conjunction with other authorities, it said to ensure that "officials within departments are assisted to develop expertise and share good practice". (DPSA 1997:29) As mentioned above, it remains the responsibility of the heads of departments to inform their officials about Batho Pele and its principles. Due to the complex nature of improving public service delivery in the South African context, it is particularly striking that no further provision on a national level has been made to specifically communicate with street level implementers of Batho Pele. Making sure they are adequately informed about the principles of the policy, and ensuring the development of their expertise is one of the most crucial elements of the implementation of this White Paper.

#### Provision for monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation

Policy evaluation is a crucial step in the policy cycle, as it holds the state accountable for its actions. Accountability is a key element of democracy.

According to the White Paper, DPSA will systematically monitor and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the policy. Regular reports need to be submitted to Parliament. (DPSA 1997:29) It is not specified, however, if there is a proper Monitoring & Evaluation system

in place, and what evaluation indicators may be, since all departments are required to develop their own monitoring indicators. Since individual departments set their own individual service standards, it remains unclear how individual evaluation criteria identified by the different departments can be integrated into one national evaluation system. To have such a system in place becomes important when it comes to measuring the actual impact of the policy.

It is also not specified, who will be responsible for monitoring whether access to services has increased, for instance.

Policy monitoring and evaluation is only very broadly considered in the White Paper, however, it is crucial to adequately consider it.

# How successful do you think the Batho Pele White Paper was in achieving its policy goals and say what motivates your opinion?

According to Hemson and Roberts, the results of the SASAS 2007 survey, which assess how Batho Pele's principles impacted municipal household services, revealed that there is still much need for Public Service improvement. The public's responses on the quality of their received services indicate that there is a difference in practice to what has been intended "on paper". Collected data suggests that government has been improving delivery, but that it has not been able to respond to people's priorities. With regards to serving the most disadvantaged beneficiaries, the survey revealed that those in greatest need of improved public services – rural communities and informal settlements – acknowledge that they are receiving increased access, however, they are also "experiencing the lowest level of consultation, redress, openness, relevant information and courtesy". (Hemson & Roberts 2008:13f)

According to Schwella (2001:378), given the legislative and policy provisions aimed at quality service delivery, one would expect that the public service would be a high-performing, effective, efficient, and productive service delivery unit. In accordance with international best practices, the policies and guidelines are said to have the full potential to deliver public services of high quality. Considering the current reality with respect to performance evaluation of service delivery, however, "the picture is less satisfactory than would be expected given the solid policy positions". Particular issues that play a role in the non-satisfactory implementation of Batho Pele are – among others - performance issues, evaluation issues, and the high level of corruption. (Schwella 2001:386f)

Expected gaps between policy making and implementation could be a result of the targets that were set out too broadly, and the unrealistic vision of a radical change of culture. The core issue of changing culture is not addressed at all in the strategy. This becomes a particular issue, for instance, when the communication strategy is defined by departments. Previous lack of commitment and bad public service delivery is unlikely to be transformed, if the underlying culture is not changed. This could provide bias in applying an effective communication strategy to inform the public and implementers about the objectives of Batho Pele. This process continues throughout various other steps of policy implementation.

Further challenges that provide obstacles in the effective implementation of Batho Pele could have, for instance, been that the policy does not provide information on how much its implementation will cost, or how lack of resources may hinder its implementation. In addition, it gives little consideration to how the success of the policy will be measured. It is not sufficient to simply require monitoring, as a systematic monitoring and evaluation systems will need to be put in place to ensure effective policy progress.

These anticipated gaps between policy making and implementation suggest that the implementation of the Batho Pele White Paper has not been very successful. Nevertheless, the improvement of access to public services, as revealed by Hemson and Roberts, is a sign that the Policy's adoption was not completely useless, but that it did provide a step towards improved public service delivery in South Africa. A lot of room remains in the improvement of equitable service delivery and serving the most disadvantaged of the population.

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# Plagiarism

Hereby I, Benita Rose, born 08 June 1990 in Bergisch Gladbach (Germany) confirm

- i) that any work submitted is my own unaided work,
- ii) that the thoughts and ideas of others are appropriately referenced, and
- iii) that I am aware that disciplinary action may be taken against me if they fail to comply.

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(Benita Rose)

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